The Passing of the Greatest Generation

Approximately every three minutes a memory of World War II – its sights and sounds, its terrors and triumphs – disappears. Yielding to the inalterable process of aging, the men and women who fought and won the great conflict are now mostly in their 90s. They are dying quickly – at the rate of approximately 555 a day, according to US Veterans Administration figures. Honoring the 20th-century veterans’ sacrifice before they pass from the scene, is at the forefront of everything done at The National WWII Museum – from their exhibits, to oral histories, to the Museum’s $325 million expansion, a lasting tribute to the Greatest Generation. “There’s no time to lose,” said Dr. Gordon H. “Nick” Mueller, President and CEO of the Museum. “We want to be able to finish and dedicate our expansion while we still have members of the Greatest Generation to thank for their sacrifice and service to the nation and to show the world what they mean to the principle of freedom.”

In 2014 approximately 19,543 WWII veterans lived in Wisconsin. An approximate total of 1,034,727 WWII Veterans are alive in the US today with 555 of them dying per day, out of the near 16 million veterans who served during WWII. It is believed by 2036 there will be no more WWII veterans in the world. World War II, which began in 1939 and ended in 1945, was the deadliest and most destructive war in history. Before the war, Germany, America, and the rest of the world were going through the Great Depression. The economy was very bad, unemployment was at an all-time high, and massive inflation caused money to lose its value. More than fifty nations in the world were fighting, with more than 100 million soldiers deployed. Countries like America and Britain were part of the Allied powers. Japan and Germany were part of the Axis powers. America’s isolation from war ended on December 7, 1941, when Japan staged a surprise attack on American military installations in the Pacific. The most devastating strike came at Pearl Harbor, the Hawaiian naval base where much of the US Pacific Fleet was moored. In a two-hour attack, Japanese warplanes sank or damaged 18 warships and destroyed 164 aircraft. Over 2,400 servicemen and civilians lost their lives. Though stunned by the events of December 7, Americans were also resolute. On December 8, President Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war against Japan. The declaration passed with just one dissenting vote. Three days later, Germany and Italy, allied with Japan, declared war on the United States. America was now drawn into a global war. More info?

Go to WWII Museum Site
http://www.nationalww2museum.org/education
For many Veterans, memories of their wartime experiences can still be upsetting long after they served in combat. If you are an older Veteran, you may have served many years ago, but your military experience can still affect your life today. Many older Veterans find they have PTSD symptoms even 50 or more years after their wartime experience. Some symptoms of PTSD include having nightmares or feeling like you are reliving the event, avoiding situations that remind you of the event, being easily startled, and loss of interest in activities. There are a number of reasons why symptoms of PTSD may increase with age: Having retired from work may make your symptoms feel worse, because you have more time to think and fewer things to distract you from your memories. Having medical problems and feeling like you are not as strong as you used to be also can increase symptoms. You may find that bad news on the television and scenes from current wars bring back bad memories. You may have tried in the past to cope with stress by using alcohol or other substances. Then if you stop drinking late in life, without another, healthier way of coping, this can make PTSD symptoms seem worse. PTSD symptoms can occur soon after a traumatic experience, but this is not always the case. Here are some common symptom patterns: PTSD symptoms until later in life. For some Veterans, PTSD symptoms can be high right after their war experience, go down over the years, and then worsen again later in life. Some Veterans begin to have PTSD symptoms soon after they return from war. These symptoms may last until older age. Other Veterans don't. Many older Veterans have functioned well since their military experience. Then later in life, they begin to think more or become more emotional about their wartime experience. As you age, it is normal to look back over your life and try to make sense of your experiences. For Veterans this process can trigger Late-Onset Stress Symptomatology (LOSS). The symptoms of LOSS are similar to symptoms of PTSD. With LOSS, though, Veterans might have fewer symptoms, less severe symptoms, or begin having symptoms later in life. LOSS differs from PTSD in that LOSS appears to be closely related to the aging process. People with LOSS might live most of their lives relatively well. They go to work and spend time with family and friends. Then they begin to confront normal age-related changes such as retirement, loss of loved ones, and increased health problems. As they go through these stresses, they may start to have more feelings and thoughts about their military experiences. Having symptoms of LOSS is not upsetting for all Veterans. While some find that remembering their wartime experience is upsetting, many find that it helps them to make meaning of their wartime experience. What can you do to find help? If you are having a hard time dealing with your wartime memories, there are a number of things that you can do to help yourself. There are also ways you can seek help from others. Do things to feel strong and safe in other parts of your life, like exercising, eating well, and volunteering.

Talk to a friend who has been through the war or other hard times. A good friend who understands and cares is often the best medicine. Join a support group. It can help to be a part of a group. Some groups focus on war memories. Others focus on the here and now. Still others focus on learning ways to relax. Talk to a professional. It may be helpful to talk to someone who is trained and experienced in dealing with aging and PTSD. There are proven, effective treatments for PTSD. Your doctor can refer you to a therapist. You can also find information on PTSD treatment within VA at: VA PTSD Treatment Programs. Tell your family and friends about LOSS and PTSD. It can be very helpful to talk to others as you try to place your long-ago wartime experiences into perspective. It may also be helpful for others to know what may be the source of your anger, nerves, sleep, or memory problems. Then they can provide more support. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Most of all, try not to feel bad or embarrassed to ask for help. Asking for help when you need it is a sign of wisdom and strength.

Representatives Dan Benishek (R-MI) and Mike Honda (D-CA) have introduced the Toxic Exposure Research Act (H.R. 5484) that will, when enacted into law, establish a national center at a VA medical facility for research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of descendants of veterans exposed to toxic substances during their service in the U.S. Armed Forces. On November 19, at 2:00 p.m., in testimony before the Subcommittee on Health of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, VVA National President John Rowan expressed VVA’s strong support for this legislation. “This bipartisan legislation is multigenerational in scope and will provide a process for evaluating exposures that may result in toxic wounds to veterans and their offspring,” said Rowan. “The invisible wounds of war may not manifest for decades. Most tragically, these wounds may be passed on to subsequent generations, and our children and grandchildren should not have such burdens visited upon them.” Toxins, such as Agent Orange, are suspected of being responsible for birth defects, cancers, developmental disabilities, and other adverse health conditions in the children and grandchildren of veterans at a rate disproportionate to the general population. Veterans were exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides used during the Vietnam War. During the Persian Gulf War, more than 100,000 troops were exposed to plumes of toxins after U.S. forces blew up the Iraqi ammo dumps containing chemical and biological weapons. These veterans and the next generation deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq were exposed to oil fires, as well as the toxic smog from burn pits in which chemicals, ordnance, and even body parts were incinerated. “H.R. 5484 is a simple and straightforward proposal that will begin the needed research in the search for answers for the children, grandchildren, and in some cases, great-grandchildren who are manifesting a range of health issues suspected to be a result of a parent’s exposure to toxins while serving in the armed forces. We applaud Congressmen Benishek and Honda for introducing this bill that addresses the conditions that are so heart-breaking to so many families,” Rowan said. Vietnam Veterans of America (www.vva.org) is the nation’s only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA’s founding principle is “Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another.”

[Source: VVA Web Weekly Nov 20, 2014 ++]
Veterans Choice Program

Many Veterans will now have the option to receive non-VA health care rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility.

Beginning November 5, 2014, the new Choice Program will begin to cover non-VA care for eligible Veterans enrolled in VA healthcare. Veterans are eligible if any of these situations apply to you:

- You have been told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days from your preferred date or the date medically determined by your physician
- Your current residence is more than 40 miles from the closest VA health care facility
- You need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home
- You face a geographic challenge, such as extensive distances around water or other geologic formations, such as mountains, which presents a significant travel hardship

Every Veteran will receive a letter and a Choice Card in the mail with details about the program. Veterans will be eligible for the program and receive cards in three phases:

1. Veterans who may live more than 40 miles from a VA facility.
2. Veterans who are currently waiting for an appointment longer than 30 days from their preferred date or the date determined to be medically necessary by their physician.
3. All remaining Veterans enrolled for VA healthcare who may be eligible for the Choice Program in the future. To set up an appointment with a non-VA provider, call the VA at 866-606-8198 and we will work with you to ensure you are approved for care in your community.

For more information: [http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/)

VA TO CONSIDER INCOME ONLY NOT NET WORTH

To align VA’s healthcare program with the financial assessment requirements for other federal healthcare programs, the SECVA has approved a process change to cease collection of veterans’ net worth information for purposes of means testing for health benefits. Effective Jan. 1, 2015, VA will only consider a veterans’ previous year’s gross household income (earned and unearned income) and deductible expenses to determine eligibility and/or copay responsibility for purposes of VA healthcare enrollment/benefit purposes. Note. This does not impact net worth development for purposes of VHA’s Extended Care Services or VBA’s Pension Program. Software changes to remove the net worth prompts from VistA and the Enrollment System are expected to be released in second quarter FY 15. Until the software is implemented, VA intake staff will enter “zero-dollars” ($0) into the net worth prompts for new applicants’ or when updating an existing enrollees’ Means Test. Changes to the online application and VA Forms 10-10EZ/EZR and 10-10HS are expected to be available by January 1, 2015. VA will be sending letters to current enrollees who may benefit from this change. Point of Contact: Ms. Benita Miller, Health Eligibility Center Director, Benita.Miller@va.gov or (404) 828-5300. [Source: NAUS Weekly Update November 07, 2014 ++]
Vietnam-era soldiers who faced punitive discharges because they suffered from post-traumatic stress are to be given liberal consideration to requests for discharge upgrades.

Secretary of the Army John McHugh issued this directive to the Army Review Boards Agency, the service's highest level of administrative review for personnel actions.

McHugh's Nov. 3 directive was prompted by an earlier order from Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel which acknowledged that thousands of soldiers may have been kicked out of service because of behavior problems related to post-traumatic stress.

Upgraded discharges for soldiers who received a less than honorable discharge could lead to the award of previously denied benefits, such as disability pay, separation pay and GI Bill eligibility.

The ARBA is comprised of several boards for considering the claims of soldiers and former soldiers who appeal the filing of unfavorable information in their personnel records.

PTSD was not recognized as a potential behavior altering medical condition until 1980, which means that disability claims and discharge upgrades based on claims of the condition routinely were denied by government agencies, to include the Army review boards.

Hagel's September instruction to the services followed by several months a federal court class action suit filed by a group veterans and the Vietnam Veterans of America that claims the military systematically denied discharge upgrade applications based on claims of PTSD.

The suit estimated that about one-third of the 250,000 other-than-honorable discharges issued to Vietnam-era veterans may have been PTSD-related.

Components of the ARBA include:

- Army Board for Correction of Military Records, a panel that can recommend, to the secretary of the Army, the removal of erroneous or unjust information in their military records after all lower level administrative remedies have been exhausted. It also reviews the discharges of former soldiers that were granted more than 15 years ago, and those that were given as a sentence of a general court-martial.

- Army Discharge Review Board, reviews the discharges of former soldiers who left service within the past 15 years, except soldiers who were discharged as a result of a general court-martial. The board determines if a discharge was proper and equitable.

- Army Grade Determination Review Board, makes decisions on advancing retired enlisted soldiers and warrant officers to the highest grade held satisfactorily after a total of 30 years' time on active duty and on the retired list. Application must be made by letter to the board.

Hagel, a former Army sergeant who holds a Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster for service during the Vietnam War, directed that the military review boards "fully and carefully consider every petition based on PTSD brought by each veteran" and that such reviews will include "all materials and evidence provided by the petitioner." Because Vietnam-era medical and personnel files will not refer to PTSD as a debilitating medical condition, McHugh has directed that the Office of the Army Surgeon General provide expert guidance to the review boards on the clinical manifestations of PTSD, and the behavior indicators that will help the boards assess the presence of PTSD and its mitigating effects.

Hagel also directed that when service records or any document from a veteran's period of service "substantiate the existence of one or more symptoms of what is now recognized as PTSD or a PTSD-related condition during the time of service, liberal consideration will be given to finding that PTSD existed at the time of service," and may have led to the misconduct that caused the other-than-honorable discharge.

The new guidance primarily focuses on administrative discharges for minor misconduct, not serious court-martial offenses that resulted in punitive bad conduct or dishonorable discharges.

Mail applications for the various boards of the Army Review Board Agency should be sent to 251 18th Street South, Suite 385, Arlington, VA 22202-3531. For online applications, access http://arba.army.pentagon.mil/.
Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) introduced legislation (H.R.5762) to allow Department of Veterans Affairs doctors to make recommendations on patients’ use of medical marijuana. The VA currently prevents its doctors from giving patients consultations about medical marijuana use. Blumenauer thinks that veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder could benefit from using medical marijuana. Moreover, the Oregon Democrat argued that allowing veterans to obtain medical marijuana in the open would prevent them from buying the drug illegally.

"We should be allowing these wounded warriors access to the medicine that will help them survive and thrive, including medical marijuana, not treating them like criminals and forcing them into the shadows. It’s shameful,” Blumenauer said. Rohrabacher said the current policy is "antiquated" and prevents veterans from having access to a wide range of treatments for their psychological issues. "Conscience dictates that we not coldly ignore these desperate men and women, and that we remove government from its paternalistic stance between patient and doctor," Rohrabacher said. Earlier this year, the House adopted an amendment sponsored by Rohrabacher that would prevent the Justice Department from interfering with states' implementation of their own medical marijuana laws.

[Source: The Hill | Cristina Marcos | Nov. 21, 2014 ++]
Draft cards for all. H.R. 748, The Universal National Service Act. Last action: March 2013 referred to a House Armed Services subcommittee. Rep. Charlie Rangel, D-N.Y., says he knows a way to make the country think more deeply before getting involved in another war: Bring back compulsory public service. His bill calls for the first military draft of the post-Vietnam War era. All 18- to 25-year-olds could be called to fight during wartime and would be required to put in military or civilian public service during peacetime. Rangel wrote in a September op-ed in the Guardian newspaper that it "would compel everyone in the nation to stop and rethink about who we send to wars, how we fight — and why we fight them at all." A draft remains a very tough sell in a country that has relied on an all-volunteer force for decades. Still, the bill "has been referred to the committee, where it will most likely die," a Rangel staffer told Stars and Stripes. "There's no question that it will be reintroduced."

Getting paid for camo cameos. S.1669. Military Equitable Reimbursement Act. Last action: November 2013 sent to Senate committee. The Transformers movie franchise has grossed hundreds of billions of dollars. The U.S. military could have seen some of that money. The Air Force, Army, Navy and Marines each all supported the movies — treating it as a public relations bonanza — by offering up hundreds of serviceember extras, equipment including F-22 jets and Predator drones, and access to facilities such as Edwards Air Force Base in California and the Army’s White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. So, who pays and who gets paid for the screen cameos? The military can be reimbursed for the movie productions but current laws make it uncertain whether it can keep the money for use of installations like White Sands. Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., proposed closing the loophole and getting the services paid. "Clarifying the reimbursement policy for the film industry allows movie productions to realistically portray the skill, heroism, capability and challenges of our Armed Forces and their families while ensuring local installations are directly reimbursed for use of state-of-the-art facilities and equipment," Heinrich said in a written statement.

Taxpayers as conscientious objectors. H.R.2483 – Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Act. Last action: June 2013 referred to House Ways and Means Committee. Anti-war sentiment has been a common theme among bills stalled on Capitol Hill. Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., who marched with Martin Luther King Jr. and studies Gandhi, took up the cause of conscientious objectors inspired by the Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission ruling in the Supreme Court, which famously ruled the government cannot stop corporations from spending in support of political candidates. Lewis and a national group of religious leaders argue that citizens should also have a right to opt out of war by withholding tax money from the military. "What it is, is a bill to help people exercise their religious freedom," a Lewis staffer said. The bill creates a separate fund to receive income, gift and estate taxes of those who do not want to the money going to military purposes.

H.R. 1238. True Cost of War Act. Last action: March 2013 referred to House committee. A recent Harvard study estimated the costs for the Afghanistan and last Iraq wars could be $4 to $6 trillion — the current national debt is just short of $18 trillion — but the ultimate cost is largely unknown. That is because much of the cost is incurred decades after conflicts through the payout of benefits to troops and veterans. Rep. Bruce Braley, D-Iowa, who lost in the midterms to Joni Ernst, repeatedly proposed a law requiring the White House to make an official calculation of those long-term costs including care for injured vets, mental health treatment, prosthetics and spouse benefits. But the last version of the bill he introduced, the True Cost of War Act, stalled in committee and appears unlikely to make a resurgence before his time in Congress is over.

A long-sought ‘sorry’. H.R. 44, Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act. Last action: June 14 passed to the Senate in an omnibus bill. Many Guamanians believe the U.S. abandoned it during the early days of World War II, allowing Imperial Japanese forces to occupy. Some there still remember Japanese atrocities such as mass executions, forced labor, torture, internment and rape. Marines liberated the island after heavy fighting, but for about 30 years Guam lawmakers have pushed for U.S. reparations. Rep. Madeleine Bordallo, D-Guam, sponsored the most recent legislation. The bill passed the House as part of an omnibus bill including legislation for other territories but Senate leadership has not moved on a floor vote.
THANK YOU!

Thank you the Nelson Family Tree Farm for generously donating trees to Veterans in Waushara County. Twenty seven Veterans participated in the tree give away, despite the generous offer of 50 trees. Both the Nelson Family and the Veterans enjoyed the exchange.

Financial Help

Jamie Kolpien from Supportive Service for Veterans Families (SSVF) will meet with veterans facing eviction from rentals or post foreclosures, every 4th Wednesday at the North Annex 230 W. Park St. Wautoma, WI between 10 am to 3 pm. For an appointment call 866-823-8387

Mental Help

WANTED: VETS WILLING TO FORM A PTSD GROUP FOR MONTHLY MEETINGS IN WAUSHARA COUNTY. IF INTERESTED IN BEING PART OF A GROUP.

PLEASE CALL

JENNIFER GRUBA, MS LMFT. Sponsored by Madison Vet Center

There is no cost to this service.

608-256-1901 x16904