



RETIREE



TIMES

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Vandenberg Air
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RETIREE APPRECIATION DAY 2001

LARGER CROWD THAN PREVIOUS YEARS!

By Col. Myrna-Lynne Whitney

30th Space Wing Vice Commander (Individual Mobilization Augmentee)
Retiree Project Officer

On Nov. 16, almost 700 military retirees, their spouses and families filled Vandenberg's Pacific Coast Club for Retiree Appreciation Day, an increase of 100 participants from last year's event. Retired Air Force Major General Richard D. Murray, President of the National Association for Uniformed Services returned as the featured speaker. Health care issues, especially TRICARE-for-Life, were the focus of the formal program. Thirty-one on- and off-base organizations had information tables again, an increase from the previous year.

The opening ceremonies began at 9:30 a.m. with the posting of the Colors, the Patriot Voices singing the national anthem and Chaplain Husfelt giving the invocation. Col. Richard Strathearn, 30th Space Wing Vice Commander and Retired Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Kipp Thonack, former 30th Space Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant, welcomed all the military retirees and thanked them for the rich legacy of service, honor, duty and loyalty that they have given to all of us. Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Leo Sampanis USAF (Ret), Air Force Retiree Council Representative for Area II - Calif., spoke briefly on the importance of honoring our retirees and the important role that the retirees play in supporting the active duty military.

Murray discussed the success of TFL since its institution on Oct. 1, 2001. He related some personal incidences with TFL and reiterated the importance of NAUS and other military associations that work to preserve a strong national defense and fight to protect the benefits of retirees, widows and veterans. He reminded the retirees that their "grass roots-level efforts" were "instrumental" in convincing Congress to fund TFL. Murray also covered some new issues that NAUS will be sponsoring and then answered questions from the audience.

Retired Air Force Lt. Col. William Pate from the Health Insurance & Counseling Advocacy Program, discussed the services that HICAP offers to retirees. Pate, a strong supporter of Vandenberg's retirees, also provided an information table for Appreciation Day.

Col. Charles Campbell, 30th Medical Group Commander, provided welcoming remarks and discussed briefly some of the changes that the hospital/clinic is experiencing. Next, Pauline Triebenbacher from Healthnet Federal Services and Lt. Col. Scott Dawson, 30th Medical Group, gave specific details on the use and functioning of TFL. Retirees questioned Triebenbacher



Speakers at Retiree Appreciation Day included (clockwise from upper left) Retired USAF Lt. Col. Leo Sampanis, Air Force Retiree Council, Col. Richard Strathearn, 30th Space Wing Vice Commander, Retired USAF Ch. Master Sgt. Kipp Thonack, former 30th Space Wing Command Chief, Retired USAF Maj. Gen. Richard D. Murray, President of the National Association of Uniformed Services, Col. Charles Campbell 30th Medical Group Commander, Retired USAF Lt. Col. William Pate, Health Insurance & Advocacy Program; Pauline Triebenbacher, Healthnet Federal Services and Lt. Col. Scott Dawson, 30th Medical Group. (30th Space Wing Photos)

and Dawson extensively on TFL.

Sheila Kaplan, Casualty Affairs Officer, 30th Mission Support Squadron, advised the retirees on the importance of updating their information in DEERS and the link between that and TFL. She discussed her casualty affairs function and encouraged retirees and their spouses to seek her help if they had questions regarding such areas as survivors' benefits.

I concluded the formal program with a status of the most successful and fruitful year that the Retiree Activities Center has enjoyed.

Thanks to the generosity of many community partners, who gave donations to mitigate the cost of the lunch, guests enjoyed a hot-buffet lunch of chicken, ground beefsteak, potatoes, gravy, vegetables, rolls and cake for dessert for only \$4. During lunch, a "give-away" drawing was conducted and many retirees received free turkeys, fruit baskets, spice-racks, aprons, numerous coupons to obtain items for "free" and a 24-inch television set. These generous gifts were complimentary items from some of

the vendors who supply the commissary and some items from the Commissary.

Everyone is reminded that this spectacular Retiree Appreciation Day is the result of a true "Team Vandenberg" effort. The "Team" comprises senior leaders; all base organizations - 14th Air Force, 30th Space Wing, and Associate units; contractors; civilians; community leaders and organizations; retirees; widows; active duty and reserves - EVERYBODY made this happen! Thank you all.



Join Now!

INTERNET ACCESS ARRIVES!**By Col. Myrna-Lynne Whitney**30th Space Wing Vice Commander (Individual Mobilization Augmentee)
Retiree Project Officer

Great news everyone – the Joint Retiree Center now has five computers that have high-speed DSL Internet access for your use. The year-end funds that Maj. Gen Looney III, 14th Air Force Commander, gave to the Joint Retiree Center enabled the purchase of necessary hardware to have the Internet service installed. Thanks to Lt. Col. Brad Ashley, 30th Communications Squadron Commander and Richard Boyle of the 30th CS, a fellow retiree, who dedicatedly worked through the reams of “red tape” to obtain a contract with Verizon.

Also, “thanks” to Lt. Col. Delane Aguilar, 30th Comptroller Squadron Commander, for handling the accounting details. This will open many doors to a world of information for our retirees and widows. They will be able to access web sites of all services, VA information and other sources that retirees need. Come into the Retiree Center and try out our new service. On every Wednesday, we have Chuck Brown who offers computer training and will help you with Internet access. On Thursdays, by appointment, we have Roy Stovall who will help you out with the computer. Call (805) 606-5474 for more information or to schedule your training.

RETIREE TIMES**Col. Robert M. Worley II USAF**Commander 30th Space Wing**Col. Richard Strathearn USAF**Vice Commander 30th Space Wing/RAO Coordinator**Col. Myrna-Lynne Whitney USAFR**

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Non-advertisement content is compiled from various sources by the Vandenberg Retired Activities Office. Even though reasonable effort has been made to assure the accuracy of the contents, no guarantee of such accuracy is made nor should be assumed. Direct questions on the various topics to the agencies and phone numbers listed in the articles. All photographs, unless otherwise indicated are RAO or Air Force Photos.

Publication deadlines are the 15th of March, June, September and December. The Retiree Activities Office reserves the right to edit all submissions for style and space. Send submissions to 30SW/CVR, 747 Nebraska Ave., Suite A200, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-1461 or via facsimile to (805) 606-0437. The phone number is (805) 606-5474. Email may be addressed to <retirees.office@vandenberg.af.mil>.

Retiree Activities Center

Building 10364, Base Exchange Area
Office Hours: Tuesday through Friday
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Closed Saturday, Sunday and Federal
Holidays

“THANK YOU”**APPRECIATION DAY SUPPORTERS****By Col Myrna-Lynne Whitney**30th Space Wing Vice Commander
(Individual Mobilization Augmentee)
Retiree Project Officer

Formal “thank you” letters will be sent to all those who helped, in so many ways, to support Retiree Appreciation Day. However, I want to recognize some individuals and organizations that donated funds to mitigate the cost of the lunches to the attendees. They are as follows: Air Force Association, Goddard Chapter; A. J. Diani Construction Company; bd Systems, Inc.; Company Grade Officers; Santa Maria Chamber of Commerce (Bob Hatch); Joe and Phil Sesto; Vandenberg’s TOP Three; United Paradyne; Vandenberg Federal Credit Union; Air Force Sergeants’ Association, Chapter 1356 and the Vandenberg chapter of the Non-Commissioned Officers’

Association.

I also want to thank Denny Laws, President of the AFA Goddard Chapter, not only for his contributions from the AFA and bd Systems; but also, for his help in seeking donations to defray costs. A special “thanks” goes to the Commissary ‘s Bill Franco, Randy Epps and Dale Yong for their contributions of fruit baskets as “give-aways” and to Jerri Askrin, representing ALA, and all the vendors who provided giveaway items for the drawing. Thanks to AAFES’s Steve

Reisbeck and Coleen Cushion for the many gift items that they provided at their information tables and the special offers that they had at the main exchange. And, a final “thank you,” to Mrs. Pat Gehres, one of our volunteers at the Retiree Center, who obtained numerous baked items, from Mr. Gregory Ratcliff and Melissa Gaudin at the Lompoc Von’s bakery department, to serve at the Center when retirees and other visitors stopped in to visit the facility. Thanks to all of you!

Military ID Cards by Mail

If you are disabled, hospitalized or otherwise unable to travel to a military base you may be able to obtain a new military identification card by mail from local military ID Card offices. To do this write a letter explaining why you cannot get to the ID Card office (for example, poor health or disability) and request an ID Card be issued to you through the mail. The letter should include your full name, Social Security number, rank and service, current mailing address, telephone number, physical characteristics including hair color, eye color, height, and weight.

Also include a notarized 8-inch by 10-inch photo, which can be in color or black and white. The photo should display the individual's face and shoulders only. It must have a plain white or light colored background. The photo must be notarized on the reverse side and the individual must also sign on the reverse side. A notary indicates that "the photo is a true photo of the person requesting the ID Card."

After the ID card office has received your letter and photo, they will send you a DD Form 1172 and a partially completed ID Card for your signature. Review the Form 1172 for accuracy and complete any highlighted areas with the requested information. Sign block 90 and date block 91. Initial the line in block 89. If the

sponsor is deceased, the surviving dependent must sign. In either case, the signature in block 90 must also be notarized. After signing the form and card, send them back, along with the old ID Card to the ID Card office where the card will be completed and returned to you.

The issuing office may require one or more certified copies of the following listed forms for verification of the retirees' status and/or the status of any dependent before the application can be processed:

Marriage Certificate, Retirement Order, Death Certificate, DD Form 214, Statement of Release/ Discharge from Active Duty, Adoption Papers, Letter from school registrar's office (on school letterhead) stating full time student status

Depending on the mail and any backlog the ID Card office might be experiencing, this process may take up to six weeks. If you have any questions regarding any ID Card policy, you should contact the applicable ID Card office.

ID Card Issuing Offices:

30 MSS/DPMPs, Rm. C-114
1031 California Blvd., Ste. D,
Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437
(805)606-2276

RETIREES – WIDOWS – HAVE YOU JOINED THE PACIFIC COAST CLUB?

Just want to let all of you in on a super offer – membership in the Pacific Coast Club! In last quarter's edition of "The Retiree Times," we gave you all the details, but this is a reminder that you are really missing out on an opportunity if you do not join the Club. Retirees – for only \$8 a month – and, widows – for only \$5 a month – you can dine in style and reap many benefits.

You will receive \$14 worth of coupons each month redeemable for lunch, brunch or evening dining. So, with simple math, you see that your membership is really FREE! You say that you "do not drive at night," but you are on base during the day and can stop in for a relaxed lunch. You may pickup membership applications at the Retiree Center or go directly to the club where you can fill out an application and immediately receive a temporary membership card.. Call the club at 734-4375 for more information.

U.S. Navy PSA Detachment
2251 Pacific Rd., Ste. 1
Oxnard, CA 93046
(805)982-5367

USAR (Attn: ID Card Section)
HHC, ISU
Camp Roberts, CA 93451
(805)238-8204

USAR (Attn: ID Card Section)
Fort Hunter Liggett
Jolon, CA 93928
(831)386-2502

Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard personnel may also write to the applicable address:

Commander, Naval Reserve
Personnel Center, Code 413,
4400 Dauphine St.
New Orleans, LA 70149-7800
(800)443-9297

Headquarters Marine Corps
Code MMSR-6
Washington, DC 20380-1775
(800)336-4649

Commanding Officer
U.S. Coast Guard Human
Resources Service and
Information Center (RAS)
444 SE Quincy St.
Topeka, KS. 66683-3591
(785)339-3441

GAME DAY at the RETIREE CENTER!

Bridge? Cribbage? Checkers? Chess? What do you like to play? What do you know how to play? Do you want to help others learn? Help us start "Game Day" – so bring your friends and let's play some of your favorite games. Come to the Retiree Activities Center **every Wednesday** to join your fellow retirees for some fun times. Mrs. Pat Nuth is going to be the activities director for "Game Day." So, if you are interested in participating, please call the Center – (805) 606-5474, and we will take your name and number and when we have enough folks who are interested in playing a particular game we will call you. Looking forward to getting this activity off the ground!

RETIREMENT LUNCHEON AND CEREMONY

By Col Myrna-Lynne Whitney

30th Space Wing Vice Commander (Individual Mobilization Augmentee)
Retiree Project Officer

I want to thank all the volunteers who participated in my retirement luncheon on Dec. 5 and in my ceremony on Dec. 7. It was so rewarding to have your support and see retirees and widows occupying three tables at the luncheon. Thank you all for the lovely oil painting of the Lompoc flower fields.

These two events were the largest celebrations that I have ever had and it was such a pleasure to have all of you share it with me. Brig. Gen. Roosevelt Mercer Jr., 81st Training Wing Commander, from Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., performed my retirement ceremony and I had the opportunity to show him the Joint Retiree Center. He was most impressed with our facility and plans to send some of his staff to Vandenberg to talk with me about the formation of the facility. Gen. Mercer wants to get something similar started at Keesler.

I have had calls from Nellis and Patrick Air Force Bases inquiring about our facility – so, we are the "benchmark" for retiree centers. The Central Coast retirees are fortunate to have this "state-of-the art" center for our activities and services.

Although I had my retirement ceremony, I will not officially retire until May 2002 due to the President's invoking "stop-loss." I am pleased as I still have some things to accomplish with the Retiree Center and look forward to continue working with the retirees and widows.

TRICARE FOR LIFE CLAIMS INFORMATION

Individual claims information can be retrieved over a password-protected internet link to Palmetto Government Benefits Administrator, the claims processor.

Direct your browser to <<http://www.mytricare.com>> and click on "Member Sign In." Provide your name and select a password. After validating your information, the administrator will send a letter by U.S. mail to the address on file for you based on claims you have sent in the past.

The letter will contain a unique Security Key Code. When you receive your letter, visit the same internet site and again select "Member Sign In." Enter your username and password then click on "Submit." A window will appear where you must enter your Security Key Code.

Entering the code successfully will give you immediate access to your claims. It will also allow you to grant permissions for others to view your personal information and add your under-18-year-old children to your profile so you can see their claims.

IMPORTANT: Due to the Federal Privacy Act of 1974, children over 18 and your spouse must create their own profiles and grant you permission to see their data before you can add them to your profile.

This two-part registration helps confirm your identity and protect your privacy. For more information how we safeguard your personal information, read "Our Privacy Promise" on the internet site

LONG TERM CARE INSURANCE COMING SOON

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has announced that Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and John Hancock Life Insurance Company have been selected as the insurers for the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program. The two companies have formed Long Term Care Partners, LLC, a jointly owned entity devoted exclusively to operating the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP). Insurance coverage will be available no later than October 2002.

OPM officials say the program is likely to become the largest employer-sponsored, long-term care insurance program in the nation. Under the law, approximately 20 million people, including federal employees and retirees, as well as members and retired members of the uniformed services, will be eligible to apply for coverage. Premiums will be below those generally available in the private market.

The OPM announcement explained that together, Metropolitan Life and John Hancock have the resources and experience to efficiently provide this insurance protection. Separately, each has name recognition with the public that inspires trust.

The FLTCIP will be a model program that offers contemporary benefits, such as a care-coordination program. The program will evolve with the market to adjust for technological advancements in the long-term care industry.

The complete premium schedules and benefit options for the FLTCIP will be announced after Long Term Care Partners conduct final market research with members of the groups eligible to enroll. An early-enrollment opportunity is scheduled for early 2002 due to significant interest from individuals who are familiar with long-term care insurance coverage. Information about the early-enrollment period will be available soon.

The program is the result of a legislative proposal submitted to Congress in January 1999, which the House and Senate passed in July 2000. The Long Term Care Security Act (Public Law 106-265) was signed into law on September 19, 2000. Members of the retiree community can stay current on the Long Term Care situation by periodically visiting the OPM web site at <<http://www.opm.gov>>.



Photo by John McGraw

The Silvertones, a Santa Maria chorale group, with conductor Mary Louise Oswald on the keyboard, joined us again this year for our holiday gathering

SILVERTONES ADD HAPPY "NOTES" TO HOLIDAY PARTY

The holiday festivities began at noon on Thursday, December 13, with a potluck comprised of many delicious entrees and desserts. Then, Col. Myrna-Lynne Whitney had an awards ceremony for the volunteers who support the Center. The following volunteers, with over 100 hours of service, received coffee cups with the logos of all the services and their names etched on the cups: Juanita Anderson, Dick Barkley, Chuck Brown, "Carp" Carper, Bob Eastwood, Pat Gehres, Faye Gillis, Gus Gustafson, John McGraw, Pat Nuth, Harlan Oakes, and George Tallent.

Volunteers who donated funds or who were instrumental in obtaining funding for Retiree Appreciation Day received "Appreciation Certificates" – Dick Barkley, John Black, John McGraw, Harlan Oakes, and Wray Stitch. Three retirees who were significant contributors, but who

were unable to attend were mailed their certificates – Ed Larson, Fay D. James, and John McNally.

Finally, "Retiree Activities Volunteer" pins were given to those with 10 hours or more of volunteer service. Besides the previously mentioned individuals, the following were awarded pins: Tony Gonzalez, Mary Hale, Betty Hoffman, Herb Kanner, Peggy Kizziah, Bud Pollock, Thomas Rush, Gary Schnereger, John Stone, Jim Swartz, Mavis White, and Elfrieda Wittwer.

After the awards ceremony, the Silvertones sang a medley of 21 holiday songs and, on some of the songs, we joined in the singing. We had a birthday cake for three of our December birthday people – Bob Eastwood, Faye Gillis, and Gus Gustafson; then a holiday gift exchange. It was a great party that concluded a super year for the Retiree Center and all of our volunteers and retired "family members."



Photo by 30 SW

Col. Myrna-Lynne Whitney and Maj. Gen. Richard Murray and his wife Jan with Volunteer Chuck Brown.



Photo by 30 SW

Maj. Gen. Richard Murray with Col. Myrna-Lynne Whitney



Photo by 30 SW

Volunteer Bob Eastwood with Maj. Gen. Richard Murray

NAUS PRESIDENT VISITS RETIREE ACTIVITIES CENTER

By Col. Myrna-Lynne Whitney

30th Space Wing Vice Commander (Individual Mobilization Augmentee) Retiree Project Officer

Following the Appreciation Day program, Maj. Gen. Murray, President of the National Association of Uniformed Services and Lt. Col. Leo Sampanis, Air Force Retiree Council Representative, accompanied by their wives toured the Joint Retiree Center so that everyone could see all the changes since their visit last year. When the grand opening was

held last year, the facility was not totally complete, as all the furnishings had not arrived.

The Murrays and Sampanis enjoyed meeting the retirees and widows who volunteer in the Center and marveled at the outstanding facility – complete with computer training and internet service for retirees. General Murray contends that Vandenberg's Retiree Center is a benchmark for the rest of the Air Force and other services to emulate.

FUNERAL PROGRAM TEAMS MILITARY, VETS' GROUPS

The Department of Defense (DoD) is teaming with veterans service organizations across the country to enhance traditional funeral ceremonies that honor the nation's military veterans. Representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the military services, the Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans service organizations, the National Cemetery Administration, the Funeral Directors Association and other groups met this past summer for the announcement of the Authorized Provider Partnership Program's July debut.

Charles S. Abell, assistant secretary of defense for force management policy, said organizations are being asked to augment DoD-provided personnel at military funerals by providing volunteers to serve as color guards, rifle detail members, pallbearers and buglers. "We want to provide the appropriate honors to veterans who pass away," Abell said. "The veterans organizations want to help us, and we would like to have their help. The program will enhance the honors that can be rendered with their performance." Other groups, such as ROTC detachments and reserve component advisory units could also participate in the

program. Letters introducing the program, a 20-minute training video, and pins for presentation to participants were mailed to military unit commanders in July. Letters explaining the program and training videos were also mailed to veterans service organizations.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 authorized the partnership program and also states DoD will provide at least two active, National Guard or reserve uniformed service members to fold and present a ceremonial U.S. flag to survivors at military funerals. One of the two detail members must be of the same service as the deceased.

DoD also provides a military musician—if available—to play "Taps," or the music is rendered via high-quality compact disc. The CDs, recorded at Arlington National Cemetery in 1999, are part of a kit sent to licensed funeral directors working in association with DoD, veterans service organizations and all active and reserve

component military units conducting funerals.

Almost 450,000 active duty and reserve component service members participated in military funeral details in 2000, DoD officials noted. The partnered veterans groups have augmented DoD efforts and "provided enhancements" to military funerals in the past, Abell said. Such help has been historically encouraged and authorized, he noted.

"What we have now is a formal program where veterans service organizations can be trained by the local (military) installation commander ... (to) ensure that the quality of the honors rendered are to standard and that the funeral honors rendered in any particular place around the nation will be the same," he said. Installation commanders will train and certify volunteers, Abell said. The volunteers, he added, are eligible for

See Vets' Groups Page 8

TRICARE GUIDANCE

In times of enhanced security at military installations it may be difficult for TRICARE beneficiaries to access uniformed services hospitals and clinics. The TRICARE Management Activity developed the following guidance for beneficiaries seeking emergency, urgent and routine care at uniformed services facilities that are under these conditions.

In case of medical emergency, TRICARE beneficiaries should seek immediate treatment at the nearest hospital. This is true whether or not they are enrolled in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE for Life at a military facility. TRICARE defines an emergency as a medical, maternity or psychiatric condition that would lead a "prudent layperson" (someone with average knowledge of health and medicine) to believe that a serious medical condition exists. An emergency condition is one in which the absence of medical attention would result in a threat to life, limb, or sight and requires immediate medical treatment. Further, it may be a condition marked by severe pain that requires immediate relief to alleviate suffering.

While the definition of an emergency may sound complicated, it really means that beneficiaries who believe they are experiencing a serious medical condition that requires immediate treatment should go to the nearest emergency room. TRICARE will assist in paying for the cost of their care. This is true for beneficiaries who use TRICARE Standard or Extra, or who are enrolled in Prime or TRICARE for Life at a military facility.

TRICARE beneficiaries who become ill but do not require emergency care as described above need urgent care. Those enrolled in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE for Life who have a primary care provider who works out of a uniformed services facility that is inaccessible due to increased security are encouraged to call their provider for assistance. Providers or staff members at military treatment facilities can inform beneficiaries of their best options for necessary care. In many circumstances, this may include taking care of oneself under the advice of a provider or a change in timing of the needed visit as appropriate. Beneficiaries also may contact their regional Health Care Information Line for information on self-care.

During times of increased security, routine appointments should be rescheduled if access to a military treatment facility is restricted. As with urgent care, beneficiaries should call ahead to their providers' offices for guidance.

People can obtain more information by visiting the website at <<http://www.tricare.osd.mil>> or calling 1(888)363-5433.

SPECIAL THANKS – RETIREES CONTINUE TO GIVE

By Col Myrna-Lynne Whitney

30th Space Wing Vice Commander (Individual Mobilization Augmentee) Retiree Project Officer

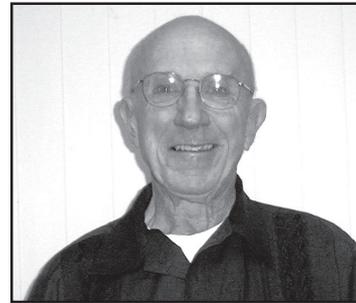
I want to thank three very special retirees— Coast Guard Reserve Cmdr. Fay James and his wife Will; Army Lt. Col. John McNally and Air Force Sgt. Richard Barkley who gave generous donations to the Joint Retiree Center. At Retiree Appreciation Day, I gave the audience a “status report” of the good fortune that the Center had received during the year. I mentioned that four of our retirees – representing their services – Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force – had given \$100 donations. After the program, Cmdr. James came up to talk with me and gave me a \$100 donation to represent his service – the United States Coast Guard.

Then, five days after Appreciation Day, the day before Thanksgiving, I received two letters. One was from Cmdr. James with a generous donation for \$251.09 – the amount that he and his wife “saved in October by canceling their Medigap policy.” The other letter contained a donation from Lt Col McNally, who said that he “lives too far away ... to be of direct help,” but that he “treasures ... the newsletter and the many services and courtesies Vandenberg Air Force Base provides,” so he wanted to contribute

with his monetary donation.

Both Cmdr. James and Lt Col. McNally live a distance from Vandenberg and do not frequent the base, but wanted to help. I was so excited with these donations and was telling some of our retirees and volunteers in the Center about these generous people. Then, Sgt. Dick Barkley, one of our regular volunteers, with over 100 hours of service this year, pulled out his checkbook and gave me a \$100 donation.

On behalf of all the retirees, volunteers, and widows, at the Joint Retiree Center, I thank these very giving individuals. The Retiree Activities Program is an official organization with an Air Force Instruction; therefore, we are unable to seek donations or raise funds as private organizations are able to do. However, we are permitted to accept donations under \$5,000 and the checks, made payable to the United States Treasury, are given to the Comptroller who maintains an official account for the Retiree Center. Thank you all for your kind donations that the retirees will put to good use in furthering the Center’s efforts.



Contributed



30 SW Photo

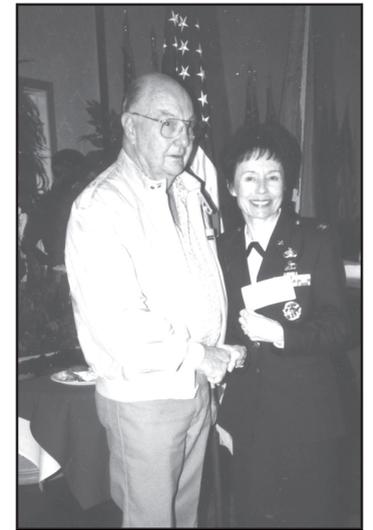


Photo by John McGraw

Lt. Col. John McNally (upper left), Cmdr. Fay James with Col. Myrna-Lynne Whitney (above) and Maj. Gen. Richard Murray with Sgt. Dick Barkley (on right, lower left)

TYPE 2 DIABETES ADDED BY LAW

Veterans Benefits Act of 2001 adds Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2) to the list of service-connected diseases presumed for Vietnam veterans, and expands the definition of undiagnosed illnesses for Persian Gulf War veterans to include fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, chronic multisymptom illnesses, and any other illnesses that cannot be defined. It also provides cost-of-living adjustments to service-connected disability compensation for veterans and their survivors.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has amended its adjudication regulations concerning presumptive service connection for certain diseases for which there is no record during service. This amendment is necessary to implement a decision of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under the authority granted by 38 U.S.C. 1116 that there is a positive association between exposure to herbicides used in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam era and the subsequent development of Type 2 diabetes. The intended effect of this amendment is to establish presumptive service connection for that condition based on herbicide exposure.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is concerned that veterans may regard diseases associated with aging, such as prostate cancer, as just another illness rather than as the result of their military service in Southeast Asia. VA wants these Vietnam veterans to know that they may be eligible for compensation and health care for certain diseases associated with Agent Orange, the defoliant sprayed to unmask enemy hiding places in the jungles throughout Vietnam.

Special health care and compensation benefits are available to the 2.6 million men and women who served in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975, only 3,300 of whom remain in uniform today. Those discharged

during that period are the largest group of veterans receiving VA health care and monthly compensation.

Yet a small percentage of their disability claims are for illnesses scientists have listed as being associated with Agent Orange. VA presumes that all military personnel who served in Vietnam were exposed to Agent Orange, and federal law now presumes that certain illnesses are a result of that exposure. This so-called “presumptive policy” simplifies the process of receiving compensation for these diseases since VA foregoes the normal requirements of proving that an illness began, or was worsened during military service.

Based on clinical research, the following diseases are on VA’s Agent Orange list of presumptive disabilities: chloracne, diabetes mellitus, Hodgkin’s disease, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, porphyria cutanea tarda, respiratory cancers (lung, bronchus, larynx and trachea), soft-tissue sarcoma, acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy and prostate cancer.

In addition, monetary benefits, health care and vocational rehabilitation services are provided to Vietnam veterans’ offspring with spina bifida, a congenital birth defect of the spine. A new law authorizes health care and monetary benefits to children of female veterans who served in Vietnam for certain additional birth defects. Additional benefits under the new law became payable to the beneficiaries December 1, 2001.

Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war also are eligible for a complete physical examination. If a VA physician suspects a disease might be related to Agent Orange, VA will provide free medical care.

See Diabetes Page 8

EXPOSURE TO AGENT ORANGE OUTSIDE VIETNAM

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has issued a final rule in the Federal Register concerning the subject of exposure to Agent Orange outside the Republic of Vietnam.

Section 1116(a) (3) of title 38 of the U.S. Code establishes a presumption of exposure to certain herbicides for any veteran who served in the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975, and has one of the diseases on the list of diseases subject to presumptive service connection.

However, if a veteran who did not serve in the Republic of Vietnam, but was exposed to an herbicide defined in 38 CFR 3.307(a) (6) during active military service has a disease on the list of diseases subject to presumptive service connection, the VA will presume that the disease is due to exposure to herbicides.

Any military retiree or other veteran that meets the above criteria should submit an application to the VA for a ruling on that individual case. To file a compensation claim for a current disability related to Agent Orange, call 1-800-827-1000 for an application form or visit the VA’s Web site at: <<http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov>>.

MONTHLY MEETING SCHEDULE

The **third Thursday** of each month at 1 p.m. in the Retiree Center, Building 10364 – Base Exchange area, across from the Four Seasons store – retirees gather to hear guest speakers, socialize, and enjoy cookies and coffee. **Quarterly** there is a potluck luncheon that begins at 1200. The schedule is as follows:

Jan. 17 – Estate Conservation – Mr. Altheide, VAFB Federal Credit Union

Feb. 21 – Federal/State Tax Preparation – 30 SW Judge Advocates Office

Mar. 21 – **Potluck at 1200. Meeting at 1300.** Dental Program – Steve Morgan, Delta Federal Services

Apr. 18 – Identity Theft/Credit Card Scams – Mrs. Van Sickle, VAFB Federal Credit Union

May 16 – Vandenberg Base Clinic – Col. Whit Campbell, 30th Medical Group Commander

Jun. 20 – **Potluck at 1200. Meeting at 1300.** Eye Care – Dr. Zarnegar – Shepard Eye Center

Jul. 18 – Exercise for Seniors – Tyson Grier – Vandenberg Wellness Center

Aug. 15 – Emergency Healthcare – Paramedics

Sep. 19 – **Potluck at 1200. Meeting at 1300.** Casualty Affairs – Sheila Kaplan – 30th Mission Support Squadron

Oct. 17 – Convalescent Care – Speaker to be determined.

***November – Retiree Appreciation Day – Date to be determined.**

***Dec. 12 – Thursday – HOLIDAY POTLUCK LUNCHEON**

*Denotes different date than 3rd Thursday of the month and for Appreciation Day different location.

NOTE: Speakers may be subject to change. Please check the “Space & Missile Times” for details as days come closer. Also, listen to KUHL for current news on events; and flyers are posted at the Retiree Center.



Photo by John McGraw

Bob Baden, Assistant Chief Executive Officer of Lompoc Hospital, spoke with military retirees at the October potluck meeting in the Joint Retiree Center. Baden advised retirees on the services that Lompoc Hospital provides and discussed the many challenges facing medicine today. An extensive question and answer session followed his presentation.

Open Enrollment in VA Health Care Extended

Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Tony Principi announced that the administration had extended the open enrollment program for all veterans who seek VA health care. All military retirees and other veterans are encouraged to enroll regardless of eligibility for other insurance such as Medicare and TRICARE.

VA COPAYMENTS

The co-payments for visits to Veterans Affairs clinics has been reduced from \$50.25 to \$15. As previously reported, the co-payment for prescriptions was increased from \$2 to \$7 on Jul. 16, 2001.

NEW CMS WEB SITE

A new web site (www.cms.hhs.gov/) was recently launched to provide information on health care programs and services and assist those who rely on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) formerly known as the Health Care Financing Administration.

SEVERELY DISABLED COMPENSATION

“Chapter 61” retirees who served 20 or more years on active duty and received a rating of at least a 70-percent military disability retirement from their parent service must also have been awarded Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation. A VA disability rating is necessary before the retiree is eligible for the new \$100 to \$300 monthly “special compensation for certain severely disabled retirees,” in accordance with a recent Department of Defense legal ruling.

“Chapter 61” retirees who applied to the VA, or did not accept VA disability compensation may have done so because they believed there was no advantage. The primary reason was that much or all of their military retired pay was exempt from taxation.

Retirees falling into this category will see a delay in receiving the new \$100-300 monthly special compensation until they apply for and receive VA compensation.

The average time to process a VA disability claim is now in excess of six months. Once the VA payments are authorized, military finance officials will make retroactive “special compensation” payments for qualifying retirees—back to the effective date of the VA disability award or October. 1, 2001, whichever is later.

Retirees due compensation under this programs who haven’t already applied for VA disability compensation should do so immediately.

COLA 2.6 PERCENT

The Bureau of Labor Statistics announced the September update of the Consumer Price index, which determines the cost-of-living adjustment to various federal programs including military retired pay, survivor benefits, and veterans compensation, Social Security annuities and many others. The COLA for all those programs is 2.6 percent for most recipients, effective Dec. 1 and payable in the checks that were received on Jan. 2, 2002.

Senate Bill 1090 authorizes a 2.6 percent COLA for veterans’ disability compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation and related benefits, effective Dec. 1, 2001. The original sponsor is Senator Rockefeller (Dem. W.Va.). It was favorably reported out of committee to full Senate.

The deduction for Medicare Part B from Social Security increased by \$4.00 to \$54.00 from the current \$50.00.

COUMADIN CLASS ACTION

If you purchased and/or paid for all or part of the purchase price of Coumadin (warfarin sodium) dispensed in accordance with a medical prescription in the United States during period Mar. 1, 1997 through Aug. 1, 2001, you may be part of an antitrust litigation settlement. The plaintiffs in this class action allege that Dupont Pharmaceuticals Company disseminated false and misleading information claiming there was a lack of equivalence between Coumadin and other products as well as providing consideration to distributors to favor Coumadin over competing products.

A settlement was preliminarily approved Aug. 1, 2001 calling for the establishment of a \$44.5 million fund that will be used to pay claims after deductions are made for expenses, attorneys’ fees and cost of administration. Third party payers, i.e., insurance companies are also eligible to participate. Claims submitted by consumers and third party payers under terms of the proposed settlement must be received by the administrator by April 30, 2002.

A claims package may be obtained by writing:
Wafarin Sodium Antitrust Litigation
c/o Complete Claims Solutions, Inc.
P.O. Box 24705

West Palm Beach, FL 33416

You may also call toll free (888)888-7474 or log on to <http://www.coumadinsettlement.com>. A copy of the consumer claim form is available at the Retiree Activities Office.

NEW TRICARE BENEFITS IN NDAA

Included in the National Defense Authorization Act are several important new benefits. They are: Hearing aids, prosthetics, medical equipment and rehabilitation therapy that will now be available for dependents under TRICARE. Another provision in the NDAA requires DOD to reimburse reasonable travel expenses of a parent or guardian who must travel significant distances to obtain specialty care under the TRICARE system.

TRIPS, TOURS AND CRUISES

Vandenberg Leisure Tours is in Building 10122, the Services Center, located near the corner of California Blvd. and Washington Ave. It offers a wide variety of excursions to suit every taste. In addition, the tour office lists favorable rates at hotels and motels in the vicinity of Southern California theme parks and Los Angeles Airport. Active duty, retired military, and civil service personnel, government contractors, families, and guests are eligible to participate. The office publishes the "Tripletter" listing upcoming events. You can learn more about opportunities by calling (805) 606-7976 and asking to be placed on the mailing list. The address is P.O. Box 5459, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-0459. You might also visit their website at www.vandenberg-leisure-tours.org. For complete information on the following upcoming trips, contact the tour office.

Feb. 4-7	Laughlin, Flamingo Hilton, \$89 per person sharing
Feb. 16-19	Lake Tahoe Ski & Play, \$145 per person sharing, single add \$70, Lift tickets available
Mar. 2-3	Las Vegas Turnaround, \$25 cash back, \$40
Mar. 10-13	Laughlin, Flamingo Hilton, See Feb 4-7
Mar. 16-24	Mexican Rivera Cruise, Star Princess, \$929-\$1,099
Apr. 1-4	Las Vegas, Gold Coast Hotel, \$149 per person sharing
Apr. 13	Monterey Day, \$35
Apr. 17	Lion King, \$105
Apr. 20	Getty Museum, reserved entrance time, \$35
Apr. 28-30	Yosemite Lodge, \$245 per person sharing, single \$385
May 4-21	China & Yangtze River, \$2,495 per person sharing, single add \$950, Visa fee \$50
May 12-14	Catalina Island, \$175 per person sharing
Jun. 16-22	California Gold Country, \$389 per person sharing, single add \$150

(Tripletter)

RAO WEB SITE ON-LINE – CHECKOUT OUR NEW LOOK!

As promised, you are now able to find out about the Retiree Center by logging on to the internet at: <http://www.vandenberg.af.mil/30sw/organizations/index.html>. Once there, click on "Staff Agencies," then click on "Retiree Activities Center." You will be able to read "The Retiree Times;" see our facility and some of our staff members; obtain information about upcoming events; and, learn more about the National Society of Military Widows (NSMW). If you have questions, call the Center at (805)-606-5474.

TRICARE DENTAL FOR MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

All Medal of Honor recipients, regardless of their retirement status, may now enroll in the Tricare Retiree Dental Program. This benefit extends to family members and surviving spouses who remain unmarried.

Direct questions about enrollment or eligibility to the Tricare Retiree Dental Program's web site (www.ddpdelta.org) or call 1-888-838-8737.

TRICARE DENTAL PLAN PREMIUM RATE CHANGE

TRICARE Dental Program members will notice a slight increase in their monthly premiums beginning Jan. 2002. The new rates are effective on Feb. 1, 2002; however, since premiums are collected one month in advance, TDP members will notice the change with their January 2002 billing statement, payroll allotment or deduction.

Effective Feb. 1st, TDP premiums will increase by about 3.5 percent or a little less than the annual increase in the dental services component of the Consumer Price Index.

Address Corrections

The mailing list for this newsletter is maintained by the Retiree Activities Office (RAO) based on input from the Defense Manpower Data Center (DEERS) and other sources as well as input directly from addressees. Please make any corrections necessary on the label below, clip and return to the RAO. In the event the retiree is deceased, indicate date and given name of surviving spouse. We want to continue to send the newsletter to the widow/widower. The mailing address of the RAO is shown below. You may also send e-mail to: retirees.office@vandenberg.af.mil.

Diabetes from Page 6

Those who participate in the examination program become part of an Agent Orange Registry and receive periodic mailings from VA about the latest Agent Orange studies and new diseases being covered under VA policies.

Vietnam veterans and their families can contact VA for more information about these benefits. For the Agent Orange Registry physical examination, call a local VA hospital or clinic listed in the government pages of your phone book. To file a compensation claim for a current disability related to Agent Orange, veterans can call 1-800-827-1000 for an application form or visit VA's Web site at:

<<http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov>>.

DON'T LET THE STORIES DISAPPEAR

The American Folklife Center, a project of the Library of Congress, is seeking stories for its new venture: the Veterans History Project. The Project needs audio- and video-taped interviews, letters, diaries, and photographs from veterans of World Wars I and II, as well as the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf Wars. For more information, visit the Project's web site at www.loc.gov/folklife/vets/ or by phone (888)371-5848.

Vets' Groups from Page 5

reimbursement of their travel expenses, such as gas and meals associated with their ceremonial duties.

Abell, attending the Washington meeting with John M. Molino, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy, remarked that America's World War II and Korean War veterans are passing on at increased rates. DoD officials note that 91,074 military funeral honors were performed in 2000, a 110-percent increase over the 43,277 funerals performed in 1999. All the military services report increased military funeral honors ceremonies in 2001.

Military officials said additional reserve component participation is augmenting the active duty military funeral teams. However, Abell reiterated the importance of participation by organizations outside DoD. "In order to provide a more complete service, with a firing detail, color guard and pallbearers, we rely on the patriotism and volunteerism of the veterans service organizations," he said.

For more information on military funeral honors, visit Military.com's Death and Burial Benefits section: <<http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourceFileView?file=Burial.htm>>

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COMPUTER TRAINING AVAILABLE

Need to learn how to use that new computer? Have computer questions that need answers? Come into the Retiree Activities Center on **Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m.** and talk with Mr. Chuck Brown, an RAO volunteer. Or, **by appointment, on Thursdays from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.** with Mr. Roy Stovall, an RAO volunteer. There are five computers and two printers ready for your use. For more details and to register for training, please come into the Retiree Center, opposite the Home & Garden Shop, behind the bowling alley — in the Base Exchange area, or telephone (805) 606-5474.