



2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter, Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)



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Volume 6

“A Soldier Once And Always”

June 2016

Commanders Corner: Hopefully, last month, you all received the amended edition of the newsletter. In the original issue, my monthly column from April was repeated by accident and a revised edition was sent out. If you didn't get that edition, our web site has the updated version. This year I again thoroughly enjoyed the Indy 500 but was missing my buddy, Bruce Nielsen (B 2/1). Bruce usually attends the race with his cousin, Bill, and we have a great time. This year he had to miss the race because of a medical complication but, Bill made it and we semi-reluctantly partied on without him. It was the 100th running of the Indy 500 this year and it was a really good race, won by a rookie, Alexander Rossi, who actually ran out of gas on the victory lap right in front of me. I had friends in for the race from Philadelphia, PA and Liverpool, England and a good time was had by all. Now, I have to get back to the real world and jump into the middle of 6 concurrent projects I have going around here. Oh, the joy of homeownership. I hope all of you are ready for a great summer with family and friends. If you are not sure about your dues, please check out our web site. We are actually doing well on payment of dues; so keep up the good work.



Chuck

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

Americal Division and 2/1 Chapter Annual Reunion: It's official; the dates and location for the Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA) and the 2/1 Infantry Chapter reunion will be held in Albuquerque, NM September 14-18, 2016. The information and forms for reserving your hotel and informing the organization staff are printed in the latest issue of the ADVA Journal. The information is also available on the Chapter website. It is not too early to make your arrangements for this reunion. As you know the rooms at the reunion hotel are called for early and there are only a select number of rooms reserved for the reunion.

Army Has Fewest Active-Duty Soldiers Since 1940: The number of U.S. Army soldiers on active duty has been reduced to its lowest since 1940. The Army Times reported that the Army's end strength for March 2016 was 479,172. That's 154 fewer soldiers than the service's previous post-World War II low. The current number is still well above the 269,023 soldiers on duty in 1940, the year before America entered World War II. However, the report says the active force has been reduced by more than 16,500 troops over the past year -- the equivalent of about three brigades. The Army is on track to reach its goal of reducing the number of active duty troops to 475,000 by the end of fiscal year 2016.

MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains of four American servicemen who had been missing in action from World War II and Korea. Being returned for burial with full military honors on a date and location to be announced are:

-- Fireman 2nd Class James B. Boring, 21, of Vinton County, Ohio, Navy Fireman 3rd Class Edwin C. Hopkins, 18, of Swanzy, N.H., and Ensign Lewis B. Pride Jr., 23, of Madisonville, Ky., had been missing since Dec. 7, 1941, when the battleship USS Oklahoma they were aboard suffered multiple torpedo hits and capsized as it was moored off Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

-- Army Sgt. 1st Class James P. Shunney, of Providence, R.I., was lost fighting in North Korea on Nov. 2, 1950. He was assigned to Company I, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division.

-- Navy Chief Storekeeper Herbert J. Hoard, 36, and Seaman 2nd Class Dale F. Pearce, 21, had been missing since Dec. 7, 1941, when the battleship USS Oklahoma they were aboard suffered multiple torpedo hits and capsized as it was moored off Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Hoard will be buried May 21 in his hometown of DeSoto, Mo., and Pearce will be buried May 26 in his hometown of Dennis, Kan.

-- Marine Pfc. Elmer L. Mathies Jr., 21, will be buried May 28 in his hometown of Hereford, Texas. Mathies died Nov. 20, 1943, while fighting the Japanese on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. He was assigned to Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division.

-- Army Capt. Elwood J. Euart, 38, of Pawtucket, R.I., died Oct. 26, 1942, died trying to rescue some soldiers who were trapped in a transport ship that struck two mines as it was entering Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides. He was assigned to the 103rd Field Artillery Battalion, 43rd Infantry Division. Burial details have yet to be announced.

-- Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Donald L. Beals, 21, of Brookings, S.D., was a P-47 Thunderbolt pilot who died April 17, 1945, while on a combat mission near Dresden, Germany. He was assigned to the 494th Fighter Squadron, 48th Fighter Group, 9th Air Force. Burial details have yet to be announced.

SEAL Killed in Iraq to Be Buried at National Cemetery: A U.S. Navy SEAL killed in Iraq will be buried at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego. The body of Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Charles Keating IV will be laid to rest after a private funeral in Coronado, California, with his family. A public procession to honor Keating will also take place Coronado, where Keating's SEAL Team 1 is based. Naval Special Warfare Base will hold a private memorial service at Tideland Park in Coronado for family, friends, and members of SEAL Team 1. Keating was shot and killed May 3 during a gun battle involving Islamic State fighters.

Alternate PTSD Therapy for Vets Ruffles VA Feathers: Even before she left for Afghanistan, Katie Helmer knew she was going to have trouble when she got back. As a member of the Minnesota National Guard, she was assigned to monitor casualties at a military hospital at Bagram Airfield. From a previous deployment in Kuwait, Helmer knew the psychic toll the ordeal would take on her. When she came home in 2013, she jumped at the chance to get free treatment for post-traumatic stress through a pilot program for a therapy called EMDR, which uses sensory stimulation to connect to triggers from trauma and neutralizes them. After several sessions, she said it worked. "I've never been a therapy type of person, but it worked because it was a different kind of therapy, and I didn't have to do too much of the talking," Helmer said. Out of that pilot program emerged the Veteran Resilience Project, a Minnesota nonprofit that offers EMDR therapy -- which stands for eye movement desensitization and reprocessing -- to vets, and says it is getting positive results. There is a rub: The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) says the treatment is effective but not one of its top choices for addressing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In Minneapolis, in fact, the VA doesn't use it at all. The VA has no objection to the therapy, but it seldom will refer patients for treatment because the VA has the resources -- and pays for -- other therapies. So EMDR practitioners are joining a growing list of groups seeking to help veterans who say they often find themselves in a David vs. Goliath battle with the VA. And they have not been afraid to step up to make their point. The Veteran Resilience Project is the brainchild of Elaine Wynne, a Minnesota EMDR therapist. Wynne tried for six years to start an EMDR project focusing on veterans, but found the VA and the Defense Department resistant because of concerns that the treatment was not evidenced-based. Undaunted, she won a grant from a national EMDR program and set off on her own in 2013 to conduct a 20-month pilot project. Using 25 therapists to serve 30 veterans, she documented that 74 percent of the respondents after treatment no longer showed signs of PTSD and that 100 percent had significantly reduced symptoms.

Defense Secretary: Navy's Reynolds, Swain Can Play in NFL: Defense Secretary Ashton Carter says former Navy quarterback Keenan Reynolds and fullback Chris Swain can defer their military service to play in the NFL. Carter made the announcement Friday during his graduation speech to the academy in Annapolis. As students cheered the news about their graduating classmates, Carter said: "Go get'em." Reynolds was drafted in the sixth round by the Baltimore Ravens. He is the NCAA's career leader in touchdowns and finished his career with 88 TDs and 31 touchdown passes while leading Navy's triple-option offense. The Ravens plan to use him as a running back, receiver and kick returner. Swain has signed with the San Diego Chargers.

Don't waste your precious energy on gossip, energy vampires, issues of the past, negative thoughts or things you cannot control. Instead invest your energy in the positive present moment.

VA Restored Benefits to 4,200 Veterans Wrongly Declared Dead: A Florida congressman says the Veterans Administration cut off the benefits of more than 4,200 people nationwide after they were wrongly declared dead. Rep. David Jolly says these people were "very much alive" and their benefits were resumed after the VA looked into their cases, which happened between 2011 and 2015. The Florida Republican raised the issue with the VA in November on behalf of a group of veterans in the Tampa Bay area. He told The Associated Press early Wednesday that agency has since acknowledged mistakes in 4,200 cases in the previous five years, and that it has changed its protocols for confirming deaths. "We simply cannot have men and women who have sacrificed for this country see their rightful benefits wrongfully terminated because the VA mistakenly declares them dead," Jolly wrote in a statement. Danny Pummill, the acting undersecretary for benefits at the VA, acknowledged mistakenly declaring the 4,200 veterans dead in a May 6 letter to Jolly. The agency's computer systems don't track the causes of each error, but Pummill wrote that they could have resulted from incorrect data provided by another agency, human error or computer issues. The VA tightened its protocols for confirming deaths in December. Now, when officials think a veteran is dead, the department will send a letter to his or her address and request confirmation of the death from a surviving family member, according to a Dec. 10 letter from the VA to Jolly's office. If the VA doesn't hear from the family -- or from a veteran erroneously believed dead -- only then will the department terminate payments, that letter said. The VA also verifies each beneficiary's entitlement through an automated match with the Social Security Administration's Death Master File. "It's a problem that should have been addressed years ago, as it has caused needless hardships for thousands of people who had their benefits terminated and their world turned upside down," said Jolly.

Senators Move to Block Plan to Privatize Commissaries: A bipartisan group of 31 senators want to block a plan that would privatize some commissaries and likely raise prices before a report on the impacts of such a plan is ready. The measure, introduced by Sen. Jim Inhofe, an Oklahoma Republican, and Sen. Barbara Mikulski, a Maryland Democrat, would instead require the Defense Commissary Agency to complete a study on the impacts of privatization ordered in 2016's annual National Defense Authorization Act. "Last year, my Senate colleagues and I fought to block language to privatize military commissaries until a study can take place to assess the impacts, costs and benefits of such drastic action," Inhofe said in a statement. "That study is currently underway, and once it is completed, Congress needs time to thoroughly review and consider the recommendations." Currently the commissary is required by law to sell goods at cost plus a five percent surcharge. Commissary operating costs are covered by an over \$1 billion taxpayer subsidy. The 2016 legislation ordered the Pentagon to produce a report on how privatizing commissaries, and allowing prices to fluctuate, would impact military shoppers. Congress asked that the study include information on common business practices, how privatizing only part of the system would work and impacts of privatization on the military's Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs. The Senators, with the backing of over 40 military-interest groups, including the National Military Family Association and the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, say that waiting for the previously ordered study is important. "Privatization could place an undue burden on many of our military men and women and their families," Mark Warner, a Virginia Democrat who co-signed the measure, said in a statement. "Launching a privatization pilot before careful study on its potential impacts is completed would be wildly premature. This amendment will sensibly prevent such a pilot from being launched until the report that Congress requested is completed."

World War II Vet Pays Tribute to Fallen on Cross-Country Bike Ride: Eighty-nine-year-old Dr. Bruce Heilman just put another 7,000 miles on his Harley-Davidson Electra Glide Ultra Classic in a cross-country ride that was all about the pain and pride of war that the nation honors on Memorial Day. Along the way, the World War II "Buck Sergeant" Marine veteran of the horrific battle of Okinawa met with the Gold Star families who lost a son or daughter, to tell them about the sharing of sacrifice. "It's a somewhat personal thing, but it actually is something in the hearts and minds of those of us who have been fortunate enough to survive," Heilman said. His message to the families: "Share with me what your son did. You can share your sorrow but you can also share your pride" in a life given to sacrifice." Heilman had just returned last week from his 50-state trek to Richmond, Va., where an honor guard of local police and veterans led him to a ceremony at the Virginia War Memorial. "Everybody thinks I'm on a three-wheeler," said Heilman, who will turn 90 in July. "I'm saving that until I get old." Next up for him and his Harley – a ride down Pennsylvania Ave. tomorrow in the Memorial Day parade. Heilman credited the Marine Corps for giving purpose to a life in which he became president of the University of Richmond and is now its chancellor. Not bad for the Kentucky boy who flunked out of high school. Heilman said he was the son of a tenant farmer and had to get up at 3 a.m. to feed the animals. "I slept through classes," he said. At age 17 in 1944, he joined the Marines. It was supposed to be 12 weeks of boot camp but they cut that to eight "because we were losing so many Marines out in the South Pacific," he said. In training, Heilman finally found something he was good at -- he could shoot. Using what he called a little "Kentucky windage," he was a top scorer on the rifle range.



Army's First Female Infantry Officer Assigned to Fort Benning: Capt. Kristen Griest, one of the first women to graduate U.S. Army Ranger School, has been assigned to the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade at Fort Benning, Georgia, according to Army officials. The Army granted Griest's request to transfer from the military police to the infantry branch April 25. In mid-April, the Army also approved 21 female West Point and ROTC cadets and one Officer Candidate School student to commission into the infantry and armor branches. Thirteen of those women will enter into the armor branch and nine will enter into the infantry branch as long as they complete the required branch-specific training for infantry and armor officers, Army officials maintain. Griest recently completed the Maneuver Captains Career Course at Benning, a requirement for infantry and armor officers to command front-line fighting companies

Each night before you go to bed, pray to God and be thankful for what you'll accomplish, today !

VA Secretary Compares Long Hospital Wait Times to Lines at Disneyland: Critics said Monday that Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald had trivialized the long-standing problem of lengthy wait times for appointments at California's veterans medical centers by comparing them to waiting in long lines at Disneyland. His comments sparked an angry backlash from California lawmakers who felt that he had dismissed the angst and frustration of their constituents. McDonald made the comments Monday during a roundtable discussion with reporters hosted by The Christian Science Monitor. "When you go to Disneyland, do they measure the number of hours you wait in line?" he said. "What's important? What's important is: What's your satisfaction with the experience?" Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Calif., said in a statement that McDonald's comparison to the lines at Disneyland Park "is utterly out of touch." "The wait times sure as hell did matter to the veterans who died while waiting for services," he said. "The wait times sure as hell do matter to the veterans who call my office because they are struggling to get in to see a VA doctor. ... Why is that so hard for our VA secretary to understand?" The Disneyland Park guest services website shows the park does measure current wait times for rides throughout the day and they are viewable by the public. The VA has learned that measuring the wrong metric can bring unintended consequences and confusion, so the agency is careful not to base the quality of care on wait times alone, according to VA spokeswoman Victoria Dillon. "We know that veterans are still waiting too long for care," she said. "In our effort to determine how we can better meet veterans' needs, knowing that their satisfaction is our most important measure ... we must transform the way we do business." Long wait times for appointments at VA medical centers have been an enduring concern, particularly since the Iraq War produced so many casualties, which flooded the VA when the injured troops left the military. It became a public scandal in 2014, when CNN revealed that veterans had died while waiting for treatment. An investigation showed that the agency had manipulated its records to cast lengthy wait times in a more favorable light. The scandal led to the resignation of the VA secretary at the time, Eric Shinseki, and to McDonald's appointment. A 2015 Associated Press analysis revealed that most California veterans wait at least 31 days for appointments at the state's VA health care centers. Northern California Veterans Affairs Clinic in Sacramento Valley, San Luis Obispo Veterans Affairs Clinic and the Sepulveda Veterans Affairs Clinic had the highest percentages of delayed appointments, according to the analysis. McDonald told reporters that the VA has been trying to find ways to measure the quality of a veteran's health care experience. "We're in the process of creating that kind of measure, validating that kind of measure, and making sure it's meaningful and that it's valid to the outcome," he said. "And that's really the kind of measure I want to move to." House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Jeff Miller, R-Fla., issued a statement that said McDonald's comparison between appointment wait times and amusement park wait times was "just plain wrong."

Ex-Phoenix VA Head Gets Probation in Wait List-Linked Case: A former VA health system director has been sentenced to two years' probation for failing to disclose gifts received while supervising the Phoenix hospital where whistleblowers revealed veterans on secret waiting lists faced scheduling delays of up to a year. U.S. District Court Judge Steven Logan sentenced Sharon Helman for making a false statement to a government agency by not including more than \$19,000 in gifts on a financial disclosure report. Helman was accused of failing to list more than \$50,000 in gifts she received from a lobbyist between 2012 and 2014. She pleaded down to a single charge under a plea agreement reached with prosecutors prior to the sentencing.

Hospitals a Deadly Target in Middle East Conflicts: The April 27 strike was the latest of thousands of attacks in recent years on medical facilities in conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere that have killed hundreds in brazen violation of humanitarian norms. Facilities have been struck in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen and South Sudan. The attacks have turned the universally recognized symbol of the Red Cross, which is supposed to offer protection and safety, into a deadly target and have exposed the failure of the international community to prevent and punish such crimes. The U.N. Security Council has denounced the attacks and demanded that all parties in conflicts protect medical facilities, staff and patients. But some of the council's most powerful members, who backed the resolution, aren't blameless. U.S. forces struck a clinic in Afghanistan last year, killing 42 people. The medical charity Doctors Without Borders, which operated the hospital, has called for an independent investigation. Medical facilities have also been hit by the U.S.-backed Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Russia, too, has been tied to attacks. Physicians for Human Rights calls the attacks in Syria the most widespread and systematic assault on health care documented in the world to date. "Health facilities, which are meant to be places where people can go for relief of suffering, for survival and safety, have become instead places of brutality and death," said Susannah Sirkin, a director at the New York-based group. The Geneva Conventions state that hospitals, doctors and patients are off-limits in conflicts. Attacking them constitutes a war crime. Violations have happened before, but aid groups say the cruelty and frequency in recent years has been unprecedented. Nearly 740 doctors and staff have been killed in more than 360 attacks on hospitals in Syria since the start of the civil war in 2011, according to Physicians for Human Rights. Doctors Without Borders, known by its French acronym, MSF, says that least 100 staff members, patients and caretakers were killed, and at least 130 were injured, in aerial bombing and shelling attacks on more than 80 MSF-supported and run health structures in 2015 and early 2016. Hospitals and physicians in the Middle East and elsewhere have been attacked simply for treating people on both sides of the conflict or because the facilities were located near what was perceived to be a military target. Treating patients in war zones has become so dangerous that some hospitals have gone undercover and residents in a number of communities in Syria have protested against efforts to reopen bombed hospitals to avoid being hit again, according to MSF. 80 governments and dozens of world leaders inaugurated the first-of-its-kind World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul. The summit, called by the U.N. Secretary General in response to pressing humanitarian challenges, was set to be attended by 6,000 people including heads of aid groups and private sector leaders. But MSF, in a strongly worded statement, said it was pulling out, calling the summit "a fig-leaf of good intentions."

Maryland Sailor Killed in Pearl Harbor Attack Identified: The U.S. military has identified the remains of a sailor from Maryland who was killed in the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency says Navy Chief Petty Officer Albert Hayden served on the USS Oklahoma. The agency says the 44-year-old is due to be buried in Morganza, Maryland near his hometown of Mechanicsville. Japanese planes hit the Oklahoma with multiple torpedoes 75 years ago, causing the battleship to capsize quickly. The military wasn't able to identify most of the 429 men killed on the Oklahoma and buried hundreds as "unknowns." The agency began digging up their remains last year, saying advances in forensic science and technology have made identification more feasible. The first Oklahoma unknown to be identified was buried in March.

US Veteran Seeks Asylum for Iraqi Man Who Saved His Life: After three military combat tours in war-torn Iraq, Chase Millsap returned home to get on with a civilian life. But there was one thing he couldn't do: leave a comrade behind, certainly not one who had saved his life. Especially not the former Iraqi military officer who had worked with the Americans and was now living a precarious existence as a refugee dodging Islamic State militants seeking to kill him. For the past two years, Millsap has been fighting a different kind of battle, one to gain asylum for the brother in arms he simply calls The Captain. "The Captain is the epitome of my personal commitment to take care of people," said Millsap, 33, who served in the Marine Corps and later joined the Army and became a Green Beret. For the time being, The Captain lives in southern Turkey, struggling to obtain refugee status in what he hopes will be the first step toward seeking permanent asylum in the United States. "If I go back, I'm sure I die," the 37-old Muslim and married father of two said recently during an interview over Skype. He agreed to speak, but, fearing for his safety, only wanted to be identified by his former rank. As he spoke, his 3-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son played in the family's living room. Millsap visited his friend last year at his cramped apartment, hoping he might help him expedite his refugee application. After running into one obstacle after another — The Captain couldn't get an interview at one government office because his papers were in English, not Turkish — Millsap returned to the United States and formed the nonprofit Ronin Refugee Project with a handful of other military veterans. It's dedicated to helping those who fought alongside Americans find safe harbor here or in other Western countries. After helping The Captain, they hope to turn their attention to others.



Bergdahl Court-Martial Could Wait Until After November: The military's case against Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl resumes with a pre-trial hearing Tuesday that could result in his court-martial being moved until after this fall's elections. The government has proposed delaying the start of the trial to December so classified documents can be properly reviewed and prepared. Given the shape of the presidential campaign, that could mean Bergdahl will face military justice after voters decide in November who will be the New Commander-in-Chief. The 30-year-old soldier faces charges of desertion and misbehavior before the enemy. The latter charge is relatively rare and carries the potential of life in prison. Bergdahl, of Hailey, Idaho, was quickly captured after walking off his combat post in Afghanistan in 2009. He was held as a prisoner of war for five years by the Taliban and its allies until President Barack Obama exchanged five Guantanamo Bay detainees for his safe return, saying the U.S. "does not ever leave our men and women in uniform behind." Some members of Congress said it jeopardized national security. Trump has targeted Bergdahl for scorn dozens of times on the campaign trail, saying he should have been thrown from a plane. The lack of evidence that any service members were killed or wounded searching for the missing soldier led the Army's primary investigating officer to recommend against jail time, and a preliminary hearing officer recommended against a bad-conduct discharge. But those recommendations were scrapped in December by the general overseeing the case. Gen. Robert Abrams, who leads the Army Forces Command at Fort Bragg, sided with an Army lawyer's recommendation for a general court-martial.