



2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter,  
Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)  
WEBSITE: [www.b-2-1-196lib.com](http://www.b-2-1-196lib.com)



Volume 2

"A Soldier's Footsteps"

April 2012

**Commander's Corner:** Well, by the time this comes out, March Madness 2012 will be history. My favorite team, Indiana, made it to the Sweet 16 but, took it on the chin from Kentucky. We should all be reaping the benefits of spring weather by now, trimming hedges, mowing the lawn, planting, pruning, painting and sore muscles. I think I miss staying indoors! I hope all of you enjoyed the first few months of 2012 and have a prosperous rest of the year.

Possibly something most of you may not be aware of regards military awards and citations you have the right to display by belonging to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, the 196<sup>th</sup> LIB, and the Americal Division. The *Presidential Unit Citation*, the *Philippine Presidential Unit Citation*, and the *Valorous Unit Award*. I am also checking into something I heard about another unit award, the *Meritorious Unit Commendation*, that was supposedly awarded in either WWII or Vietnam but I have yet to confirm it so, until I find out the facts, I wouldn't do anything with this one. Also, all of you having served in Vietnam are eligible for the *Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm* medal; this probably will not appear on your original DD 214. All of you are entitled to at least 1 campaign star on your Vietnam Service Medal ribbon; you receive 1 star for every campaign that occurred while you were in country. In all, there were 17 separate campaigns in the Vietnam War spanning from 1962 through 1973. The Americal was involved in 14 different campaigns which are defined on our web site.

While reading an article in the *Indianapolis Star* newspaper by Bradford Kelley, a former U.S. Army Infantry and intelligence officer regarding the death of SSG Gary Lee Woods Jr. who was killed on a combat patrol in Mosul, Iraq in April, 2009, I was impressed with a statement he made in reference to SSG Woods. He stated "*He laid down his life so that we can continue to proclaim that this is the land of the free because of the brave*". Usually, the United States of America is referred to as the "*home of the brave*", but I felt this was a very poignant statement that hits to the heart of why we are free. After serving his country, Mr. Kelley is now a law student at LSU.

Newest members of the chapter as of this writing are Bennett Dickson (B,) Richard Padgett (B, Ken Smith (D), Mike Halpin (C). Remember, 2012 dues go to Don Hicks, 909 Maple Leaf St., Franklin, KY 42134.

*Keep safe and may the bond of battle never be broken!*

Chuck

**Looking For:** "Pops" Lawrence (1<sup>st</sup> Plt, B 2/1 '69), Pete Johnson (3<sup>rd</sup> Plt, B 2/1 '69), Forest "Cherokee" Moore (1<sup>st</sup> Plt, B 2/1 '69), Walter "Hotrod" Willis (1<sup>st</sup> Plt, B 2/1 '69), John Mackey "1<sup>st</sup> Plt, B 2/1 '68-'69). Contact the webmaster on our web site at the top of this newsletter to be reunited with friends who are looking for you.

**Army Improves Management of Arlington:** After reviews by the investigative arm of Congress, GAO, it appears that the Army has improved its oversight of Arlington National Cemetery and will retain control of the nation's sacred Military Burial Ground. A recent GAO report noted the Army has taken positive steps to address management deficiencies at Arlington and has implemented improvements across a range of areas. The GAO report offered Arlington three recommendations to better manage its contracts: clearly define how many jobs are needed; specify responsibilities; and implement a method that accurately tracks progress of work. In response, Arlington stated it welcomes the GAO recommendations as they continue to improve and enhance the cemetery.

**Defense Overhaul to Feature 'Leaner' Forces:** The Administration unveiled a new defense strategy that would shrink the Army and Marines, focus more attention on China and reduce the nation's nuclear arsenal. The plan would cut military spending by \$487 billion or about 8% over the next ten years. The plan would cut the Army by 14%, or about 80,000 troops, and the Marines by some 10% or about 20,000 troops. Currently, approximately 80,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Europe, but it is unclear how many will remain. The Pentagon will launch a full review of the military's retirement system to get the costs for retirement program under control, however retirees already receiving benefits would be "grandfathered" into an new system, unless the bottom falls out of the U.S. economy.

**Air Force Will Not Tolerate Wrongdoing:** The Air Force will not tolerate wrongdoing, Air Force Secretary Michael B. Donley said in a statement today in response to a report of wrongdoing by the independent Office of Special Counsel in the handling of some remains at the Dover AFB. At the time, the Air Force investigation found that some remains were not handled according to official procedures, and the mortuary leadership implemented corrective actions, including improvements in accountability, processes and procedures, record keeping and human and labor relations. As a result of the investigation, in 2010 the mortuary commander received a letter of reprimand and two civilian employees were demoted and shifted to nonsupervisory jobs.

**Secretary/ Treasurer's Report:** If you have sent your dues to the Secy/Treas and haven't received your membership card by the middle of April please email a note stating your name, etc. so our records can be adjusted, and send out the membership cards as needed to [nay-nay152@comcast.net](mailto:nay-nay152@comcast.net). Reminder, if you haven't sent in yours dues yet then send them to: 2/1 196th chapter, % Don Hicks, 909 Mapleleaf St., Franklin, KY 42134

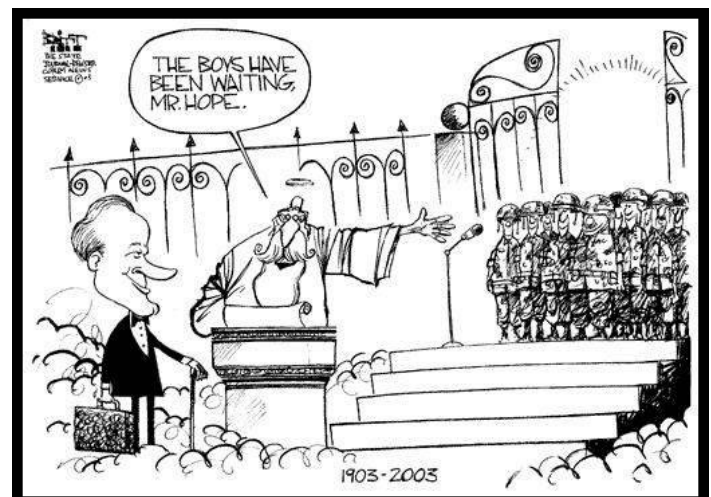
**Air Force Will Not Tolerate Wrongdoing:** The Air Force will not tolerate wrongdoing, Air Force Secretary Michael B. Donley said in a statement today in response to a report of wrongdoing by the independent Office of Special Counsel in the handling of some remains at the Dover AFB. At the time, the Air Force investigation found that some remains were not handled according to official procedures, and the mortuary leadership implemented corrective actions, including improvements in accountability, processes and procedures, record keeping and human and labor relations. As a result of the investigation, in 2010 the mortuary commander received a letter of reprimand and two civilian employees were demoted and shifted to nonsupervisory jobs. At a Nov. 10 news conference, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta noted concerns about this disciplinary action and other matters that were raised in a report by the Office of Special Counsel.

**Advocates Worry About 'Crazy Vet' Perception:** The reports of the recent shooting in Afghanistan, in which a U.S. soldier allegedly broke into homes and killed sleeping Afghan civilians, aren't just worrisome with respect to the focus of the war effort. They've also got some veterans groups concerned about a return of the "angry, disturbed veteran" stereotype born of the Vietnam War. "It's a huge concern," said Matt Gallagher, an Iraq War vet and senior fellow at Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "The only thing missing right now is a powerful visual, but I'm sure someone is going to find a creepy photo of the sergeant in question posing with guns, and that will be blasted everywhere." That perception affects the veterans who never have committed any crimes or unnecessary violence," Gallagher said. "[It affects] not only job searches, but how friends and family interact with them," he said. The veteran-as-ticking-time bomb became a ubiquitous image in the latter part of the Vietnam War and remained on the American landscape for years afterwards. It was at the heart of Hollywood films from "The Deer Hunter" to "Taxi Driver" to the "Rambo" franchise. Gallagher warned that the Kandahar shootings could worsen the disconnect between those who have served or have ties with servicemembers and the majority of Americans with no military experience or contacts, he said. "Unfortunately, the 'crazy vet' is a very negative, very powerful stereotype and this fits neatly into that category," said Gallagher. IAVA touched on that concern in a statement condemning the shootings in the Kandahar area village but cautioned the public and media to refrain from rushing to stereotypes. But this perception had found new life even before the shootings in the village near Kandahar, partly as a result of explicit images circulated by troops themselves courtesy of sites like YouTube. Washington Democrat Sen. Patty Murray, chairwoman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, told the Veterans of Foreign Wars only last week that some vets she met were worried about how they were being perceived by potential employers. Some are afraid to write the word 'veteran' on a job application for fear that those who have not served will see them as 'damaged' or 'unstable. VFW spokesman Joe Davis said it's important for people to understand that incidents like last weekend's shooting are rare, and to appreciate that the vast majority of troops conduct themselves professionally. About 75 percent of the nation's 18-to-24-year-olds cannot meet the military's minimum standards for health, aptitude and physical fitness, he said, making the remaining 25 percent "the cream of the crop.

**Tip of the month: Junk Mail.** When you get 'ads' enclosed with your phone or utility bill, return these 'ads' with your payment. Let the sending companies throw their own junk mail away. When you get those 'pre-approved' letters in the mail for everything from credit cards to 2nd mortgages and similar type junk, do not throw away the return envelope if it has prepaid postage on it. It costs them the regular postage to send it and costs them their pre-paid postage when they receive back. It costs them nothing if you throw them away! Why not get rid of some of your other junk mail and put it in these postage-paid return envelopes. Send an ad for your local chimney cleaner to American Express. Send a pizza coupon to Citibank. If you didn't get anything else that day, then just send them their blank application back. You can even send the envelope back empty if you want to just to keep them guessing! It still costs them. To remain anonymous, just make sure your name isn't on anything you send them. The US Postal Service says e-mail is cutting into their business profits, and that's why they need to increase postage costs frequently; help them out.

**Corps to Reduce Afghan Force by Half This Year:** Marines will lead the U.S. troop drawdown in Afghanistan this year, reducing by about half their numbers in the key province of Helmand as Afghans move fully into the combat lead there, a top U.S. general said recently. Helmand, which has seen some of the fiercest American and allied fighting over the past two years, is transitioning to Afghan control faster than most other Taliban-contested areas of the country. Yet to be seen is whether the Afghans will manage to stand on their own as the Americans thin out. Maj. Gen. John Toolan, who has commanded the U.S. Marine contingent in Helmand for the past year, said from his Camp Leatherneck headquarters in southwestern "Afghanistan that the number of Marines is likely to shrink by 8,000-10,000 from the current total of 17,500 by the end of September." That is the target date for the overall U.S. force in Afghanistan to drop to 68,000 from the current 90,000.

**What is Meant by the Term "Political Correctness":** "Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a "turd" by the clean end."



**Troops Still Embrace 'Infidel' Label:** In the wake of the recent setbacks in Afghanistan, American commanders are working overtime trying to instill sensitivity among U.S. troops toward their Afghan counterparts and their Islamic culture. But many American servicemembers already wear their feelings on their sleeves -- sometimes literally -- choosing a powerful term to represent the way they believe they're perceived by the Muslim world: "Infidel." There are infidel hats, infidel T-shirts and infidel uniform patches -- an entire genre of morale wear that emerged from the ashes of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Now that a decade has passed, the movement is booming. Type "Infidel Strong" into Google and page after page of military gear sites pop up, peddling what has become an ersatz symbol of patriotism. It started as a humorous tactic for poking fun at intolerant Islamists ignorant of American ideals. Clayton Montgomery, owner of a well-known online vendor called Mil-Spec Monkey and designer of some infidel patches, said his most popular item has been his "Pork-Eating Crusader" patch, which includes a translation into Arabic. "Everybody sort of hates occupying forces anyway, so it's kind of embracing that," he told Military.com "If you are going to hate us anyway, we might as well pretend to be the great white devil."

### **Suspect in Afghan Killings Could Face Death**

**Penalty :** Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales, the soldier accused of killing 16 Afghans could be executed if convicted, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told reporters aboard his plane en route to Kyrgyzstan that the shooting suspect would be brought to justice under the U.S. military legal code, which allows for the death penalty in some cases. The Army staff sergeant, who was on his first tour of duty in Afghanistan after serving three tours in Iraq, left his base in Kandahar province before dawn and went on a murderous rampage. He is accused of breaking into village homes and opening fire, killing 16 people including women and children, in an incident that has imperilled Afghan-U.S. relations. "Then at some point after that (he) came back to the forward operating base and basically turned himself in. Afghan President Hamid Karzai has described the shootings as "unforgivable," and the Afghan parliament declared that "people are running out of patience" over the behavior of the 130,000 U.S.-led NATO troops deployed in the country. The Taliban, leading a 10-year insurgency against the foreign troops and Karzai's government, threatened to take revenge against "sick-minded American savages." The Pentagon made clear that it would prosecute the soldier. He has not been named, but officials said he is in his 30s and that the investigation will look into whether he may have been suffering from mental trauma. The massacre is the latest serious test of the U.S.-Afghan alliance as the two countries pursue difficult talks on securing a strategic pact to govern their partnership once foreign combat troops leave Afghanistan in 2014.

### **U.S. Suspends MIA Search in North Korea:**

United States has suspended efforts to find remains of U.S. service members lost during the Korean War due to North Korean threats to launch a ballistic missile, Pentagon Press Secretary George Little said here today. "We do hope at some point to be able to re-engage the effort." The United States sees the recovery of remains as a humanitarian mission and does not link those operations with other policy issues, Tara Rigler, a Pentagon

spokeswoman, said in a statement. The United States hopes to engage in the future with North Korea on efforts to recover remains, Little said. "But when there are suggestions that they might launch ballistic missiles, when they make bellicose statements about South Korea and engage in actions that could be construed as provocative, we think that it's not the right time to undertake this effort," he told reporters. "We're hopeful that we will get past this period and that we can continue the remains recovery effort." The Defense Department remains committed to the fullest possible accounting of the more than 7,950 U.S. service members missing from the Korean War, officials said. An estimated 5,300 are missing in what is now North Korea. In many cases, the United States knows exactly where the service members were buried, as U.S. forces attacked up into North Korea in late 1950. The Chinese army entered the fray and pushed U.S. and other United Nations forces out of the north. U.S. officials say they know where those burials are, but have not been able to get to them.

### **VA Houses 33,000 Homeless Vets:**

From mid-2009 to the end of 2011 more than 33,000 homeless veterans used government vouchers to acquire housing according to the Veterans Administration. In addition, the joint voucher program between VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development --HUD-VASH--hopes to garner enough funds to issue another 30,000 vouchers throughout 2014. VA estimates that more than 20,000 Iraq and Afghanistan vets have been homeless at some point during the past five years. Vouchers are available to homeless vets on a first-come, first-served basis. But even so, those selected must wait four months to a year, depending on how much paperwork is required. The voucher system requires vets to pay 30% of the income to rent, and the voucher covers the rest. Each voucher cost the government \$6,500 annually, plus \$4,148 in case management services. VA periodically reviews the recipient to ensure they continue to qualify. For more information access <http://www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp>.

### **Arlington Burial for SF Soldier Who Died in**

**Fire:** A decorated Green Beret who died trying to rescue his two young daughters from their burning home will be honored with a military funeral at Arlington National Cemetery. Chief Warrant Officer Edward Cantrell died Tuesday, along with 6-year-old Isabella and 4-year-old Natalia. Authorities say he leapt from the second floor of the burning house, wrapped himself in a blanket and ran back inside for his girls. He never made it back out. Lt. Col. April Olsen of the Army Special Forces Command said Wednesday that Cantrell's daughters may be buried with him, though plans for the military funeral are not yet finalized. Cantrell served a combat deployment to Iraq and five to Afghanistan, returning from the last mission in August. He earned four Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart. Cantrell was a member of the 3rd Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg. He held the rank of chief warrant officer 2, which authorized Cantrell to lead half of his 12-member Green Beret team if it was split up, Olsen said. Cantrell joined the Army in 1994 with one combat deployment to Iraq and five to Afghanistan.

### **The Second Amendment to the Constitution:**

"A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."



**Advocates Worry About 'Crazy Vet' Perception:**

The reports of last weekend's shooting in Afghanistan, in which a U.S. soldier allegedly broke into homes and killed sleeping Afghan civilians, aren't just worrisome with respect to the focus of the war effort. They've also got some veterans groups concerned about a return of the "angry, disturbed veteran" stereotype born of the Vietnam War. "It's a huge concern," said Matt Gallagher, an Iraq War vet and senior fellow at Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "The only thing missing right now is a powerful visual, but I'm sure someone is going to find a creepy photo of the sergeant in question posing with guns, and that will be blasted everywhere." That perception affects the "99 percent of veterans who never have committed any crimes or unnecessary violence," Gallagher said. "[It affects] not only job searches, but how friends and family interact with them," he said. The veteran-as-ticking-time bomb became a ubiquitous image in the latter part of the Vietnam War and remained on the American landscape for years afterwards. It was at the heart of Hollywood films from "The Deer Hunter" to "Taxi Driver" to the "Rambo" franchise. Gallagher warned that the Kandahar shootings could worsen the disconnect between those who have served or have ties with servicemembers and the majority of Americans with no military experience or contacts, he said. "Unfortunately, the 'crazy vet' is a very negative, very powerful stereotype and this fits neatly into that category," Gallagher said. IAVA touched on that concern in a statement issued earlier by founder and executive director Paul Rieckhoff, who condemned the shootings in the Kandahar area village but cautioned the public and media "to refrain from rushing to stereotypes." But this perception had found new life even before the shootings in the village near Kandahar, partly as a result of explicit images circulated by troops themselves courtesy of sites like YouTube. Washington Democrat Sen. Patty Murray, chairwoman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, told the Veterans of Foreign Wars only last week that some vets she met were worried about how they were being perceived by potential employers. "Some are afraid to write the word 'veteran' on a job application for fear that those who have not served will see them as 'damaged' or 'unstable,'" Murray said. VFW spokesman Joe Davis said it's important for people to understand that incidents like last weekend's shooting are rare, and to appreciate that the vast majority of troops conduct themselves professionally. About 75 percent of the nation's 18-to-24-year-olds cannot meet the military's minimum standards for health, aptitude and physical fitness, he said, making the remaining 25 percent "the cream of the crop, who are also heavily recruited by colleges and universities and industry." "I have to believe that the civilian public can disassociate the tragedy that occurred in Afghanistan from the millions of veterans who have and continue to serve their nation with honor and pride," Davis said. "But we cannot allow that single act to allow the military-civilian disconnect to grow even wider. "

**RIIP, William R. Charette, MOH, US Navy, Korea:**

Retired Master Chief Hospital Corpsman William Charette, who received a Medal of Honor for throwing his body on top of a patient during a grenade attack during the Korean War, has died. Charette, 79, died Sunday morning at his Lake Wales, Fla., according to the Ludington Daily News. His nephew told the paper that Charette had undergone a couple of surgeries in the last six months. Charette enlisted in the Navy in 1951.

**Marine with one Lung an Third Deployment:**

If someone saw how fierce Sgt. Phil Farmer is during a firefight, they would never guess he only has one fully functioning lung. Farmer is a squad leader with 3rd platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, combat outpost Pennsylvania and on his third combat deployment. He leads his Marines on patrols, finds improvised explosive devices and has partnered with Afghan National Security Forces to help make Afghanistan a safer place. On his second deployment, Farmer, a 30-year-old Matawan, N.J., native, had his observation post in Ramadi, Iraq struck by a suicide bomber driving a dump truck laden with explosives and chemicals, releasing a noxious cloud of gas after the massive explosion. After the blast, a complex ambush ensued. Two weeks after the attack, Farmer coughed up blood, but he felt fine after and continued to push on with his deployment. Farmer now has the symptoms of Bronchial Inflammation Disease and must use an inhaler from time to time, but the Marines he serves with wouldn't have known about the issue unless he told them. For Farmer, the reason he has been able to carry on in stride despite having one lung is his training as a Marine.

**The Dog That Cornered Osama Bin Laden ...**

Not your standard K9...When U.S. President Barack Obama went to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, for a highly publicized but very private meeting with the commando team that killed Osama bin Laden, only one of the-- IT HAS TOO PROVE THAT DOG IS MAN'S BEST FRIEND 81 members of the super-secret SEAL DevGru unit was identified by name: Cairo, the war dog. Cairo, like most canine members of the elite U.S. Navy SEALs, is a Belgian Malinois. The Malinois breed is similar to German shepherds but smaller and more compact, with an adult male weighing approx. 30 kilos range. German shepherds are still used as war dogs by the American military but the lighter, stubbier Malinois is considered better for the tandem parachute jumping and rappelling operations often undertaken by SEAL teams. Labrador retrievers are also favoured by various military organizations around the world. Like their human counterparts, the dog SEALs are highly trained, highly skilled, highly motivated special ops experts, able to perform extraordinary military missions by Sea, Air and Land. The dogs carry out a wide range of specialized duties for the military teams to which they are attached: With a sense of smell 40 times greater than a human's, the dogs are trained to detect and identify both explosive material and hostile or hiding humans. The dogs are twice as fast as a fit human, so anyone trying to escape is not likely to outrun Cairo or his buddies.



# Atlanta



# 2012

**Time to Make Arrangements for the 2012 ADVA Reunion:** It's not too early to decide to make plans for the 2012 ADVA reunion in Atlanta, GA. This note is intended to alert you to join us for an anticipated "Hot" time. Atlanta is chock-full of fun things to do and see. It is the capital city of the South making it a well traveled tourist adventure land. The ADVA staff is working to make this year's event everyone will long remember. We are scheduled to participate in the dedication of the Americal Division monument in the "Walk of Honor" near the newly opened National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning. As part of this memorable event the attendees are invited to eat lunch at the 2/46<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment Mess Hall. What a treat this will be for the ladies who have seldom had the opportunity to dine in this fashion. The lunch may even be an experience for all of us "Grunts". An application is part of your latest Americal Journal. You can also find an application via our Chapter and ADVA WEBSITES. Make your reservations early. Let's make this another banner reunion. Our annual membership meeting will also be conducted at this time. We are considering adding a "Hospitality Room" for Chapter use during the reunion.



**Proposed Changes to DoD Medical:** TRICARE Prime annual enrollment fees for retired families (currently \$520) would rise as high as \$820 starting October 1, 2012, and rise to as much as \$2,048 within five years, with fees based on military retired pay amount. TRICARE Standard beneficiaries would start paying a \$140 annual family enrollment fee and a slightly increased deductible (\$320) starting Oct 1, with the enrollment fee and deductible rising to \$250 and \$580, respectively within 5 years. These would be flat fees for all Standard beneficiaries. Retirees and family members age 65 and older would start paying an annual TRICARE For Life (TFL) enrollment fee of up to \$135 per person starting this Oct. 1. This fee also would be graduated based on retired pay amount, and would rise to as much as \$475 per year within 5 years. Pharmacy copays for retail and mail-order brand-name medications would more than double (from \$12 to \$26) starting Oct 1. Copays for non-formulary medications that currently cost \$25 would also more than double, to \$51, and availability would be mostly restricted to the mail-order venue, with only limited retail access. The brand-name and non-formulary copays would rise to \$34 and \$66, respectively, within 5 years.

**Stolen Valor Case Upheld:** By a 2-1 decision, the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver recently reversed a lower court's decision that the Stolen Valor Act of 2005 violates First Amendment free speech protections. Courts in California, Georgia and Missouri have considered similar cases. In the Colorado case, defendant Rick Strandlof had founded a veterans group in Colorado Springs, and said he had received the Purple Heart and Silver Star, although the military had no record that he ever served. The California case, *U.S. v. Xavier Alvarez*, is currently before the U.S. Supreme Court, primarily because the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco overruled by 2-1 a lower court verdict against Alvarez, a member of the local water district board, who claimed at a public meeting that he was a retired Marine and Medal of Honor recipient. Alvarez, too, had never served in the military.

**VA Budget Deals With Homelessness and Jobs:** The Department of Veterans Affairs sent Congress a proposed budget of \$140 billion for fiscal 2013 on Monday, which includes a 33 percent increase in funding to tackle homelessness and a \$1 billion request for a new Veterans Job Corps. In a statement, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki said the proposed budget would also fund services for newly discharged vets, improve access to benefits, bring down the disability claims backlog, and beef up the department's information technology program. More than half the \$140 billion requested is already spoken for. The VA says \$76 billion is intended to cover mandatory expenses such as disability compensation and pensions. About \$64 billion is discretionary spending to cover programs ranging from the proposed jobs package to ending homelessness to construction at VA facilities.

**The reason Politicians try so hard to get re-elected is that they would 'hate' to have to make a living under the laws they've passed.**

If at first you don't succeed, skydiving isn't for you!

## KILROY WAS HERE! WHO THE HECK WAS KILROY?

Anyone born in the mid thirties (or earlier) knew Kilroy. We didn't know why but we had lapel pins with his nose hanging over the label and the top of his face above his nose with his hands hanging over the label too. I believe it was orange colored. No one knew why he was so well known but we all joined in! In 1946 the American Transit Association, through its radio program, "Speak to America," sponsored a nationwide contest to find the REAL Kilroy, offering a prize of a real trolley car to the person who could prove himself to be the genuine article. Only James Kilroy from Halifax, Massachusetts, had evidence of his identity.

James Kilroy was a 46-year old shipyard worker during the war who worked as a checker at the Fore River Shipyard in Quincy. His job was to go around and check on the number of rivets completed. Riveters were on piecework and got paid by the rivet. Kilroy would count a block of rivets and put a check mark in semi-waxed lumber chalk, so the rivets wouldn't be counted twice. When Kilroy went off duty, the riveters would erase the mark. Later on, an off-shift inspector would come through and count the rivets a second time, resulting in double pay for the riveters.



One day Kilroy's boss called him into his office. The foreman was upset about all the wages being paid to riveters, and asked him to investigate. It was then he realized what had been going on. The tight spaces he had to crawl in to check the rivets didn't lend themselves to lugging around a paint can and brush, so Kilroy decided to stick with the waxy chalk. He continued to put his checkmark on each job he inspected, but added KILROY WAS HERE in king-sized letters next to the check, and eventually added the sketch of the chap with the long nose peering over the fence and that became part of the Kilroy message. Once he did that, the riveters stopped trying to wipe away his marks.

Ordinarily the rivets and chalk marks would have been covered up with paint. With war on, however, ships were leaving the Quincy Yard so fast that there wasn't time to paint them. As a result, Kilroy's inspection "trademark" was seen by thousands of servicemen who boarded the troopships the yard produced. His message apparently rang a bell with the servicemen, because they picked it up and spread it all over Europe and the South Pacific. Before war's end, "Kilroy" had been here, there, and everywhere on the long hauls to Berlin and Tokyo.

To the troops outbound in those ships, however, he was a complete mystery; all they knew for sure was that some jerk named Kilroy had "been there first." As a joke, U.S. servicemen began placing the graffiti wherever they landed, claiming it was already there when they arrived. Kilroy became the U.S. super-GI who had always "already been" wherever GIs went. It became a challenge to place the logo in the most unlikely places imaginable (it is said to be atop Mt. Everest, the Statue of Liberty, the underside of L'Arc De Triomphe, and even scrawled in the dust on the moon). As the war went on, the legend grew. Underwater demolition teams routinely sneaked ashore on Japanese-held islands in the Pacific to map the terrain for coming invasions by U.S. troops (and thus, presumably, were the first GI's there). On one occasion, however, they reported seeing enemy troops painting over the Kilroy logo! In 1945, an out-house was built for the exclusive use of Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill at the Potsdam conference. Its first occupant was Stalin, who emerged and asked his aide (in Russian), "Who is Kilroy?"

To help prove his authenticity in 1946, James Kilroy brought along officials from the shipyard and some of the riveters. He won the trolley car, which he gave to his nine children as a Christmas gift and set it up as a playhouse in the Kilroy front yard in Halifax, Massachusetts. So, Now you know! Thanks go out to Julius Driscavage for this piece of history.