



# NEWS AND VIEWS



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## Women in World War I

The naming of a new U.S. Navy destroyer in honor of Chief Nurse Lenah Higbee may be just a blip in the news, but it represents a long-overdue recognition of American women's participation in World War I.

Across the globe, over thirty countries are commemorating the Great War with educational programs, memorial services, and public events. The United States shed its isolationist stance and joined with the Entente powers in 1917, three years after the war began. Thus, our two-year centennial of World War I will begin later as well, on the 100th anniversary of Congress' declaration of war in April 2017.

This centennial provides a chance to re-awaken Americans to this largely forgotten war, and its continuing impact on our lives, and on the geopolitics of today's world. Name a hotspot in the news — shall we start with Syria? Or how about the Ukraine, the Balkans, post-colonial Africa, or the South China Sea? World War I and its aftermath continue to weave bloodstained threads into the global social fabric of the 21st Century.

The Great War links directly to contemporary cultural issues as well. While segregated "colored" regiments like the highly decorated Harlem Rattlers met with a joyous welcome home at the war's end, the violent reality of life within apartheid United States inspired black veterans to join a young organization called the NAACP. Along the way, their leadership helped spark the Harlem Renaissance.

The seismic impact of World War I also shaped the role of American women, both in the military and in civilian life. We are all familiar with the poster image of World War II's iconic Rosie the Riveter and her "We Can Do It!" ethos.

As the chairman of the US World War I Centennial Commission, Robert Dalessandro, recently comment-

ed, "Rosie the Riveter had a mother, and that mother worked in a factory too!" In fact, by 1918, two million civilian women worked in war-related industries. Women also took on traditionally male roles in farming, participating in the stunning growth of American agricultural production during this era. We associate these changes with World War II, but the Great War led the way in expanding women's horizons.

American women volunteered overseas in newly professionalized capacities on the war front, starting with the German invasion of Belgium in 1914.

Women worked as Red Cross nurses, as relief workers, as supervisors of large-scale resettlement efforts. They often wore military-type uniforms, displaying a no-nonsense appearance that helped them get the job done, whether it was driving an American Field Service ambulance or organizing a local orphanage.

When the US officially entered the war in 1917, many of these female volunteers signed up in the Army or Navy Nurse Corps. On the USS Mongolia, one of the first troop ships to arrive in France in 1917, misfiring ordinance accidentally killed two female nurses as the ship pulled into the French harbor. They would be the first two Americans to die in the line of duty during World War I.

The Navy Nurse Corps began in 1908. It was here that Lenah Higbee made her mark. Under her leadership, the Corps grew from 22 original nurses to over 10,000 in wartime. She received the Naval Cross in 1918, the first woman to receive this honor. Higbee was also the first woman in the navy to have a ship named after her.

There are other "firsts" associated with the Great War. Women's suffrage was a hard-won victory in battle that had begun over 75 years before the Great War, but women's wartime service gave it that last, successful push.

The expansion of women's roles during World War I

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Contributors to the News and Views: Ken Holybee, Kate O'Hare-Palmer, Bill Burke and Astrid Ortega. Thanks to all. Would like to see more articles next month. Support the chapter. I don't write articles, I just put it together. There are a lot of interesting stories out there, send them to Ken and he will forward them to me.

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provides just one example of the war's impact on American life. The war's history abounds in diverse themes -of immigration, technology, treachery, heroism, philanthropy, economic strength, artistic inspiration– and each of them lends valuable perspective on the 21st century.

Over the next 3 years, the US World War I Centennial Commission will build awareness about World War I through educational programs, the arts, and the creation of a national memorial park in Washington DC. Please join us in commemorating the upcoming centennial in your community and across the nation.

Visit [www1cc.org](http://www1cc.org)

Libby Haight O'Connell and Monique Brouillet Seefried serve on the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission

### **Vietnam War Veteran Cured of Hepatitis C By Knute Niehoff**

**In 1999, 35 years my Vietnam War ended, I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). I started receiving treatment and counseling, which is ongoing to this day. Then in 2003, I received an unexpected letter that would compound my PTSD.**

**The letter was from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) urging me to get tested for hepatitis C virus (HCV) as they had found a high prevalence of the disease among Vietnam War veterans, especially Army combat medics. I saw my doctor, who gave me a blood test and biopsy, and confirmed that I did in fact have HCV. I was shocked. Like so many who have been diagnosed with this so-called "silent disease", I hadn't experienced any signs or symptoms. I was terrified that my wife and daughters could have also contracted this disease from me. Luckily, they all tested negative.**

**I determined that I had contracted HCV in 1969 while serving as a helicopter medic evacuating the wounded from the jungle and performing triage on the way to the hospital or the hospital ship. I had not worn gloves or a mask and had been constantly stuck with needles and splattered with blood.**

**My HCV diagnosis took a toll on my mental health. To this day – 46 years later – I continue to struggle with my PTSD and depres-**

**sion. Finding out that I also had HCV worsened an already tenuous existence. My wife and daughters witnessed my suffering and supported me through some very dark times.**

**As I did more research to try to make sense of my diagnosis, I came across an alarming statistic. Approximately 75 percent of the 3.5 million Americans who have HCV are unaware they are living with the virus. Veterans and Baby Boomers, in particular, are affected at a disproportionately high rate.**

**Eventually, I spoke with my doctor regarding HCV treatment options available at the time. We discussed an interferon-based regimen, but I ultimately decided to forgo treatment as it could have had a very negative reaction with the medication I was taking for my PTSD. But I also knew that without treatment, my HCV could worsen and eventually cause liver damage.**

**Fortunately, in the fall of 2015, my doctor called to tell me about a newly approved drug that could offer a chance for a cure with many fewer potential side effects. I immediately began treatment with a 12-week regimen of the medication. I'm happy to report that the treatment worked and I'm now cured of HCV.**

**It's hard to put into words the feelings I experienced when I learned that I had been cured and the "black cloud" I had been feeling lifted. I was overwhelmed with emotion -- I laughed, I cried, I hugged everyone who had been there for me.**

**I encourage anyone at risk -- particularly veterans, public servants, emergency medical technicians (EMT), nurses, policemen, firemen-- to get tested for HCV. Life is a gift and I'm glad I'm here to enjoy every day.**

*Knute Niehoff is a Vietnam War veteran, retired executive recruiter, husband and grandfather of three living in Novato, Calif*

[Please Buy or Sell some tickets to our Annual Dinner Social Dance on September 10, 2016 from 4-10](#)

## ***VA Hearing Aids/Eyeglasses***

***BY: Chris Bingham***

Many Veterans are unaware that the VA will provide glasses and hearing aids to those who are not service connected for vision or hearing-related conditions (Priority Groups 6-7). In the past these were available only to Veterans who were service connected for hearing or vision related conditions. Now, these services are generally considered part of the preventative care package for all veterans enrolled in VA healthcare. Also, veterans who are enrolled in the VA health care system are eligible for battery replacement and repair of hearing aids even though those aids were purchased from a private source.

While glasses and hearing aids may be provided at no charge, Audiology and optometry are considered specialty clinics, and have a \$50 dollar co-pay for those in priority group 6-7 who do not have a service connected disability for hearing loss and/or vision. There is no co-pay for the devices or the batteries, nor are there any charges for visits for the purpose of adjusting, repairing or modifying hearing aids. There may be additional charges for certain glasses frames or lens treatments.

No cost VA health care is available to veterans whose income falls below a certain level, or those who recently returned from a combat zone. They are entitled to five years of free VA care. The five-year "clock" begins with their discharge from the military, not their departure from the combat zone. Providing health insurance information may reduce or eliminate copays. Veterans with health insurance may choose to use their private health insurance to supplement their VA benefits. Payments from private health insurance usually cover copay expenses for VA health care. Having private health insurance does not affect eligibility for VA health care. The VA Medical Center in San Francisco, as well as our local Santa Rosa VA clinic has a member services representative available to provide information and assistance with enrollment. Veterans can also visit Sonoma County

Veteran Services with health eligibility questions. The local VA clinic phone number is 707-569-2300.

The Sonoma County Veterans Service Office can complete the DMV Veteran Status Verification Form for the new California Veteran Designation on your driver's license and also issues Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To determine if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms.

*Sonoma County Veteran Services, 3725 Westwind Blvd, suite 101, Santa Rosa, CA 95403*

*Services by appointment, please contact 565-5960;*

*Drop in services are available Monday through Thursday, 8:30-10:00 am. We also have limited appointments available at the Valley of the Moon County facility near Oakmont. Please call 565-5960 for more information or to schedule an appointment at that site.*

**Check your mailing label. If you have \*\*\*\*\* behind your name your dues are past due. This could be your last newsletter from the chapter and you may have not received the last 'Veteran'. Contact the membership chair for further Info.**



CSC Table at the 9th Veterans Luncheon At the table are: Gentleman in hat, Richard Segovia, At-Large Director, next to him 2nd Vice President Dick Southern and his wife Carol, then, Megan from the "No on 61" proposition, and last but not least, North District Director, Butch Fredrickson and his Finance.

Picture from Ken Holybee

## Raffle at the General Meeting

by Bill Burke

If you have attended the Chapters' general meeting over the past few months you may have noticed that we have been holding a gift card raffle. Prizes have ranged from dinner at local restaurants to Starbucks cards. If you want in on the prizes just buy some tickets at the next general meeting, Tuesday, August 16, 2016.

Past gift card winners include:

July 2016 – \$50 Safeway – Dennis Keeffe, \$10 Starbucks – Tom Dundas, \$10 Starbucks – Dennis Keeffe.

June 2016 - \$50 Safeway – Kate O'Hare-Palmer, \$25 Starbucks (donated by Bob Evans) – Tom Dundas, \$10 Starbucks – Shirley (Bill misplaced the last name).

May 2016 - \$50 Safeway – Bob Evans, \$10 Starbucks – Dennis Keeffe

April 2016 - \$50 Applebys – Carlton Smirni, \$25 Shell – Sonja Holybee, \$25 Safeway – John McGivney.

March 2016 - \$50 Outback – Tom Dundas

## Hepatitis C Education Awareness Program – July 8, 2016

Veterans Health Council (VHC) in association with Gilead Sciences put on a Hepatitis C Awareness and Education Program at the Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building. Attendance was sparse but those who attended received a box lunch from Boudin. VHC is a VVA program dedicated to informing veterans and families about health issues. Education health care communities about multiple health issues associated with military service. Gilead Sciences is a research based biopharmaceutical company started in Foster City, CA. Gilead personnel put on the very informative presentation.

After a brief introduction, Dick Southern (VVA Region 9 Director) spoke of his experience of dealing with Hep C long after his military service had been

completed in 1968. It wasn't until 2014 that he finally was cured through a program within the VA system. Brian Maldonado from Gilead then put on the awareness presentation. Some of the high points are that 3.5 million Americans are affected, most don't know it, symptoms are easily confused with other ailments, 1 in 10 Vietnam Veterans are affected and don't know it, and Baby Boomers are 5 times more likely to be affected just to name a few. Not knowing can seriously affect your liver and eventually can cause life threatening liver cancer.

You contract Hep C through blood-to-blood contact including those wonderful air guns used to immunize us, transfusions, needle sharing, and tattooing. Diagnosis is done through simple blood testing, ultrasound, liver function tests, and rarely, a biopsy.

Even if you were tested and cleared years ago the disease can re-appear. So it's time to get tested and get some peace of mind.

Report for August 16

I am happy to report that our chapter is still operating normally. At the time of this writing Kate and Lou are in Tucson at the national leadership conference. I am happy that Lou is attending and hopeful that he will be bringing back important information and is learning a lot. Kate is there as a presenter for the Women Veterans' committee that she is also the chair of.

We will be ending our summer event at the Santa Rosa Wednesday Night market this month. We have not seen a lot of our members stopping by this year. It is a fun event if you like to watch people aimlessly walk up and down the street with no real direction. We do, however, speak to a lot of these people about veteran issues and benefits available to them or their family members. It is actually a lot of fun even though it means being committed to one day per week. We will be planning for the Airshow at the end of the summer. If you would like to be part of the group out there let us know.

We will also be holding our annual Dinner Social/Dance Fundraiser on September 10<sup>th</sup>. It is the same night as our monthly poker tournament so our regular volunteers will be spread thin. We could use some assistance on these events.

We have been working with other Veterans' Organizations in Santa Rosa on different events and programs. At the state level this is in discussion asking how can we get VSO's to work together. It is important in many ways to do this. One, we do not allow anyone except Veterans from the Vietnam time frame in VVA. We do have the assistance from AVVA as a resource for anyone that wishes to assist our organization in our efforts and programs. AVVA is also the lead in the town hall meetings on Agent Orange. These town hall meetings stress the need for research into the birth defects of the children and are working to educate the public on these issues. With us working with the other VSO's we can direct veterans to groups that are working on programs that are of interest to them. Some of the groups are having trouble recruiting members because they are not getting the word out about what they do. I am working on programs in the state to see what can be done to better communicate these issues.

We had a lively meeting in July and spent time with members introducing themselves and where they served. We have not done this for a while and the members found out that a lot of them were in the same areas at different or overlapping times. We also set a date for a showing of the documentary that was produced by AVVA member Cathy Ortelte, while she was at TV Channel 50, about our member Mark Weston and a reunion with two soldiers he was wounded with in Vietnam. We will be showing the movie at 7 PM on November 3<sup>rd</sup> so mark your calendars to be there. The film was done 30 years ago as a follow up of our chapter bringing the Moving Wall to Santa Rosa. For those of you that remember, that was a major project for a small new chapter to undertake. The event was so successful that the chapter began growing and getting involved in more local projects that we are doing daily. We sometimes forget where the chapter got its roots and who was involved in getting it going.

We would like to get an email address for as many members as possible. The reason for this is to be able to send out reminders to meetings and event as well as keep members up to date on event changes and additions. This would be a secure address list that would be administered by the chapter. The list would not be given out or shared for any reason. Some of us get a lot of information from other places that are relevant to our members, but we have no resource to share it. I know that what I get is not interesting to all but some is very relevant and needs to be shared more than once a month. I get email meeting invitations and news from veteran resources almost daily. I am on the list at CalVet for all of their information and meeting notices and well as information that they think I would be interested in.

A few years ago we had a program called "Veterans Vote" this was put out from the national level and we were encouraged to get the word out. The program was not about who to vote for, VVA like all service organizations cannot endorse any candidate for elected or appointed position, but a program to encourage everyone to vote. This year is very important in the respect of voting. There are more things on the ballot than who is running for president. We have local tax measures, 30 propositions on the state ballot as well as who is going to represent us at all levels of our life. Proposition 61 is one that we took a position on at the state level. The state council representatives voted to support the vote no on 61 side of this proposition. We do not feel that it would be good for anyone except the pharmaceutical person that wrote the proposition. He put in a provision that exempts his company from the complying with the rules in it.

You will hear about every aspect of one side or the other on every issue and every candidate. If you can, go to their meetings and gatherings and don't just listen but ask questions. There is nothing that says that as a voting citizen you cannot be involved in every aspect of the elections and we encourage your participation. One of the reasons for our organizational neutrality is we need to be able to work with whomever gets elected. If we take a side as an organization, we cannot do that with credibility. People we do not agree with still have their right to their opinion and to speak. If we disagree with them we just

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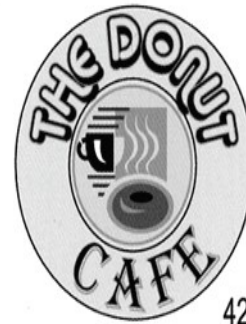


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President's Article Continued from page 6

need to work harder to get them to see our side. Please work on getting people to get out and vote even if you know they support someone you don't. It is the local things that have more effect on our lives than who is in charge at the top. Anytime you want to hear my take on what is what just ask me. I will not put it in writing but I think I can give you a perspective you probably won't see in the press.

I could really use some editorials and stories for the newsletter. Sonja is trying not to make it to depressing so if you have a fun story about your dealing with the VA or your time on earth and would like to share it, feel free to write it down.



The President's VVA and AVVA John Rowan and Sharon Hobbs



Katie and her friend Patti Ehline...worked together in Chu Lai..she is on Colorado state council now

Pictures courtesy of  
Kate O'hare-Palmer