



# RETIREE



# TIMES

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## Thanks for the memories Honoring Bob Hope, one of America's greatest entertainers

By Capt. Cyril Buehler  
Supply Corps USN (Ret.)

Retiree Activities Office director

■ On May 29, 2003, a special military tribute is planned to honor veterans and one of "America's Greatest Entertainers", Bob Hope, who on that day celebrates his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. A groundbreaking ceremony also takes place that day in San Diego, Calif. to begin construction of the tribute to honor not only America's veterans but also to recognize Hope.

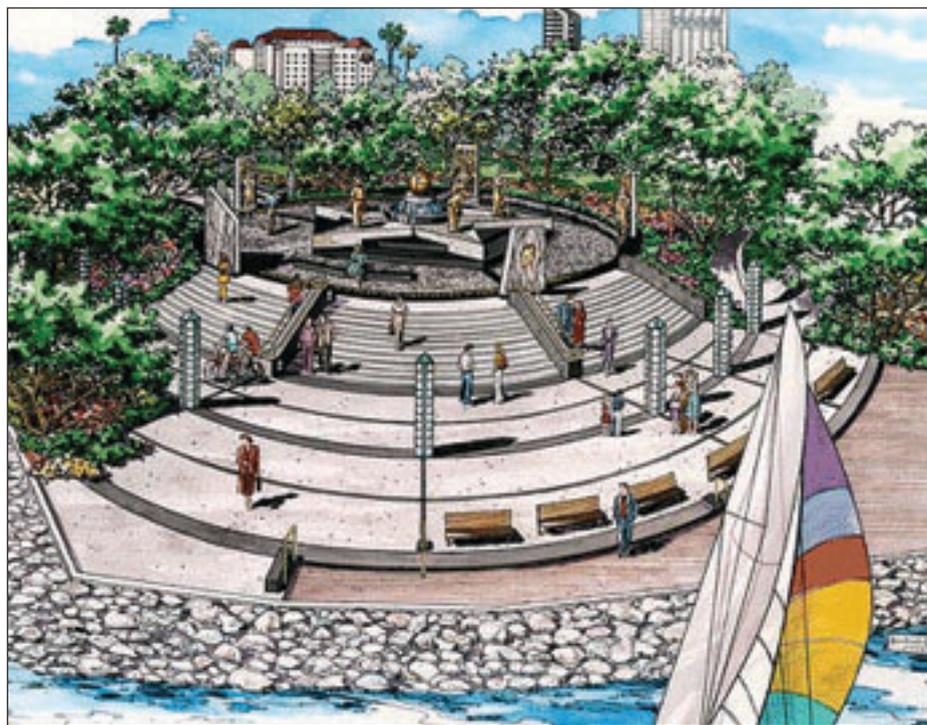
The effort is sponsored by Taffy III, a group of World War II Navy veterans who served on three ships of Task Unit 77.4.3 that were sunk off Samar in the

Philippines during the Battle of Leyte Gulf Oct. 25, 1944. "Taffy III" was the code name of this task unit.

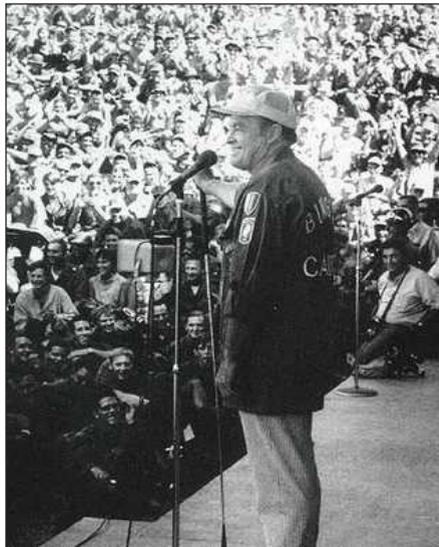
In recent years these men have devoted their efforts toward raising money for monuments to preserve the history of the era. The Port of San Diego already has one monument funded by this group - The Battle of Leyte Gulf Memorial. The Bob Hope Tribute is the latest and most ambitious Taffy III commemorative project.

Fifty-seven years have passed since Bob Hope first entertained the troops.

### "Strolling Down Memory Lane"



The tribute will occupy a waterfront site in San Diego Hope Trib-  
ute



Hope Enterprises

### Bob Hope entertains a military crowd overseas

Whenever there was a need, Hope was there. Thanks to him, hundreds of thousands of soldiers, sailors, airman and Marines had their spirits lifted.

The tribute site is at the northwest corner of the G Street mole on the downtown waterfront. This is in proximity to other military-related monuments in the neighborhood including the Homecoming sculpture, the Aircraft Carrier Memorial obelisk, and the Battle of Leyte Gulf monument. In addition, the retired aircraft carrier U.S.S. Midway has been proposed for permanent berthing as a museum at the south side of the nearby Navy Pier.

Hope's wife, Dolores and daughter Linda have endorsed the military tribute to Bob Hope. Contributions for the memorial are welcome and donations can be made to the memorial fund. In appreciation for their contributions, the names of each donor will be logged and placed in a time capsule which will be permanently set within the stage of the tribute.

Make checks payable to the "BOB HOPE TRIBUTE" and mail to Military Tribute to Bob Hope, P.O. Box 919012, San Diego, CA 92121.



RAO Photo

### Volunteer recognized

By Master Sgt. Robert Eastwood  
USAF (Ret.)

Retiree Activities Office manager

■ The Air Force Personnel Center, under its Retiree Activities Program, selected Juanita Anderson as the Volunteer of the Year in calendar year 2002 for Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Anderson, widow of retired Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Delong Anderson, started volunteering in the Retiree Activities Office in July 2001. On Mar. 20, 2003, Col. Wayne E. Louis, 30<sup>th</sup> Space Wing vice commander, along with retired Navy Capt. Cyril Buehler, RAO director, presented her with the Volunteer of the Year certificate. During the year 2002 her active involvement in the RAO, also earned her the Vandenberg AFB Volunteer of the Quarter award for the second quarter.

She has been an integral part of the operations in the RAO, from supervising volunteers in the quarterly preparations of the newsletter, to assisting in monthly meetings and potluck luncheons. She is also active in other organizations. President of Local Chapter 44, National Society of Military Widows, she has reinvigorated their monthly meetings, held in the RAO. She is also a regular volunteer at the base clinic pharmacy.

In the civilian community, Anderson is an active member of Orcutt Christian Church, providing counseling to widows and parents of young children. Additionally, she is an endowed member in the philanthropic organization - Order of the Eastern Star, and has held the position of Worthy Matron in two chapters and served as deputy of the Worthy Grand Matron.

## Director's Corner

By CAPT. CYRIL BUEHLER,  
SUPPLY CORPS, USN (Ret.)

*Retiree Activities Office Director*

At the time of this writing, our U.S. all-volunteer Armed Forces are going into harm's way in Iraq. They are carrying out their tasks and duties in a most admirable and honorable way. They are bringing liberty and freedom to the Iraqi people, just as veterans have done for other countries around this world in earlier times.

We should be proud of the sacrifices they are making in the accomplishment of their effort and should provide support for them and their Commander in Chief in every way possible.

Vandenberg Air Force Base Family Services places drop boxes in various locations including one at our retiree activities center to receive donations such as playing cards, games, and personal

## Donations needed for deployed troops, memorial tribute to Bob Hope



RAO Photo by John McGraw

**Cy Buehler**

hygiene items which are in short supply in the middle of a desert where there is no base exchange. Family Services will forward items to our deployed service people. Your gifts are most welcome.

Elsewhere in this issue of the *Retiree Times*, there are articles about a memorial tribute to our veterans and Bob Hope. For over 50 years, Hope and other entertainers and the United Services Organization have brought America to our armed forces wherever they were located.

Many of us have had the privilege to attend and be part of these gala events, especially during the holiday season. Now you can make a contribution to the Bob Hope Tribute fund and in this way give your own "Thanks for the Memories."

## Verifying and Updating DEERS

Beneficiaries can verify their DEERS information by contacting your regional TRICARE managed care support contractor, the local TRICARE service center or the nearest uniformed services personnel office (ID card facility).

Sponsors or registered family members may make address changes, however, only the spon-

sor can add or delete a family member from DEERS, and proper documents are required such as a marriage certificate, divorce decree and/or birth certificate.

To update DEERS information visit the local uniformed services personnel office or contact the Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office at (800)538-9552. Find the nearest uniformed ser-

vices personnel office at: [www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/](http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/)

Fax address changes to DEERS at (831)655-8317. Mail the address change to the Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office, ATTN: COA, 400 Gigling Road, Seaside, CA 93955-6771. Go online at: [www.tricare.osd.mil/DEERSAddress](http://www.tricare.osd.mil/DEERSAddress) to update your information.

## Web site improves quality of life

The Air Force's official family and community Web site, Air Force Crossroads, is a valuable resource for Air Force personnel and their families. Air Force Print News reports that the Crossroads Web site includes spouse and employment bulletin board message centers and provides one-stop shopping for information on installations, schools, and local areas.

Once registered, the site is publicly accessible from home. Forum membership is certified through verification of personal information, and access requires a user name and password. Personnel from other service branches are granted limited access. The Air Force Crossroads web site is located at <http://www.afcrossroads.com>.

## DFAS change creates some confusion, problems

A change in the location to send written correspondence destined for the Defense Finance and Accounting Service from Cleveland, Ohio, to London, Ky. has created some confusion among members of the military retiree community.

The confusion, according to officials, stems from the fact that many retirees and Survivor Benefit Plan annuitants think DFAS operations have actually moved from Cleveland to the Kentucky town. This is not the case, but it has led to problems for both the employees in London, Ky. and in Cleveland.

The change created a new way of doing business, which has not been fully explained. Here's how it works and what customers can do to ease the problems. The London, Ky. location is simply a "mail drop" facility where retiree and survivor correspondence to DFAS is handled — opened, sorted and filmed. The Kentucky staff runs documents through a scanning/imaging machine so these important papers may be electronically transmitted to DFAS-Cleveland.

Since the documents arriving in London are in all sizes, shapes, and conditions, some are almost impossible to handle. As a result, of this imaging process, it is very important to send documents that have a certain level of consistency to the London Ky. handlers. Types of documents that retirees and beneficiaries may have the need to transmit include marriage and death certificates, divorce decrees (and letters accompanying those documents), and even changes of address requests.

To obtain the greatest efficiency:

- ◆ Ensure documents sent are standard size (8.5 by 11 inches); make enlargements or reductions when necessary before mailing.
- ◆ Ensure documents are not brittle, fragile, torn or permanently creased because the imaging process uses ungentle, mechanical handling.
- ◆ Ensure any notary or certification seal will be legible after the document completes the scanning/imaging process. If the seal is impressed or embossed, carefully rub a pencil lightly over the raised surfaces. This will lightly darken the impression so that the DFAS technician, who processes the electronic copy of the document, will be able to easily discern it was properly notarized or certified.
- ◆ Be sure to provide a copy of the reverse of documents when data pertinent to the correspondence is on the back of the page.
- ◆ Don't mail and also FAX correspondence to DFAS unless so instructed by DFAS.
- ◆ Place the member's last name and social security number in the upper right hand corner on the front of each page mailed.

## RETIREE TIMES

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The *Retiree Times* is published quarterly, Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer, by Lompoc Record Publications, a private firm in no way connected with the U.S. Air Force, under exclusive written contract with the 30<sup>th</sup> Space Wing. This commercial enterprise Air Force newsletter is an authorized unofficial publication for members of the U.S. military services who are retired and their families and surviving spouses residing in the Vandenberg AFB catchment area. Contents of the *Retiree Times* are not necessarily the official views of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Air Force.

The appearance of advertising in the publication, including any inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense, the Department of the Air Force, or Lompoc Record Publications, of products or services advertised. Everything advertised in this publication shall be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national

origin, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any other non-merit factor of the purchaser, user or patron.

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 15<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:retirees.office@vandenberg.af.mil).

## Pilot program tests new prescription refill system

The Department of Defense Military Health System and Department of Veterans Affairs have joined forces in a pilot program to test the feasibility of providing TRICARE beneficiaries with a new pharmacy benefit that delivers prescription refills by mail.

The DoD/VA Military Refill Mail Service, a joint initiative with the VA's Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy program, is ramping up at three sites: Fort Hood, Texas; San Diego, Calif. and Kirtland Air Force Base, NM. The one-year pilot program became operational at the three demonstration test sites October 2002.

The MRMS/CMOP is different from the DoD TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy program with

Express Scripts, Inc. that dispenses prescription medications to TRICARE beneficiaries. Beneficiaries using TMOP pay a co-payment for each prescription filled. The DoD/VACMOP does not require co-payments and only involves Military Treatment Facility refills.

The pilot program will test the impact of DoD shifting some of its pharmacy refill workload to various regional CMOP pharmacies operated by the VA. The VA has more than 40 years of success providing eligible military veterans refills on prescription medications by mail. If successful, the pilot program may lead to future expansion to TRICARE beneficiaries worldwide.

## Medical clinic closure

The 30<sup>th</sup> Medical Group Clinic began closing for training the fourth Thursday of each month on Feb. 27. Do not plan to pickup prescriptions on these days since the closure will affect the pharmacy. For more information, call 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. William Menza at 606-2273.

## Lompoc gate opens, Solvang gate closes

The Lompoc (Pine Canyon Road) Gate is now open 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday only. The Solvang (13<sup>th</sup> Street) Gate is closed until further notice.

## Benefits to more Vietnam veterans

Based upon a recently released review of scientific studies, the VA has extended benefits to Vietnam veterans with chronic lymphocytic leukemia. The ruling means that retirees and other veterans with CLL who served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War do not have to prove that illness is related to their military service to qualify for VA disability compensation.

A recent panel of experts focused on CLL in their report because of veterans' concerns that CLL shares some similarities with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, which had previously been connected to Agent Orange exposure.

Publication of regulations governing CLL is expected in the near future. VA will publish further details, when available, on its Web site at <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/benefits/herbicide/>. Retirees with questions about health-care, compensation and survivor benefits may call a toll-free help line at (800)749-8387 for information.

## TRICARE-authorized providers

A TRICARE-authorized provider is a facility, doctor or other health care professional that meets the licensing and credentialing certification requirements in the state where service is rendered, and meets the TRICARE regulations and practices for that area of health care. Providers who treat TRICARE patients must be authorized by TRICARE to be reimbursed by TRICARE for its share of the cost for medical benefits. Only those providers who have passed a credentialing process can be authorized TRICARE providers. Becoming an authorized network provider brings with it a higher volume of patients.

Beneficiaries should ask their providers if they are authorized by TRICARE before seeking treatment. Beneficiaries who use non-authorized providers may be responsible for all charges incurred. No legal limits exist on the amounts these providers can bill beneficiaries. Examples of non-authorized providers are most chiropractors and acupuncturists. Also included are physicians who do not meet state licensing or training requirements. For a listing of authorized providers visit [http://www.tricare.osd.mil/provider/provider\\_cert.htm](http://www.tricare.osd.mil/provider/provider_cert.htm).

## Lt.Col. Esten Carper Jr. USMC (Ret.)

Lieutenant Colonel Esten "Carp" Carper Jr., U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.), passed away Feb. 12, 2003 in Thousand Oaks. Memorial services with military honors were held at 3 p.m. Mar. 12 in Lompoc.

"Carp" was a valued volunteer at the Retiree Activities Office over the past three years, providing information and assistance to hundreds of retirees and surviving spouses.

"Carp" was born Sept. 24, 1924, in Frederick County, Va., to Esten and Lillian Pope Carper. He enlisted in the Marine Corps during World War II serving at Guadalcanal. After going through the enlisted ranks and attending officers school in Quantico, Va., he served as an ordnance officer on several aircraft carriers.

He saw service in China before the Communist takeover and in the Korean War where he was a member of the "Chosen Few" who fought their way out of the Chosen Reservoir. "Carp" was awarded the bronze star for his service in Vietnam before retiring in 1970. He moved to Lompoc in 1978 from Chula Vista and was a volunteer with the American Cancer Society and the American Red Cross as well as the RAO.

Survivors include his wife of 59 years, Doris Carper; of Lompoc; daughters, Carole Huneycott, of Lompoc, and Dorinda Murray, of Santa Barbara; son, Esten C. Carper II, of Palmer, Alaska.

## HELP WANTED

We are looking for volunteer(s) to assist our editor in selecting and preparing articles from various sources to be included in our quarterly newspaper, *Retiree Times*. Maintaining our mailing list will also be part of the duties. For further details, contact Cmdr. Gustafson or Capt. Buehler at (805) 606-5474.

## Air Force clubs offer scholarships

The Air Force Services Agency is conducting the seventh annual club membership scholarship program. Six scholarships will be awarded: First prize \$6,000, second \$5,500, third \$4,500, fourth \$3,500, fifth \$3,000, and sixth \$2,500.

Current club members, including retirees, and their family members (e.g., spouse, son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter) who have been accepted by or enrolled in an accredited college or university for entry during the fall of 2003 term as a part-time or full-time student are eligible to apply for scholarships. Grandsons and granddaughters are eligible if they are a dependent of the club member.

Student enrollment status may involve either undergraduate or graduate curricula. These prizes are made possible through commercial sponsorship provided by First USA Bank, Coca-Cola, and Mastercard.

Entries must include the club member's name, last four digits of his or her club membership card number, base, club name, and the entrant's full name with mailing address and phone number. If the entrant is someone other than the club

member, state his or her relationship to the member and provide his or her social security number.

Entrants must provide an essay of 500 words or less on the following topic: *Air Force Clubs—help us make "Members First."* The essay should focus on club facility, membership programming, food, beverage, entertainment, and customer ser-



vice. Essays exceeding 500 words (excluding title) will be disqualified.

Each nomination package (personal information and essay) should not exceed two pages single-spaced with double spacing between paragraphs. Submit all entries on standard white bond paper with one-inch margins. The essay should be typed in 12-point Ariel, Times New Ro-

man or equal.

Nominees must also provide a single-page summary of their long-term career/life goals and previous accomplishments. The summary may include civic, athletic, and academic awards and accomplishments.

All entries are to be submitted to the base services commander/division chief (30th Services Squadron at Vandenberg) by July 15, 2003. Each base services commander/division chief may submit no more than two scholarship entries. All bases and entrants will be advised of scholarship selections/nonselections.

Anyone interested in participating or needing information on the program should contact their club manager (734-4375 or 606-3330 at Vandenberg). See the Air Force Services web site at <http://www.afsv.af.mil/Clubs/scholarship.htm> for more.

We encourage club members and their eligible family members to take advantage of this special scholarship opportunity. Club membership pays!

## New TRICARE Pharmacy Express Scripts began Mar. 1

Effective Mar. 1, the DoD National Mail Order Pharmacy became the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy with a new provider, Express Scripts replacing Merck-Medco.

Express Scripts has updated the Press Room, a feature of the DoD TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy. New information includes:

- \* Details on how members can receive e-mailed updates about the TMOP program
- \* Information about Drug Digest health and drug information website
- \* An update on the mail service pharmacy that has been built to support the TMOP program

The Press Room provides helpful articles that can be used to share this information with TRICARE beneficiaries. To read or download these articles, visit:

<http://www.express-scripts.com/custom/dod/pressroom/home.htm>

TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy frequently asked questions (FAQ) are available at <http://www.express-scripts.com/custom/dod/tmopfaq/>

## Over-the-Counter Claritin

Claritin, a popular non-sedating antihistamine, was recently switched from being a prescription medication to one that is available over the counter medications without a prescription.

Claritin became available in many pharmacies the week of Dec. 9, 2002. This includes all forms of Claritin that were previously available only by prescription: Claritin Tablets and Syrup, Claritin Reditabs, Claritin-D and Claritin-D 24-hour Tablets.

The Food and Drug Administration does not allow pharmaceutical companies to sell the same drug at the same strength as both a prescription drug and an OTC drug. Once Claritin became available, the manufacturer could no longer sell over the counter prescription Claritin.

While the military pharmacy benefit is one of the best health care values around, it does not pay for medications that are available OTC except in very rare circumstances (like insulin). Patients who previously filled prescriptions for Claritin at a retail pharmacy and paid a \$9 copay for a 30-day supply, or in the National Mail Order Pharmacy (now the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy) for a 90-day supply, will no longer be able to do so.

If you have been obtaining your Claritin prescriptions by mail order, you will no longer be able to receive Claritin in that manner. Prescriptions sent to the TMOP for Claritin, including refills of current pre-

scriptions, will be returned. The TMOP has no mechanism to dispense medications that are not included in the TRICARE benefit.

If you have been obtaining your Claritin from a retail network pharmacy, you will very likely be able to continue to obtain your Claritin there. However, it will probably be located on the shelf with all the other allergy medications that are available OTC. You also will be required to pay the full price for the medication, as TRICARE will no longer "cost share" for the medication. This also includes any refills that may have been left on your prescription.

What alternatives do you have? You can continue to obtain Claritin as outlined above. You also can go back to your provider and request that he change your prescription to one that is still available by prescription. Allegra is an example of another non-sedating antihistamine that is still available by prescription only. It works very well, and is on the DoD Basic Core Formulary so it is available at all MTF pharmacies. It is also available at the TMOP. The DoD has a contract with the manufacturer for this product, which allows them to provide you this medication at a very favorable price. In any case, the decision about how to handle this change in the status of Claritin is one you should make in consultation with your health care provider.

## CHAMPVA Coverage

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently stated that some military spouses who were Civilian Health and Medical Program of the VA beneficiaries, but lost their benefits by remarrying after becoming age 55 and before Feb. 4, 2003, may be eligible to be reinstated for benefits. Similarly, a surviving spouse who remarried after becoming age 55 and lost access to TRICARE benefits may now be eligible for CHAMPVA coverage.

A provision in the Veterans Benefit Act of 2002 authorizes this reinstatement if the military spouse's remarriage was on or after their 55<sup>th</sup> birthday, provided that the original marriage was to a veteran who was permanently and totally disabled or died from a service-connected condition.

Surviving spouses who remarry at a younger age and lose their CHAMPVA

benefits can have these benefits restored if their later marriage is annulled or ends due to death or divorce. Similarly, widows or widowers of any age who lost benefits under VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation program due to remarriage are eligible for reinstatement of monthly DIC payments if their subsequent marriage ends.

This restoration policy has been in effect since 1998, but VA officials are concerned widows or widowers may overlook this benefit if a subsequent marriage ends years later. In general, CHAMPVA covers most health care services and supplies that are medically and psychologically necessary. Eligible spouses must enroll before Feb. 4, 2004. An application for benefits can be obtained by calling (800) 733-8387.

# Mended Hearts, Inc. repudiates coughing

By **Cmdr. Earl F. Gustafson USN (Ret.)**

Retiree Times Editor

During the past three years, an article advising how to survive a heart attack when alone has been making the rounds on the internet. Newsletters circulated to the military retired community, as well as the general public, have repeated it in print.

The article is believed to have originated in 1999 with the local Fort Worth/Northeast Chapter of Mended Hearts, Inc., a national organization dedicated to cardiovascular health. Published in the chapter's newsletter, it was picked up by other chapters and eventually made its way to the internet.

The web site, Urban Legends reads, "The message gives the impression that the technique described has the endorsement of

Rochester General Hospital and Mended Hearts, a heart attack victims' support group. It does not. Although the text was first published in a Mended Hearts newsletter, the organization has since retracted it. Rochester General Hospital had no part in the creation or dissemination of the message and does not endorse its contents."

Executive Director Darla Bonham of Mended Hearts Inc. issued the following statement, "Please help us stop the circulation of the article "How to Survive a Heart Attack When Alone." She went on to say, "I contacted Rochester General Hospital about the article, and their medical and public relations staff could not locate a source

within the hospital. I tried tracking the article through medical journals and could not find a source.

A scientist on staff with the American Heart Association Emergency Cardiac Care division was able to track a possible reference for the information. The information comes from a professional textbook on emergency cardiac care.

This procedure is also known as 'cough CPR' and is used in emergency situations by professional staff. There is no evidence to show that this is a medically proven procedure.

The American Heart Association does not have a public policy on the procedure, but the scientist I spoke to said that he would not recommend that the public use this method in a situation

where there is no medical supervision," Bonham said.

Dr. Cary Fishbein, a cardiologist with the Dayton Heart Center said, "It's right up there with voodoo as far as I'm concerned."

The coughing technique has been used in hospitals by physicians to treat sudden irregular heartbeats in monitored patients during cardiac catheterization procedures. In this case, a responsive patient who develops a sudden irregular heartbeat could possibly maintain blood flow to the brain and remain conscious for a few seconds if they cough vigorously and forcefully while being directed by a physician.

Traditional CPR is not used to treat heart attack victims who remain conscious - but only if the heart attack is followed by cardiac arrest, the American Heart

Association said.

According to Dr. Stephen Bohan of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, in certain instances where a patient has abnormal heart rhythms coughing can help normalize them. But most heart attacks are not of this type. Bohan said the best course of action for a typical heart attack victim is to immediately take an aspirin which helps dissolve blood clots and call 911.

This is a case where a nugget of truth has apparently been misunderstood and misrepresented to the public, though not intentionally. As with all medical rumors, the most prudent course of action is to verify the information with a doctor or other medical professional before acting upon it or sharing it with others.

## VA opens national Multiple Sclerosis centers

Drawing on well-established resources to provide high-quality care to veterans who have Multiple Sclerosis, a chronic neurological disease, the Department of Veterans Affairs will establish two Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence.

The two MS centers will be created at the Baltimore VA Medical Center and jointly at the Portland and Seattle VA medical centers to coordinate the activities of existing programs for MS patients at other VA sites. Each of the VAMCs has a close relationship with affiliated schools of medicine that has resulted in strong, coordinated efforts in MS diagnosis, treatment and research. The centers will also improve care, and promote research and education in MS.

To deliver expert consultation advice and care in the diagnosis and management of MS for veterans, a system of satellite clinics working in a "hub and spokes" arrangement with the new centers will be implemented. The centers will be supplemented by VA's telemedicine network that will further the reach to veterans no matter their locations.

"VA has excellent resources that should be tapped to improve care, find effective treatments and pursue a cure for this chronic dis-

ease of the brain and spinal cord," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi." With MS affecting 350,000 Americans, 22,000 of whom are veterans enrolled in VA's health care system, the department can make a difference by providing \$8 million for these centers over the next four years."

Each MS center will conduct research covering basic biomedicine, rehabilitation, health services delivery and clinical trials. The two centers will facilitate access to care for veterans regardless of their location through advances in telemedicine. Operating as a national consortium, the new centers will specialize in research, education and clinical care, functioning similarly to VA's Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinical Centers.

MS is a chronic, unpredictable neurological disease of the brain and spinal cord. The illness is thought to result from an autoimmune attack on the central nervous system focused on myelin, which is a protective coating on nerves. There is no cure for MS yet, although drugs can help slow the course of the disease or ease symptoms in some patients. The symptoms of MS are highly variable, depending on the areas of the central nervous system that

have been affected. Initial symptoms of MS often include difficulty in walking and abnormal sensations such as numbness.

To qualify for VA disability compensation for MS, a veteran must have a current diagnosis of the disease and there must be evidence that it developed in service or to a compensable degree within seven years following separation from active duty.

To receive health care, veterans generally must be enrolled with VA. Veterans with MS are eligible for VA health care and are exempt from co-payment requirements for hospital and outpatient medical services if they are receiving compensation for any service-connected disability, receiving care for a service-connected disability or if their income is at or below the congressionally established income limits.

These veterans may be subject to co-payments for medication. Exempted from medication co-payments are veterans whose service-connected conditions are 50 percent or greater, whose medication is for the service-condition or whose income is at or below the pension threshold.

All veterans are eligible to enroll for VA health care. Veterans can obtain information on enrollment by calling (877)222-8387.

## TRICARE eligibility

Retired reservists and their eligible family members are covered by TRICARE after the retired reservist member reaches age 60 and begins to receive retired pay. Dependent parents and parents-in-law are not eligible for TRICARE benefits. However, they are eligible for care in military treatment facilities, on a space-available basis (and if available, TRICARE Plus), and may be eligible for TRICARE Senior Pharmacy benefits.

# Locals look to create a closer veterans cemetery

By Andrea Rooks

*Santa Maria Sun Staff Writer*

If a Santa Maria-area veteran's family wanted to bury their loved one in a national cemetery close to home, they'd have two options: Gustine or Riverside. In this case, "close" translates to at least 200 miles away.

To the group of local civilians and veterans' representatives who make up the national cemetery task force, that's not much of a service for the thousands of local current and retired military personnel. So this handful of Lompoc, Santa Maria, and San Luis Obispo County residents have been meeting monthly since mid-January to figure out exactly what they can do to create a national cemetery here.

Before the March 4 task force meeting, Lompoc resident Jim Bray, who's heading up the task force, shared several reasons for his vision: "For a family that has

a veteran who passed away and wants a national cemetery [burial], they will have to go 3 1/2 to four hours away."

Alice Milligan, chair of the Lompoc Chamber's Military Affairs Committee, which sponsors the task force, caught Bray's vision and helped bring the group to life.

"It's something that would be a tremendous asset for veterans in this community and the surrounding community," she said. "We feel we have a lot of people in this area, and so many retired military people who remain [here]."

Bray, himself a retired Army Special Forces lieutenant colonel, also said that the nation is rapidly losing generations of veterans from the older military eras. "Our greatest generation, the World War II generation, is passing away at a rate of 1,000 a day," he said. "The VA estimates

that that will peak in 2006 with 1,800 a day."

Locally, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reports that in 1999, there were 62,568 veterans living in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District, which includes the Santa Maria Valley. That translates to 13 percent of the total civilian population.

Right now, the task force is in the early stages of learning all that needs to be done to make this vision a reality, including what the local veteran population needs to be for the VA to approve it and Congress to fund it.

"All the options that we're talking about now are strictly speculative," said Lompoc Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Denny Anderson. He listed several of the possibilities and questions the group needs to figure out: national versus state cemetery; ramifications;

where to put it; how to maintain it; rules and regulations.

"We're really in a fact-finding mode at this point," Anderson said. "It's moving along with some great, interested people who are out there between meetings just digging for information so that once we get to a point, we can make an intelligent decision on who, what, when, where, how, why." The task force also has the option of pursuing a state-run national cemetery if it finds the Central Coast doesn't meet the requirements for a federally maintained facility.

Location-wise, the task force members have been feeling out Vandenberg Air Force Base as a potential location, though a national cemetery doesn't have to be located on military property. "The government already owns that land—there would be no purchase by the VA," Bray explained. "But Vandenberg would

have to determine if they have excess land. They need to review this from their standpoint."

This isn't the first time a Central Coast group has tried to create a national cemetery closer to home. Bray said that it was tried in the early '70s and failed. "We don't have a lot of information on what happened and why it wasn't successful. We saw the legislation that was introduced, but we don't know why it didn't go through," he said. "It may not have met the criteria."

"We're just now trying to figure out what the road map is."

*(Reprinted with permission of Ryan Miller, editor of the Santa Maria Sun. Andrea Rooks can be reached at arooks@santamariasun.com.)*

## Presidential Memorial Certificate

The Presidential Memorial Certificate is an engraved parchment certificate with a calligraphic inscription expressing the nation's grateful recognition of an honorably discharged, deceased veteran's service in the Armed Forces. The veteran's name is inscribed and the certificate bears the signature of the current President.

The certificate program was initiated in March 1962 by President John F. Kennedy and has been continued by all subsequent Presidents. Statutory authority for the program is Section 112, Title 38, of the United States Code.

The Department of Veterans Affairs administers the program by preparing the certificates which bears the President's signature expressing the country's grateful recognition of the veteran's service in the United States Armed Forces.

Eligible recipients include the deceased veteran's next of kin and loved ones. More than one certificate may be provided.

Eligible recipients, or someone acting on their behalf, may apply for a certificate in person at any

VA regional office or by U.S. mail. Requests cannot be sent via email. There is no form to use when requesting a certificate. A copy of the veteran's discharge and death certificate must be enclosed. Submit copies only, as original documents cannot be returned.

Note that names of those listed on the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial may be obtained without further documentation. Simply write or call with the name, service number and date of death.

In most cases involving recent deaths, the local VA Regional Office originates the application for a Presidential Memorial Certificate without a request from the next of kin. VA Regional Offices normally are aware of veteran deaths when processing a claim or a change in veterans benefits.

Those who would like to request a Presidential Memorial Certificate should mail their request and all supporting documents using either the U.S. Postal Service or a commercial mail service, such as one of the overnight or express mail delivery

services, to: Presidential Memorial Certificates (402E12) National Cemetery Administration, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420-0001

Mail is presently being  
**See Memorial Page**

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# Navy Burial At Sea Program

Burial at Sea is a means of final disposition of remains that is performed aboard United States Navy vessels. The committal ceremony is performed while the ship is deployed. Therefore, family members are not allowed to be present. The commanding officer of the ship assigned to perform the ceremony will notify the family of the date, time, and, longitude and latitude once the committal service has been completed.

Individuals eligible for this program are: active duty members of the uniformed services; retirees and veterans who were honorably discharged; U.S. civilian marine personnel of the Military Sealift Command and dependent family members of active duty personnel, retirees, and veterans of the uniformed services.

After the death of the individual for whom the request for Burial at Sea is made, the person authorized to direct disposition should obtain a Burial at Sea Request Form. A copy of this form is available at the Retiree Activities Office. It is also available for downloading on the internet as an Acrobat Reader file at: <http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/questions/bas-form.pdf>.

Supporting documents which must accompany a request are:

- (1) Photocopy of the death certificate;
- (2) Burial transit permit or the cremation certificate; and
- (3) Copy of the DD Form 214, discharge certificate, or retirement order.

The Burial at Sea Request Form and the three supporting documents make up the Burial at Sea Request package.

A burial flag is required for all committal services performed aboard United States Naval vessels, except for family members, who are not authorized a burial flag. Following services at sea, the flag that accompanied the casketed or cremated remains, will be returned to the family. If the family does not wish to send a burial flag for the service, a flag will be provided by the Navy for the committal service, but will not be sent to the family.

Cremated remains must be in an urn or plastic/metal container to prevent spill in shipping. The cremains, along with the completed Burial at Sea Request package, and the burial flag are forwarded to the Burial at Sea Coordinator at the desired port of embarkation. Prior to shipment, it is recommended that a phone call be made informing the coordinator of the pending request. It is also recommended that the cremains package be sent via certified mail, return receipt requested.

Specific guidelines are required for the preparation of casketed remains. All expenses incurred in this process are the responsibility of the family who selects a funeral home in the area of the port of embarkation. After this selection has been made and notification has been provided to the coordinator, the casketed remains, the request form, supporting documents, and the burial flag are be forwarded to the receiving funeral home. The coordinator makes the inspection and completes the checklist for the preparation of casketed remains.

It is recommended that funeral homes responsible for preparing and shipping intact remains contact Navy Mortuary Affairs at

the Military Medical Support Office, P.O. Box 886999, Great Lakes Ill. 60088-6999 to receive the preparation requirements. The phone number is toll free (888)647-6676.

For questions about the Burial at Sea program, call the United States Navy Mortuary Affairs Office toll-free at (888)647-6676, and select option 4.

## **Ports Of Embarkation / Coordinators**

**San Diego, Calif.**  
Commanding Officer  
Naval Medical Center  
ATTN: Code 22-BAS  
San Diego, CA 92134-5000  
Phone: (619) 532-8305  
(800) 290-7410

**Bremerton, Wash.**  
Commanding Officer  
Naval Hospital  
ATTN: Code 015-DA  
Bremerton, WA 98312-5008  
Phone: (206) 475-4387/4303

**Honolulu, Hi.**  
Navy Liaison Unit  
Tripler Army Medical Center  
Tripler AMC, HI 96859-5000  
Phone: (808) 433-6611

**Norfolk, Va.**  
Commander, Naval Medical Center  
ATTN: Code 0210C  
620 John Paul Jones Cir.  
Portsmouth, VA 23708-5100  
Phone: (757) 953-2617/2618

**Jacksonville, Fla.**  
Officer in Charge  
Naval Hospital Branch Clinic  
Naval Station  
Mayport, FL 32228  
Phone: (904) 270-7296/5301

**Corpus Christi, Tex.**  
Commanding Officer  
Naval Hospital  
ATTN: Code 0104  
10651 "E" Street  
Corpus Christi, TX 78419-5130  
Phone: (361) 961-2255

## Eye exam for diabetic retirees & spouses on Medicare

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in collaboration with the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Optometric Association have initiated a National program for Medicare beneficiaries with diabetes to encourage them to get their eyes examined. The Eye Care America — National Eye Care Project announced in June 2000 seeks to raise public awareness of the connection between diabetes and blindness.

Under the initiative, beneficiaries age 65 and older who have diabetes and haven't had a medical eye exam in the past three years, will be matched with a volunteer ophthalmologist in their area. They'll receive a free dilated eye exam and up to one year of follow-up care for any condition diagnosed at the initial exam.

Dilated eye exams are vitally important for diabetics. People with diabetes are at an increased risk for eye problems, including blindness, and may need treatment even if their vision is normal. About 10 percent of those over 64 years of age have diabetes.

By law, regular fee-for-service Medicare may not cover refractive services — eye exams for eyeglasses — although some Medicare+Choice managed care plans may offer them. Medicare does cover medical exams, however, and this new program

makes it easier for diabetics to get regular medical eye checkups.

To get the name of a participating ophthalmologist in a specific area, call the 24 hour toll-free number at (800) 222-3937. NECP matches qualifying persons with a volunteer ophthalmologist in their area who has agreed to provide a comprehensive medical eye exam and up to one year of follow-up care by that physician for any condition diagnosed at the initial exam, with no out-of-pocket expense to the patient.

President Clinton signed legislation calling for the first glaucoma detection benefit under Medicare Dec. 22, 2000, further supporting this benefit. The glaucoma detection provision includes coverage of a dilated eye examination with an intraocular pressure measurement, and direct ophthalmoscopy or a slit-lamp biomicroscopic exam for individuals at highest risk of developing the disease, including African Americans and those with a family history.

To learn more about the joint AAO/AOA/CMS Diabetes Initiative, beneficiaries may call (888) 691-9167. For general information on diabetes, AOA's Diabetes Hot Line is (800) 262-3947. Operators are available from 6:00 a.m. — 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

## Memorial from Page 6

received at the Washington, D.C. address, however mail delivery is considerably slower than normal. Those who made requests more than eight weeks ago and have not received their certificate, should fax their request and all supporting documents (copy of

discharge and death certificate) to (202)565-8054.

For more information call (202) 565-4964. Visit the website at <http://www.cem.va.gov/pmc.htm> or send email: to [PMC@mail.va.gov](mailto:PMC@mail.va.gov)

The listed telephone number and email address are for questions about the Presidential

Memorial Certificate Program only. They are not for information on other VA programs or access to other VA records. For assistance with other VA benefits or records please call the regional office at (800) 827-1000.

## Mark your calendars!

### Retiree Center

There will be no “**third Thursday**” of the month meeting in the Retiree Center during April and May. Meetings will resume with a potluck luncheon June 19 beginning at noon followed by a guest speaker at 1 p.m. The site is Building 10364 – base exchange area, across from the home and garden shop where retirees, spouses and widows gather to hear guest speakers, socialize and enjoy cookies and coffee. Volunteers will be recognized during National Volunteers Week in April. The schedule is as follows:

**April 29** -- Volunteers' Reception, Pacific Coast Club

**June 19** -- Potluck luncheon, speaker to be announced

\***Nov.** -- Retiree Appreciation Day, To be announced

\***Dec. 11– Thursday** – **HOLIDAY POTLUCK LUNCHEON**

\*Denotes different date than third Thursday of the month and for Appreciation Day different location.

**NOTE:** Check the *Space & Missile Times* for details as days come closer. Also, listen to KUHL on Tuesdays at 8:20 a.m. for current news on events and watch for flyers posted at the retiree center.

### Society of Military Widows

The SMW, Central Coast Chapter 44, meets the second Wednesday of each month in the joint retiree center. A business meeting begins at 1 p.m. followed by a guest speaker at 2 p.m. Retirees and spouses frequently attend the informative lecture sessions. Military widows, retirees and spouses are invited.

On May 14<sup>th</sup>, Col. Michele Williams, the 30<sup>th</sup> Medical Group, speaks with attendees on the subject of osteoporosis.

The SMW has been busy this year. Many of the group met at the base clinic for two days labeling medication packets and bottles which were delivered to Guatemala by clinic personnel.

### Tickets, Tours, Cruises

Vandenberg Leisure Tours is in Building 10122, the Vandenberg Services Center, located at the corner of California Boulevard and Washington Avenue. 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 the 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. To learn more about opportunities, call (805) 606-7976 and ask to be placed on the mailing list. The address is P.O. Box 5459, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-0459. Or, visit the website at <http://www.30svs.com/index2.html>. Click on Downloads and then Upcoming Tours. For complete information on the following upcoming trips, contact the tour office.

<b>May 3</b>	Monterey, \$35
<b>May 6-17</b>	Great Lakes Adventure, \$1,999 per person double, single add \$650
<b>May 11-13</b>	Catalina, \$240 per person sharing, \$328 single
<b>May 18-22</b>	Grand Canyon, \$285 sharing, \$410 single
<b>Jun. 1</b>	Champions on Ice, \$80
<b>Jun. 5 and 19</b>	The Producers, \$105
<b>Jun. 9-16</b>	Crater Lake & California Trails, \$529 per person sharing, single add \$335
<b>Jun. 17-26</b>	Canadian Rockies, \$1,685 per person sharing, single add \$400
<b>Jul. 3-6</b>	Laughlin, \$145 per person sharing
<b>Jul. 11-12</b>	Laguna Pageant & Huntington Museum, \$170 sharing, \$225 single
<b>Jul. 17</b>	The Producers, \$105
<b>Jul. 22-25</b>	Mammoth Mountain, \$385 per person sharing
<b>Aug. 1-15</b>	Rhine River and Switzerland, call
<b>Sep. 7-10</b>	San Diego, \$325 sharing, \$395 single
<b>Sep. 14-17</b>	Catalina, \$298 sharing, \$422 single
<b>Nov. 13-15</b>	Palm Springs Follies, \$245 sharing, \$370 single

## Retiree Times address corrections

The mailing list for this newsletter is maintained by the Vandenberg Retiree Activities Office based on input from the Defense Manpower Data Center and other sources as well as input directly from addressees. 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](mailto:retirees.office@vandenberg.af.mil).

**Retirees Activities Office**  
**30 SW/CVR**  
**747 Nebraska Ave. Suite A-200**  
**Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-6261**  
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