

OFFICERS 2010-2011

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Earl Mason, Brian Mitchell, Henry Merckson, Jo Ann Daszuta,
Rafael Rodriquez, James Daniel, Kevin Reed, Jean Gautreaux

Commander notes

Reminder: The ability of this office to continue to provide assistance to veterans and families is totally dependent upon receipt of donations, not only from chapter members but other organizations and businesses as well. We know that the current state of the economy has placed an added burden on everyone's finances. In order for us to continue to operate we need donations and hope and pray that everyone will continue to be generous with their donations.

As I look back over the past seven years I'm continually amazed at the progress that has been made. When I started doing service work we only had one working PC and one office. The PC was used to prepare newsletters and correspondence. We now have 4 private offices and 6 service officer workstations complete with internet access and tied into a central data system.

The only area of disappointment is with the lack of attendance at general membership meetings. In Addition to the camaraderie, it is of vital importance for our members to know what we are doing and what we want to do. Support your chapter, come to our monthly meetings. We might even feed you!

We have a query about availability of our newsletter via e-mail and are researching the possibility since it would be less expensive, saving postage on those sent this way. We are also looking at the possibility of posting it to our Chapter website. Unfortunately, we only have email addresses for a miniscule number of our members. If you would be interested in an electronic version, send us an email at fldav32@bellsouth.net so we can start to build an address book.

On March 24, 2012, The Brevard Veterans Council will be holding their **17th Annual Stand Down for Homeless Veterans**, an event which is unfortunate, but totally necessary.

In order to make this event work, they need the support of our members, organizations, and anyone else who would like to make a difference in the lives of our Homeless Veterans. They are asking for donations of the following: **"Pop-top" type canned food, such as Beans & Wieners, Pork & Beans, Vienna Sausage, Chicken Vienna, Spaghetti Meatballs or Ravioli, apple sauce.**

They have a donation box located at the Veterans Memorial Center on Merritt Island so you can drop off your donations at your convenience. Or you can drop items off at our chapter home on Monday or Wednesday and they will be taken to the center..

Boosters Oct 2011 – Feb 2012

Lester Armstrong
Ray&Peggy Braz
Neil&Faith Carson
Dominic&Mary Del Grosso
Nathan Hicks
Rene&Jocelyn Lajoie
George McGee
Norbert&Yvonne Oswald
Leonard Pirolozzi, JR
Thomas Sullivan
Andrew Zorbis

Robert Baden
Terry&Renee Bryant
Donald Champlain, SR
Alex&Margaret DiSanto
John Hucek, JR
David Lippincott
Raul Mercado
John Panik, SR
Louis Sirois
David Sulzbach

Angelo Barbato
James Carelton
Rex&Harriett Cummings
Kenneth Fallin
Marlin Jacobs
Larry McDonald
Frank Noel
Raymond Patala
Robert Smith
Edward Williams

New Law Permits Veterans Designation on Florida Driver's License

Florida Governor Rick Scott signed House Bill 1165 to recognize and honor Florida veterans who honorably served their nation. Veterans who live in the Sunshine State now can add a veteran designation to their driver license or identification card. The blue "V" on the driver's license indicated the license holder is a military veteran. To add the "V" to a license or ID card Veterans can visit any Florida driver's license office, including those operated by county tax collectors. They should plan to:

- Present their DD-214, which shows their honorable discharge from active duty.
- Pay a one-time \$1 fee, in addition to the replacement or renewal fee
- Visit www.GatherGoGet.com to ensure they have all the other documents required.

VA Disability and/or Military Retirement Pay:

While on the subject of Death Benefits, please remember that any VA payments made monthly to the Veteran will stop immediately upon their death. If there is a surviving spouse, they will be entitled to payment for the full month of the Veteran's month of death. The VA will contact the surviving spouse about how they can receive this payment. We strongly suggest that if the check for the month of death is deposited in the bank account that the surviving spouse not spend this money until she has verified with the VA (1-800-827-1000) that the money deposited by the VA is intended for use of the surviving spouse. Sometimes the VA takes back the check deposited for the month of death and then reissues it to the surviving spouse. Additionally, if the Veteran was entitled to military retired pay, this also stops immediately upon the Veteran's death. Unlike VA, the surviving spouse is entitled to a prorated payment for the month of death, based on the number of days the Veteran was alive during the month of death. This payment comes from DFAS (1-800-321-1080). Finally, please note that both VA and Military Retired pay stop upon the Veteran's death. None of the Veteran's payments continue beyond their death. The surviving spouse may be entitled to some VA and/or military benefits, depending on several factors. Please contact us for assistance with these potential claims.

A veteran – whether active duty, retired, served one hitch, or reserves is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a blank check made payable to 'The Government of the United States' for an amount of 'up to and including my life.'

From one Veteran to another, it's an honor to be in your company. Thank you for your service to our country and defending the freedoms we enjoy.

Veteran to VeteranAuthor Unknown

When a Veteran leaves the "job" and retires to a better life, many are jealous, some are pleased, and others, who may have already retired, wonder if he knows what he is leaving behind, because we already know.

1. We know, for example, that after a lifetime of camaraderie that few experience, it will remain as a longing for those past times.
2. We know in the Military life there is a fellowship which lasts long after the uniforms are hung up in the back of the closet.
3. We know even if he throws them away, they will be on him with every step and breath that remains in his life. We also know how the very bearing of the man speaks of what he was and in his heart still is.

These are the burdens of the job. You will still look at people suspiciously, still see what others do not see or choose to ignore and always will look at the rest of the Military world with a respect for what they do; only grown in a lifetime of knowing.

Never think for one moment you are escaping from that life. You are only escaping the "job" and merely being allowed to leave 'active' duty.

So what I wish for you is that whenever you ease into retirement, in your heart you never forget for one moment that you are still a member of the greatest fraternity the world has ever known.

NOW...Civilian Friend vs. Veteran Friends Comparisons:

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Get upset if you're too busy to talk to them for a week.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Are glad to see you after years, and will happily carry on the same conversation you were having the last time you met.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Have never seen you cry

VETERAN FRIENDS: Have cried with you.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Keep your stuff so long they forget it's yours.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Borrow your stuff for a few days then give it back.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Know a few things about you

VETERAN FRIENDS: Could write a book with direct quotes from you.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Will leave you behind if that's what the crowd is doing.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Will stand by you no matter what the crowd does.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Are for a while.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Are for life.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Have shared a few experiences....

VETERAN FRIENDS: Have shared a lifetime of experiences no citizen could ever dream of...

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Will take your drink away when they think you've had enough.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Will look at you stumbling all over the place and say, "You better drink the rest of that before you spill it!" Then carry you home safely and put you to bed.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Will ignore this.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Will forward this.

VHA Health Eligibility Center Health Benefits Website

VHA Health Eligibility Center (HEC) has recently enhanced its ability to communicate with the Veteran community by launching a new Health Benefits website at www.va.gov/healthbenefits. This site will replace the current Health Eligibility website (www.va.gov/healtheligibility/), and is designed for easier navigation and is more interactive to enhance the user's experience. The new site is an online portal for Veterans, family members and caregivers to learn about eligibility, enrollment options and benefits offered by VHA. It also provides detailed information about how to apply for VHA health services, cost of care, accessing VA health care and VA's Medical Benefits Package. The Health Benefits website became available November 11, 2011 (Veterans Day) and provides the following new features:

- Simple, easy instructions on how to obtain and access health benefits
- Organized informational flow
- Medical benefits package and priority group information
- Income threshold determination widget
- Copay mapping

VA Clothing Allowance Information

The current VA Clothing Allowance is \$716 annually. Veterans who, because of a Service-Connected Disability, wear or use a prosthetic or orthopedic appliance that tends to wear out or tear clothing, are eligible for payment of an Annual Clothing Allowance. Examples of appliances include an artificial limb, rigid extremity brace, rigid spinal or cervical brace, wheelchair, crutches, or other devices prescribed for the Service-Connected Disability. Veterans who, because of a Service-Connected skin condition, use medications that caused irreparable damage or stains to outer garments, are also eligible for payment of Annual Clothing Allowance. Recently, the VA has determined that it is now possible that eligible Veterans may receive two Clothing Allowances in cases where separate and distinct clothing items are affected by Service-Connected Disabilities. You may apply for this benefit between now and 1 August 2012, if you believe you are eligible, at the Prosthetics Section of the VA Clinic.

Timely Reminder: If you are rated 30% Service-Connected Disabled or higher, you should be getting extra compensation for the number of your dependents. Further, if your marital status changes due to death or divorce, you must let the VA know as soon as possible. Unreported changes in marital status are one of the leading causes of creating a debt where the Veteran owes money to the U.S. Government for overpayment of VA benefits.

What's New on My HealtheVet

DoD Military Service Information Now Available on My HealtheVet

Are you a military retiree or a Veteran discharged after 1979?

If yes, key portions of your DoD Military Service Information may be found in My HealtheVet. To see this you simply need to:

- be a veteran enrolled at a VA health care facility
- be registered on My HealtheVet and
- have an up graded account

Viewing your DoD Military Service Information in My HealtheVet is simple. It is easy to use, private and secure. Anytime, anywhere your are, as long as you have Internet access, you can view your:

- Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) codes
- Pay details
- Service Dates
- Deployment Periods
- Retirement Periods

Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) is your military information. It describes your work while on active duty or in the reserves. It includes training and certifications. My HealtheVet provides this for all branches of the military.

Having your DoD Military Service Information available in My HealtheVet gives you easy, convenient access to your military employment history. It lets you see your information on demand. Use the VA Blue Button to print or download your DoD Military Information.

You can share this information whenever you need it without the hassle of calling for paper records. Using it when looking for a new job or considering changing careers. Share this information with your employer to show past job skills and experience.

If you have any questions, please contact the My HealtheVet Coordinator at your local VA medical center.

Rating Review

Many Veterans, especially our Veterans from WWII and/or Korea, have received Rating decisions from the VA in the past at 0%. Our experience shows that far too many of our Veterans in this category think this means the VA denied their claim. This is untrue! A 0% rating is a valid Service-Connected Rating and the VA is required to provide medical treatment for all 0% Service-Connected Disabilities. Second, odds are that this years-old Disability has likely gotten worse and needs review. All you have to do is bring current treatment records for this Disability to our office and we will help you ask the VA to provide a current evaluation of the Disability. That evaluation may well result in an award of a higher disability rating, which will pay compensation. I suggest you review those old Rating decisions and see if you had some 0% Ratings you thought were Ratings Denials and come see us about trying to get an increase.

Ratings Review part II: Of course, anyone with a VA Disability Ratings 10% or above may also ask the VA to review this for possible increased evaluation. Again, please bring a copy of your current treatment record concerning the Disability to our office and we will help get the VA to review it to see if a higher rating is warranted. As a point of interest, the VA is obligated to schedule you for a C&P Exam anytime you ask for a review of an existing VA Service-Connected Disability. Finally, anytime you file another claim with the VA which includes re-evaluation of existing Service-Connected Disabilities, the VA can review and evaluate all of your Service-Connected Disabilities if they choose to. This does not always happen, but it certainly can.

Death Benefits

Effective October 1st 2011, the VA plot allowance is increased from \$300 to \$700 for all qualifying claimants. The plot allowances are payable if the veteran was in receipt of any type disability payments from the VA at the time of death and the veteran is not buried in a National Cemetery. If buried in a National Cemetery, the plot allowance is not payable as the plot is furnished at no charge. The burial allowance is also increased from \$300 to \$700 on October 1st, but only for veterans who died while properly hospitalized by VA. The allowance is payable to help offset burial expenses for veterans buried in a National Cemetery or a private cemetery. Again, the Veteran must have been in receipt of some disability payments from the VA at the time of death.

Proposed State Legislative Priorityies for 2011/2012

1. Legislation extending property tax credit to survivors of active duty deaths (including those whose spouses were non-residents and moved after death),
2. Increase the number of nursing homes in Florida
3. Legislation authorizing a veterans' Court program and establishing a Veterans Court Docket throughout the State of Florida.
4. Legislation that provides that persons found to have committed offenses who allege that offenses resulted from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, substance use disorder, or psychological problems from service in combat theater in the U.S. military may have hearing on issue before sentencing.
5. Legislation designating August 7th of each year as "Purple Heart Day".

Veterans Employment Tax Credits Signed into Law

President Obama has signed the legislation into law aimed at helping unemployed veterans find jobs. The Wounded Warrior Tax Credit offers employers up to \$9,600 for hiring a veteran with a service-connected disability, and Returning Heroes Tax Credit provided businesses a credit of up to \$5,600 for each veteran hired. Both tax credits apply for businesses that hire veterans who have been unemployed for more than six months. The Wounded Warrior Tax Credit is doubled from the existing credit, covering the first \$24,000 of wages for a service-connected disabled veteran.

If you get a request for an Eligibility Verification Report (EVR) related to a VA pension, be sure to send it in, *even if you received a letter saying that you didn't have to!* As with any confusing correspondence you may get from the VA, give us a call and we can sort it out for you. Some of the replies should be sent through us to the National Service Office in St. Pete.

Do you know what April 15th is? Yeah, yeah, TAX DAY! It also happens to be the 65th anniversary of your Chapter's original chartering, back in 1947! We are trying to put together a gala of some sort (maybe with politicians congratulating us) and would like any historical input from our longer-term members like "where were we before we moved into our current quarters about 33 years ago?" "Who were all of our past Commanders?" You get the idea. Mail it to us or email it to fldav32@bellsouth.net.

It's time to think about applications for our scholarship for children or grandchildren of our members who are or will be attending an institution of higher learning (including technical schools). Applications are available for the asking and must be returned by May 15th. Last year's essays all missed the mark and no award was made. Surely someone can nail it this year.

Elections are coming, elections are coming! Anyone interested in serving their chapter as one of its officers (and have their name in the prestigious list at the front of this publication) should let the Adjutant know before the March general membership meeting on the 28th.

Aluminum cans

We are still collecting aluminum cans for recycling and annually realize about six or seven hundred dollars from this effort, which helps with Chapter expenses. While the majority of cans are soft drink and beer cans, others such as Spam and some pet food cans are also aluminum and are acceptable. All we ask, for the benefit of the disabled vets opening the bags at the recycler, is that you rinse the pet food cans out before bagging them as they can become a bit "ripe" during the time they spend in our shed awaiting the trip to the recycler.

.....Thanks

NEWSLETTER

Please send the coupon below and your check for \$10 to subscribe to our newsletter. If you're due for renewal, don't forget to do so. If you have anything for the newsletter let us know.

BOOSTERS

Donations from our DAV Boosters help defray the chapter costs. The donation will be \$10.00 annually; you may use the form below for the newsletter or booster donation or scholarship fund, check boxes indicating what you are donating for -Thank you.

Make check payable to:

J.L. GOLIGHTLY CHAPTER #32
2265 NORTH HARBOR CITY BLVD
MELBOURNE, FL 32935-6653

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

NEWSLETTER BOOSTERS

COLLEGE FUND TOTAL AMOUNT \$_____

Disclaimer: The Disabled American Veterans, J.L. Golightly, Inc. Chapter #32 publishes this newsletter as a service to its members as well as a public information service on Veteran's Affairs. The contents do not reflect the views or opinions of the membership, the Chapter officers or National parent organizations of the DAV.