



2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter,

Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)

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February 2019

Volume 9

“A Soldier Once And Always”

Commanders Corner: What have you decided to do to make 2019 better than last year? What's your plan? Personally, I hope to do more for my local community and broaden my local American Legion's support of veteran and community issues. None of these are easy, but with time and commitment you can make a difference.



I recently took part in what's called a “day on the Hill” where our Department of Virginia American Legion members go to meet State Delegates and Senators in the State Capital and discuss support of initiatives for Virginia Veterans. I assume each state has a similar event. Virginia supports veteran's health issues by supporting local health centers that work with Veterans Administration Medical Centers to provide more local treatment and care. Look into whether your state does this.

Again, please consider donating during this year for our 2-1 INF Brick Program. It's a small commemoration of our battalion and regiment, but it will last for a long time and people will see these in memorial gardens and other places where we decide to commemorate our brothers who stood in ranks before us. As members of an old regiment of our Nation's Army, we should commemorate the Regiment's service, and the service of those who came before us. Five dollars is not a lot and we can all afford this small token.

Company A soldiers are making plans to attend a special event to commemorate the loss of soldiers during a skirmish Near Tien Phuoc on 19–29 March 1969, A Co., 2/1 Infantry sustained heavy casualties including 10 killed. Some of them will be visiting Lewiston, ME, the hometown of company medic Tom McMahon, to mark the 50th anniversary. We plan to visit Tom's grave and the Thomas J. McMahon Memorial Elementary School, where his Medal of Honor and Purple Heart are on display, and to meet with family members. We will leave from the lobby of the Hilton Garden Inn Portland Airport at 9:00 a.m. on 19 March by rented vehicle returning the same day. If you want a ride, contact me at jisely@wi.rr.com ASAP. Please pass this message to all interested persons.

God bless you and your families during the rest of this year and the upcoming Holidays. Have a great New Year's celebration as well. Remember our collective extended family, those Americans serving in our Armed Forces all over the world, and especially to the memories of those that gave the ultimate sacrifice.

Got a comment, idea or complaint, contact me at Commander.2.1.jgw@gmail.com.

John

Commander

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



Burial Options Continue to Expand: National Cemeteries serve as the final resting place for millions of servicemembers and veterans and their spouses. What started out as 14 cemeteries for the remains of Civil War has grown to a network of nearly 140 cemeteries across 40 states and Puerto Rico. More are in the planning stages. Nearly every state has at least one. Funding for the cemetery is helped by the Veterans Administration, state governments are solely for operations and eligibility criteria. For eligible veterans, the VA provides a grave site, grave liner, government headstones or marker, US burial flag, Presidential Memorial Certificate and personal care of the grave site at no cost to the family. They also open and close the grave. Capacity is an ongoing concern. Plots at VA national cemeteries cannot be reserved in advance, and space at a handful of cemeteries is starting to fill up quickly. Finite burial space is an age-old issue, so it will remain something that needs to continuously monitor.

Guard Helicopter Helps Border Patrol Seize Pot, make Arrests in New Mexico: Authorities say an Arkansas National Guard helicopter deployed to the New Mexico desert to help secure the U.S.-Mexico border helped federal agents seize large sacks of marijuana and arrest four camouflage-clad men hiding in brush at night. National Guard and Customs and Border Patrol officials said that the LUH-72 Lakota helicopter's crew used its night-vision equipment to first guide Border Patrol agents on ATVs to the hiding suspects and then located the nearly 136 pounds (62 kilograms) of marijuana in burlap sacks stashed nearby. A Border Patrol agent had initially spotted the men walking along a road. The incident occurred near Playas, New Mexico, which is about 120 miles (194 kilometers) west of El Paso, Texas, and about 39 miles (63 kilometers) north of the border.

After Hearing U.S. Veteran Had No Family, Huge Crowd Attends Funeral In Texas: Scores of people turned up for Joseph Walker's funeral in Texas — not because they knew him, but because they knew the Vietnam-era veteran was at risk of being buried without anyone in attendance. Walker served in the U.S. Air Force, and he died of natural causes at the age of 72. When the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery announced funeral plans for him, the facility didn't expect anyone other than staff members to be present. With no family or loved ones coming forward after his death, Walker was classified an “unaccompanied veteran.” That changed. “Today, we're not strangers; today, we are family,” said Marc George who officiated the funeral. Standing next to Walker's flag-draped coffin, George declared, “This is our brother, Joseph Walker.” The diverse turnout reflected “an outpouring of love” from communities in Killeen, Texas, George said, acknowledging the large crowd that turned out to pay their respects. Officials at the cemetery say they knew very little about Walker's life. It's possible he has a brother living in Texas, the cemetery said.

Defense 3 WWII Veterans Honored with France's Most Distinguished Medal: Three St. Louis area World War II veterans in their 90s who played roles in liberating France from Nazi occupation have been given France's Legion of Honor. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reports that a ceremony on Wednesday at Soldiers Memorial in downtown St. Louis honored 95-year-old Alfred Villagran of Chesterfield, 98-year-old Eugene Harmack of Kirkwood and 98-year-old Glenn Harrison of O'Fallon. The honor was started in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte and past recipients have included President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Gen. Douglas MacArthur and St. Louis aviator Charles Lindbergh. Guillaume Lacroix, consul general of France for the Midwest, told about 200 friends and relatives who attended the event that without Americans like Villagran, Harmack and Harrison, the French flag "would not be flying here today." As Lacroix pinned his country's most distinguished medal to Villagran's chest, Villagran thought of the five men in his B-17 bomber crew who were killed in combat.

A Fake Deployment Letter Scam is Making the Rounds on Fort Bragg: A fake deployment letter urging friends and families to make a payment in order to contact loved ones overseas is making the rounds on Fort Bragg, North Carolina. "This is a scam," post officials said in a Facebook post. "It was brought to our attention that a fake deployment letter signed by the Fort Bragg Garrison Commander Col. Kyle Reed is making its rounds encouraging Families and friends of deployed service members to subscribe to a website called MilVPN-USaf," the post reads. "The scam website attempts to deceive families/friends to register, select a plan, and make a payment in an effort to contact service members while deployed." Army officials said family members who want to send letters or connect with loved ones while deployed should do so through official channels. "Online offenders will go to great lengths to deceive unsuspecting users out of money and their identity," the Fort Bragg Facebook post reads. "For family members who would like to get more information about contacting their service members while abroad, contact your spouse's unit Family Readiness Liaison or chain of command." U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command says it receives hundreds of reports from individuals who have fallen victim to scams involving criminals impersonating U.S. soldiers over the internet.

Like Mother, like Son: Deployed Soldier's Mom Joins Him in Afghanistan: Detaching from warm familial surroundings to venture off to far-flung corners of the globe will forever be one of the toughest facets of the deployment process. Communication restricted to letters, unreliable phone centers and rarely accessible social media oftentimes makes the distance between two worlds seem infinite, a feeling Sgt. Yash Hernandez-Kraskey experienced firsthand during his first tour in Afghanistan. However, as he was entering the home stretch of his second deployment to Afghanistan, the 24-year-old helicopter mechanic from the Fort Campbell, Kentucky-based 101st Combat Aviation Brigade learned he would soon be seeing someone who would significantly close the cosmic space between deployed life and home sentimentality — his mother. Kim Hernandez arrived at Bagram Airfield for a one-year tour in October after being accepted into the Department of Defense's Civilian Workforce program. An Army and Air Force veteran of 24 years — and a former Blackhawk mechanic just like her son — Kim decided to pursue the Afghanistan opportunity upon learning her son would be going back.



2/1 LOCATOR

** Send your locator notices to *Locator c/o P.O. Box 2639 Key West, FL 33045*, or email: jhughes-groupins@aol.com. Okay to include photo, name / nickname, rank, home origin if known, and time of Vietnam service.

Honoring the Four Army Chaplains: Sunday, Feb. 3, will mark the 76th anniversary of the sinking of the United States Army Transport Dorchester and the selfless acts of four Army chaplains aboard. The Dorchester tragically sunk on Feb. 3, 1943, while crossing the North Atlantic, transporting troops to an American base in Greenland. A German U-boat fired a torpedo that struck the Dorchester, killing 672 of the 902 officers and enlisted men, merchant seamen and civilian workers aboard. Many of those survivors owe their lives to the courage and leadership exhibited by four chaplains of different faiths, who, in sacrificing their lives, created a unique legacy of brotherhood. As soldiers rushed to lifeboats, Reverend George Fox (Methodist), Jewish Rabbi Alexander Goode, Reverend Clark Poling (Dutch Reformed) and Father John Washington (Roman Catholic) comforted the wounded and directed others to safety. One survivor watched the chaplains distribute life jackets, and when they ran out, they removed theirs and gave them to four young men. As the Dorchester sank, the chaplains were seen linked arm in arm, praying.



Soldier is 3rd Service Member ID'd From 55 Boxes of Remains Returned by North Korea: The remains of a U.S. soldier believed to have been captured by Chinese forces in North Korea in December 1950 and later died in a prisoner-of-war camp have been identified, officials said recently. The soldier, Sgt. Frank Julius Suliman, is the third American service member to be identified from among 55 boxes of bones and other material that the North Korean government handed over to the United States last summer. The Pentagon said Suliman, a member of the 9th Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Infantry Division, was from New Jersey. His remains were identified on Jan. 15. The return of unspecified numbers of Korean War remains was among commitments made by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during his meeting with President Donald Trump. Kim also agreed to "work toward" denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but efforts to move that deal toward an elimination of the North's nuclear weapons have been stalled. A follow-up summit is expected to be held next month. Although the Pentagon wants to make arrangements to recover additional U.S. battlefield remains from North Korea this year, the North Koreans have been unwilling to agree to face-to-face negotiations. By the Pentagon's account, Suliman was captured by Chinese forces on Dec. 1, 1950. He had been riding in a vehicle convoy when it was halted by a roadblock south of Kunu-ri, North Korea. Fellow soldiers later reported that Suliman was captured after abandoning their vehicles to proceed on foot.

The Army May say Bon Voyage to Part of its Sea-going Fleet: The Army's little-known but sizable maritime fleet may be facing cuts, as the service considers eliminating dozens of boats and forcing hundreds of reservists out of their jobs. The service's watercraft deliver supplies, assist in dive operations and land troops on beachheads during combat operations. But many of those boats are aging, costly to maintain and require upgrades to keep up with modern warfare. The Army is mulling plans to shutter its National Guard and Reserve component watercraft units, according to a PowerPoint slide deck dated Jan. 8, obtained by Stars and Stripes. The plans come amid warnings of a looming crisis in the military's transport fleet necessary for carrying troops, equipment and supplies at a time when China and others are spending more on coastal warfare capabilities. The Army confirmed that a formal analysis of its fleet inventory is underway. "The Army is assessing its watercraft program to improve readiness, modernize the force and reallocate resources," spokeswoman Cheryle Rivas said via email.

Pres.Trump Salutes Remains of 4 Americans Killed in Syria Attack: A solemn procession. A long salute. A chaplain's prayer. President Donald Trump traveled to Delaware's Dover Air Force Base on Saturday to pay his respects to the returning remains of four Americans who were killed this week in a suicide bomb attack in Syria. The bombing, which was the deadliest assault on U.S. troops in Syria since American forces moved into the country in 2015, came as Trump prepares to pull U.S. troops out of Syria. The president stood solemnly and saluted the remains of civilian Scott A. Wirtz of St. Louis as his body was carried from a C-17 military aircraft into a waiting van. Wirtz and the three other Americans were killed in a suicide bombing Wednesday in the northern Syrian town of Manbij. He had been assigned to the Defense Intelligence Agency as an operations support specialist. The three other transfers were to be conducted privately, with the president observing. He also spent time with the families of those killed.



Remains Recovered from Korean DMZ: South Korean Defense Ministry announced in November 2018 that 5 sets of remains from the Korean War had been recovered during mine clearance operations at Arrowhead Hill near Cheorwon, just south of the DMZ. This brings the total unearthed number of remains recently discovered in the area to nine since October 1, 2018. The recovery was the result of an agreement between North and South Korea. Both countries aim to remove weapons and munitions along the DMZ and have agreed to identify and return any remains that are recovered in the process. Arrowhead Hill, otherwise known as Hill 281, was the site of several firefights during the Korean War. As of November, there were 7,675 Americans who remain unaccounted for from the Korean War, according to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

[The Siege of Stalingrad resulted in more Russian deaths than the United States and Britain sustained \(combined\) in World War II.](#)

Remember When the King Joined the U.S. Army? It was on March 24, 1958, when the King, Elvis Aron Presley entered the United States Army. He then went through basic and advanced training and ended up serving as a member of two different armor battalions during his active military career. Presley was sent overseas to serve as a member of the 1st Medium Tank Battalion, 32d Armor in Germany from October 1, 1958, until March 2, 1960. On March 5, 1960, he left active duty and returned to the states. It wasn't until March 23, 1964 that he received his discharge papers from the Army Reserve and went back to his music career. It was on March 24, 1958, when the King, Elvis Aron Presley entered the United States Army. He then went through basic and advanced training and ended up serving as a member of two different armor battalions during his active military career. Presley was sent overseas to serve as a member of the 1st Medium Tank Battalion, 32d Armor in Germany from October 1, 1958, until March 2, 1960. On March 5, 1960, he left active duty and returned to the states. It wasn't until March 23, 1964 that he received his discharge papers from the Army Reserve and went back to his music career.



High Blood Pressure Linked to Agent Orange Exposure: Researchers from the National academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine published a report in November 2018 that links hypertension or high blood pressure, and Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS) to Agent Orange exposure. MGUS is a condition with no symptoms. It's caused when an abnormal protein is present in the bloodstream. After the report was published the VA was called upon to add hypertension and MGUS to the current list of presumptive diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure. VFW Commander in Chief B.J. Lawrence said in a letter to the VA, there is "no doubt" that Agent Orange made veterans and their children ill, which has brought "pain and suffering" to many people. Lawrence called on the VA Secretary Robert Wilkie to "recognize the science" in the academy's report by adding the two illnesses to the VA's presumptive list. Actions need to be taken, so veterans can receive assistance "they earned and deserve." Veterans who served in Vietnam or Thailand, as well as along the Korean DMZ to contact the VA service Officer to discuss whether they are eligible to file a VA claim for Agent Orange exposure.

Atlanta Falcons' Ben Garland, Academy grad and Air Guardsman, wins NFL's Salute to Service Award: Atlanta Falcons guard Ben Garland, an Air Force Academy graduate and a captain in the Colorado Air National Guard, has won the NFL's Salute to Service Award. Garland was recognized Wednesday by the league and USAA for his exceptional efforts to honor and support members of the military community. "I am honored to win the award, but, honestly, I am just honored to be part of an organization that puts military first from the top down. Garland said. "They do so much for our military and I am proud to be with an organization that is the spear in the NFL of showing how to do it right and how to truly give back and say thank you to the military members that absolutely deserve it." USAA, will contribute \$25,000 in Garland's honor to the official aid societies representing all five military branches.

Here's Why You're Paying More for Official Lodging at Many Installations: That's because the defense officials have put the services on notice that they must stop using taxpayer dollars to pay to operate their lodging facilities used for official travel — for temporary duty as well as permanent change of station moves. By Oct. 1, the service branches must stop using taxpayer dollars for anything related to these lodging facilities — whether it's maintenance, and other operation support requirements, repair or construction. These lodging facilities will rely on money generated by their nightly room fees to sustain their lodging operations and meet DoD standards for adequate lodging. Generally, the rates will still be within per diem rates for that location. Official travelers receive per diem, which is an allowance for travel expenses such as lodging and meals, with rates set based on location. That allowance is paid by taxpayer dollars, so in essence, the official lodging facilities had been receiving taxpayer dollars in two forms — the room fees, as well as taxpayer dollars that were allocated specifically to the facilities for operations and other aspects. The DoD memorandum, issued in November, applies only to the TDY and PCS lodging and operations worldwide, and doesn't include morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) recreational lodging, or military treatment facility lodging, to include Fisher Houses, and lodging facilities that are privatized or operating under an enhanced use lease.

Up or out' is on its way out, and it's time for 'perform or out.' Army secretary says: Army Secretary

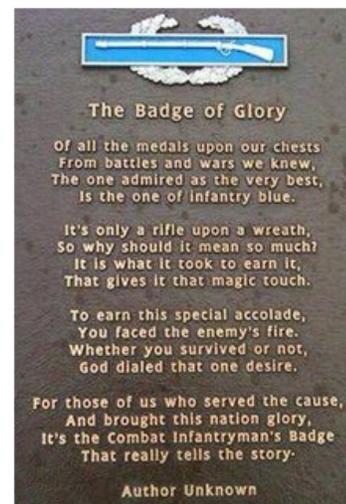
Mark Esper is looking to make talent management his top priority in 2019 according to the Army Times. As Army readiness continues on a steady uptick, and the infrastructure for a modernization push is in place with Army Futures Command, the service's top civilian is devoting more attention to a task force stood up specifically to help the Army through an overhaul of its promotions, assignments and other processes that affect soldiers' careers. Over the past several years, the Army has been making overtures about the importance of talent management, of getting the best qualified and highest performing soldiers into the positions that best fit their skills and knowledge, rather than simply moving personnel around to fill openings based on who's up for new orders first. The service took a step in that direction with beta testing of the Integrated Personnel and Pay System, which is underway with the Pennsylvania National Guard. The system as envisioned is going to be a market-based system, where talent is managed at echelon. Maybe the top and bottom 10 percent to 15 percent of the ranks will be centrally managed according to the needs of the Army.

VA's Benefits Appeals Process will see a Dramatic Changeover Next Month: Veterans rejected

for disability benefits will have a new slate of appeals options starting next month, when federal officials will put in place an overhaul the review process with hopes of dramatically cutting down on wait times for the complicated cases. Last week, Department of Veterans Affairs officials announced they will implement new appeals modernization rules starting Feb. 19. Under the new rules, veterans will be given three options for their benefits appeals. All three are designed to streamline the complicated existing process for cases. Now, VA leaders are hoping the most difficult reviews can still be completed in under a year in the vast majority of cases. Their target for cases which don't go before the Board of Veterans Appeals is an average of about four months for a final decision. VA and Capitol Hill leaders hailed the changes as a long-overdue fix. The most significant reform in veterans' appeals processing in a generation and promises to improve the timeliness and accuracy of decisions for our nation's veterans," said House

Are You One of the 133,000 Vets Who may Qualify for a Tax Refund Windfall? If you're one of the more than 133,000 veterans who received a notice last July that you might be eligible for refunds of federal taxes you paid on disability severance pay, take heed and do it before summer. By law, you have a year to file an amended return with the Internal Revenue Service to get the refund. If you need help in filing for the refund, seek help from a tax professional. The refunds are the result of a law passed in 2016, the Combat Veterans Tax Fairness Act, which went into effect in 2017. It applies to veterans who received disability severance pay dating back to Jan. 17, 1991, with taxes withheld, and who also qualified for disability from the Veterans Affairs Department. Any service member who suffers a combat-related injury and is separated from the military receives a one-time, lump-sum disability severance payment based on their rank and years of service. The payment is not supposed to be taxed in certain situations, but DoD routinely took taxes out of the severance pay. The 2016 law required DoD to identify the veterans who were improperly taxed, and to notify them. DoD worked with the IRS to provide instructions on procedures for receiving the refund. About 300,000 veterans received the disability severance payment, and DoD identified 133,000 veterans who may qualify for the refunds.

Who's Watching Payday Lenders? The director of a federal agency has asked Congress for explicit authority to strengthen its enforcement of financial protections for service members. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau wants specific authority to conduct examinations of payday lenders and others under their jurisdiction to ensure they're complying with the Military Lending Act (MLA). Among other things, the MLA limits interest rates that can be charged to active-duty members and their dependents to 36 percent annual percentage rate. Last year, the CFPB pulled back on its regular examinations of payday lenders and others to make sure they're complying with that law. CFPB determined they didn't have authority to do those examinations, although they have been conducting the MLA exams for years. In announcing the legislative proposal submitted on Jan. 17, CFPB Director Kathleen Kraninger said the bureau's commitment to the well-being of service members "includes ensuring that lenders subject to our jurisdiction comply with the Military Lending Act so our service members and their families are provided with the protections of that law. "That's why I have asked Congress to explicitly grant the bureau authority to conduct examinations specifically intended to review compliance with the MLA," said Kraninger, who became director of the CFPB in December. Kraninger noted that she was pleased to see that legislation proposed recently in the House is also aimed at granting the bureau this authority.



She was an Original': Rosemary Mariner, Ground-Breaking Navy Aviator, Dies at 65:

Rosemary Mariner, who was one of the first group of female aviators in the Navy and continued to break barriers throughout her career, died Thursday at the age of 65. Her obituary said that Mariner, who retired as a captain, had ovarian cancer. In 1973, she was one of the first eight women chosen to fly Navy aircraft, according to the service. She was the Navy's first female jet pilot to fly the A-4C and the A-7E Corsair II. In 1990, she became the first woman in the military to command an operational air squadron. During her 24 years of service, Mariner logged more than 3,500 flight hours in 15 types of aircraft. She had wanted to be a pilot since she was a child. Her father, an Air Force pilot, died in a plane crash when she was 3, according to An Encyclopedia of American Women at War. Her family moved to California and she grew up watching the planes at Miramar Naval Air Station. She washed planes and cleaned houses to earn money for flight school. After her Navy career, she taught military history classes at the University of Tennessee and was an adviser for the Department of the Navy and media outlets. She lived in Norris, Tenn., with her husband of 40 years, Tommy Mariner, a retired Navy commander. Their daughter, Emmalee, attends Duke University. She was known for her leadership and many tributes have noted her contributions to the fight to end the ban on women in combat aviation. Tammie Jo Shults, a former Navy pilot who served under Mariner, told National Public Radio that the changes Mariner was a part of had "huge ripples of effect."



Court rules VA must pay disability benefits to 'blue water' Vietnam veterans: A federal court ruled Tuesday that the Department of Veterans Affairs cannot deny disability benefits to thousands of Vietnam veterans who claim exposure to cancer-causing chemical defoliants simply because those vets served in the waters off the country's coastline, and not inland. The ruling marks a major victory for so-called "blue water" Navy veterans who have fought the department for years over the denials. VA officials have said the existing scientific evidence doesn't justify the presumption of toxic exposure for the group and have strongly opposed legislative efforts to overturn their decision. But the 9-2 decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit overturns past court opinions backing up VA, saying that Congress never intended to exclude servicemembers in the seas around Vietnam when they awarded presumptive benefits for certain illnesses related to Agent Orange exposure. Under current department rules, the blue water veterans can receive medical care for their illnesses through VA. But to receive disability benefits — worth up to several thousand dollars a month — they must prove that their ailments are directly connected to toxic exposure while on duty. That's not the case for other Vietnam veterans, who are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange and other defoliants known to cause serious and rare cancers.

Total casualties for World War II totaled between 50 - 70 million people, 80 percent of which came from only four countries - Russia, China, Germany and Poland. Over 50 percent of the casualties were civilians, with the majority of those being women and children.

New VA plan: Vets facing 30-minute drives, 20-day waits for appointments could get private-sector care instead:

Veterans who live more than 30 minutes from a Veterans Affairs medical clinic or face a wait of more than 20 days for most health care appointments would be eligible for expanded private-sector medical options under new proposed guidelines unveiled by department officials. The new standards would replace the 40-mile, 30-day guidelines currently in place for most veterans and could dramatically expand the number of outside health care appointments that VA will have to fund in coming years. Veterans would also be able to receive urgent care outside the VA system in a to-be-established community care network. Those emergency appointments would require a co-payment from the patients, but department accountants would cover the bulk of costs. In a statement, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said the new standards — scheduled to be in place by June — are a vital part in ensuring proper health care for veterans well into the future. "Most Americans can already choose the health care providers that they trust, and President Trump promised that veterans would be able to do the same," he said. "With VA's new access standards, the future of the VA health care system will lie in the hands of veterans, exactly where it should be." The new access standards were mandated under legislation passed by Congress last summer with bipartisan support. But congressional Democrats have repeatedly warned that shifting too many VA resources to outside clinics and doctors' offices could slowly drain away needed resources from the department's facilities and lead to privatizing VA's core mission of providing health care for veterans.

Meditation Helps Vets With Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder:

Meditation worked as well as traditional therapy for military veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder in a small experiment sponsored by the Department of Defense. One method preferred by the Department of Veterans Affairs is exposure therapy, but it doesn't work for everyone and many can't handle what it requires: purposely recalling traumatic events and confronting emotions. Meditation could be a better choice for some, the researchers said. The experiment tested meditation against exposure therapy, which involves working with a therapist and gradually letting go of fears triggered by painful memories. Many vets won't try exposure therapy or drop out because it's too difficult, said Thomas Rutledge, the study's senior author and a Veterans Affairs psychologist in San Diego. Evidence for meditation "allows us to put more options on the table" with confidence they work, Rutledge said. The study was published in the journal *Lancet Psychiatry*. About 400,000 veterans had a PTSD diagnosis in 2013, according to the VA health system. The VA already is using meditation, yoga and similar approaches to supplement traditional therapy with PTSD, said Paula Schnurr, executive director of the VA's National Center for PTSD. While the three-month study adds to evidence supporting these lifestyle practices, Schnurr said, more research is needed to learn how long meditation's benefits last. "There's no follow-up in this study," Schnurr noted, and one therapist did 80 percent of the exposure therapy so the findings hinge largely on one therapist's skills. Researchers measured symptoms in about 200 San Diego area veterans randomly assigned to one of three groups. Some learned to meditate. Others got exposure therapy. The third group attended classes where they learned about nutrition and exercise. After three months, 61 percent of the meditation group improved on a standard PTSD assessment, compared to 42 percent of those who got exposure therapy and 32 percent of those who went to classes. When researchers accounted for other factors, meditation was better than the classes and equally effective as exposure therapy.

World War II - Operation Magic Carpet

There is little sweeter in this world than returning home from combat operations and being restored to family and native soil. Returning the troops home after WWII was a daunting task. The *Magic Carpet* that flew everyone home. The U.S. military experienced an unimaginable increase during World War II. In 1939, there were 334,000 servicemen, not counting the Coast Guard. In 1945, there were over 12 million, including the Coast Guard. At the end of the war, over 8 million of these men and women were scattered overseas in Europe, the Pacific and Asia.

Shipping them out wasn't a particular problem but getting them home was a massive logistical headache. The problem didn't come as a surprise, as Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall had already established committees to address the issue in 1943. When Germany fell in May 1945, the U.S. Navy was still busy fighting in the Pacific and couldn't assist. The job of transporting 3 million men home fell to the Army and the Merchant Marine. 300 Victory and Liberty cargo ships were converted to troop transports for the task. During the war, 148,000 troops crossed the Atlantic west to east each month; the rush home ramped this up to 435,000 a month over 14 months. In October 1945, with the war in Asia also over, the Navy started chipping in, converting all available vessels to transport duty. On smaller ships like destroyers, capable of carrying perhaps 300 men, soldiers were told to hang their hammocks in whatever nook and cranny they could find. Carriers were particularly useful, as their large open hangar decks could house 3,000 or more troops in relative comfort, with bunks, sometimes in stacks of five welded or bolted in place. The Navy wasn't picky, though: cruisers, battleships, hospital ships, even LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank) were packed full of men yearning for home. Two British ocean liners under American control, the *RMS Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth*, had already served as troop transports before and continued to do so during the operation, each capable of carrying up to 15,000 people at a time, though their normal, peacetime capacity was less than 2,200. Twenty-nine ships were dedicated to transporting war brides: women married to American soldiers during the war. The Japanese surrender in August 1945 came none too soon, but it put an extra burden on *Operation Magic Carpet*. The war in Asia had been expected to go well into 1946 and the Navy and the War Shipping Administration were hard-pressed to bring home all the soldiers who now had to get home earlier than anticipated. The transports carrying them also had to collect numerous POWs from recently liberated Japanese camps, many of whom suffered from malnutrition and illness. The time to get home depended a lot on the circumstances. *USS Lake Champlain*, a brand new *Essex*-class carrier that arrived too late for the war, could cross the Atlantic and take 3,300 troops home a little under 4 days and 8 hours. Meanwhile, troops going home from Australia or India would sometimes spend months on slower vessels. There was enormous pressure on the operation to bring home as many men as possible by Christmas 1945. Therefore, a sub-operation, *Operation Santa Claus*, was dedicated to the purpose. Due to storms at sea and an overabundance of soldiers eligible for return home, however, Santa Claus could only return a fraction in time and still not quite home but at least to American soil. The nation's transportation network was overloaded: trains heading west from the East Coast were on average 6 hours behind schedule and trains heading east from the West Coast were twice that late. The *USS Saratoga* transported home a total of 29,204 servicemen during *Operation Magic Carpet*, more than any other ship. Many freshly discharged men found themselves stuck in separation centers but faced an outpouring of love and friendliness from the locals. Many townsfolk took in freshly arrived troops and invited them to Christmas dinner in their homes. Still others gave their train tickets to soldiers and still others organized quick parties at local train stations for men on layover.

A Los Angeles taxi driver took six soldiers all the way to Chicago; another took another carload of men to Manhattan, the Bronx, Pittsburgh, Long Island, Buffalo and New Hampshire. Neither of the drivers accepted a fare beyond the cost of gas.

In all, though, the Christmas deadline proved untenable. The last 29 troop transports, carrying some 200,000 men from the China-India-Burma theater, arrived to America in April 1946, bringing *Operation Magic Carpet* to an end, though an additional 127,000 soldiers still took until September to return home and finally lay down the burden of war.

