



RETIREE



TIMES

A publication of the
Vandenberg AFB
Retiree Activities
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Summer 2004

Vandenberg AFB Calif.

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Air Force club membership drive Club privileges free through August to prospective new members

By David Hicks

Pacific Coast Club Manager

The Air Force Services Agency and the Pacific Coast Club at Vandenberg have implemented an Air Force-wide club membership campaign focused on recruiting new club members from the military



retired community. The membership drive will run from 1 September through the end of November 2004.

Air Force Club Membership is the gateway to on-base fun and socialization, food, entertainment and provides financial rewards through the membership card. Club member programs offer once in a lifetime opportunities like free trips to the Super Bowl and Pro

Bowl, cars, home electronic equipment and cash. In fact during the current membership drive, new and existing members can win cash prizes, with the grand prize being

\$3,000.00 in cash.

During the membership drive each new member will receive 3 months free dues, \$10.00 in "Club Bucks" and a complimentary lunch certificate in addition to the many other benefits of being an Air Force Club Member such as discounts on meals and catered programs and of course the opportunity to win one of the many great prizes.

The cost of membership at the Pacific Coast Club is

See CLUB Page 6

Retiree's painting hangs at 14th Air Force

By Cmdr. Earl F. Gustafson USN Ret.

Retiree Times Editor

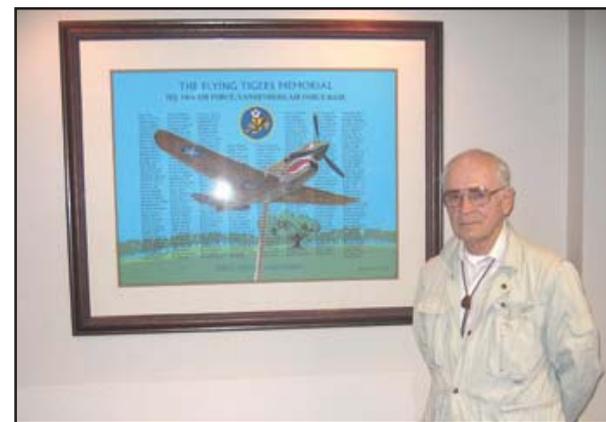
Retired Air Force Capt. Arthur C. Kane recently presented one of his art works for display at 14th Air Force Headquarters. It depicts a P-40 with the names of the American Volunteer Group, commonly known as the Flying Tigers in the background.

Kane is a member of the Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles. Among these artists is a group who are known as *Friends of the Air Force* and who contribute

paintings that become part of the Air Force Art Collection. Every two years the contributors attend a formal "turning over the paintings" fete at Andrews AFB. Kane has ten paintings in the collection to date. The paintings are displayed throughout the country and used in recruiting.

Kane was asked by SILA to attend the dedication of the P 40 Flying Tigers memorial at Vandenberg AFB with the intent of creating a painting commemorating the event. The result is the painting now hanging at 14th Air Force Headquarters.

Rather than have the painting travel around the country, Kane felt it should be located with the 14th Air Force. Consequently, he wrote to 14th AF Commander Maj. Gen.



14th AF Photo
Retired Air Force Capt. Arthur C. Kane at 14th Air Force Headquarters.

Michael A. Hamel enclosing a picture of the painting and suggesting that it properly belonged at Vandenberg AFB. Hamel put the wheels in motion and made it all happen!

Kane was born and raised in Brooklyn, N.Y. He joined the New York National Guard's 258th Field Artillery Regiment on Dec. 7, 1940. Two months later it was "federalized" and subsequently was on maneuvers at Fort Bragg,

N.C. when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Entering the Army Air Corps as an Aviation Cadet, he graduated from flight training in February 1943. He was assigned to the 102th Observation Squadron, later renamed the 102nd Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, where he flew P-40s.

Kane deployed to the European theatre in 1943 where he served until the end of WWII flying C-47s with the 86th Air Transport Squadron.

Kane was recalled to active duty during the Korean War, spending two years at Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps Headquarters in Montgomery, Ala. as Chief of Training Aids Development. He retired from the Air Force Reserve after 20 years of service.

See PAINTING Page 7

Commissary pricing remains unchanged

The long-awaited independent variable pricing study recommends the Defense Commissary Agency not implement the practice of variable pricing.

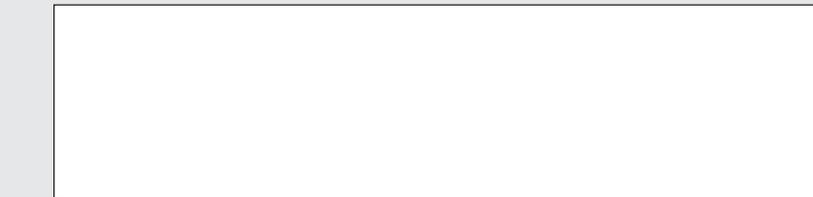
In the commercial grocery industry, variable pricing means that retailers set prices to meet their profit margins based on factors such as local market conditions, competition, or how much customers can be expected to pay for an item. Since commissaries sell at cost, DeCA's pricing practices do not rely on meeting a profit margin and discounts are passed directly to the customers. Under DeCA's current pricing model, commissary customers pay shelf price plus a five percent surcharge.

The primary objective of the study was to provide an assessment of the feasibility of using variable pricing within DeCA to reduce appropriated fund costs while sustaining a 30 percent customer savings rate.

Study results confirm that variable pricing is not a feasible means to reduce taxpayers' cost while maintaining a high savings rate.

DeCA's current business model delivers an average savings of 30 percent or more for military families, officials said, adding that the savings can amount to about \$2,700 annually for a family of four with regular commissary shopping.

[Defense Commissary Agency]



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Retirees Activities Office

**Retiree
Activities
Center**

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

Vandenberg's Retiree Activities Office -- Serving those who've honorably served their nation throughout the years.

Director's Corner

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

Retiree Activities Office Director

By the time this article appears in print, I will have re-retired and will no longer be serving as Director, Retiree Activities Center. My wife and I will be off on other pursuits.

It has been a pleasure serving you these past 2 ½ years. The volunteer staff and visitors dropping in, partaking in a bottomless cup of coffee and sharing experiences has been very enjoyable.

Along the way, the office has been able to assist in Long Term Care, TRICARE for Life, Combat Related Special Compen-



Cy Buehler

RAO Photo

sation and other issues. In the future more issues are sure to arise and the Retiree Activities Staff will continue to be here offering assistance in retiree related issues.

Unfortunately, there has been no one to assume the duties as Director. The position is vacant and Vandenberg AFB would like to fill it. If you would like an interesting volunteer position as Director, call [805] 606-5474. Any questions that you may have will be answered.

Breakers temporarily closed

The Breakers Dining Facility at Vandenberg AFB closed effective June 1 for renovation of utilities. Scheduled reopening is Nov. 4. During this time the Beachcomber Dining Facility [Bldg. 9190] on Nevada St. will be open to retirees and family members with ID cards in the same manner as the Breakers. Hours of availability are:

Monday through Friday

Breakfast 6 to 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 1 to 2 p.m.
Dinner 4:30 to 7 p.m.
Midnight 11 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Weekends, Holidays and Down Days

Brunch 6 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Supper 4 to 6 p.m.
Midnight 11 p.m. to 1 a.m.

RETIREE TIMES

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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.

Clinic hours for Thursdays stated

The 30th Medical Group's hours of operation for the first, second, third and fifth [if applicable] Thursday of the month are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The phone lines will open at 8:30 a.m. for dependents and retirees. Please remember the clinic is closed on the 4th Thursday of the month for training.

[30th Medical Group]

Mark your calendars!

The Retiree Activities Center is in Building 10364 – Base Exchange area, across from the Home & Garden Shop where retirees, spouses and widows gather to hear guest speakers, socialize and enjoy cookies and coffee. Scheduled activities are shown below.

Look for further information in the Fall issue of the Retiree Times due out in October. Also, check the *Space & Missile Times* for details as days come closer. Listen to KUHL Tuesdays at 8:20 a.m. for current news on events; and watch for flyers posted at the Retiree Activities Center.

Aug. 11 – Wednesday -- Society of Military Widows

Nov. 6 – Saturday – Retiree Appreciation Day

West Nile Virus a threat

Readers should be aware that West Nile Virus has been observed in California. Cases of infection in humans have been reported as near to the local area as Los Angeles County and an infected bird was found in Ventura County. Below are a few tips to reduce the risk of becoming infected, from wearing protective clothing, to organizing neighborhood clean-ups.

Avoid Mosquito Bites

- Apply a spray or lotion with an insect repellent containing DEET [short for N, N-diethyl-meta-touamide] on exposed skin before going outdoors. DEET does not kill insects, but repels them from treated skin and clothing.
- Wear long-sleeves, long pants, and socks outdoors when possible. For extra protection, spray thin clothing with insect repellent.
- Peak mosquito biting times are between early evening and early morning. Try to use repellent and wear protective clothing if you are outdoors during these times.

Mosquito-Proof Your Home

- Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. At least twice a week, drain standing water in areas around your home, such as flower pots, pet food and water dishes, birdbaths, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels, and cans. Check clogged rain gutters, and remove discarded tires and other items that could collect water.
- Keep mosquitoes outside by installing well-fitting screens on windows and doors.

Help Your Neighborhood

- Dead birds may be a sign that WNV is circulating between birds and the mosquitoes in an area. Report dead birds at the California Department of Health Services web site <http://westnile.ca.gov/> or call [877] WNV-BIRD.
- Control mosquito breeding sites throughout your area by organizing a neighborhood clean up day to pick up possible standing water containers from vacant lots and parks, or encouraging neighbors to keep their yards free of standing water.
- Check with local health authorities to see if there is an organized mosquito control program in your area, or help establish a program with your local government officials.

[California Department of Health Services]

VA begins chiropractic care

Veterans can receive chiropractic care at 26 selected Department of Veterans Affairs facilities beginning in the fall of 2004. Locations where chiropractic care will be provided include Sacramento and Los Angeles in California.

VA will hire or contract with doctors of chiropractic to provide the care. In consultation with VA primary care providers, doctors of chiropractic will offer patient evaluations and chiropractic care for neuro-musculo-skeletal conditions.

Eligible veterans in areas distant from the selected facilities will also be able to receive chiropractic care through VA's outpatient fee-basis program after a referral by their primary care provider, and prior authorization by the department.

VA was authorized to offer chiropractic care and services under the provisions of section 204 of Public Law 107-135, the VA Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001.

[Department of Veterans Affairs]

Retail pharmacy program resolving concerns

The new TRICARE Retail Pharmacy program began nationwide operations with Express Scripts Inc., on June 1. Within hours, significant problems arose for all ESI customer accounts, including TRICARE beneficiaries.

The immediate and comprehensive efforts expended by ESI, private sector consultants, and TRICARE experts resulted in restoration of commercial customer business and improvements for TRICARE beneficiaries. System improvements continue daily and until all system errors and "time-outs" within the communications infrastructure are resolved, the TRICARE Management Activity will provide updates on its website on a 72-hour basis.

TRICARE and ESI expect that as initial prescription submission throughput improves, the program will stabilize and reach a steady and continuing pace. On June 7 and 8, more than 180,000 claims were processed and paid each day. These numbers

significantly exceed the standard of 125,000 TRICARE claims usually processed and paid on Mondays and Tuesdays. Nevertheless, higher than normal rates of claims rejection continue and problems exist in some areas. The ESI provider-relations team is working with individual pharmacies and pharmacy chains alike to resolve both systems problems and the particular problems experienced by those pharmacies.

The new TRICARE Pharmacy program introduces a standard, national approach to retail pharmacy use that offers TRICARE beneficiaries the same benefit wherever they may be in the United States and its territories; it is a fully portable benefit. Beneficiaries who experience difficulty with their prescriptions during this initial period may contact the TRICARE Retail Pharmacy Customer Service Center at [866] 363-8779. For those who purchased their medications at full price, they may file a paper claim on

See RETAIL Page 6

CRDP and CRSC explained

The 2004 National Defense Authorization Act [Public Law 108-136] will benefit as many as 200,000 disabled military retirees in two ways.

As part of the Act, what is now called the Concurrent Retirement Disability Payments phases out over a 10-year period the disability offset to military retired pay starting Jan. 1, 2004.

CRDP is applicable to all retirees with 20 years of service who have a Department of Veterans Affairs-rated, service-connected VA disability of 50 percent or higher. Disability retirees with less than 20 years of service and retirees who have combined their military and civil service times to qualify for a civil service retirement are not eligible for CRDP.

Second, under the Law, the recently enacted Combat Related Special Compensation benefit was expanded to include all combat or operations related disabilities that have been service-connected by the VA at 10 percent or higher. Previously, the only veterans eligible for this benefit were those with qualifying disabilities rated 60 percent or higher or those rated at 10 percent with disabilities caused by wounds for which a Purple Heart Medal was awarded.

Additionally, under the new criteria, National Guard and Reserve applicants must be 60 years of age with 20 years of creditable service, and eligible to receive retired pay. Retirees who have combined their military and civil service times to qualify for a civil service retirement are not eligible for CRSC.

Payments of CRSC are paid at the rate of VA disability compensation paid to a single veteran for whatever combined percentage of disability is determined by the veteran's service to be combat or operationally-related.

Military retired veterans must apply to their service for CRSC payments and there is no phase-in period for this tax-free benefit.

Military retired veterans rated 50 percent and higher who are either not eligible for or do not apply for CRSC payments will see their retired offset phased out automatically. No application is required.

For 2004, CRDP qualifying retirees should see their retired pay increase by the following flat amounts: For 100 percent disabled, \$750; 90 percent, \$500; 80 percent, \$350; 70 percent, \$250; 60 percent, \$125; 50 percent, \$100. Defense Finance and Accounting Officials pointed out that the CRDP pay cannot exceed gross retired pay. For example, a retiree who is rated at 100 percent but whose gross retired pay is only \$631 will only have \$631 restored.

The remaining retired pay offsets will then be phased out over the following nine years. In 2005, retirees would get back another 10 percent of the remaining offset; in 2006, 20 percent; in 2007, 30 percent of the remaining offset and so on. By January 2014, retirees will be entitled to full concurrent receipt of military retired pay

and VA disability compensation.

Retirees who qualify for both CRSC and CRDP must make a choice. DFAS will pay the retiree the higher dollar entitlement but because of tax considerations, this may not be the best for the retired member. Department of Defense is developing an election process and instructions will be published later.

In the latest CRSC developments, officials in the Air Force Personnel Center's Disability Division said that the Services had concurred in a new DoD form to be used to apply for CRSC; however, DoD still has not released the form for public use.

In the meantime, the form currently authorized for use by those under the original criteria of 60 percent combat related disabilities/10 percent combat related with a Purple Heart, may also be used by those retired members who meet the expanded criteria, a minimum of a VA rated 10 percent combat related disability.

[Air Force Retiree News]

Civil Service retirement may affect CRDP

An entry on the Defense Finance and Accounting Service web site answers the question asked by many retired members wanting to know if they qualify for Concurrent Disability Pay although they waived their military retirement pay.

The answer, according to DFAS officials, depends on the situation. If you have combined your military time with your civil service time in order to qualify for a Civil Service retirement, you are not eligible for CRDP.

On the other hand, if you combined your military time with your civil service time in order to enhance your civil service retirement, you may be eligible for CRDP.

Officials point out, however, that those who are eligible will have to coordinate with the

Office of Personnel Management to reverse the waiver of retired pay. It's important to note that by doing this, the retired member may incur a debt to the government resulting from an over-payment. Any decision to change the status of retired pay should be carefully considered.

The CRDP law is applicable to retirees who have a VA-rated, service-connected disability of 50 percent. Individuals who retired for disability rather than under the regular retirement law must have at least 20 years of service. Answers to other frequently asked questions are provided at <http://www.dfas.mil/money/retired/cdpfaq.htm>.

[Defense Finance and Accounting Service]

At the June potluck



RAO Photo

1st Lt. Bernard J. Kurek from the Vandenberg AFB Staff Judge Advocate office speaks with retirees about wills and living trusts at the quarterly RAO potluck. At right is retired Navy Chief Petty Officer Evelyn Smith.

Some survivors face deadline for restored benefit

The Department of Veterans Affairs wants to ensure that surviving spouses of deceased veterans are aware of an approaching deadline that may affect entitlement to Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits.

Last year, President Bush signed Public Law 108-183, the "Veterans Benefits Act of 2003," which restores entitlement to DIC and related home loan and education benefits for surviving spouses who remarry on or after their 57th birthdays.

VA officials are concerned that surviving spouses may not be aware of this change in law, or may overlook this benefit if their subsequent marriages have not ended.

Generally, VA pays DIC to the surviving spouses of military service members who die while on active duty, and to surviving spouses of veterans whose death resulted from service-related causes.

The basic monthly rate is \$967 and is increased if the surviving spouse has dependents, is housebound, or meets criteria common to those who need a home aide. There are additional payments for dependent children. Parents who were dependent upon the service member's income also may qualify for DIC.

Under previous law, surviving spouses who remarried were not eligible for DIC unless their marriages ended. At that time they could apply for reinstatement of benefits.

Under the new law, surviving spouses who remarried after age 57 and before Dec. 16, 2003, have a limited time to apply for restoration of DIC. They have one year from the date the new law was enacted [Dec. 16, 2003] to apply for restoration of benefits. If VA receives the application later than Dec. 15, 2004, restoration of DIC must be denied.

The one-year application period does not apply to other surviving spouses whose remarriage on or after attaining age 57 followed enactment of the law.

For more information on restoration of DIC, call VA's toll free number at [800] 827-1000 or visit the nearest VA regional office. Office locations can be found in the blue pages of local telephone directories. More information is available at VA's Internet Web site <<http://www.va.gov>>.

People who are hearing impaired should call VA at [800]-829-4833 by use of a telecommunications device for the deaf.

[Department of Veterans Affairs]

TRICARE Regions 9 and 10 become TRICARE West

Beneficiaries in the TRICARE military healthcare plan in California, formerly Regions 9 and 10, transitioned to the new TRICARE West Region on July 1. When the transition is completed, TRICARE West will include most of the western U.S. including Alaska and Hawaii.

Beneficiaries will receive health services and support through its new regional contractor, TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corporation. This transition is part of Department of Defense's next generation of healthcare contracts in which three new regional contractors will provide easier access to care and a reduced need for transferring Prime beneficiaries' enrollments when moving.

This transition to new contractors

will not change benefits and costs. Beneficiaries in the West Region, who are not enrolled in Prime, will have the opportunity to enroll and all beneficiaries will receive TriWest enrollment information. Beneficiaries also will receive information on network providers, procedures for filing claims and points of contact for assistance.

Procedures are in place to ensure that claims sent to the former contractor by beneficiary providers, after the start of the new contract, will be automatically forwarded to the new West Region claims contractor.

The national healthcare information line will not be available under the new regional contracts. Local healthcare

information lines will be available in some locations. Beneficiaries seeking local healthcare information should contact their primary care manager or local military treatment facility for assistance.

Additionally, beneficiaries in the West Region may access health information by calling [888] 874-9378. The number offers options for accessing information about the benefits, as well as healthcare information, including an audio health library. For information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, beneficiaries may access the following web sites: TRICARE online at <http://www.tricareonline.com> for healthcare information or the TRICARE Web site at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil>.

[TRICARE Management Agency]

Air Force Memorial inputs sought

Air Force Memorial Foundation officials are seeking ideas for inscriptions to be placed at the new memorial site. The official groundbreaking will take place 2:30 p.m. Sept. 15 at the memorial site, just southwest of the Pentagon. The focal point of the Air Force memorial will be a 270-foot monument featuring three spires that point toward space.

The site will include a parade ground, an 8-foot-high rendering of the Air Force Honor Guard

designed to "honor the values and traditions of our Air Force," two 55-foot-long granite walls and an area called "Walls of Reflection."

The walls—seven translucent glass panels arranged around a square center area—are to bear inscriptions. Two granite walls, one to the north and one to the south of the parade ground, will also bear inscriptions.

See MEMORIAL Page 6

CLUB from Page 1

only \$8.00 per month. The club membership credit card requires no annual fee, offers a 25-day grace period, a competitive annual percentage rate, 24 hour account information, members only discounts, and automated dues billing where you can choose from monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annual payments.

To get the membership drive started, the Pacific Coast Club will be hosting a Membership Drive Kick-Off and Appreciation Night on Wednesday, Sept. 1 starting at 5:30 p.m. The evening will include a special buffet dinner, door prizes and entertainment and is open to all current club members and prospective new members. The cost will be free to the member and only \$6.00 for spouse or guest. Any

individual who joins the club on this evening will receive an additional \$10.00 in "Club Bucks".

As a special get acquainted offer for prospective new members, the Pacific Coast Club will issue a special courtesy club card valid through the end of August for all interested military retirees. All you need to do is bring a copy of this article or tell the club staff you heard about this special offer in the "Retiree Times" and they will immediately issue you a temporary club card and give you \$5.00 in "Club Bucks. This card will entitle you to club member benefits and discounts until the membership drive begins on Sept. 1.

If you should have any questions about club membership please call the Pacific Coast Club at 734-4375.

RETAIL from Page 3

DD Form 2642, available on the TRICARE Website: <http://www.TRICARE.osd.mil/> to: Express Scripts
PO Box 66518
St. Louis, Mo. 63166-6518

Express Scripts Inc. is one of the largest pharmacy benefit management companies in North America, providing pharmacy benefit management services to more than 50

million members through facilities in 13 states and Canada. Express Scripts serves thousands of client groups, including managed care organizations, insurance carriers, third-party administrators, employers and union-sponsored benefit plans. Express Scripts Inc. has the ability to process in excess of one million claims daily.

[TRICARE Management Agency]

CRDP for retired Guard and Reserves

National Guard or Reserve retirees with a Department of Veterans Affairs rating of 50 percent or higher may still qualify for Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay, formerly known as Concurrent Receipt, even if medically retired under *Chapter 61, Retirement or Separation for Physical Disability*. This is in spite of what these retirees might have been told in the past

Up until recently Defense Finance and Accounting Service has been telling Guard and Reserve retirees that they had to have a minimum of 7,200 points to qualify for CRDP. Any retired reservist or guardsman that has "20 Good Years" and meets the remaining eligibility requirements is eligible to get CRDP benefits. The 7,200 points is not the determinant factor.

Eligibility for the CRDP includes all Chapter 61 medically retired personnel with twenty years of service whether their

service was twenty or more years of active duty or twenty or more "good years" for reserve retirement. Each good year requires a minimum of 50 points. If CRDP has been denied or has not been received, but you believe you qualify, you should contact your DFAS to determine the reason for non-payment.

As an eligible Reserve or Guard retiree you can take action to ensure that you start getting your CRDP by taking the following steps:

- Collect your documentation including your letter of retirement eligibility, i.e., "20- years letter" and your last point summary.
- Call DFAS at: [800] 321-1080 even if you have been turned away in the past.
- Check back with DFAS on a regular basis.

[Military Advantage]

MEMORIAL from Page 5

The memorial foundation has formed several committees to develop ideas for what inscriptions or images will be placed on those walls. The committee wants ideas for inscriptions from Airmen and anybody else who has an interest in the service.

Suggestions for inscriptions can address specific ideas. They can include images and quotes, as well as thoughts on the categorical groupings or broader themes that should be recognized with inscriptions.

Suggestions for inscriptions at the memorial can be e-mailed to the inscription committee at afmf@airforcememorial.org. For more information and pictures of the Air Force Memorial, visit <http://www.airforcememorial.org>.

[Air Force Print News]

Space A travel opportunities to be reduced

Fiscal realities and limited use have led U.S. Transportation Command to restructure Patriot Express. Patriot Express is the military's chartered commercial air service for transporting service members on permanent-change-of-station orders and their families to and from overseas locations.

Beginning next fiscal year through fiscal 2008, the restructure will lead to fewer flights and leave only one gateway, at Baltimore-Washington International Airport. Contracted gateways at Atlanta-Hartsfield, Los Angeles and Seattle-Tacoma will be closed. Passenger reservation centers in Germany, Japan and Hawaii will remain for the time being but will eventually close.

The phase out of Patriot Express will mean a reduction in the number of space-available seats, but Space-A travel will still be available at many AMC passenger terminals on military transports.

All Patriot Express routes, except for those into locations with no commercial service or where there are force protection considerations, will be phased out over the four-year period. Duty

passengers will be able to travel on commercial airlines through the General Service Administration's City Pair program.

In fiscal 2005, the Atlanta gateway will close, and Patriot Express flights to Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany, will end. The military will also adjust the frequency and size of flights to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Keflavik, Iceland.

In fiscal 2006, service to Osan and Kunsan air bases, Korea; Kadena AB, Japan; Keflavik, Iceland; and Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England, will end. The passenger reservation center at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, and the gateway at Los Angeles International Airport will close.

Fiscal 2007 marks the end of service to three American bases in Japan: Yokota and Misawa air bases and the Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni, as well as the Japan passenger reservation center.

The Seattle gateway will also close, and Air Mobility Command's main PRC will increase its operating hours.

[Air Mobility Command]

Service Organization Directory

Air Force Sergeants Association

2nd Tuesday of each month at 3:30 p.m., Vandenberg Services Center, Tech.Sgt. Scott Astrosky (805) 606-9308, scott.astrosky@vandenberg.af.mil

Society of Military Widows

Central Coast Chapter 44
2nd Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. usually, followed by a guest speaker at 2 p.m., Vandenberg Retiree Activities Office, Juanita Anderson, (805) 937-0940, spartlerjia@aol.com

Military Officers Association of America

Santa Maria-Lompoc Chapter
Call for location and time, Norman Enoch (805) 938-9999, njenoch@earthlink.net
Central Calif. Coast Chapter -- San Luis Obispo
2nd weekend of each month, call for location and time, John Mirolla, (805) 528-8269, pjmirolla@msn.com
Santa Barbara Chapter
2nd Tuesday of each month, Harry's Café, call for time, Steve Keller, (805) 965-0359, keller103@cox.net

Tickets, Tours, Cruises

Vandenberg Leisure Tours has moved to Building 10250, Outdoor Recreation, located near the corner of Alaska Way 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 Los Angeles Airport. Active duty, retired military, civil service personnel,

government contractors, families, and guests are eligible to participate. The address is P.O. Box 5459, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-0459. You might also visit their 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 at [805] 606-7976 or [805] 606-1675.

July 25- Aug. 4 Alaska Cruise, \$1,636-2,737
Aug. 7 Hairspray, \$112
Aug. 10 Roaring Camp Steam Train, \$67
Aug. 12 J. Paul Getty Center, \$35
Aug. 15-18 San Francisco, \$265 per sharing, single supplement \$125
Sept. 8-16 Blue Danube River Cruise
Sept. 18 "Movin Out," \$112

Sept. 19-22 Catalina, \$298 per sharing, \$435 single
Oct. 11-15 Baja Cruise, \$335 per sharing inside, \$383 per outside stateroom
Oct. 17-20 Las Vegas
Oct. 20-26 Victoria and Vancouver Island
Nov. 9-16 Costa Del Sol

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Using his GI Bill benefits, Kane attended Pratt Institute of Art in New York City. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles and a Master of Arts at California State University Los Angeles.

As a civilian, Kane was employed as an advertising artist at Remington Rand and a writer for the advertising agency, Benton and Bowles in New York City. He retired as an advertising manager after 25 years with IBM.

Kane currently lives in Cambria.
[Capt. Kane contributed to this article]



Central Coast National Cemetery Task Force

By Lt.Col. James H. Bray
USA Ret.

Cemetery Task Force Chairman

In January 2003, the Central Coast National Cemetery Task Force began meeting under the auspices of the Lompoc Chamber of Commerce's Military Affairs Committee.

There were several reasons for the creation of this task force. First, is the fact that the closest veterans cemetery for Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties is either the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside or the San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery in Gustine. Both locations are over four hours away from the local communities of Lompoc and Santa Maria.

Secondly, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs, there are 18,846,200 living veterans from World War I to the Gulf War Era. Veterans of World War II are dying at the rate of 1,000 a day. That number is expected to peak at 1,800 a day in the year 2006. Following those veterans will be service members from the Korean, Vietnam and Desert Storm conflicts.

There are only four other national cemeteries in California

beside Riverside and San Joaquin, and they have serious space limitations. The San Francisco, Golden Gate [San Bruno] and Los Angeles cemeteries can accommodate only burials of family members of veterans already interred. Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery has space only for cremated remains.

Given all these factors, it was not difficult to put together a local task force, as there is a lot of interest in the community and veteran's organizations to support this effort. Members of the task force come from veterans' organizations, the funeral industry, both the Santa Maria and Lompoc Chambers of Commerce, as well as representatives from Congresswoman Capps, Congressman Gallegly and State Senator McClintock's offices. Congresswoman Capps' district includes Vandenberg Air Force Base, while Congressman Gallegly's district covers a large portion of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties.

There are many challenges to the success of this venture. These include meeting VA demographic criteria, other communities vying

for a national cemetery, and finding local sites from which to choose a preferred location. Vandenberg AFB is a primary choice of the committee due to the amount of land not required for mission or security purposes of the base. However, it is by no means assured that the Department of Defense will agree to our effort, much less work with us to make this happen. So, we must find other potential sites in the local community.

The task force has spent a productive year and a half building its membership, doing research, and reaching out to community and government leaders for support. However, we need help – lots of help. Every veteran and local citizen has skills that can be used on the task force to make our mission successful. If you are interested in making this veterans cemetery a reality, please contact the Task Force chairman at 805/934-8210 or email jbray@plainsxp.com.

Early fall Medicare Part B penalty resolution

In many cases, no news is good news but not when it comes to information on the law providing for the waiver of the Medicare Part B premium for certain members of the military retiree community.

Following the first announcement of the provision and the report that implementing procedures would be developed, little information has followed.

Finally, the information log jam has been broken with changes in the TRICARE Management Activity Fact Sheet and information posted on the Medicare web site.

Specifically, the new law affects uniformed services beneficiaries who are TRICARE and Medicare eligible in one of two ways:

1. Beneficiaries who are entitled to Medicare Part A but are not enrolled in Medicare Part B will be automatically enrolled in Medicare Part B without a premium surcharge during a special enrollment period that will continue through Dec. 31, 2004. In early fall, these beneficiaries will receive a form in the mail, giving them the option of selecting any month in 2004 as their Medicare Part B entitlement date, or refusing Part B altogether.

2. Beneficiaries whose current Medicare Part B entitlement began between January 2001 and December 2004 and who are paying a premium surcharge [more than \$66.60 a month] for Medicare Part B, will have their Part B premium reduced to the 2004 rate of \$66.60 beginning January 2004, or if later, their Part B entitlement date. In early fall, these beneficiaries will receive a refund for any excess premium surcharges they paid beginning in January 2004.

[Air Force Retiree News Service]