



The Patriot Reader Newsletter

P.O. Box 2117

St. Augustine, FL 32085

Bill Dudley, Publisher

Michael Rothfeld, Editor

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Message from the Chairman



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Fellow Veterans,
As we are in our Christmas Season, I would urge everyone to please take a few minutes from your busy schedules to remember our men and women who are serving our great nation in uniform, especially those in harm's way. And to remember those who have served and defended our country, many paying the supreme price for their service.

Our Wreaths Across America program this year was another huge success. Our appreciation to Sgt. Maj. Ray Quinn and his team for assuring that our Veterans Council once again met its commitment to place a wreath on every headstone at our St. Augustine National Cemetery. We want to thank our community for the outpouring of support for our WAA program.

The Veterans Council has

pledged to assure every headstone will have a wreath each year during the Holiday Season and our community has helped us honor our commitment. The Veterans Council would also like to recognize Michael Isam who started this program years ago at our National Cemetery and brought the program to the attention of our Veterans Council.

As we come to the end of 2016, the Veterans Council would like to express our appreciation to all the Veterans organizations and to the community who have supported our many programs throughout the year. Our Veterans Day weekend was a huge success due to the outpouring of support from the merchants and individual contributors.

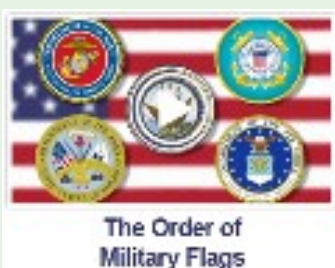
The next major event is our upcoming St. Augustine Military Ball to be held at the Mark W. Lance Armory

on January 14, 2017. All proceeds are donated to The Legion Legacy Project for the renovation of the Historic Hamblen House and American Legion Post #37 Headquarters.

After nearly 3 years of planning and development, we now have a planned date for the launch of our Veterans Treatment Court. The first veterans selected for the program will be on the docket for January 19, 2017.

We look forward to another successful year of supporting our veterans and wish everyone a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year.

William Dudley,
Chairman
Veterans Council of St. Johns County



Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home



Each year the residents take shifts ringing the Salvation Army bell at the Murabella Publix



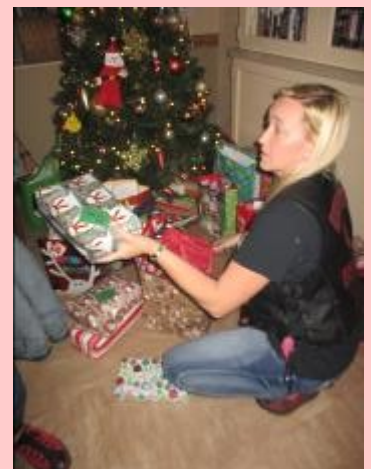
More visitors and entertainment!



Lots and lots of visitors....from NAS Sailors to Showtime dancers!



Every year Prudential volunteers from Jacksonville come and decorate all the veteran doors for Christmas.....





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



JNC SC Chairman,
Ray Quinn

The Support Committee invites everyone to attend its **next scheduled meeting, on Monday, January 9, 2017**. The meeting will be at **7:00pm**. The meeting will take place at Community Hospice, **4266 Sunbeam Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32257 in Conference Room A**.

+++++2015/2016 Officers of the SCJNC+++++

Chairman: Ray Quinn

Vice Chairman: Bill Dudley, Treasurer: John Mountcastle

Assistant Treasurer: Michael Rothfeld, Secretary: Kathy Church

Chaplain: Michael Halyard, Master-At-Arms: Joe McDermott

JAG Officer: Patrick Bennett, Historian: Jody Raymond

From FL State Director, Kathy Church

NATIONWIDE PROGRESS AS OF 11/29/2016

Total Funeral Homes Visited - 2,019

Cremains Found - 14,243

Veterans Cremains Identified - 3,224

Veterans Interred - 2,966

FLORIDA PROGRESS TO DATE AS OF

11/30/2016

Veterans Interred - 118

Spouses Interred - 49

Dependent Interred - 1



Starting the 1st of the year I will be back working with MIAP fully. We need to get back to contacting funeral homes locally and get volunteers on board through out the state. I have been preoccupied with other volunteer commitments but this will be changing at the end of 2016.

“Mac”

Joseph "Mac" McDermott, SGM, US Army (Ret), was the St. Johns County Veterans Service Officer for the past 13 years and served as a Veteran Service Officer in Jacksonville for ten years before coming to St. Johns County. St. Johns County Veterans Service Office won State awards for being the best VSO in the state. He was ably assisted by Rick Rees, US Navy (Ret), Tammy Shirley, US Navy (Ret), and Lashonda Burns, USAF, together they make up what many have said is the best VSO in the state.

Mac retired on November 30, 2016. His service to veterans was indisputable, his knowledge unquestionable.

At Mac's retirement party, several prominent people, both from military and civilian fields were present to speak about Mac's many accomplishments. Among them were Bill Dudley, Chairman of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County; Ray Quinn, former County Commissioner; Randy Stapleford, representing Congressman DeSantis' office; former Assistant County Administrator, Jerry Cameron; and current County Administrator, Michael Wanchick; all spoke glowingly about Mac, his achievements, his love for veterans and his willingness to go the extra mile when needed.

Mac attended all veteran's meetings and events, the Veterans Council, the DAV, the American Legion and the VFW.

Joseph McDermott was honored a few years ago by The Veterans Council of St. Johns County, receiving the Col. Ed Taylor Veteran of the Year Award. The honor goes to an individual selected for exceptional work on behalf of the county's veterans.

"Joseph McDermott epitomizes the meaning of that term," Ray Quinn noted, in announcing this year's recipient. Known to everyone as "Mac", McDermott is the senior veteran service officer for the Veterans Service Office in St. Johns County. McDermott and his staff assist veterans from all services with filing of claims with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Besides overseeing the office and staff," Quinn said, "McDermott is present at many of the veteran organization meetings to brief the membership on what is happening with the claim process at the present time." "He attends many of the County Board of Supervisors meetings, meets with county staff on a myriad of areas, especially the move to offices within the new Health and Human Services building.

The award was presented to McDermott by Col. Ed Taylor, name-sake of the award and co-founder of the current council.

Veteran Service Officers will help with VA claims, and they can help you identify benefits available from your state government, such as reduced property taxes or educational benefits for dependents.

Veteran Service Officers (VSO) are veterans who stand ready to help with veteran-related needs. Veterans Service Offices have all the forms and other information a veteran may need to obtain service from the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as the forms for requesting State veterans' benefits. The Service Officers will assist in finding the information and resources needed to solve service-related problems.

Veteran Service Officers help veterans navigate the many federal, state, and local resources and benefits available to them. Whether it's a specific question or the need to identify programs and benefits for which a veteran may be eligible, Veteran Service Officers stand by to help. They are advocates for all veteran issues.

VSO's are trained and accredited by the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs to provide assistance to veterans, their dependents, and survivors. This includes not only applying for federal and state benefits but also providing resources related to the following:

- Compensation and Pension • Health Care • Education & Training • Employment • Burial & Survivor • Housing • Transportation • Military Records**

Joseph "Mac" McDermott went above and beyond all the time, he was a Veterans Veteran.



Wreaths Across America, St. Augustine National Cemetery

On National Wreaths Across America Day each December, volunteers place wreaths on individual veterans' graves in over 1,100 locations throughout the U.S., with ceremonies at sea, and at each of the national cemeteries on foreign soil.

We encourage every volunteer who places a wreath on a veteran's grave to say that veteran's name aloud and take a moment to thank them for their service to our country. It's a small act that goes a long way toward keeping the memory of our veterans alive.

We are not here to "decorate graves." We're here to remember not their deaths, but their lives.
—Karen Worcester, Executive Director of Wreaths Across America



ca

The pictures that follow were taken by Ted Pappas at the Wreaths Across America Ceremony held at St. Augustine

National Cemetery. Ray Quinn, SGM USA, ret., was Master of Ceremonies and the Keynote speaker was Richard Capps, BG, USA ret.







Thank You

For A



Memorable Veterans Day Weekend

ON BEHALF OF THE MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA - ANCIENT CITY CHAPTER, AND THE VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, WE EXTEND OUR UTMOST THANKS AND APPRECIATION TO EVERYONE WHO DONATED, SUPPORTED AND PARTICIPATED IN THIS YEAR'S VETERANS DAY WEEKEND CELEBRATIONS.

George Linardos CPT (USA-Fmr)
MOAA - Military Officers of America Assc.

Bill Dudley LTC (USAF-Ret)
Veterans Council of St. Johns County

Donars

American Legion Post 45
Ameris Bank
Anastasia Baptist Church
Ancient City Brewery
Black Fly Restaurant
Carl Petry
City of St. Augustine
City of St. Augustine Police Dept.
City of St. Augustine Beach Police Dept.
Claude Caviness
Coquina Crossing Veterans
Columbia Restaurant
Corazon Cinema and Café
Dennis Maloney
Dennis Newman
Dr. Roger Geronimo
Dr. Roy Hinman

Dr. William Proctor
Ed Moitoza
Emmett Tishaw, MG (USAF-Ret)
First Coast Living
Flagler College Veterans Club
Florida Power & Light
Green Trolley
Hilton Bayfront Inn
Jerome Jacalone
Jim Vanairsdale
John Leslie, CMDR
John Tinny
Joretta Anderson
K9s For Warriors
Lovely Loo Portable Restrooms
Raymond Yancy

Reunion Bank
Rolling Thunder Florida Chapter 4
Signs Now
St. Augustine Amphitheatre
St. Augustine Record
St. Johns County Fire Rescue (EMS)
St. Johns County Sheriff's Dept.
State Senator Travis Hutson
Subway
Tammy Delaporte
Virginia Wygonik
VyStar Credit Union
William F. Ruthenberg
William Strouse
WSOS
WFOY

Dignitaries

Wallace Schoettelkotte
Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army

Honorable Mark Smithson, Vice Consul General
British Consulate

Governor General Javier Salinas
Order of the Granaderos de Galvez - Spain

CAPT Wyatt Chides, Chief of Staff,
US Navel Forces Southern Command
US Fourth Fleet

Air Commodore CBE Steve R. Thornber
Deputy Director Intelligence (Operations)
HQ USCENTCOM

Kimberly Mayo, Chief Ranger
Castillo de San Marcos and Ft Matanzas

Local

CMDR Jared King, X.O. USCG HITRON
United States Coast Guard

Brigadier General Jesús F. Armisen Bobo
Defense Attaché, Embassy of Spain

Mayor Nancy Shaver - St. Augustine
State Senator Travis Hutson
State Representative Cyndi Stevenson
State Representative Paul Renner
County Commissioner Jeb Smith
County Commissioner Jimmy Johns

BG Brian Simpler, Chief of Staff
Florida National Guard

CW5 Miguel A. Sanchez Bosque
Embassy of Spain

Parade Participants

13 FLNG Marching Band Miramar, Florida
3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, GA.
Florida National Guard, St. Augustine, FL.
Andrew Jackson High School JROTC
Bartram Trails High School JROTC
Civil Air Patrol Fruit Cove Cadet Squadron

Civil Air Patrol SER 173
Mandarin High School JROTC
Nease High School JROTC
St. Augustine High School JROTC
University of North Florida ROTC
U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, St. Augustine
Youth Challenge, Camp Blanding

St. Augustine High School Band
Pedro Menendez High School Band U.S.
Naval Sea Cadet Corps, St. Augustine
Jeeps and Motor Cycles
Alexander Watkins
Chris Railing

Military Officers Association of America - Ancient City Chapter - 501(C)(3)
Veterans Council of St. Johns County - 501(C)(3)





560 N. Wilderness Trail Palm Valley Ponte Vedra Beach 904-285-2484

7th ANNUAL COWBOY NIGHT

Saddle up partners...it's time for another rootin' and tootin' evening with Dakota Don, Beaumont Ben and the Laredo Ladies

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28th 6:30pm til ??



Come and experience the best BBQ in all of Palm Valley
Bring your best gal, guy and partners enjoy a fun filled rootin' tootin' evening

Due to the popularity of this event we ask that you **RSVP with the number of members and guests that plan on attending. We need a count so we will have enough food and fixins**

RSVP by January 15th, 904-285-2484
Leave your name and count with the bartender.

WE NOW ACCEPT



BBQ PORK BUTTS cooked onsite by **Dakota Don & Beaumont Ben** will be served up with all the fixins by the **Laredo Ladies**. **ALL** for a small donation of only **\$10.00**

Food service will begin at 6:30pm til 9:00pm (or until we sell out)

Entertainment by Wanda and Big John from 7:30pm til ??



'Be A Star'

K9s for Warriors is a life saver By ANNE C. HEYMEN

Every 65 minutes a veteran commits suicide, **John R, “Jack” Capra**, a Navy veteran, told members of the Pilot Club of St. Augustine as guest speaker for the club’s November program meeting. “Our organization helps dogs help veterans.”

Capra, appointed to the U.S. Navy Judge Advocate General’s Corps in September 1990, was referring to the K9s for Warriors organization, an organization described on its Web site as “dedicated to providing service canines to veterans suffering from Post-traumatic Stress Disability, traumatic brain injury and/or sexual trauma as a result of military service post 9/11.”

With his canine, Rocco, a standard-sized poodle at his side, Capra, who is dealing with traumatic brain injury, told the gathering he was the eighth person to graduate from the K9 group. He and Rocco have been together since 2011. “It’s a wonderful experience,” he said. “It changed my life.” Serving in a variety of capacities in the Navy, Capra was re-called to active duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and, in March 2004, was wounded in Bastra, Iraq . Insurgents had detonated a radio-controlled explosive device under his convoy.



A year later, Capra, who was awarded the Purple Heart and the Combat Action Ribbon after the 2004 injury, was mobilized to active duty for a third time for Operations Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom. The next year, he was mobilized – for a fourth time – this time in support of Operation Enduring Freedom to Joint Task Force-Guantanamo, (JTF-GTMO) Cuba. He served as deputy director, Staff Judge Advocate and then as the ex



ecutive assistant to the JTF Commander.

“Every time I came home” from one of those deployments, he told his audience, “I found myself more comfortable over there. You can’t imagine it over there,” he continued. “Everything is a threat – people shouting at us all the time.”



K9s for Warriors is truly a life saver, Capra emphasized. It was founded by north-east Florida resident Shari Duval, who now serves as president. Her son, a veteran K9 police officer, worked as a contractor for the Army, completing two tours in Iraq and returning home with PTSD. As she explains in the K9s for Warriors Web site: “After two years of research on canine assistance for PTSD, we decided the best way we could help these deserving warriors was to start a non-profit organization to train and give service canines to assist our warriors’ efforts to return to civilian life with dignity and independence.”

The K9s for Warriors training facility is located in Ponte Vedra with a 17,000 square foot headquarters which provides a training ground for the Warriors and their service dogs. Veterans come from all over the world Capra and his wife, Sandi, told the gathering – Washington, Germany. Since there is such a demand there is a waiting list. Everything is 100 percent free. Cost to train a service dog says Capra, is about \$15,000. K9s for Warriors dogs are 45 pounds or larger.

For further information on the organization call 904-686-1956. The address is 114 Camp K9 Road, Ponte Vedra Beach, Fl. 32081. K9s for Warriors is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Tadzia Alexander, who heads the patriotism area for the club, introduced the speaker Nov. 16 and presented a variety of gifts to Capra and his wife, as well as Rocco, who received a red, white and blue scarf.

By EMELIA HITCHNER , emelia.hitchner@staugustine.com

This article is from the St. Augustine Record and is reprinted in its entirety

Hard work, determination proves worthwhile for Naval student

To achieve the unachievable, 21-year-old Lucy Ford knows a little elbow grease and a lot of confidence goes a long way.

The St. Augustine native and former Ponte Vedra High School graduate is known for her consistency and work ethic. Her father, Jim, describes her as tough. Her mother, Karen, labels her as resilient.

But if anyone asks Lucy, she'll spend far less time listing her attributes and summarize her mantra in a single question:

"If you're just being the standard every day, why are you doing it?"

Lucy, a senior studying ocean engineering at the United States Naval Academy, is of course anything but standard. She serves as the 5th Battalion Commander, responsible for leading 720 midshipmen on their journey to become naval officers. Recently she became the Naval Academy's 50th Rhodes Scholar, one of 32 selected from nearly 900 national candidates. The prestigious scholarship will send her to Oxford University for two to three years of study.

It was a dream she's had since the age of 10.

"I remember when I first found out about the Rhodes Scholarship, and thought 'wow, that'd be really amazing to do,'" Lucy Ford said.

As she moved through St. Johns County schools, Lucy immersed herself in clubs, volunteer opportunities and sports. When she finally graduated as salutatorian from Ponte Vedra High School with plans to enroll at the Naval Academy, her father said she was well on her way to defying the status quote.

"The thing I think that's great about her winning this scholarship is the way it disproves the talk that the American dream is lost," Jim Ford said. "This is a story of how someone can go to a public school and just work hard. The American dream is still alive."

The application for the scholarship was nothing short of daunting, requiring a 1,000-word personal statement and eight letters of recommendation. Lucy said when she was asked to travel to Birmingham, Alabama as a finalist she was in disbelief. After a grueling 20-minute interview with eight interviewers, she waited for three hours with other finalists for the results.

Her mother remembers the text she sent her daughter on that day.

"I texted her and told her I wanted her to be happy with whatever the outcome was," Karen Ford re

called. “She said ‘I just want to get it.’”

Lucy’s hours of preparation paid off.

“I was shocked when they said they selected me,” she said.

Her father, although excited, wasn’t surprised.

“She’s the toughest young person I know. If something doesn’t go right, she doesn’t avoid it, she looks at the problem again and hits it head on,” Jim Ford said. “She puts her mind to something and she goes after it.”



Both of Lucy’s parents agreed that growing up, their daughter was normal. She did her homework. She played soccer. She studied hard.

But they felt she was different from many students in the sense that she never limited herself. For Lucy, options were never-ending, as long as she was willing to try.

“She wants to do her best and leaves nothing to chance,” Karen Ford said.

This past summer, Lucy spent a summer in Africa developing energy policies and providing health clinics in rural Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo with sustainable electricity. During her junior year, she studied at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Outside of her studies, she’s the co-chairman of the Naval Academy Science and Engineering Conference, sings in the Women’s Glee Club, and works with at-risk youth in the Annapolis community.

Her advice to other students concerning success is simple.

“I say always work hard toward something you think you can’t attain,” she said. “And act as if it’s impossible to fail. The confidence and the work you put in will pay off in ways you won’t necessarily know.”

Lucy said she will be commissioned as a U.S. Navy submarine officer in May before working a temporary assigned duty. In October, she will move overseas to pursue a master’s of science in Nature, Society and Environmental Governance with a focus in Energy Policy followed by a master’s of science in Economics for Development at Oxford. The scholarship will cover her university and living expenses.

In the future, she said she’d like to assist the Navy with clean energy use as well as continue leading and serving her fellow sailors.

“I think it’s important to look outward, not inward, meaning when you’re trying to achieve something, don’t just look at how it affects you,” she said. “Look at how you can affect others.”

LEAD EDITORIAL

Military ceremony: Civilian significance

The Spanish essayist and novelist could not have captured more succinctly what many Americans see as a sickness in our country. so many of our people have lived without the desperation of the Depression or the horrors of war. Yes, America has been involved in military operations across the globe and we see quick bites of film on the six o'clock news.

The military has been involved. but Americans have not.

Not in the way we were through previous fights. civilians paid into the fray with rationing, restrictions, massive manufacturing of the objects of war and the tax liability to support it all.

Over the past decades the bill has been paid by laying a tab on a federal deficit that threatens to sink our country. And still we can't be bothered to pay our own way: live within our considerable means. Saturday, the veterans council of St. Johns county will join some 1,200 other groups across the nation in an tribute called Wreaths Across America.

Keynote speaker is retired brigadier General Richard Capps; a Vietnam veteran and former Assistant Adjutant General of the Florida Army National Guard. The 1,200 efforts will occur at 12 noon. And, here at our St. Augustine National cemetery, 1,240 wreaths will be laid.

The focus, writes Wreaths Across America executive Director Karen Worcester, is this: "We are not here to 'decorate graves.' We're here to remember not their deaths, but their lives."

This is a military ceremony of a different kind. The public is not only invited to attend, but also encouraged to participate in the laying of the wreaths. volunteers are asked to speak "their" veteran's name out loud and take a moment to reflect on the ways the soldiers' loss of life has enriched and helped to guarantee our own.

The local veteran's council, comprised of 28 military organizations in the county, especially encourages youth groups to get involved. so you'll likely see ROTC and sea scout groups involved; as well as boy scout troops and other civic youth organizations. but, as a parent, we encourage you to bring your children to the ceremony. veterans council chair Bill Dudley told us it's a way to "impart and pass on the significance of vets serving their country." it may become, in some small way, a bridge between the generations who endured so much and the youth of our country who have little idea what that means.

These same kids may one day help resist global conflict. They may also be called to serve in one. We pray not. but a lesser-known quote by Santayana is this: "Only the dead have seen the end of war." We all could use a wake up call — of just how palpable that dark passage really is.

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By JARED KEEVER jared.keever@staugustine.com
From the St Augustine Record

Family of injured Marine given new home in time for the holidays

Christmas came early for the family of an injured U.S. Marine when they received some gifts too big to fit under the tree. But just having a place to put a tree and celebrate the holidays as a family may be the biggest gift of all for Sydney and Chris Natto and their son Rhett.



Members of the Northeast Florida Builders Association; its charitable arm, Builders Care; and a slew of contractors and sub-contractors gathered in the Arbor Mill at Mill Creek subdivision Friday afternoon to present the young couple with the keys to their new custom-built home.

Unlike most Christmas gifts, it was no surprise. But the new Toyota minivan, found sitting in the garage when someone raised the overhead door just before a ceremonial ribbon cutting, certainly was.

The look of wonder and shock on Sydney's face suggested it was all part of a happy end to what has been a very difficult year.

Chris, 26, was serving with the elite Recon Marines on Feb. 29 when an accident during a training exercise left him partially paralyzed.

In a short story of the couple's life that Sydney wrote after her husband's accident, she explains that Chris was making a night jump from the skies over North Carolina with nine others when they realized they had been dropped too far from a designated landing zone. Some came down in residential neighborhoods, Chris and others landed in nearby pine trees.

"He remembers hitting the top of a tree and having his legs flare out," Sydney wrote.

He landed on a branch that couldn't support his weight as his parachute collapsed. When the branch broke, Chris fell 40 feet before landing on his back.

He was flown to a trauma center in Charlotte, North Carolina, where doctors eventually told Sydney that he had broken his neck.

He had two successful surgeries to repair and stabilize areas around his neck that were injured in the fall, but he remains paralyzed from the chest down.

"He has little arm movement, but he is getting stronger every day," Sydney wrote. "He has no finger movement and little hand movement, but has feelings from his head to his toes. Only half of his diaphragm is functioning for breathing, but thankfully he is able to breathe on his own."

Not prepared or planning for a life with a wheelchair, or a home that can accommodate one, the injuries essentially left the couple — who grew up and attended Pedro Menendez High School together — homeless.

Sydney moved back to the St. Augustine area where her parents could help with the couple's toddler. And while she was busy splitting her time between them and Chris — who has been recovering in a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital in Tampa — others were hard at work making sure they would have a home that would meet their needs in time for the holidays.

That work started when a former member of the Northeast Florida Builders Association, Bruce Peters, reached out to Builders Care Executive Director Justin Brown.

Peters, a veteran himself, and friend of Sydney's father, who serves in the Florida Army National Guard, told Brown about the family's situation.

"My mind immediately went to Matt Devereaux," Brown told The Record on Friday.

Devereaux, a division president with Lennar homes, had recently told him "to be on the lookout" for a family in need that Lennar could help, he said. So Brown took him the Nattos' story.

That was August.

By late October, plans for a house had been modified so the finished home could accommodate Chris' needs, Devereaux had gotten a number of contractors willing to donate time and materials on board, and they had held a ground-breaking ceremony.

"All of this is that story," Brown said motioning toward the new home as well-wishers and workers lined up outside to get their first look at the finished product.

Inside, Chris and Sydney shook hands and gave hugs as people filed through the living room.

She said she was simply "overwhelmed" at the support they had received in recent months. Not only was it great that they were going to have a place to call home at Christmas, she said, they were also going to get to spend some quality with Rhett, who turns 2 at the end of the month.

"He will get to be in his home for his birthday," she said, smiling.

Back outside, Devereaux, who hosted Friday's event, was shaking hands and talking with members of the media.

He said that once he heard the family's story, and what Chris had sacrificed with his service, he knew they were the ones Lennar and its partners should help. The attention from the media was nice, he said, but it isn't the motivating factor.

"We do this because its the right thing to do," Devereaux said. "And because of what Chris gave us."

Legion of Honor for WWII service

From the St. Augustine Record

St. Augustine U.S. Army WWII veteran Atma Phillips smiles after being presented with a Legion of Honor Medal by Consul General of France in Miami Clement Leclerc in a ceremony at St. Augustine Beach City Hall on Tuesday. During the ceremony organized by the Les Amis Francophones de St. Augustine, the men were honored for their service on French soil during WWII. U.S. Army veteran Homer Harris was also recognized, though he and his family were unable to attend the ceremony.



The Consul General of France in Miami Clement Leclerc presents Legion of Honor Medals to (from left) WWII U.S. Navy veteran Frederick Daft; Wayne Mattson, who accepted the medal on behalf of his late father U.S. Army veteran John Mattson; U.S. Army veteran Atma Phillips, and U.S. Army veteran Robert Schmidt.

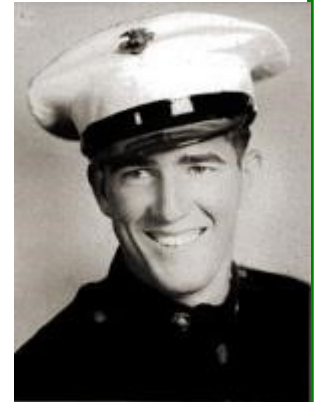


Photos BY CHRISTINA.KEISO@STAUGUSTINE.COM

The Veterans Council, Bill Dudley and I have been working with the new University of Florida digital military online library in getting the Council's 5 documentaries on their site. We have accomplished and they are all now online.

We were just informed today that a speech we recorded in 2008, the only one of its kind has also been put on the Univ of FL's Military online library.

We recorded, with Michael Isam's help the Keynote address of Dr. Giles McCoy of Palm Coast. Dr McCoy was a 19 year old Marine who was aboard the USS Indianapolis that was sunk by a Japanese submarine. Dr McCoy's story is told every year on the History Channel and retold in the book, "In Harm's Way". Dr McCoy spent 4 1/2 days in the Pacific fighting off sharks and hallucinations without food, water, or the Navy knowing where they are.



It is an uplifting story of heroism and survival.

Please take the time to view it and share it with friends.

Here is a link: <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/1/AA00052854>

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County is proud to announce that it has modernized its website and created a new Facebook page.



We are inviting all veterans to visit our website at:
<http://www.veteranscouncilofstjohns.org>

The Veterans Council will post items of interest to all veterans, post pictures, articles, flyers, events, etc. We will post our meetings dates and keep you informed about events at the Jacksonville and St. Augustine National Cemeteries.

Please join our group on Facebook at:
VeteransCouncilofStJohnsCounty,FL

Please select **Join the Group** to become a member

Once you have joined the Veterans Council Facebook group you will be able to post your meetings, pictures, articles, fund raisers, etc. It will be your common site to go to and see what's happening.

The website and Facebook page were updated and created so that there would be a central place to list all veterans activities in NE FL.

You may have noticed the Veterans Council's new logo, it was created by Roy Havekost and his web design company PageAuthors. The VC strongly recommends that you contact Roy, 904-287-6909, if you or your vet group wants to create a website or Facebook page.

An interesting read about a school in Brooklyn, Patriotism is alive in New York City. I feel a lot better after reading this, I did not see much of this when I taught in Brooklyn from 1965 to 2000. There's still hope.

December 1, 2016 New York Teacher issue

Jessica Amato teaches English language arts to 7th-graders at IS 259 in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. When a student asked her, “What is a veteran?” Amato said she “knew we had to do something on Veterans Day. We need to pay homage to our veterans and recognize the freedoms we enjoy because of their sacrifices.” It’s personal for Amato: One of her uncles died in Vietnam and another also served there. Amato organized an assembly that featured veterans from the Korean conflict and wars in Vietnam, the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan. They spoke about the losses they endured and the lasting friendships they made.



A map projected on a screen showed students where their guests had served. Students also made a video of interviews with classmates whose relatives are veterans and recorded a message of thanks for their service. “We had an idea and a vision and they brought it to fruition,” Amato said. Student DeSean McBean spoke at the assembly on Nov. 4 about his mother’s recent deployment and the fear and pride her service engenders: “My mom has always been the bravest, toughest in the family. Strong enough to fight, but scared to go on roller coasters.”

J.W. Cortes, who served in Iraq with the Marines and now appears in the Fox TV show “Gotham,” has a cousin at the school. He spoke about his service and rebuilding his life when he returned home. After the ceremony, students waved flags and homemade posters and thanked the veterans. The marching band played “America the Beautiful” and “Taps,” followed by a moment of silence for deceased veterans. “It was a nice way for the community to come together and educate the children,” said Marissa Vargas, the band director. “Youth in this day and age don’t always know about veterans’ sacrifice.”

Air Force names Jacksonville as finalist for new fighter jet

By Stephanie Brown WOKV

Jacksonville has made the cut.

We first told you in April that the 125th Fighter Wing was named one of 18 installations being considered for basing the new F-35A Joint Strike Fighter Lightning II aircraft. Now, the US Air Force has announced five finalists, and Jacksonville is among them.



“This announcement highlights what we in Florida have always known- that our Florida Air National Guard has the finest facilities, airspace and- most importantly - Airmen in the world,” says a statement provided by Florida Adjutant General Major General Michael Calhoun.

Calhoun says the new aircraft would allow the Florida National Guard to protect the skies for decades to come. The Florida Air National Guard previously told WOKV the current aircraft are projected to last through 2040, but they are performing testing to see if that will change.

The aircraft would replace the legacy F-15 Eagle. The new jets could arrive in Jacksonville by 2022.

The Air Force is also considering Montgomery, AL; Boise, ID; Detroit, MI; and Madison, WI. Two units will be selected in the spring of 2017, following on-the-ground site surveys at each location. Those assessments will evaluate operational requirements, potential impacts to existing missions, infrastructure and manpower, and environmental impact.

Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Offers Improved Mobile App for Veterans



November 15, 2016

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) is proud to announce enhancements to its free Mobile App, available to veterans and their families through the iPhone and Android Markets. The app is a primary tool to advocate for the Sunshine State's more than 1.5 million veterans.

FDVA's enhanced Mobile App has an array of features to serve Florida veterans:

the Locations feature allows veterans to view the closest VA Medical Centers, Outpatient Clinics and Vet Centers; it also provides veterans with one-click access to instant directions to the selected VA facility;

the Crisis tab reminds veterans we're here to help and provides a phone number they can click to instantly dial the crisis line;

the Jobs feature connects veterans to many different employment and transition services, as well as a web-based job board; and,

the Services tab provides an overview of each type of service available to Florida veterans.

Additionally, the Mobile App provides easy access to the FDVA Benefits Guide and to an up-to-date list of veteran events throughout the state.

"The FDVA Mobile App adds to our mission of advocating with purpose and passion for Florida veterans and linking them to superior services, benefits and support," said Steve Murray, FDVA Communications Director. The Mobile App is available through the Apple iTunes App Store or Google Play Store.

For 24-hour counsel, call the National Veteran Crisis Hotline at 1-800-273

The Veterans Council congratulates member Roger J Geronimo and Joan Geronimo on the promotion of James Geronimo.

In Service: Geronimo Jr. promoted to Chief Petty Officer

James Geronimo, Jr. was promoted to Chief Petty officer Sept. 16, 2016, at the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command in Charleston, South Carolina.

The ceremony elevated him to Navy Chief.

Geronimo was the Lead Petty Officer on the USS Alabama nuclear submarine where he was Sailor of the Year in 2014 and 2015.

Geronimo is a 2008 graduate of St. Augustine High School where he was a cadet Colonel Brigade Commander in the JROTC.

He is currently teaching nuclear reactor theory at the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command.

Geronimo is the son of James and Marybeth Geronimo and the grandson of Dennis and Joan Geronimo of St. Augustine.

James is the nephew of Veteran Council's Roger Geronimo.



A Clarification from George McCrea

Bob Adelhelm, representing Vets 4 Vets, Jacksonville, recently addressed the Veterans Council of St. Augustine. Since then, I have been questioned about the relationship between Vets 4 Vets of St. Augustine, Inc. and Vets 4 Vets, Jacksonville.

I would like to clarify the difference; there is NO relationship! The names are similar, the goals (Mission Statement) are NOT!

Vets 4 Vets Jacksonville's mission is to inform, share information and connect veterans to other northeast Florida veterans via monthly meetings.

Vets 4 Vets of St. Augustine, Inc. is not a political organization. Our mission is to assist disadvantaged veterans and their families by providing food, fuel, shelter, medicine and by paying bills they are temporarily unable to such as rent, mortgage, and utilities. We even go so far as to provide room heaters in the winter and small window air conditioners in the summer. Our goal is to help a veteran become a productive citizen or to help keep what he/she has to keep being a responsible citizen. We are not a social network organization and assistance given is confidential.

We are a 501c3 corporation. We have no office or building to maintain. All board members are volunteers, without salary or financial benefits, that give generously of their time and talents to meet our goals; 100% of our donations go directly to the veterans. All donations are provided by veteran organizations, private citizens, and other organizations interested in helping our disadvantaged vets. We do not stand outside stores with buckets or in any other way 'beg' for money.

If you have questions or would like to have a representative speak to your group, please call the Veterans Service Office, (904) 209-6160 or George McCrea, President Vets 4 Vets of St. Augustine, Inc., (904) 669-3305 or email: gmccrea1935@gmail.com



JOHN MCCAIN
UNITED STATES SENATOR
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Cecil Field POW/MIA Memorial, Inc.
P.O. Box 440625
Jacksonville, FL 32222

Dear Board Members,

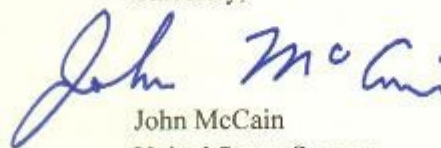
Our nation owes a great debt to the courageous men and women who served our country in enemy captivity, and the more than 83,000 service members who are still unaccounted for. They truly deserve our nation's highest respect and gratitude for the service and selfless sacrifice they provided in defense of our country and freedoms. It is in this spirit that I am in full support of your organization's efforts to establish a memorial and museum honoring our Prisoners of War and Missing in Action on the grounds of former Naval Air Station Cecil Field in Jacksonville, Florida. I was proud to serve in two assignments at NAS Cecil Field. First, as a pilot in the VA-44 Replacement Air Group squadron in 1966, and as Commanding Officer of Replacement Air Group VA-174 "Hellrazors" at Cecil Field from 1976 to 1977, then the largest aviation squadron in the U.S. Navy.

The great honor of my life was serving in North Vietnam in the company of heroes whose comradery, bravery and resilience in the face of tremendous hardship inspired us to resist our captors and find strength and hope, even in the darkest of hours. These men and women, and those like them who served in previous conflicts, and the thousands who never returned home, deserve the upmost admiration, honor and appreciation. While we can never fully repay the debt we owe, we can and must take steps like these to honor their lives and service.

As home to more than 150,000 veterans and three major military installations, Northeast Florida is a perfect location for a POW/MIA monument and museum. With Jacksonville's vibrant military and veteran population, and sterling reputation as a military-friendly city, I am confident that this monument will be well supported. This monument will further that reputation, and provide a place of solace for the family and friends of these heroes.

I offer my best wishes and full support for your organization's efforts to establish a memorial honoring our nation's POW/MIA service members.

Sincerely,



John McCain
United States Senator

NOT PRINTED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

ALL are invited to attend, represent your organization and report back to them

JACKSONVILLE NATIONAL CEMETERY

SUPPORT COMMITTEE MEETING

9 JANUARY 2017, 7:00 pm

AT: Community Hospice of NE FL, 4266 Sunbeam Rd., Jax 32257

WELCOME:	Ray QUINN, Chairman
PLEDGE AND PRAYER:	QUINN/Chaplain HALYARD
INTRODUCTIONS:	ALL
MINUTES:	REVIEW / APPROVE
TREASURERS REPORT:	REVIEW / APPROVE
JNC REPORT:	DAN
JACKSONVILLE LADIES REPORT:	CHAIR
NEW BUSINESS:	
NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS:	BILL DUDLEY
VOLUNTEER/PRIVACY TRAINING (REQUIRED)	
OLD BUSINESS:	
NEW BUSINESS:	
GUEST COMMENTS:	
NEXT MEETING DATES DISCUSSION:	
ADJOURN	

Please try to have a representative from our organization at this meeting.

Something to Think About doing

Second World War D-Day Veteran Publishes His War Diaries, And Urges Others To Do The Same

Now 94 years old, Alfred Hodgson from Scotland was a naval officer who was shot at, bombed, shelled, and participated in many important events during World War Two. He has self-published his diaries from that time.

“That’s the best way to get the real facts of what happened then,” he explained. “At that time everything else was filtered and edited through the Ministry of Information.”

His diaries are real-life accounts of the taking of Antwerp, the D-Day invasion, and stories of the merchant marine convoys that ferried Allied supplies from the United States across the North Atlantic.

He went to war at age 18 in 1941, and for the next five years was attacked almost continuously. For most of the war, he was in the North Atlantic where convoys were frequently attacked.

During September in the first year of the conflict, 41 vessels totaling 30,800,000 pounds or 154,000 tons were sunk. In addition to the German danger, convoys also had to survive the abysmal weather and sea conditions.

Alfred said the closest he came to death occurred in Antwerp when he was serving on an Admiralty tug as a radio officer as the ship cleared mines, towed, and made personnel transfers.

The campaign to take Antwerp was critical as it was the primary sea port for supplying Allied forces with supplies. But its capture cost the crews dearly. Alfred said that 703 officers and about 12,200 people of various ranks were wounded, killed or lost in action and presume dead, STV News reported.

He served on an admiralty ship during the invasion of Germany and France when gunfire and air raids were constant, as well as serving at D-Day.

Alfred considers himself fortunate to have lived to an advanced age. The idea that he might not have been here today to relate his story was contemplated frequently, he said. His diaries weren’t meant for publication, but his children kept badgering him, so he resolved to group all the stories as one publication.

When one of his grandchildren offered to edit the material, they decided the rest of the world should have the opportunity to read it, too. That was done more for the family. Many people heard of the project and the number who wanted to read it grew.

By George Winston War History Online

MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains of four Americans who had been missing in action from World War II and Korea. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- Army Pfc. Daniel Hunt, 18, of Columbiaville, Mich., will be buried Dec. 2 in Phoenix, Ariz. On Sept. 28, 1951, Hunt was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, fighting in Korean border area often referred to as Heartbreak Ridge. Hunt was reported missing in action after a series of battles. Read more at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1011148/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-accounted-for-hunt/>.

-- Army Cpl. Vernon D. Presswood, 19, will be buried Dec. 3 in his hometown of Pinckneyville, Ill. In late November 1950, Presswood was a member of Heavy Mortar Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, which was assembled into the 31st Regimental Combat Team and deployed east of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when it was engaged by overwhelming numbers of Chinese forces. Presswood was reported missing in action as of Dec. 2, 1950. Read more at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1011150/soldier-killed-in-korean-war-accounted-for-presswood/>.

-- Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Robert E. Moessner. On April 18, 1944, Moessner was the bombardier of a B-24 aircraft out of Kwelin, China, when it was shot down near Hong Kong. Of the 12 crewmembers aboard, only two would survive the crash landing in shallow water. Interment services are pending. Read more at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1010134/airman-missing-from-world-war-ii-identified-moessner/>.

-- Army Sgt. 1st Class Harold P. Haugland, of Gallatin, Mont. In late November 1950, Haugland was a member of Company D, 15th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division, which was assembled into the 31st Regimental Combat Team and deployed east of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when it was engaged by overwhelming numbers of Chinese forces. Haugland was reported missing in action as of Dec. 2, 1950. Interment services are pending. Read more at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1008321/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-identified-haugland/>.

The Navy League of the United States St. Augustine—Palm Coast Council held its annual Holiday Party on December 8th at the Marsh Creek Country Club.



The party is always sold out and this year was no exception.

The honored guest was Duane Dewey, recipient of the Medal of Honor, received from President Eisenhower for actions in the Korean War. In the audience at



Marsh Creek was Dr. Henry Moreland and members of the Korean War Veterans Association Jacksonville chapter 200.

The President of the United States takes pride in presenting the MEDAL OF HONOR to:

CORPORAL DUANE E. DEWEY
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS RESERVE



for service as set forth in the following,

CITATION:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a Gunner in a Machine-Gun Platoon of Company E, Second Battalion, Fifth Marines, First Marine Division (Reinforced), in action against enemy aggressor forces near Panmunjom, Korea, on April 16, 1952. When an enemy grenade landed close to this position while he and his assistant gunner were receiving medical attention for their wounds during a fierce night attack by numerically superior hostile forces, Corporal DEWEY, although suffering intense pain, immediately pulled the corpsman to the ground and, shouting a warning to the other Marines around him, bravely smothered the deadly missile with his body, personally absorbing the full force of the explosion to save his comrades from possible injury or death. His indomitable courage, outstanding initiative and valiant efforts in behalf of others in the face of almost certain death reflect the highest credit upon Corporal DEWEY and enhance the finest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

/S/ DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

The St. Augustine - Palm Coast Navy League Council is a proud sponsor of...

USS The Sullivans (DDG-68)
USS Hue City (CG-66)

USS Farragut (DDG-99)
Sunseekers (VR-58)

Sector Jacksonville

- USCGC Ridley*
- USCGC Sawfish*

USCGC Hammer
USCG Aids to Navigation

USCGC Maria Bray

Desron 14
HITRON CG Cecil Field
USMC Blount Island Command
Sea Cadets
USCGC Valiant (WMEC-621)

Continued next page

The following pictures were taken by Navy League member Garry Cohn



VA Grants Full Practice Authority to Advance Practice Registered Nurses

Decision Follows Federal Register Notice That Netted More Than 200,000 Comments

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that it is amending provider regulations to permit full practice authority to three roles of VA advanced practice registered nurses (APRN) to practice to the full extent of their education, training, and certification, regardless of State restrictions that limit such full practice authority, except for applicable State restrictions on the authority to prescribe and administer controlled substances, when such APRNs are acting within the scope of their VA employment.

“Advanced practice registered nurses are valuable members of VA’s health care system,” said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. David J. Shulkin. “Amending this regulation increases our capacity to provide timely, efficient, effective and safe primary care, aids VA in making the most efficient use of APRN staff capabilities, and provides a degree of much needed experience to alleviate the current access challenges that are affecting VA.”

In May 2016, VA announced its intentions, through a proposed rule, to grant full practice authority to four APRN roles. Though VA does have some localized issues, we do not have immediate and broad access challenges in the area of anesthesia care across the full VA health care system that require full practice authority for all Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs). Therefore, VA will not finalize the provision including CRNAs in the final rule as one of the APRN roles that may be granted full practice authority at this time. VA will request comment on the question of whether there are current anesthesia care access issues for particular states or VA facilities and whether permitting CRNAs to practice to the full extent of their advanced authority would resolve these issues.

APRNs are clinicians with advanced degrees and training who provide primary, acute and specialty health care services; they complete masters, post-masters or doctoral degrees. There are four APRN roles: Certified Nurse Practitioner, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist, and Certified Nurse Midwife.

“CRNAs provide an invaluable service to our Veterans,” Under Secretary for Health Shulkin continued. “Though CRNAs will not be included in VA’s full practice authority under this final rule, we are requesting comments on whether there are access issues or other unconsidered circumstances that might warrant their inclusion in a future rulemaking. In the meantime, we owe it to Veterans to increase access to care in areas where we know we have immediate and broad access challenges.”

All VA APRNs are required to obtain and maintain current national certification.

The final rulemaking establishes professional qualifications an individual must possess to be appointed as an APRN within VA, establishes the criteria under which VA may grant full practice authority to an APRN and defines the scope of full practice authority for each of the three roles of APRN. Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists will not be included in VA’s full practice authority under this final rule.

VA is the nation’s largest employer of nurses; as of July 2016 its workforce of approximately 93,500 nurses (RNs, LPNs, NAs) includes approximately 5,769 APRNs

For more information about openings for nurses or other health care positions at VA, visit Vacareers@va.gov.

Clyde E Lassen

Clyde Everett Lassen (1942 – 1994), a native of Fort Myers, Florida, was a retired Commander in the United States Navy and a Naval Aviator. As a Lieutenant, he received the Medal of Honor for his rescue of two downed Naval Aviators while piloting a search and rescue helicopter in Vietnam.



The mission

On June 19, 1968, Lassen, then a 26-year-old Lieutenant, junior grade flying a UH-2A Seasprite of HC-7 (assigned to the USS Preble), embarked on a mission to recover two downed Naval Aviators (from VF-33, off the USS America) whose F-4J plane had been shot down on a night interdiction mission deep inside North Vietnam. Upon reaching the hilly terrain where the aviators were hiding, Lassen made several attempts to recover the aviators, but dense tree cover, enemy weapons fire and intermittent illumination frustrated his efforts. Lassen turned on the landing lights of the helicopter, despite the danger of revealing his position to the enemy. After the pilots made their way to the helicopter and with his bullet-riddled helicopter dangerously low on fuel, Lassen evaded further anti-aircraft fire before landing safely at sea on board the USS Jouett with only five minutes of fuel left in the helicopter's fuel lines. The account of the rescue was logged as a successful, routine search and rescue mission.

LT Lassen became the first Naval Aviator and fifth Navy man to be awarded the Medal of Honor (MOH) for bravery in Southeast Asia (SEA)/Vietnam. He was also only one of three Naval Aviators to be awarded the MOH in SEA (along with CAPT Michael J. Estocin, and RADM James Stockdale), and the only rotary wing Naval Aviator to be awarded the MOH in SEA.

He remained in the Navy for a career and retired in 1982 with the rank of Commander, residing in Pensacola, Florida until his death in 1994, from cancer. In 2001, a destroyer was commissioned and named after him: the USS Lassen.[1] An SH-60 Seahawk was painted to commemorate his actions.

Rank and organization: Lieutenant, U.S. Navy, Helicopter Support Squadron 7, Detachment 104, embarked in U.S.S. Preble (DLG-15). place and date: Republic of Vietnam, June 19, 1968. Entered service at: Jacksonville, Fla. Born: March 14, 1942, Fort Myers, Fla.

Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as pilot and aircraft commander of a search and rescue helicopter, attached to Helicopter Support Squadron 7, during operations against enemy forces in North Vietnam. Launched shortly after midnight to attempt the rescue of 2 downed aviators, Lt. (then Lt. (J.G.)) Lassen skillfully piloted his aircraft over unknown and hostile terrain to a steep, tree-covered hill on which the survivors had been located. Although enemy fire was being directed at the helicopter, he initially landed in a clear area near the base of the hill, but, due to the dense undergrowth, the survivors could not reach the helicopter. With the aid of flare illumination, Lt. Lassen successfully accomplished a hover between 2 trees at the survivors' position. Illumination was abruptly lost as the last of the flares were expended, and the helicopter collided with a tree, commencing a sharp descent. Expertly righting his aircraft and maneuvering clear, Lt. Lassen remained in the area, determined to make another rescue attempt, and encouraged the downed aviators while awaiting resumption of flare illumination. After another unsuccessful, illuminated rescue attempt, and with his fuel dangerously low and his aircraft significantly damaged, he launched again and commenced another approach in the face of the continuing enemy opposition. When flare illumination was again lost, Lt. Lassen, fully aware of the dangers in clearly revealing his position to the enemy, turned on his landing lights and completed the landing. On this attempt, the survivors were able to make their way to the helicopter. En route to the coast he encountered and successfully evaded additional hostile anti-aircraft fire and, with fuel for only 5 minutes of flight remaining, landed safely aboard U.S.S. Jouett (DLG-29).

Military Frauds Are Being Exposed, Prosecuted Under Stolen Valor Act

Although it may seem unthinkable in the United States, people try to take advantage of the sacrifices made by our country's military veterans. One way crooks do this is by impersonating service members and claiming to be decorated heroes. Thankfully, one law makes it a federal crime to impersonate a soldier or claim to have earned medals for financial gain. The law also has two ardent backers making it their next mission to expose those frauds.



Two men, Don Shipley and Ryan Berk, both American heroes with decorations and years of service, take it upon themselves to find people posing as vets and then have them arrested. Berk, a former infantryman and Purple Heart recipient, confronted Sean Yetman at a shopping mall near Philadelphia. Yetman claimed to be an Army Ranger, but Berk called out his sloppy uniform and lack of patches on his sleeves. Yetman even admitted on camera that Berk caught him.

In the case of Jonathan Wade Short, he claimed to be a soldier stationed at Fort Knox in Kentucky. He swindled a woman out of thousands of dollars using a fake Army uniform and medals as a cover story. He admitted to impersonating an Army officer in July 2013 before spending a year in federal prison. Short went to prison because of a revised federal law called the Stolen Valor Act, passed by Congress and signed by President Barack Obama in the summer of 2013. Unfortunately, this problem occurs all over the country, which necessitates this law.

Shipley, a former Navy SEAL, takes his crusade the Internet and to YouTube, where he posts videos of frauds wearing uniforms. The man in this video tries to pass off dress blues from the Marines, but his getup is so sloppy, it's obvious he's faking it. A Marine's father confronted the poser after a high school graduation. The father even tells the impostor he's going to be a YouTube star with more than 1 million views. It turns out, the Marine's father was right.

The Rossen Report from "Today" investigated how easy it is for someone to impersonate a decorated service member. The journalistic team bought a replica uniform, and it arrived in the mail within days. The team also bought military medals online. Even though buying uniforms and medals is easy, the Stolen Valor Act states no one has the right to take away from someone's genuine sacrifice.

Thanks to heroes Shipley and Berk, impostors wearing fake uniforms don't stand a chance, as others have joined in the fight against stolen valor. These brave men and women have enough to worry about when returning to civilian life.

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Government Relations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 7, 2016

VA Works with Veteran-Run Company ID.me to Offer Veterans More Secure, Convenient Online Services

VA is First US Government Agency to Meet “Level of Assurance 3” IT Standard

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that, with help from Veteran-run small business ID.me, Veterans will now be able to manage their own health care and benefits online more simply and safely. Vets.gov now meets the “Level of Assurance 3” (LOA3) information assurance standard, which will allow VA to offer Veterans more features on a single convenient site. This is the highest level of security used to protect user data and privacy, and VA is a leader in both the government and private sectors with an LOA3 logon account.

After a year of beta testing, VA launched Vets.gov, where Veterans can now use a single account to access services that were previously spread across numerous websites requiring multiple usernames and passwords. Because of security improvements enabled by ID.me’s tools, Veterans can now use Vets.gov to: - Check the status of a benefits claim - Message with health care providers - Order prescription refills online

Information assurance is about proving who you really are online. A multi-factor authentication process, developed with ID.me, confirms a Veteran’s identity at the highly-certain “Level of Assurance 3,” so VA can safely share personal information. VA is the first federal agency to meet the LOA3 standard of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

“This move is just the latest step in VA’s effort to improve Veterans’ access to VA services and information,” said Marina Martin, VA’s Chief Technology Officer. “Protecting Veterans’ privacy and personal information is central to our mission, and these improvements keep that commitment while making communication with VA more convenient and accessible.”

“To date, Veterans have been required to visit a VA facility in-person to verify their identities before they were able to access valuable VA services online,” said Blake Hall, ID.me CEO. “Now, Veterans can easily verify their identity at Vets.gov from their own home or on the go. The net result is a substantial improvement in access and customer experience.”

Celebrating Service

Home Depot associates band together to beautify Five S.T.A.R. Center

BY ANN FRIEDMAN ann.friedman@jacksonville.com

Nearly 50 Home Depot associates were spread throughout the Five S.T.A.R. Veterans Center on Acme Street on Nov. 3 to beautify the facility as part of the company's annual Celebration of Service campaign.

Associates painted, landscaped and installed fencing around the facility, which houses 22 displaced veterans and uses a four-phase program to help them live independently.

For Anthony Avila, who has worked as a millwork associate at the Orange Park Home Depot since February, volunteering at the veteran's center is especially meaningful as he is a veteran himself.

Avila served in the Navy for 13 years as a bosun mate first class.

"Home Depot does a lot for vets and it's another opportunity to give back," he said.

Avila added, "I have a lot of friends who are vets and not all of them can cope with what they've gone through. I've lost friends, and it's important to know that there are people who care and companies like Home Depot are out there and that they care."

Col. Len Loving, who is retired from the United States Marine Corps, serves as the CEO of Five S.T.A.R. Veterans Center and said the facility has put back more than 100 veterans into the workforce.

"Our building is a work in progress — it's old and things are always happening to it," he said. "We run on the volunteer support and the Home Depot has helped us big time."

Derek Fleming, store manager at the Yulee based Home Depot, said the company has a longstanding relationship with the veteran's center and has previously had more than 300 employees out to paint the outside of the now beige building, which was previously red, white and blue.

"We've done at least six projects here over the last few years, from tidying up the exterior to full-blown remodels," he said. "Home Depot is a huge entity in the American retail space and it's only obvious to take that revenue and use it to help the very people who shop at our stores and to help the less fortunate."

Trish Barton, director of counseling at the veterans center, looked at the needs of the residents to shape the mental health program.

"When they guys come in here, they're broken and they're self-medicating to mask what's going on," she said. "We've expanded beyond medications and looked at other strategies and modes of healing including art therapy, massage therapy and yoga."

Dave Orr, who conducts individual and group counseling sessions for residents, said it's difficult for those

who return from combat to blend back into society.

“They’ve been in intense situations and they rely on each other and in the civilian world they don’t have that brotherhood or structure they’ve come to know,” he said. “There’s a tremendous sense of loss.”

Barton added that it’s hard for families of veterans to understand what their loved one has been through.

“Their family and community alienate them because they don’t know where they’ve been and think they’ll come back and blend in to life seamlessly,” she said. “They have nightmares and sights, sounds and smells can trigger memories and they don’t want to tell their family what they’re experiencing, which causes the foundation to fall apart over time.”

Oakleaf Town Center Home Depot Store Manager Les Crawford, who served in the Army as a sergeant for nearly eight years, said he hopes the community continues to support the veterans center in the future.

“It’s a tough adjustment back into civilian life and I want veterans to know there is a place that can help them and we’ll make sure it’s being kept up so they have a place to relax,” he said. “We can’t give as much as these soldiers have given us but we can get their lives back to normal.”

ANN FRIEDMAN: (904) 359-4619

“We’ve done at least six projects here over the last few years, from tiding up the exterior to full-blown remodels. Home Depot is a huge entity in the American retail space and it’s only obvious to take that revenue and use it to help the very people who shop at our stores and to help the less fortunate.”

Derek Fleming,

Home Depot store



manager

From DAV: Fullest possible accounting, bringing closure to the families of the missing

According to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), 82,701 service members spanning from World War II to now are still missing or unaccounted for.

DAV is diligently working with the Department of Defense and other veterans service organizations (VSOs) to eliminate that number, with the goal of giving survivors of these men and women some long awaited closure.

One example of those efforts involves the remains of servicemen who died during the 1941 Pearl Harbor attack.

“During a conference call last year, the DPAA polled the participating VSOs on a decision to disinter or not to disinter the 388 remains of Marines and sailors from the USS Oklahoma,” said Vincent Darcangelo, DAV Interim POW/MIA Committee Chairperson. “In the interest of ‘fullest possible accounting,’ I voted to disinter.”

In April 2015, the Pentagon announced these remains associated with the ship would be exhumed from the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific and sent to the DPAA laboratory for forensic, DNA and genetic testing in the hope of identifying the fallen.

The remains associated with the Oklahoma are not the only work DPAA is doing regarding POW/MIA service members. The agency has teams all over the world looking for the final resting places of missing military personnel.

Darcangelo said that, so far in 2016, DPAA has announced positive identification of 46 military members previously listed as missing in action— 25 from World War II, 18 from Korea and three from Vietnam.

But many more families are still waiting.

“There are still 1,618 missing in Vietnam,” said Cindy Stonebraker, board member of the National League of POW/MIA Families. “My father is one of them.”

Air Force Lt. Col. Kenneth Stonebraker was shot down over North Vietnam on Oct. 28, 1968.

“He was a navigator on a nighttime recon mission in an RF-4C,” Stonebraker said. “It gives you hope knowing there are people on the ground over there actively working on finding him and others.”

Darcangelo agreed and called the POW/MIA subject one of importance and passion.

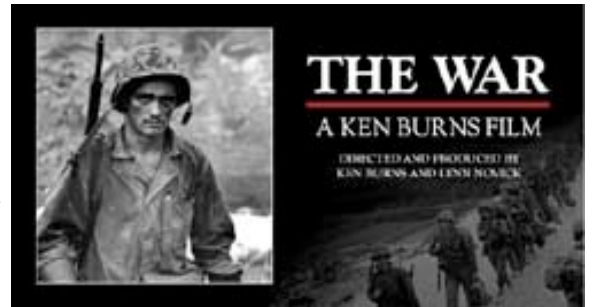
“DAV demonstrates its unyielding commitment of bringing each of our missing brothers and sisters home to family and loved ones waiting decades for answers,” he said.

The DPAA said VSOs are an integral part of accounting for the missing.

“Partnering with the veterans service organizations is extremely important to DPAA and our mission of accounting for Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom,” said Johnie E. Webb Jr., DPAA deputy director of outreach and communications. “The VSOs play a major role in keeping the POW/MIA issue before the American public and the members of Congress to continue support for the issue. Their members remember the military creed, ‘I will never leave a fallen comrade,’ and pledge to do all they can to assist us in never leaving a fallen comrade.”

Stonebraker’s family will continue their vigil for her father.

THE VIETNAM WAR is a ten-part, 18-hour documentary film series directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick that will air on PBS in September 2017.



In an immersive 360-degree narrative, Burns and Novick tell the epic story of the Vietnam War as it has never before been told on film. THE VIETNAM WAR features testimony from nearly 100 witnesses, including many Americans who fought in the war and others who opposed it, as well as Vietnamese combatants and civilians from both the winning and losing sides.

Six years in the making, the series brings the war and the chaotic epoch it encompassed viscerally to life. Written by Geoffrey C. Ward, produced by Sarah Botstein, Novick and Burns, it includes rarely seen, digitally re-mastered archival footage from sources around the globe, photographs taken by some of the most celebrated photojournalists of the 20th Century, historic television broadcasts, evocative home movies, revelatory audio recordings from inside the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations and more than 100 iconic musical recordings by many of the greatest artists of the era.

The film will be accompanied by an unprecedented outreach and public engagement program, providing opportunities for communities to participate in a national conversation about what happened during the Vietnam War, what went wrong and what lessons are to be learned. In addition, there will be a robust interactive website and an educational initiative designed to engage teachers and students in multiple platforms.



WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced it now provides eligibility determinations for interment in a VA national cemetery prior to the time of need. Through the Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility Program, upon request, individuals can learn if they are eligible for burial or memorialization in a VA national cemetery.

“MyVA is about looking at VA from the Veterans’ perspective, and then doing everything we can to make the Veteran Experience effective and seamless,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. “This new program reaffirms our commitment to providing a lifetime of benefits and services for Veterans and their families.”

Interested individuals may submit VA Form 40-10007, Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery, and supporting documentation, such as a DD Form 214, if readily available, to the VA National Cemetery Scheduling Office by: toll-free fax at 1-855-840-8299; email to Eligibility.PreNeed@va.gov; or mail to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office, P.O. Box 510543, St. Louis, MO 63151.

VA will review applications and provide written notice of its determination of eligibility. VA will save determinations and supporting documentation in an electronic information system to expedite burial arrangements at the time of need. Because laws and personal circumstances change, upon receipt of a burial request, VA will validate all pre-need determinations in accordance with the laws in effect at that time.

VA operates 135 national cemeteries and 33 soldiers’ lots in 40 states and Puerto Rico. More than 4 million Americans, including Veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA’s national cemeteries. VA also provides funding to establish, expand and maintain 105 Veterans cemeteries in 47 states and territories including tribal trust lands, Guam, and Saipan. For Veterans buried in private or other cemeteries, VA provides headstones, markers or medallions to commemorate their service. In 2016, VA honored more than 345,000 Veterans and their loved ones with memorial benefits in national, state, tribal and private cemeteries.

Eligible individuals are entitled to burial in any open VA national cemetery, opening/closing of the grave, a grave liner, perpetual care of the gravesite, and a government-furnished headstone or marker or niche cover, all at no cost to the family. Veterans are also eligible for a burial flag and may be eligible for a Presidential Memorial Certificate.

Information on VA burial benefits is available from local VA national cemetery offices, from the Internet at www.cem.va.gov, or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at any open VA national cemetery at the time of need, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117.

Pre-Need+Eligibility++Fact+Sheet-Final.docx

If you or someone you know are one of the 48 million Americans who suffer from hearing loss, I have Great News to share with you!!!



ClearCaptions is a federally funded telecommunications company. The FCC has commissioned ClearCaptions to inform those experiencing any hearing loss of the federal program available to them based on Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act (mandated since 1990). Those with any hearing loss are entitled to our new technology **caption phone absolutely FREE, including installation, training and on-going service.** Those needing our phones need to have:

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Did you know 22 veterans will commit suicide every day?

Join the "Stop 22" movement to raise awareness and stand with K9s for Warriors as they help veterans with PTSD and brain injuries.

On the 22nd of every month, use the hashtag #Stop22 on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and show your support. Watch below how people are "outdoing 22's" all over social media.

Learn more by visiting the Stop 22 website: <http://www.stop22.org/>

And check out K9s for Warriors for regular updates on their mission: <http://www.k9sforwarriors.org/>



Join Post 233's Campaign To help the 5 Star Veterans Center !



As you know they put military veterans back to work by providing safe and secure housing with extensive services, intensive case management and counseling that promotes mental and physical wellness. They are presently in need of various non-perishable items.

The items needed:

Canned goods, soups, stews, vegetables, chili, etc.

Cans of soft drinks, small bags of chips, Doritos, Fritos, pretzels, microwave popcorn,

Clorox, Windex, pine sol, dish detergent trash bags, paper towels, tissues, toilet paper !

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NEW INFO: Ride in comfort to your appointments at the VA Medical Center in Gainesville.



The van is provided by the Disabled Veterans Chapter 6, and leaves no later than 6AM from the new VA Clinic location at 195 Southpark Blvd. The corner of Southpark and Old Moultrie Road.

To schedule your seat please contact the VA Clinic at 904-823-2954 and ask for Veteran Van Scheduling.



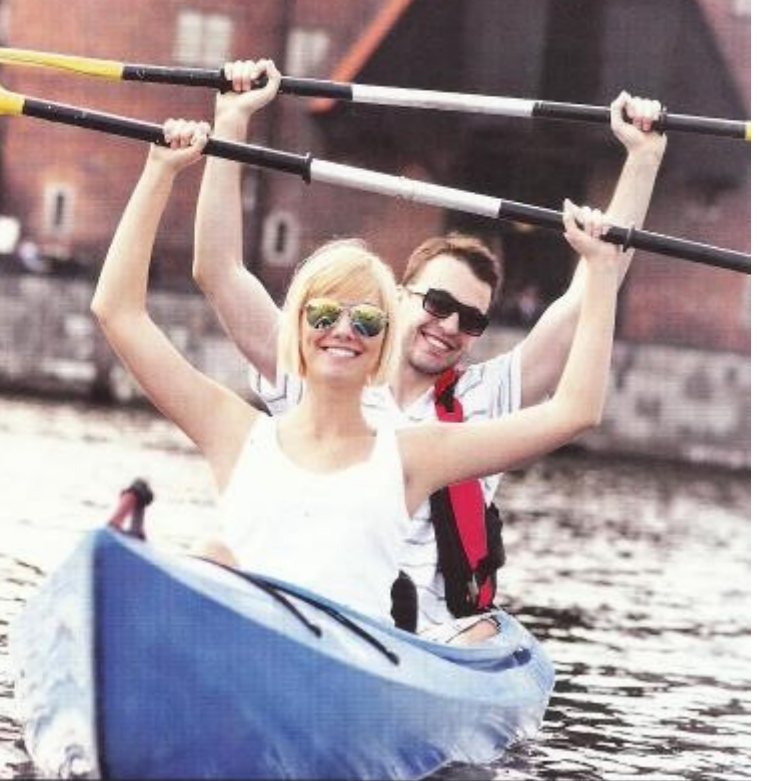
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Contact Keith Ham

Survivor Outreach Services Support Coordinator, HRCI Contractor
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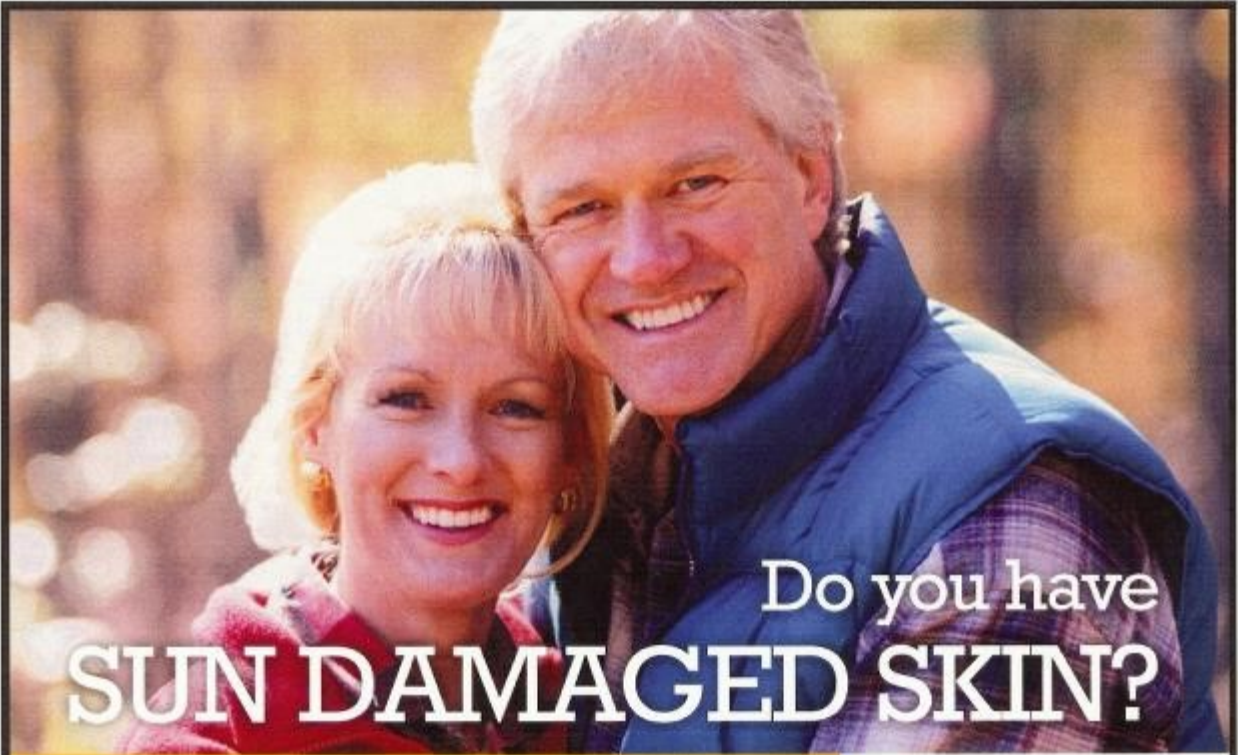
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*Veterans Council of St. Johns County,
"Helping All Veterans"*

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

Please send to: mrothfeld@anyveteran.org



Jack Wentz, in Korea with ??

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.

**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.**

***The Veterans Council meetings are
conducted at the the Elks Lodge
829, 1420 A1A S., St. Augustine.***

**Veterans Service Office
200 San Sebastian View, Suite 1400
St. Augustine, FL 32084**

(physical location)

*The VSO Office is located in the new St. Johns County
Health and Human Services Building.*

*The office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily,
Monday through Friday excluding holidays.
Closed for lunch daily from 11:30 am 12:30 pm*

Service is by appointment.

Phone: 904-209-6160 Fax: 904-209-6161

Joseph McDermott, CVSO

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Tammy Shirley, Assistant VSO

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