

OFFICERS 2012-2013

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<u>Adjutant:</u>	Jim Daniel	<u>Officer of the Day:</u>	Campbell Love	
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Executive board members

Earl Mason, Hank Merckson, Jessie Owens

Service Officers

Earl Mason, Brian Mitchell, Henry Merckson, JoAnn Jackson, Rafael Rodriguez, Jim Daniel, Louis Velez, , Henry Stallings

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS NEWSLETTER

Winter 2014

SERVICE HOURS – MONDAY & WEDNESDAY 9AM – 1PM

E-mail: Info@FLDav32.Org

Website: WWW.FLDav32.Org

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NEWSLETTER

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TAPS

Since September 2013, we have learned of the passing of the following members:

Paul J. Adams (Past Commander)
Richard C. Cain
William N. Dunning
Pat Mazza

Walter J. Backer
Jeffry H. Dempsey
Salvatore Giammanco
Richard Mebus

Corbit L. Best
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Commander's Note

Well, we're all back from service officer certification training for another successful week without a fatality. We now have seven certified service officers and will have an eighth one by April when one of ours, who couldn't attend the January school, will be finished.

Throughout the week we were reminded of the new DAV logo which you should see on your DAV magazine: "FULFILLING OUR PROMISES TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED". Who are they? YOU! You gave up a part of your life, and maybe your body, to serve your country in the defense of freedom somewhere in the world. Some served when it was the thing to do during World War II; some in Korea, when a lot of people didn't know where exactly it was and still don't realize that we are still technically in a state of war there; a lot of us during the Vietnam era when being in the military was not the best thing to be identified with; and now others who have served in places with names that are hard to say and even harder to spell, in a role even more unpopular than in Vietnam.

What do we have in common? Everyone, whether volunteer or conscript, served under at least an implied promise that were we killed, injured or made ill by the circumstances of our service, our government would do right by us and our survivors. The VA's mission statement says: "To fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans." Does it get any clearer than that? Does it occasionally seem that the VA needs to have its employees stand and recite that statement at the beginning of each work day, like we used to do the pledge of allegiance at the beginning of each school day and which we still do at every DAV function? Are the staffers who decide the fate of our claims for compensation really aware of the sacrifices we made to allow them to have their jobs or are they just putting in the hours and pushing the paper or computer keys?

Peter Finley Dunne (1867-1936) in War and War Makers said: "I wish it could be fixed up, so' th' men that starts th' wars could do the fightin'." Maybe, just maybe, there would be fewer of them, eh? Maybe if the VA decision makers all had to be veterans, the perspective would change. Our Chapter Service Officers are all disabled veterans, the DAV National Service Officers are all disabled veterans, as are all of our leaders in the State and National organizations, so we know what service and sacrifice are. I believe the Mr. Dunne would give us a "thumbs up" because we have earned our credentials by doing the fightin'.

Every couple of years we, as free Americans, choose certain people to run our local, state, and federal governments. We, as veterans, need to question the candidates for these offices and make sure that they will have the best interest of their country's defenders at heart, and if not, vote for the other one, if they do. Whenever you get an opportunity to express your views on veterans' affairs to an elected official, DO IT! Talking among ourselves doesn't do a lot of good if the folks in charge can't hear it. As a gentleman named Carl Schurz (1829-1906) put it: "Our country, right or wrong. When right, to be kept right; when wrong, to be put right." It's our responsibility.

ELECTIONS

Remember, nominations for elective office are due by February 26, 2014. Anyone desiring to be considered for any of these positions should let Earl Mason know either by e-mail at Adjutant@FLDav32.Org or by snail mail at 2265 N Harbor City Blvd, Melbourne, FL 32935. Nominations will be finalized at the February, 26th general membership meeting with elections being held at the general membership meeting on March 26th.

Patriotism is supporting your country all the time, and your government when it deserves it.
--- Mark Twain

MEETING REMINDER

The Executive Board normally meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 1300 hours after the chapter service hours. Any member can attend as a visitor.

The General Membership (Business) meetings are normally held at 1930 hours on the fourth Wednesday of each month except November and December when they are held on the third Wednesday. Meetings are suspended during June, July, and August and only the Executive Board meetings are held.

OOPS!

In our last newsletter we mentioned that we have a “pre-departure” checklist you can use to help sort out all of the stuff your survivors are going to be hunting for after you leave. We got a number of requests for copies but, unfortunately, those names got misplaced in the shuffle. Please remind us if you were one who asked for a copy and didn’t get it (you now know why). You can e-mail us at: Adjutant@FLDav32.Org or put a note in with your donation slip. Adjutant Jimbo promises to not forget you. (It should soon be available on the chapter website, www.fldav32.org, for download)

THE SURVEY SAYS.....

Please take the brief survey on the chapter website (www.fldav32.org) and let us know your desires, preferences, complaints (not really, I hope), so we can continue to improve what we do for you, our members.

Why do we choose from only two or three people to be President and 51 for Miss America?

AUXAILLIARIES

There are two auxiliaries to the DAV: the traditional one everyone thinks about which is open to spouses, children and grandchildren of our members and the one composed of members, male and female, who have chosen to give a little bit back to the organization through helpful service, the National Order of Trench Rats. Both are active in this area and are looking for new members. If you have an interest in joining either one, let us know and we will see that you are contacted by an officer of the appropriate group.

SERVICE CENTER

As you are aware, the sole reason for our existence is to provide service assistance to disabled veterans and their survivors seeking compensation from the Department of Veteran Affairs. We think that we do a good job of it and now have two Dept Service Officers (DSO) and five Chapter Service Officers (CSO) available two days a week to assist those veterans. By April, we should have one more CSO.

Our DSOs are Earl Mason and Lou Velez. Our CSOs are Brian Mitchell, Hank Merckson, Joann Jackson, Henry Stallings and Jim Daniel. We anticipate having Rafael Rodriguez recertified this spring.

From November last year through January this year, we served 250 clients with some level of claim service. During that same period our Chapter reported over 800 hours under the Local Veterans Assistance Program, 160 of which was for Service Officer certification training.

Sometime in April you may get a notice that there will be a DAV Mobile Service Office (MSO) in your area. The MSO will be at our Chapter on May 1st and at the Vietnam and All Veterans reunion at Wickham Park on May 2 & 3. There will be two of DAV’s professional National Service Officers with the unit.

A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination.---Nelson Mandela

DID YOU KNOW?

Do you know a veteran who has NEVER submitted a claim for compensation to the VA? A program announced last summer gives some special consideration to veterans filing their INITIAL claim for compensation and using the fully developed claim (FDC) process

For claims filed between August 6, 2013 and August 5, 2015, it is possible to get up to one year retroactive compensation if certain requirements are met:

The claim must be for compensation – no other types are eligible.

The claim must be original; for the purposes of this program an original claim is the initial formal (complete) claim filed by a veteran for disability compensation. Any applications submitted or filed subsequently will be considered new or supplemental claims, and therefore not eligible for a retroactive date.

Informal (incomplete) claims are not eligible for an additional retroactive date.

The claim must be received on a VA form 21-526EZ or submitted through eBenefits using VDC (come see us to learn more.)

The veteran must be separated from his/her last period of **active duty** service more than one year ago, and

The claim must be received before August 5, 2015.

NEW GO-TO PLACE FOR VETERANS BENEFITS

Military veterans and their families have a new online source of help for getting the benefits they've earned. On the web site Explore VA, produced by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, you can learn about many kinds of benefits: health care, education, job services, home loans, housing, life insurance, pensions, disability compensation, and much more. You can also apply for those benefits through the site and track the status of your claim. And if you want to reach out for more information or to friends or fellow veterans, you'll find social networking tools to help with that, too. Log on to va.gov/explore.

HOW CAN I CHANGE MY DIRECT DEPOSIT?

Probably the easiest way is to call the VA Help Line at 1-800-827-1000. When you call, make sure you have your account number and routing transit number from the old and the new bank. It takes about 45 to 60 days to become effective, so if changing banks, make sure to keep the old bank account open until your money starts going to the new bank account; otherwise you may end up with having to get your monthly VA payment reissued and this can take a considerable amount of time. Finally, you can also change your address by calling the VA Help Line. It is essential that you keep your mailing address current with the VA so they can reach you with important communications.

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 recycling center, 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 center. Please remove any paper labels.

.....Thanks

It is hard to imagine a more stupid or dangerous way of making decision than by putting those decisions in the hands of people who pay no price for being wrong. –Thomas Sewell

NEW NATIONAL CEMETERY UPDATE:

At the recent meeting with National Cemetery Officials at the Veterans Memorial Center, I learned it is to be located in the Scottsmoor area, about two miles from I-95. The 300 plus acres have been purchased by the VA and they are working on finalizing architectural plans. The cemetery will be designed and constructed in section that will be large enough to handle ten years worth of burials (about 1700) each. There will be about seven sections, so it will meet burial needs for the next 70 years.

The current schedule indicates the first section should be open in mid 2015. In addition to space for full body burials, it will contain columbiums for interment of ashes of the departed.

As with all National Cemeteries built and managed by the VA, it will be a beautiful and respectful final resting place for America's veterans and eligible dependents.

Some of the eligibility rules are complex and you should call our office, contact your funeral home, or go to the VA web site at www.va.gov for more specific help. Finally, please remember you cannot make reservations for burial in a National Cemetery. You must apply through your funeral home at the time of need.

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear. –Nelson Mandela

K9S FOR WARRIORS

This non-profit organization provides dogs to help stressed U.S. military veterans cope with civilian life. Unfortunately, many warriors suffer from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) or TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury). This, in turn, causes them to experience problems in fully integrating into civilian life. The facility is located near Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. They offer a three-week in-house program for Vets to meet and learn to work with their dogs. The dogs are trained with special skills to help the veteran. Some types of assistance are fetching objects for veterans with physical disability, create personal space for the veteran whose condition may make them nervous in a crowd. The dogs are taught to “cover and block” – to stand between a Vet and an approaching person, or behind a Vet when they are standing in line. Of course, the dogs are taught many other skills to directly help the Vet. The Director of Canine Operations says, “the dogs are literally a prescription on four legs.” One Veteran graduate says when he has nightmares, his dog gets upon the bed and starts pounding on him, knocking his wife right out of bed to wake him up. He says since he has teamed up with his dog, a Labradoodle, he is now able to go to the store on his own, pick up his kids from school, and take his daughter to gymnastics among other daily living activities he previously was unable to do. Of note, the organization's primary source of dogs to train is rescue dogs from shelters. The training of the dogs and Veterans cost \$10,000 for each Veteran-dog team and is completely paid for by private donations. They may be contacted at (904) 686-1956 or www.k9sforwarriors.org. Other groups that match up shelter animals with Veterans include Pets for Vets (petsforvets.com). Please share this information with any Veteran you feel would possibly benefit from these types of programs.

When the people fear their government, there is tyranny; when the government fears the people, there is liberty. --Thomas Jefferson

WHO DO YOU KNOW NAMED BOB?

Our chapter has around 1200 members, about 150 of them are 90 years old or older and 170 are 80+. Three of those currently on our roster are 98 years old. One of them, Bob Whitney, has been a regular attendee at our monthly meetings until just recently.

Bob was born in New London, Connecticut in December 1915 and was a military “brat”. His dad spent 30 years in the US Army and retired in 1918 so there is definitely some warrior blood in his veins. He enlisted in the Army in September 1934 at Fort H.G. Wright, Fisher’s Island, NY in the Eleventh Coast Artillery, beginning a 31-year career ending at Patrick AFB, FL in 1965.

The list of bases he was assigned to includes Mitchell Field, NY; Chanute Field, IL; Trumbull Field, CT; Ft. Benning, GA, Maxwell Field, AL; Carlstrom Field, FL; Selman Field, LA; Greenville, MS; Buckingham Field, FL; Lowry Field, CO; Sioux City AAF, IO; Buckley Field, CO; Keesler AFB, MS; and finally Patrick AFB, FL. Many of these places only exist in the memories of local residents and other old-timers as they ceased to function years ago. Temporary duty assignments took him to such exotic places at Detroit, MI to observe the manufacture of ball turrets for B-17 and B-24 aircraft; Hickam, HI ; Kwajalein AFB, Haneda Airport, Japan; Kadena, Okinawa; and the Northrup manufacturing plant in Hawthorne, CA for training the Snark missile.

Following his retirement from the Air Force, he remained active in Space Coast activities including a stamp club for missileers and a space related covers club, all while working full time as an inspector for freight carriers. Among other things, he was Chairman of the Brevard Historical Commission until 1988 and served as a hospice volunteer for many years. Bob became a member of DAV Chapter #32 in 2007.

T.S. Eliot said: “The years between 50 and 70 are the hardest. You are always being asked to do things, and yet you are not decrepit enough to turn them down.” No problem for Bob Whitney, apparently.

Do not regret growing older; it is a privilege denied to many.”

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.