



July 2015

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Joe Noriel, left, Charles Earthman, center, and Paul Lewis, right, stand near where they hope to install a Korean War Veterans Memorial monument in Petaluma's Walnut Park. Photo by Crista Jeremiason, The Press Democrat

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA REDWOOD EMPIRE CHSPTR 223
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DONATIONS

In our ever-growing efforts to serve local veterans, VVA Chapter 223 is always looking for new sources of funds to support the cause. We're still a very small entity trying to serve the veterans of Sonoma County.

You can help by making a tax deductible contribution directly to VVA Chapter 223. Send donations directly to the Chapter at the address on the back page.
Thanks...

NOTICE

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To make a contribution to the News and Views, submit a story, or a photograph, please call or email: Charles Earthman: 707.778.6598, or c.earthman173@gmail.com To make a complaint about the newsletter, please call: Ken Holybee: 707.887.8891, or holybee@comcast.net

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A business card size ad in our newsletter is \$100 for a full year...
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President's Letter

The Toxic Exposure Research Act of 2015 is very important legislation that everyone should be aware of. To me, it could be one of the most important things we have done as an organization. The Act creates in the Veterans Health Administration a Center of Excellence to research the birth defects and health anomalies of the children of veterans. The Act will have the VA do research and look at scientific evidence to see what effects exposure to toxins has on the children of military members and future generations.



Ken Holybee

As most of you know, this is an area that I have been talking about to everyone that will listen. When we do events I have information that I speak about and hand out to veterans and their spouses, children, and grandchildren. We cannot abandon the families or wait until someone else decides to find answers to these issues. VVA and AVVA have been holding, and will continue to hold, town hall meetings to discuss the Agent Orange issue. This is where we speak about all toxins and agents that we know about. We have heard many stories of children born with illnesses or birth defects, some structural and some non-structural, as well as many illnesses that come on at puberty or as young adults. This is an area that scientists are looking at today. What happens to your chromosomes and the receptors that make the changes in your body? There has been a lot of research in this area in the last years that the government does not want to acknowledge and will not accept as specific to veterans. We can make a difference in this. S901 and HR1769 have been introduced this year as the Toxic Research Act of 2015. We have been trying to get co-sponsors to this legislation since it was introduced. Many of us have spoken to our members of Congress about these bills but very few have either answered us or have signed on. Our Senators have ignored us when asked or they tell us that the legislation did not make it out of committee last year. That is true for the Toxic Exposure Act of 2014. It seems that they have not kept up with the bills introduced this year. Our local members of Congress, Mike Thompson and Jarrod Huffman, have not taken a position on this legislation. I have spoken to both of them and have communicated with their aides regarding this, just to be told "I will

speak to them and get back to you". I think I have been patient in my waiting for a response. I wish they would tell me why they are being silent on this issue. It is time for all veterans to become very vocal and demand an answer.

We can make a difference if we work together. Contact your members of Congress and tell them to support these bills. Children's lives and futures depend on this. Ask them, "Who will take care of our children when we are gone?" Let's find the answer to these questions that we have been asking for 50 years. We are celebrating 50 years since the end of the Vietnam War. We should be asking when will the war be over. What kinds of problems are the Gulf War Veterans' children having? What problems will the children of today's soldiers have? A lot of today's veterans are the children of veterans--what will the effects of multiple generations of exposure to many unknown chemicals have for their children

Editor's Notes

This is the fourth newsletter I have edited since Brooke McKusick resigned. Now, as I am starting to get the measure of the task, I am beginning to build a format of my own that fits the mission of the Chapter. I have received help from some members, but could always use more. You may notice that most of the stories and articles are written by me. That is not because I want to fill the pages with my words, but rather because I am getting very little written by other Chapter members. I need your input; written articles and stories of any length. Photos of people and events in the community are needed and welcomed. This newsletter belongs to VVA Chapter 223 and our community. So again, I ask you to contribute to this publication.

We are still looking for photographers. "Have Camera, Will Travel." If you want to help, or know someone who is interested, give me a call.





The Grapevine

Talk Around the Redwood Empire Chapter

By Charles Earthman

The Grapevine is back. After about a year's hiatus from "News and Views", the news segment that talks about what's happening around our community is returning. So send in your tidbits on happenings in the community and I will print them in this column.

My good friend Claudio Calvo will be retiring later this year. He has worked tirelessly on local veterans employment issues through his job at the California EDD and has volunteered and been at the forefront of many projects benefiting our community. Recently Claudio was awarded the 2015 Outstanding Veterans' Representative by the California Employer Advisory Council. He was nominated by the Sonoma County Employer Advisory Council and the Award was presented at a ceremony that took place in Redding on May 8, 2015. The CEAC is a non-profit arm of EDD. Congratulations, Claudio.

At midsummer the Wednesday night Farmer's Market in downtown Santa Rosa is in full swing. The level of participation by veterans groups is high this year with as many as four organizations providing information to the public on a number of veteran's issues. For the third year VVA Chapter 223 and Purple Heart Chapter 78 have booths at the market, and this year they are joined by Vet Connect and VFW Post 1844. This kind of outreach keeps our bonds with the community strong and provides a valuable conduit to the public.

The District 9 pre-convention meetings are being held in Reno this month as VVA prepares for the biennial national convention in Springfield, Illinois. In the past I have attended both the pre-convention meetings and the

Continued on Page 8

Assembly Luncheon By Ken Holybee

I have just returned from the 8th annual Assembly Veterans Recognition Luncheon in Sacramento. The recognition event was started by Assembly Member Salis when she was Chair of the Assembly Veterans Committee. The Assembly members are asked to recognize a veteran in their district and bring them to Sacramento where they are introduced on the Assembly floor. There are the normal speeches and certificates given to the recipients and their pictures are taken with their assembly members. After the ceremony they come to the luncheon and listen to speeches. This event has turned into a "must attend" for the legislators and invited guests. The Emcee for the luncheon was Amy Lewis of the KFBK Morning Show. The Secretary of CalVet, Debbie Endsley, spoke about the current condition of the California Department of Veteran Affairs. Jackie Irwin, Chair of the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee, and Tony Atkins, Speaker of the Assembly, gave opening remarks. Stephen Peck, CEO/ President U. S. Vets, was the keynote speaker.

The event is about the legislators honoring veterans in their districts for the work they do and the sacrifices they have made in their lives. It is truly an honor to mingle with these veterans, their families, and the legislators and attendees that support this event. This event is on the last Wednesday in June each year. This year there were about 385 people in attendance and it has grown every year. During the lunch it was announced that the Governor had signed this year's budget. Some of the legislators leave quickly to get back to work since there are normally committee hearings in the afternoon. It is good to be able to spend some time with veteran leaders and legislators outside of the capital. There is always business to talk about and contacts to be made.

This is one of many events that take me away from Chapter activities and whenever possible, I like to invite Chapter members to attend these with me. This is an important part of letting the legislators know what kind of job they are doing and I know they like to attend these events to be able to talk to us.

In the end, it's not the years in your life that count, it's the life in your years.— Abraham Lincoln

SANTA ROSA VETERANS FAMILY ADVISORY COUNCIL

By Charles Earthman

The Department of Veterans Affairs has come under scrutiny in the past few years for a number of patient care issues. Accusations have come from the left and the right sides of the political spectrum, from veterans groups, and from many veterans themselves. There have been complaints, criticisms, and calls for resignations of everyone from the VA Secretary to regional directors and directors of medical centers and clinics, but little has been offered in the way of constructive solutions. Be it in the national press or over coffee in the local diner, everyone has an opinion but no one has any solutions or answers.

The Veterans and Family Advisory Council (VFAC) is one tool the veterans of Sonoma County can utilize to address some of these patient care issues on a local level. The VFAC meets on the second Monday of every month at the Santa Rosa VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). The Council includes a veteran from World War II, veterans from the Vietnam and Gulf Wars, and other veterans and community members as well. The diversity of the group brings a range of perspectives for dealing with the issues the Clinic and the veteran community is facing.

The Council's co-organizers are Kathy King, LCSW, and Phila Cole, VA Patient Representative. Discussing the VFAC, Kathy King said, "The purpose is to create a synergistic collaboration between our veterans receiving VA care and VA staff providing such care" and "to get input from the people we serve to make our system stronger". Phila Cole notes that the veterans served by each community CBOC have unique needs, concerns, and interests rooted in their local community. For this reason, Santa Rosa's veterans expressed interest in forming a local clinic advisory council.

The VFAC has been meeting since the beginning of 2015 and is still working to establish a cohesive group. As a new committee, some members have been trying it out; looking for a fit. But there is a working body of members that have been at every meeting since the group's inception and there have been some positive results that have come from their work. The Council has already made one significant change in its short existence--ensuring that Phila Cole, the Patient Advocate serving the northern CBOCs, will be present at the Clinic's new patient orientations to discuss how

patients can get help in addressing any complaints or concerns they might have. The group is also working on other improvements with the VA to make patients' visits easier at the Santa Rosa CBOC.

This relationship between local vets and the Santa Rosa VA Clinic is still a work in progress but has already started to show positive results. The dedication demonstrated by Phila Cole, Kathy King, and the Council members is strong and, if allowed to continue, will yield positive results for the VA and the veteran community.

The Council is still looking for members from the veteran community, especially female vets, to help expand its diversity. If you are interested or know someone who may be interested in serving on the Veterans Family Advisory Council, contact Kathy King or Phila Cole at the Santa Rosa VA Clinic or contact me through the contact link on the Chapter 223 website: www.vva-223.org/contact.

Petaluma Korean War Monument

Continued from front page

memories to fight for their country. It all started and stopped here in Walnut Park, the cornerstone of western Petaluma. It seems only proper for this to be the place memorializing these young men who will not be forgotten."

This Monument will be a long overdue acknowledgement to those men and women who sacrificed so much and have received so little thanks. I look forward to its dedication on Veterans Day 2015.



B-52 crews drop PACAF's last Vietnam-era bomb

By Jeff Schogol (From the Air Force Times)

For years, the Air Force's M117 750-pound bomb was synonymous with "death from above."

During Vietnam, B-52 crews flying from Thailand and Japan dropped the ordnance as part of Arc Light missions and Operation Linebacker II, and nearly 20 years later, M117s rained down on Saddam Hussein's army.

On Friday, Pacific Air Forces said goodbye to its inventory of the Vietnam Era ordnance when B-52s dropped the last M117s from PACAF's stockpile on an uninhabited island off Guam.

Airmen from the 20th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron, of Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, and the 36th Munitions Squadron, of Anderson Air Force Base Guam, participated in Friday's training mission, according to a PACAF news release.

"I think it's fitting that the last M117 bomb was dropped from a B-52 deployed to Andersen AFB," Jeffrey Meyer, 36th Wing historian, said in the news release. "Loading and dropping the last M117 from a deployed B-52 here is like remembering and honoring the hard work of Strategic Air Command's airmen from long ago one last time."



Airmen from the 20th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron sign the 'Last Blast' June 24, 2015, at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Joshua Smoot/Released)



B-52 crews deployed to Guam have been using M117s on training missions for years, said Maj. Phil Ventura, a spokesman for the 2nd Bomb Wing at Barksdale. At one time, Anderson had one of the largest stockpiles of M117 bombs in the Air Force, with an estimated inventory of 90,000 M117 bombs in 1993.

Bomber crews rotating through Guam as part of the U.S. Pacific Command's Continuous Bomber Presence will now use newer bombs during their training missions, the news release says.

Friday also marked the 98th birthday of the 20th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron, which was founded at Kelly Field, Texas, in 1917.

"I think it's awesome to be able to drop live weapons on the range out here especially on our birthday," 1st Lt. Bryant Curdy, 20th EBS weapons system officer, said in the news release. "So many B-52 crews have come through Guam and dropped M117s starting in Vietnam, and actually being able to be part of the crew who gets to drop the last weapon out here is not only great training but it's a part of a cool legacy that we get to share."





9/11 BENEFIT DINNER



VFW POST
#1844

Friday, September 11, 2015

***Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building
1351 Maple Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA***

Donation: \$40 per person/\$70 per couple

Dinner from 5:00 to 8:00PM

Dance from 8:00 to 11:00PM

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go to vva-223.org/dinnerdance

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For more information visit us at: www.vva-223.org

Tickets are now on sale for the 9/11 Benefit Dinner and Dance. This is going to be a great fundraising event, so get you tickets now.

Here are some of the items that will be auctioned at this event:

Sharp 50 inch HD TV

Toshiba 40 inch HD TV

Framed photo of Mickey Mantle and Willie Mays together during the 1962 World Series

Separate, framed photos of Mohmand Ali and Willie Mays

Two MVP Box Seat tickets to Giants vs. Athletics, September 25

Two Lower Box Seat tickets to Dodgers vs. Giants, September 30

Three tickets in the infamous "Black Whole" at the Oakland Coliseum for the
Bronco's vs. Raiders, October 25

Proceeds from the auction go to support programs and services for needy veterans and their families in our community. So join us and lend your support—it's going to be lots of fun.

Survey: Women struggle to be seen as 'real' veterans

By Leo Shane III, Staff writer—Military Times

Women already facing discrimination issues in the ranks confront similar challenges being accepted as "real veterans" in their post-military life, according to a new study released by officials at The Mission Continues on Monday.

The survey of women fellows in the group in April found that about two-thirds did not feel "respected and valued as veterans," because of a lack of respect of their service or assumptions they must be spouses instead of former service members.

That feeling in turn hurt their sense of identity and ability to connect with others.

Paired with a shortage of female-specific services at the Department of Veterans Affairs and other military outreach efforts, the struggles left 70 percent of the women surveyed with significant difficulties forming strong relationships after their military lives ended.

"There are limited structured opportunities for women veterans to connect with others who can relate to their experiences and support them during their reintegration," the report states.

"The relatively small number of women veterans can make it even more difficult for them to connect with each other. This can have a negative impact on women veterans' mental health and their successful reintegration into to civilian life."

The 71-person survey does not carry any scientific or statistical weight for the veteran population as a whole, but does offer a snapshot of some of the specific challenges subgroups of veterans face transitioning back into a civilian society that often has only a partial understanding of overall military culture and lifestyle.

Female veterans make up about 16 percent of the country's veteran population, the highest rate in U.S. history. But advocates have long complained that too many veterans services and resources are still geared toward men only, without enough flexibility or knowledge to fully assist those millions of female veterans.

The Mission Continues officials said the report is part of a larger yearlong effort to highlight women veterans and post-military successes, including work as volunteer fellows with

the group.

The organization's stated goal is to help veterans with their military-to-civilian transition through community service, with a host of subsidized fellowship programs and volunteer teams nationwide.

Nearly all the women in the April survey reported feeling stronger connections to the community and to fellow veterans as a result of that volunteer work, leading to less overall stress and a better sense of identity.

Report authors say the report findings indicate more focus on the issue of women veterans reintegration, including "greater recognition and respect to women veterans" in the country at large.



An Army noncommissioned officer receives an 82nd Airborne patch during a ceremony at Camp Ramadi, Iraq. An unscientific study of female military veterans found that about two-thirds did not feel "respected and valued as veterans." (Photo: Sgt. Kissta Feldner/Army)

The Grapevine — Continued from Page 4

national convention and have reported back to the membership and community through "News and Views." This year I will not be at these events, so I hope we can get one or more of our delegates to write something for this publication. We need to keep our readers informed.

That's it for now, but let's keep the conversation going. If you would like to contribute to the Grapevine, go to www.VVA-223.org or contact me at 707.318.2837.

A woman is like a tea bag - you can't tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water. — Eleanor Roosevelt



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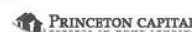
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VA Health Care, Veterans Benefits
Counseling for Veterans and their Families
Housing and Employment Counseling

Phone 707-755-1417

These services are also available at the Veterans Memorial Buildings in Guerneville on the 2nd Thursday and in Sonoma on the 3rd Thursday of every month. Please note the time schedule for these resource and service meetings is: Noon to 3 pm

ALL VETERANS ARE WELCOME

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North Bay Veterans Resource Center

200 Montgomery Drive, Suite "C"
Santa Rosa, CA 95402
Phone 707-578-8387

NBVRC provides supportive services to very low-income veteran families living in, or transitioning into, permanent housing. The employment workshop is free. Veterans can obtain career training.

NBVRC operates Hearn House, a behavioral health treatment program that provides comprehensive treatment and housing for male veterans.

SONOMA COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

(707) 565.5960

3725 Westwind Blvd, Suite 101
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Please call to schedule an appointment.

Walk-ins seen Mon. thru Thur. 8 to 10am

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FREE BUS RIDES FOR VETERANS

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See Earl Walters

Tuesday & Friday

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updates and Chapter information...**

www.vva-223.org



CHAPTER 223
GENERAL MEETING
July 21, 2015
Raffle Prize
BE THERE EARLY!!!

HOMELESS OUTREACH PROGRAM

Every Monday evening @ 5:30 pm.
 101 6th Street, Santa Rosa.

SONOMA COUNTY VET CONNECT -

Every Tuesday morning, 9am to noon at the
 VETS building. Vets helping vets solve problems.

VVA 223 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING -

Second Tuesday of the month, 1pm @ the VETS
 building. Look for the guys looking for the
 room...

VVA-223 GENERAL MEETING

Third Tuesday of the month. POTLUCK @ 6pm
 & Meeting starts at 7pm. Next meeting , July 21

FOOD-GIVE-AWAY PROGRAM

Fourth Tuesday of the month. Volunteers will
 please check in with John McGivney @ 575.5261
 for time and station.

POKER SCHEDULE

Cards in the air at 6pm. Check-in and pizza 5pm
 to 5:55 pm. Usually the first Saturday of the
 month..

COMIC'S CORNER

A guy yells across the river, "Hey, how do you get to
 the other side of this river?"

A guy on the other side yells back, "You are on the
 other side!"

* * *

The Fourth of July weekend was approaching, and
 Miss Pelham, the nursery school teacher, took the op-
 portunity to tell her class about patriotism. "We live in a
 great country," she announced. "One of the things we
 should be happy for is that, in this country, we are all
 free." Trevor, who was a little boy in her class, came
 walking up to her from the back of the room. He stood
 with his hands on his hips and said loudly, "I'm not free.
 I'm four." (How Cute!)

* * *

A priest, a rabbi, a lawyer, a redneck, a blonde, and a
 dog walk into a bar. The bartender looks up and says,
 "Is this some kind of joke?"

* * *

A man was driving down a local street one day and
 approached a stop sign. He barely slowed down and ran
 right through the stop sign after glancing for traffic.
 What the driver didn't know was that a policeman was
 watching the intersection. The policeman pulled out
 after him and stopped the car two blocks away. Police-
 man: "License, registration and proof of insurance
 please." Driver: "Before I give it to you, tell me what
 the heck you stopped me for, man." Policeman: "Watch
 your tone sir; you ran the stop sign back there!!!" Driv-
 er: "Man, I slowed down, what the heck is the differ-
 ence!?!?" The police officer pulled out his night stick
 and began smashing it over the man's head and shoul-
 ders. Policeman: "Now, do you want me to just slow
 down or stop!!!?"

* * *

A penguin walked into a bar and asked, "Has my
 father been in here today?"

The bartender said, "I don't know. What does he look
 like?"

* * *

Organized crime in America takes in over forty billion
 dollars a year and spends very little on office supplies.

- Woody Allen





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News and Views

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