

THE

RED 5 DIAMOND

The official publication of The Society of the Fifth Division, United States Army.

Volume MMXXII Ed.4

November 2022

Annual Dues: \$15



Happy Veterans Day to all us and our families. To all those who have gone before us. May we never forget to honor them.

“WE WILL”

Deadline for submission of articles for the next Edition:

January 10, 2022

2020-2021 Society of the Fifth Division Officers – Roster

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENTS

- *Maj. Gen. Hanson E. Elyz (1919-22,24-25)
- *Col. Philip J. McCook(1922-23)
- *Dr. E. C. Morton (1925-28)
- *Maj. Gen. Paul B. Malone (1929-30)
- *Capt. Peter Murphy (1930)
- *Maj. Walter E. Aebischer (1930-32)
- *Capt. Peter P. Zion (1932-34)
- *W. Walter Healey (1934-35)
- *Lloyd A. Reder (1935-37)
- *Col. Henry Clay Bate (1937-38)
- *William Barton Bruce, Sr. (1938-39)
- *Emil Everts (1939-41)
- *A. Lincoln Bradbury (1941-45)
- *William Gibbs (1945-46)
- *John W. Fonner (1946-48)
- *William L. McGrory (1948-49)
- *Kenyon Stevenson (1949-50)
- *Charles A. O'Connell, Jr. (1950-51)
- *John H. Pflaum (1951-53)
- *Frederick F. Specht (1953-54)
- *John H. Baskin (1954-55)
- *Walter R. Stout (1955-57)
- *Frank H. Deane (1957-58)
- *Edward Pivovar (1958-59)
- *T. Earl McNaney (1956-60)
- *Russell S. Fisher (1960-62)
- *Gordon S. Henry (1962-63)
- *John J. Madison (1963-65)
- *Herbert K. Webb (1965-66)
- *Charles P. DeRose (1966-67)
- *Victor Dunneback (1967-68)
- *Winston Roche (1968-69)
- *Ervin J. Kotowski (1969-70)
- *Herbert Ginsburgh (1970-71)
- *Aubrey Prewitt (1971-72)
- *Michael S. O'Donnell (1972-73)
- *Virgil Scheibel (1973-74)
- *Frank Kolimaga (1974-75)
- *Kenneth Anderson (1975-76)
- *Howard Singer (1976-77)
- *Robert Young (1977-78)
- *Stanley Piotrowski (1978-79)
- *George Bachman (1979-80)
- *Harry Arquette (1980-81)
- *William Stanfield (1981-82)
- *Guido Bemasconi (1982-83)
- *Msgr. Harold Prudell (1983-84)
- *Chester Ball (1984-85)
- *William Colon (1985-86)
- *Robert Graves (1986-87)
- *Herman Schell (1987-88)
- *William Stanfield (1988-89)
- *John Goodman (1989-90)
- *William Upham (1990-91)
- *Bradley Brewer (1991-92)
- *Harry Arquette (1992-93)
- *Robert Rochon (1993-94)
- *Charles Coco (1994-95)
- *Michael Giannini (1995-96)
- *Don Brown (1996-97)
- *Cullen Slone (1997-98)
- *Jay Balderson (1998-99)
- *Jimmy C. Walker (1999-2000)
- *Mickey McCoy (2000-01)
- *Carl M. Hiestand (2001-02)
- *Robert M. Rochell (2002-03)
- *James A. Landry (2003-04)
- *Mike Sperling (2004-05)
- *Phil Maniscalco (2005-07)
- *Jim Spiller (2007-08)
- *Pat Andreoni (2008-09)
- *James "JJ" Jackson (2009-10)
- *Bernie "Buck" Kean (2010-12)
- *Steve Wheat (2012-13)
- *Bobby Moody (2013-2014)
- *Wayne Cumer (2014-2015)
- *Robb Robetson (2015-2016)
- *Bob Dudley (2016-2017)
- *Dennis Thompson (2017-2018)
- *Alex Candelaria/Steve Wheat (2018-2019)
- *Hal Roller (2019-2020)
- *Louis Pepi (2020-2021)
- *Gary Haverman (2021-2022)

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Society of the Fifth Division President

A Note from the President Hal Roller

This is déjà vu all over again. You guys know that electing me as president means you have the only past president in the 101 years old history of the Society of the Fifth Division that didn't have an annual reunion! However, I do have an excuse- it's called the pandemic. I promise you we're going to have a reunion in 2023. It will be September 7 through 10 on the Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas. I mean, the hotel we are staying in is right on the Riverwalk, and four blocks from the Alamo! It's going to be a fun time that you don't want to miss.

While we're on the subject of reunions, Gary Haverman did such a great job as president on our last reunion in Springfield. Kudos to Gary. I know Gary would be the first one to tell you he didn't do it alone. The serendipitous thing about being president is how much you wonderful guys are willing to help. It's a key factor in making our Society of the Fifth Division not only function but unites us in concern for one another.

Of course the main thing uniting some of us is combat service in Vietnam. (I'm so happy to write "some of us" because we have Fifth Division guys who served in Panama. Hurrah!) In this regard Lou Pepi deserves a big thank you for his two books, *My Brothers Have My Back* and *A Day in Hell on the DMZ*. These books tell the experiences some of us had and to which all of us can relate. Both books will be available for purchase during our reunion in San Antonio. Thank you Lou for writing these books.

One experience those of us had who served in Vietnam was exposure to Agent Orange. In case you haven't heard, Congress passed the 2022 PACT Act. This law expands presumptive, VA care and benefits to Veterans suffering from more than 20 toxic exposure-related conditions. Check-out the details at [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT).

I have to end where I started- being president again. I feel honored that you have that kind of confidence in me. I can't say of myself that I have that confidence, but I will work hard to keep our Society of the Fifth Division on target. What I do have confidence in is you guys. You won't let me fail. Thank you. Thank you for being you.



Words from your First Vice President

Bud Wagner

Celebrating Veterans Day with you

vet·er·an | \ 've-tə-rən , 've-trən \

Definition of veteran

1a: a former member of the armed forces

b: an old soldier of long service

2: a person of long experience usually in some occupation or skill (such as politics or the arts)

I remember in September 1969 standing in a long line in Vietnam waiting for a clerk to give me my unit assignment. When I finally got to the front I still remember him telling me how lucky I was, I was being assigned to the 1/61 of the 5th Mechanized Division. He said you won't have to walk; you get to ride everywhere!

I learned that wasn't true and it's hard to hide when you are riding around with a bunch of M-113 APC's and tanks!! You also learn not to sleep near them because their RPG magnets. You had to be concerned about mines all the time, my track hit one in February 1970 east of A-4.

Coming home in September 1970 was a difficult experience for me. Most of my friends were apathetic toward the war. It seemed that no one cared or took the time to try to understand what we experienced.

Life moved on and I settled down to marriage, children, and a career. The years passed by but I never "celebrated" Veterans Day, to me I didn't want to be known as a Veteran.

That changed about 7 years ago, and I began a quest to find out more about my time in Vietnam, and what happened to us during that time. Lou Pepi's book, "My Brothers Have my Back" was very helpful to me to help me understand the kind of trauma we experienced in battle.

I'm now proud to call myself a Veteran, and proud to know you as my brothers. I look forward each year to our Reunions and meeting new brothers. Let's honor our fallen this year during Veterans Day and remember what a great nation we live in.

Bud Wagner – First Vice President



Words from our Second Vice President Larry Burnett

As I have been elected the new 2nd Vice President. I will tell you about myself. My name is Larry W. Burnett. My wife's name is Venita but goes by her middle name of Marie. We were blessed with 3 wonderful children. First one was our son, Adam. Followed by two girls, Teresa and Marcia. All three are married and we were blessed again with 5 grandkids.

I am from Kansas. I was born April 1949. I live in a small town 40 miles south of Topeka. Melvern, has a population of about 350 people. Have lived here all my life.

I grew up on a farm as my dad and his dad were farmers. When I was born my parents had not electricity, no well or running water and no gas for heating. Had to haul our water and heat with wood. As I felt good just to get through school college was out of the question. I didn't want to make a career of the military so I just waited till Uncle Sam call me to serve.

Did my basic at Fort Jackson, S. Carolina. My AIT at Fort Sill. Got to Vietnam May 6, 1970 and left June 28, 71. I extended 2 months for the 5 month early-out. Didn't want to do any state-side duty. Served in Charlie Battery in the 155 arty battery on C-2. Was 13A10 but after a couple months they were short of 13E's (FDC) so being the _ng , was sent back to Quang Tri for training then back to C-2.

Spent the rest of my life working construction. 15 years as a labor and then 27 years as equipment operator. Mostly running a backhoe. About every type except a CASE.

I hope that I can serve this new role in the Society of the Fifth Div. as good as the past Presidents. It will be a challenge because the past ones have done great.

And thank you Gary for a great and wonderful reunion in Springfield, Mo.

I have a place I plan to have mine but not 110% in stone yet.

Larry Burnett 2nd Vice President, Society of the Fifth Division



Words from our 5th Division Chaplain Ron VanBeek

Christian - Jesus' Tzitzil

Malachi - 4:2 - The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His Wings.

The Word for the Hebrew word, Tzitzel, in the Greek is translated, kraspedon. Thus this word, points to the corners and the fringes of the outer cloak or shawl that every male Jew wear, after the age of 12, when they became a man. Moses told Israel, that God commanded this special tassel, called the Tzitzit, a bounded fringe, be placed upon their garment's helm. The tzitzit is made up of 10 strings, with 10 different colors, each color representing one of each of the 10 Commandments. It was to be worn on the 4 corners of their garment, by every male Israelite. Yes, color is important to the Eyes of God, which he uses to separate or distinguish different things. Remember, we see a different color stone, was given to each of the 12 tribes of Israel, to be worn on the Breast Plate of Righteousness of the High Priest, so that each tribe could be distinguish one from another. Yes we see on Mount Sinai, that the elders of Israel were given to see into heaven's courts, of glass, bathed in Royal blue. We see the 12 foundations of the city of the new Jerusalem, representing the colors of the stones of the 12 tribes of Israel. We see that Heaven's streets are paved in pure gold, the gates of heaven as pearls. We see a Great white throne set in the midst of heaven, bathed in emerald green, surrounded with a rainbow that encircled God's Throne. Yes, color is very important to God and is dominate in God's Kingdom. Not earthly color; but spiritual Color that dazzles far beyond human comprehension. Yes, All of Heaven is vibrant with color, that our human eye on earth can not begin to comprehend. It need not surprise anyone that God's 10 Commandments are also color coded, by His Design.

Yes, God designed the Tzitzit, the hem fringe, made up with the 10 colors of each of the 10 Commandments, which were to be worn on the four corners of the cloak/garment, called the Tallit Katan. The Tallit Katan, was a large piece of rectangular cloth with a hole large enough for one's head to go through, that had four Tzitzits, hanging from each of the four corners. It was to worn so that it can be easily visible to their eyes at all times, to remind them to obey each of the 10 Commandments, constantly, every moment of the day. True Jewish Christians dared not go anywhere, without wearing the tzitzit, because it was forbidden, to not wear it all the time.

We know very little about what Jesus looked like, other than that he was indistinguishable from other men, but we do know what he wore, the seamless Robe, knit by his own mother, The Virgin Mary, which she lovingly made without seam. Now that shawl was considered so valuable that the Roman soldiers at the cross did not tear Jesus' Cloak up, simply for its valuable cloth, as they usually did, but they kept it intact and cast

lots, for who would receive that that beautiful intact cloak. But the most important thing on that cloak was the fringes, the Tzitzits on the four corners. By the law of Moses, which God gave him to give to the children of Israel, after Mount Sinai, and their many well known failures to obey the 10 Commandments. After these frequent failures, the children of Israel were to wear on the fringes on the corners of their garments, the Tzitzit.

Yes Jesus 'specially made outward cloak, had four sacred beautifully embroidered corners where four sacred corner fringes hung, called the Tzitzit, where the cords of the 10 colors of the 10 Commandments hung bound together with the special Blue Cord of God. Remember, When the children of Israel heard God's thundering voice in Giving of His Law, from Mount Sinai, it's so terrified them, for God's power, majesty and Glory, that they feared it's Power would crush them and cause their death. So they begged Moses to be their intercessory, and to speak to God for them, so that Moses would speak what God told him, to tell the children of Israel. Yes we remember that memorable time, when God Thundered the 10 Commandments and wrote them on tables of stone, then the children of Israel verbally promised and pledged, that they would obey each of the 10 Commandments. How loudly the people pledged That they would always be faithful to God's 10 Commandments, always obey them. Sadly, Now we also know their promises, were just vain words spoken from the mouths, not from their hearts. They failed almost immediately, where we see them worshiping the golden calf, already at the foot of Mount Sinai. We know over a very short period of time the children of Israel failed miserably time after time, in obeying even one of the 10 Commandments. Any of them! Yes, The Old Testament is full of their sad and failed history. Now, To help them to remember the 10 Commandments; God commanded each of the children of Israel to weave on the corner of their outward robe, 10 strings, each string of a different color, which represented the 10 Commandments, which God had Given them. To help them remember, God told them to place it on the four corners of their outward garment, so that it was always physically visible before them, no matter which way they turned. Yes these 10 colored strings, the highly visible tzitzit, hung from the four corners of every Israelite. Now to further help them to see that these were his commandments, God also introduced a special blue string, dyed and made with a special dye, that tied these 10 strings inside of five string knots, to remind them that the 10 Commandments had both a positive and a negative requirement within them. These 10 colored strings were to visibly remind every Israelite, that they had promised to obey all the 10 Commandments, and to constantly worship him with all their heart, mind, body, soul, and strength. Yes, the central blue string tied in 5 knots always pointed to God their Creator, whom they had promised to love unconditionally, just as God loved his children. To glorify him daily, which was God's Created purpose for mankind, the crown piece of his creation.

This page is dedicated to those who may need prayers, cards and maybe a phone call. If you know of anyone who should be listed please email the names, thank you.

Ken Magnett 29 East Ridge Rd. Eddyville, Ky., 42038
765-210-1513 Multiple cancer from Agent Orange

Tom Owens 2677 Beacon Drive, Doraville, Ga., 30360-2601
404-984-7005 hospice care

The Sperling's 14503 NE 257th Ave., Brush Prairie, Wa.,
98606 360-798-7111 forced to vacate home because of
closeness of forest fire.



The rambling words and thoughts of the Editor Dave Kocan

At our reunion this year, during the banquet Saturday night, I had to use the men's room. Coming out of the men's room I by chance bumped into some of the lovely women of the 5th Division. This group of ladies were expressing their opinion of the banquet procedure. Their thoughts were that the dinner started to late, an hour or so earlier would be better. Also it was entirely to long, time limits on speakers, and shorten it up so they would have more time socialize with friends. In other words its time to get with the times and change it up.

I have expressed this a few times all ready, that we should make some serious changes to our banquets. Look around and check out what other groups are doing.

Send me in your suggestions and I will anomalously print them and bring them before the "Executive Board" . What was done 102 years ago does not mean should continue in the same format.

Remember to VOTE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

God Bless All Veterans and Their Families
Remember and Respect and Honor Those Who Have
Gone Before Us

Society Executive Board Members and Past National Presidents,

As many of you may know, the Society membership attending the Society General Business Meeting on Sunday, September 25, 2022, unanimously approved the proposed amended version of Article III (Membership), Section A (Eligibility) of the Society's Constitution.

I am attaching the updated version of the Constitution for your records.

National Editor Dave Kocan, may I ask that you publish the Society's updated Constitution in the upcoming issue of the Red Diamond? Thank you.

Phil Maniscalco

Society of the Fifth Division, U.S. Army, National Judge Advocate

CONSTITUTION OF THE SOCIETY OF THE FIFTH DIVISION, UNITED STATES ARMY

— Amended 25 September 2022 —

— ARTICLE 1 —

"NAME"

The name of this Society shall be, "The Society of the Fifth Division, United States Army."

— ARTICLE II —

"OBJECTS"

The Objects of this Society shall be:

A. To perpetuate and memorialize the valiant acts and patriotic deeds of the Fifth Division; to electrify and unify that invisible current of fellowship, friendship and comradeship moulded in the throes of war and the exigencies of a peacetime service, and promote the interests and welfare of its members.

B. To publish and preserve the history of the accomplishments of the Fifth Division and the Society, in war and peace, and set forth the gallant and heroic deeds of its members.

— ARTICLE III —

"MEMBERSHIP"

Membership in this Society shall be of four kinds: Annual, Associate, Honorary, and Life members. Membership will be comprised of: (1) members of Local Camps, and (2) members at large who do not belong to any Local Camp.

A. **ELIGIBILITY:** Those who served honorably as officers and enlisted men and women in the Fifth Infantry Division during its periods of activation are eligible to become members of this Society. Also eligible to become members of this Society are war veterans who served honorably as officers and enlisted men and women in the United States Armed Forces and who are ancestors (parent, grandparent, etc.), lineal descendants (child, stepchild, grandchild, etc.) or collateral descendants (brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, etc.) of those who served in the Fifth Infantry Division. Also eligible are war veterans of Regiments of the Fifth Infantry Division that remain active in the United States Armed Forces. (Note: Eligibility requirements were amended and approved at the annual reunion/convention on Sunday, September 25, 2022, during the Business Meeting in Springfield, MO.)

B. **ANNUAL:** An Annual member is one whose dues are fully paid yearly. Delinquent members will be dropped from the Society rolls three months after the date of expiration of dues.

C. **ASSOCIATE:** Associate membership in this Society may be conferred upon any member of a family of a Fifth Division veteran, or any person who did not serve in the Fifth Division, but who is interested in the activities of the Society upon payment of annual dues as required in Section A. of ARTICLE VI hereof. Associate Members shall not have the right to vote under Section E. of ARTICLE V hereof. They are extended the choice of becoming an Annual or Life member.

D. **HONORARY:** Honorary membership in this Society may be conferred upon any individual to whom the membership may wish to give special recognition or reward, through election by majority vote of those in attendance at an Annual Meeting. Honorary members are required to pay dues and are not entitled to vote: They may also become Annual or Life members.

E. **LIFE:** Any member wishing to become a LIFE member may do so by paying the following one-time dues: age less than 61, \$150.00; age 61-69, \$75.00; age over 70, \$50.00. All LIFE members are subject to any special assessments declared by the Executive Board or adopted at any meeting.

— ARTICLE IV —

"LOCAL CAMPS"

Inasmuch as members of the Society are widely scattered throughout the United States, authority is vested in the Executive Board to organize branches of the Society to be known as Camps. Because of the greater benefits to be enjoyed through Camp membership, every Society member shall be urged by the National President to affiliate with the Local Camp of his choice.

— ARTICLE V —

"ORGANIZATION"

A. OFFICERS: The following National Officers shall be elected annually for one-year terms:

- National President
- National 1st Vice President
- National 2nd Vice President
- National Secretary
- National Treasurer
- National Historian
- National Chaplain
- National Judge Advocate
- National Editor

And such Honorary Officers as the Society may authorize.

Duties of National Officers:

1. NATIONAL PRESIDENT: The National President (or, in his absence, the National 1st Vice President, or National 2nd Vice President) shall preside at the meetings of the Society. The National President shall be responsible for the administration of the Society in all functions and undertakings, in accordance with the policies established by the Executive Board or the membership in meeting assembled. The National President shall be the Chairman of the Executive Board.

2. NATIONAL 1ST VICE PRESIDENT: The National First Vice President shall perform the duties of the National President in the absence of that official, and shall serve in any administrative capacity designated by the National President. In the event of the death, resignation, or incapacity in other matters of the National President, the National 1st Vice President shall succeed to the office of National President and continue in the office until the next election.

3. NATIONAL 2ND VICE PRESIDENT: The National Second Vice President shall serve in any administrative capacity designated by the National President. In the event of the National First Vice President's succession to the National Presidency, the National Second Vice President shall be termed simply "The National Vice President."

4. NATIONAL SECRETARY: The National Secretary shall be the Statistical Officer of the Society, being responsible for keeping complete and up-to-date files of the names, addresses, and former military organizations of members of the Society. The National Secretary shall be responsible for keeping a separate list showing the members by Camps and the geographical localities in which they live. The National Secretary shall keep a list of names and addresses of all parties with whom the Society deals. The National Secretary shall be responsible for keeping the minutes of all meetings of the Society, shall keep a file of all correspondences of the Society, and shall be responsible that all members of the Society are properly notified of all meetings of the Society in time for them to act on the notification. The National Secretary shall remit to the National Treasurer all monies received for the Society on the 1st and 15th of each month. Upon termination of National Secretary's term of office, the National Secretary shall turn over all the Society's files, software and equipments to the successor.

5. NATIONAL TREASURER: The National Treasurer shall be responsible for the reception, disbursement, and safekeeping of all funds pertaining to the Society and shall render an annual accounting for the same which shall be audited and distributed to all members of the Society. All checks issued by the National Treasurer against Society funds must be approved by the National President or supported by appropriate statements or invoices. The National Treasurer shall arrange for a suitable bond for all the elected officers of the Society, and shall furnish a copy to the National President and the National Secretary. Upon termination of his term of office, the National Treasurer shall turn over to his successor all Society funds, records and files.

6. NATIONAL HISTORIAN: The National Historian shall be responsible for preparing, publishing, and preserving historical data pertaining to the Fifth Division, the Society and its Annual Reunions, and the deeds of the officers and men thereof. The National Historian shall be the custodian of the History of the Fifth Division, and shall render an annual accounting and report to the Society.

7. NATIONAL CHAPLAIN: The National Chaplain shall conduct the devotional and memorial services at the meetings of the society, and perform the usual duties of chaplain of a veteran's organization.

8. NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE: The National Judge Advocate's duty shall be to advise the National President and the Executive Board on the legality and constitutionality of all questions and matters submitted to the National President.

9. NATIONAL EDITOR: The duties of the National Editor shall be to publish quarterly the Red Diamond magazine to the membership of the Society from a list provided by the National Secretary.

B. EXECUTIVE BOARD: Government of this Society shall be vested in an Executive Board composed of elected Active Members who have demonstrated an enthusiastic, constructive interest in the Society and who shall be selected annually as follows:

1. Two Past National Presidents.
2. All elected officers shall be members of the Executive Board.
3. The National President shall be Chairman of the Executive Board.
4. The Executive Board is authorized and empowered to direct and conduct the business of the Society and to order the National Officers to make such disbursements as it deems necessary to conduct the Society's business. Issues considered by the Executive Board shall be determined by a majority vote of those members of the Board present at a meeting of the Board. When the Board votes by mail, the issue shall be determined by a majority of the votes cast.

C. ADVISORY COMMITTEE: There shall be a president's advisory Committee, constituted as follows:

1. All National Officers.
2. All living Past Presidents who are Active Members.
3. One representative from each Active Camp, to be chosen by the Camp and so certified by the National President.
4. Eight members – at-large - to be chosen geographically as follows:
 - Two from the Northeast (region east of the Mississippi River and North of the Ohio River extended).
 - Two from the Southeast (region east of the Mississippi River and South of the Ohio River extended).
 - Two from the West (region west of the Mississippi River).
 - Two Vietnam veterans at large.

The functions of the Advisory Committee shall be to bring before the National President any and all questions and recommendations pertaining to the welfare of the Society which may arise in the Camps, and to advise and consult with the National President on any matters the National President cares to submit to them.

D. ELECTIONS: All National Officers and the Executive Board shall be elected for one-year terms at the Annual Business Meeting held at the Society's Annual Reunion, by a majority of the votes cast. In the event no Annual Reunion is held, the annual election shall be conducted by mail in a manner to be determined by the Executive Board.

E. VOTING: Voting for National Officers, Members of the Executive Board, and on all other matters coming before the Annual or Special Meeting shall be as follows:

Each active member in good standing shall be entitled to one vote. Voting of the Active Membership of Local Camps shall be delegates selected not later than thirty (30) days prior to the Annual Meeting, one delegate and one alternate for each ten (10) members or fraction thereof in good standing. The delegate or delegates of each Local Camp present at the Annual Meeting shall be entitled, as determined by the Credentials Committee. Such Credential Committee shall be appointed by the National President at each meeting. Active members in good standing present at the Annual Meeting, who are not members of a Local Camp shall cast their individual votes. At Special Meetings of the Society, the votes of Active Members in good standing shall be cast in the same manner, except the requirement for election delegates by Local Camps thirty (30) days prior shall not apply. Local Camps shall submit to the National Secretary not less than thirty (30) days prior to the Annual Meeting a list of the duly elected delegates and alternates as herein before provided. In case camps are formed after the thirty (30) day period provided for above before the Annual Meeting they shall be allowed to elect their delegates.

The term "Active Member in good standing" shall be taken to mean Active Members with National dues paid up to thirty (30) days prior to the meeting.

F. FISCAL PERIOD: For the purpose of accounting for receipts and expenditures of the Society, the fiscal year shall end on December 31st of each year. (Note: Fiscal Period was amended from July 31 to December 31 at the annual reunion/convention on Sunday, 18 September, 2016, during the Business Meeting in Columbus, Georgia).

G. INABILITY OF ELECTED OFFICERS TO CARRY OUT DUTIES: In case of the inability of any elected officer to carry out the duties of his office, the National President, with the approval of the Executive Board, may appoint a member of the Society to fill the unexpired term of such elected Officer.

H. QUARTERMASTER AND WEB ADMINISTRATOR: The National President shall appoint a Quartermaster and Web Administrator with the approval of the Executive Board.

— ARTICLE VI —

"DUES and ASSESSMENTS"

A. DUES: To be an Annual, Associate, or Honorary Member of this Society, any qualified person shall pay annual National Dues of \$15.00 per year, or other amount set by the Executive Board, plus whatever local dues are set by the Local Camp to which the member belongs. The annual period of membership shall run for Twelve (12) months from the date that the dues are received by the National Secretary of the Society.

B. INITIATION FEE: There shall be no National Initiation Fee.

C. ASSESSMENTS: Assessments may be levied upon Active Members of the Society by a two-thirds majority vote of the Active Members thereof present.

D. CONTRIBUTIONS: Any member of the Society may make contributions to the Society, and may indicate in connection therewith the exact purpose for which such contribution may be used, and if the purpose is so designated by the contributor, said contribution may not be used for any other purpose without the consent of the contributor. All contributions shall be separately accounted for, and recorded in the annual report of the Treasurer of the Society.

— ARTICLE VII —

"EMBLEM and CREST"

The emblem and the crest of the Society shall be the same as those adopted as the Fifth Division emblem and the Fifth Division crest, with proper modification of inscription to conform to the requirements of the Society.

— ARTICLE VIII —

"ANNUAL REUNIONS and MEETINGS"

The date and place of the next Annual Reunion and Meeting shall be fixed by majority vote of those entitled to vote for National Officers at the Annual Business Meeting. In the event that a meeting place and date cannot be fixed at the annual meeting, the decision shall be made by the Executive Board.

— ARTICLE IX —

"Headquarters"

The Headquarters of the Society shall be deemed to be the city in which the National Secretary lives.

— ARTICLE X —

"AMENDMENTS"

This constitution may be amended in either of two ways:

A. By a two-thirds majority of the votes cast at an Annual Meeting in conformity with the provisions of Section E, VOTING, of ARTICLE V, ORGANIZATION of this Constitution.

B. By a two-thirds majority of the votes cast when a proposed amendment is submitted to the Active Members for a mail vote. Amendments may be proposed by any member or Camp. Each amendment shall be presented to the membership for consideration, with the Board's favorable or unfavorable recommendation, at the Annual Meeting or to be voted upon by mail.

— ARTICLE XI —

"DISSOLUTION"

Upon the dissolution, or cessation of existence, of the Society, all historical materials in the custody of the National Historian and other such records (e.g. files of the National Secretary) shall be turned over to any Museum of the Fifth Infantry Division which exists at that time. Should there be no such museum, the aforementioned materials shall be deposited with the U.S. Army Military History Institute. After payment of all indebtedness, all other assets (e.g. monetary or other such assets) shall be distributed by the Executive Board, as constituted at the time of dissolution or cessation of existence, to the Patton museum at Fort Knox, Ky, and/or other entities, including but not limited to, the Battle of Normandy Foundation; the museums Clervaux and Diekirch, Luxembourg; and any VA medical center recreation fund deemed appropriate.

Hey! I paid for an Ad in the Reunion Booklet, but there was no Booklet.

That's right. There was no 2022 Reunion Booklet. Due to circumstances beyond the publisher's control, the booklet could not get published. So, here are your options with regard to the money you paid for your ad...

1. You can place your already paid for ad in the 2023 Reunion Booklet...yeah, the one in San Antonio. Your Society Treasurer will just move your funds from the 2022 Reunion to the 2023 Reunion. You don't have to nothin'.
2. You can request to have your money returned to you via a check from the Society Treasurer. All you must do is send an email to the Treasurer at treasurer@societyofthefifthdivision.com.
3. You can just donate your ad money to the Society. If you do not choose option 2 and you do not act on option 1 by September 2023, the Treasurer will assume you chose this option.

George Shoener
Treasurer
Society of The Fifth Division

Credit Card use at the 2023 Fifth Division Reunion

That's right, you will be able to use your credit card at the 2023 reunion in San Antonio. This is something new. The Society Treasurer will accept the following payments using a credit card...

1. Any items purchased in the Quartermaster Store during specific hours of operation as established by the Quartermaster, Dennis Coulter.
2. Any items purchased during the Silent Auction. When paying for your items, the Society Treasurer will be available to accept credit card payment.
3. Any donation members which to make during the Reunion...in the hospitality room or at any function where the Treasurer is available.

George Shoener
Treasurer
Society of the Fifth Division

On 25th anniversary of Panama invasion, South Carolina Guard members recall their roles
By Maj. Cindi King South Carolina National Guard

COLUMBIA, S.C. - The South Carolina National Guard bid farewell last year to its final serving member from the Vietnam War. That retirement leaves a generation of Soldiers with vastly different combat experience after numerous deployments to the desert in Iraq and Afghanistan.

There are however, currently serving members in the National Guard who deployed in combat to other regions, sometimes overlooked after 13 years of continuous deployments for the Global War on Terror following the Sept. 11 attacks. One of those regions is Panama for Operation Just Cause in 1989.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the invasion of Panama to stop the regime of Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega. It was Dec. 20, 1989, when the invasion began, after President George H.W. Bush ordered more than 9,500 Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Air Force personnel to join the already 13,000 U.S. forces stationed in Panama.

The S.C. Army National Guard has three members who recall where they were when they were notified they would be deploying to support Operation Just Cause.

"I was a young Infantry Specialist serving in the 1st Ranger Battalion at Hunter Army Airfield," said Sgt. 1st Class Rudy Fontanez, supply specialist, Co. A, 218th Combat Support Battalion, S.C. Army National Guard. "We had been training weeks before using a scenario of an airfield seizure. We had no idea at the time that was the rehearsal for what we were going to be asked to do in Panama." Fontanez served on active duty from 1987 to 1991, joining the S.C. Army National Guard in 1992.

The Ranger battalions would rotate for block leaves. According to Fontanez, his unit was preparing to begin their scheduled block leave for the holidays and were unexpectedly called back to their units and all leave forms were cancelled.

"It was right before Christmas, so as soon as we reported, within two days we had an operations order, conducted rehearsals and were ready to go."

Fontanez said his unit parachuted into an airfield in Panama under cover of darkness at 500 feet from a C-141 aircraft with nearly 3,000 other Rangers. He said their aircraft took small arms fire and some of the Rangers were wounded.

"There was a lot of chaos on the ground as you can imagine," said Fontanez. "Once we came in, we secured the airfield for follow-on units to arrive."

The Rangers' mission was to stay until the airfield was in the control of other U.S. units to begin their operations and movement. Fontanez said they were on the ground approximately two weeks. He said shortly after this mission, his unit was being prepared for a deployment to the Persian Gulf for the first Gulf War.

The experience of Fontanez during Operation Just Cause demonstrates the rapid deployment of Ranger units to set up the conditions for follow-on units. In Panama, one of these units was the 82nd Airborne Division from Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The senior non-commissioned officer from the Recruiting and Retention battalion in the S.C Army National Guard, Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Elvis, was a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne when he was alerted to mobilize for Operation Just Cause.

"I was a sawgunner and Specialist in B-Company, 4th Battalion, 325th Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division," said Elvis. "We were just getting ready to go on Christmas block leave and were standing in line in the chow hall when we got the notification."

Elvis said an announcement came over the loudspeaker for an alpha alert, in which they all had to report as part of the reaction force. This was not uncommon for units designated for first response. He said they knew it was not a typical emergency deployment readiness drill when they saw there was live ammunition.

"Many in the ranks left for work on Dec. 18, saying goodbye to their families not knowing they would be mobilizing," said Elvis.

On Dec. 20, 1989, almost 1,000 paratroopers from Elvis' unit parachuted in via a C-141 aircraft through the darkness into a civilian airfield in Panama, and immediately received small arms fire.

"I remember seeing the tracer rounds all around us and thinking what have I gotten myself into?" said Elvis. "We saw a lot of contact after we hit the ground, as our follow-on missions after securing the airfield were to conduct patrols, pull security and conduct check points."

Once the order was given to transition from air to ground operations, the use of armored vehicles was critical to get into the fortified areas around Noriega's Comandancia.

The S.C Army National Guard director for the State Partnership Program with Colombia, Maj. Dave King, was a young lieutenant in 1989 responsible for a team of M113 armored personnel carriers with .50 caliber machine guns, who were supporting Task Force Black. He had prior active duty time from 1979-1982, was in the U.S. Army Reserves from 1982-1987, and again served active duty from 1987 until 1997, before joining the S.C. Army National Guard in 2007.

King was a member of 4-6th Infantry Battalion, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) at Fort Polk, Louisiana in 1989. His unit had mobilized to Panama in September of 1989 as part of an ongoing rotation of U.S. forces to augment security of the Panama Canal.

"Back then as an infantryman, the expectation of actually seeing combat did not seem likely, unlike today's Soldiers who know they will be called to deploy," said King. "It was mid-December when we knew we were going to be part of the invasion."

King's team augmented other units with mechanized infantry assets for the night time assault on the Comandancia. The battle at the Comandancia is considered the bloodiest, with four Soldiers killed and more than 60 wounded.

King recalls the chaos and receiving small arms fire. "We lost two Soldiers in our battalion, Cpl. Ivan Perez and Pvt. Kenneth Scott."

It was Jan. 3, 1990 when Noriega surrendered to U.S. Forces. The dictator was put aboard a Black Hawk and flown to Howard Air Force Base, where he was arrested by officials from the Drug Enforcement Administration. Shortly after word spread about his surrender, civilians in Panama began celebrating in the streets.

"The civilians we met were so grateful we were there," said Fontanez. "I remember while we were patrolling on New Year's Eve, we ran into a small group of locals who insisted we take a moment to celebrate the new year with them."

Elvis echoed the sentiment saying that their presence at check points was very much appreciated by the Panamanian civilians.

"We had regulars who would visit us and bring us drinks, baked goods and food to show their appreciation," said Elvis.

Elvis added he did learn a valuable lesson as a young specialist that he always shares with his Soldiers, to be considerate of the local population when deploying to another country. He said it was Christmas Day and he thought it would be great for his Soldiers to be able to call home to wish their families Merry Christmas. These were the days before cellphones, so their easiest option was to enter a hotel to borrow the telephone.

"We did not think about us going in a hotel with all of our tactical gear and how our live weapons would impact the guests," said Elvis. "We had to reassure everyone we just wanted to use the phone, and were not trying to seize the hotel."

King said his troops were also treated very well by the Panamanians, who would bring them food, with one family opening up their home so Soldiers could use the phone to call loved ones on Christmas Day.

King said one important lesson Operation Just Cause taught him was the criticality of squad and platoon level infantry training. He said when operating in an urban combat environment, the skills of small unit tactics is crucial.

During Operation Just Cause, 23 U.S. service members were killed and more than 300 wounded. Pentagon planners, such as former Army Chief of Staff Gen. Edward Meyer rate the success of the operations in Panama as one of the best conceived and although it had some flaws, it was a brilliant success.

The members of the S.C. Army National Guard who saw combat during Operation Just Cause stated they have no special plans during the 25th anniversary of the mission.

"I can't believe it's been 25 years," said Fontanez. "I never really thought about it, as the years go by, the memories seem to fade about those days."

"I still run into Soldiers from years ago from active duty," said King. One of my young Soldiers became a Command Sgt. Major who I saw again during combat operations in Iraq. It was quite fitting he served at the beginning of his career in combat with the 4-6th Infantry in Panama and was winding it down as the battalion command sergeant major of the same unit in Iraq.

With little fanfare about Operation Just Cause over the years, these Soldiers still recall those moments as young troops going to combat for the first time. Each has had follow-on deployments to the Middle East.

"We didn't have cellphones or the Internet in Panama to know what was going on everywhere," said Fontanez. "I heard more about the operation from talking to family who were watching CNN."

Twenty-five years later, Noriega sits in a Panamanian prison, after being tried by the U.S. for drug trafficking and money laundering. The events that led to the toppling of the Noriega regime are but a distant memory for many, and almost forgotten by the new generation of service members who are too young to know of combat operations prior to Iraq and Afghanistan.

According to Maj. Gen. Robert E. Livingston, Jr., the adjutant general for South Carolina, what has not changed over the years is the U.S. commitment to helping neighboring countries when needed.

"Our engineer unit had been in Ecuador prior to Operation Just Cause, helping after an earthquake had struck the southern region," said Livingston. "As a military organization, we were aware of these events and were impressed with the level of professionalism taking place by U.S. forces in Panama."

Livingston said it is important people don't forget military history and the lessons learned from those who have answered the call and supported in all regions and operations.

"Operation Just Cause represents the range of our capabilities to extend a helping hand and care for our neighbors in the south," said Livingston. "We are grateful to these heroes who served during this time in our history and sacrificed to assist those in need."

5th Infantry Division (Mechanized)
Operation Just Cause (Dec. 1989)

5th Infantry Division (Mech) Marker image. [Click for full size.](#)

Photographed By Lee Hattabaugh, November 17, 2010

1. 5th Infantry Division (Mech) Marker

Inscription. [Click to hear the inscription.](#) This monument is dedicated to the soldiers of 5th Infantry Division (Mech) who participated in Operation Just Cause (Dec. 1989) in Panama and to the following soldiers who lost their lives while serving in Panama.

CPL Ivan Perez
Co B, 4th BN, 6th INF

PVT2 Kenneth Scott
Co A, 4th BN, 6th INF

SPEC Larry Emerson
HHC, 4th BN, 6th INF



Photographed By Lee Hattabaugh, November 17, 2010

1. 5th Infantry Division (Mech) Marker

Erected by American Legion Droddy Cain Post 145 & Veterans of Foreign Wars Old Stage Post 3106.

Topics. This historical marker is listed in this topic list: [Military.](#)

Location. $31^{\circ} 2.887' N$, $93^{\circ} 12.791' W$. Marker is in Fort Polk, Louisiana, in Vernon Parish. Marker can be reached from Louisiana Avenue east of Colorado Avenue, on the right when traveling east. Located in the Fort Polk Warrior Park. [Touch for map.](#) Marker is in this post office area: Fort Polk LA 71459, United States of America. [Touch for directions.](#)

Other nearby markers. At least 8 other markers are within walking distance of this marker. [Second Brigade Soldiers](#) (here, next to this marker); [Peason Ridge Heritage Families](#) (a few steps from this marker); [Camp Polk Heritage Families](#) (a few steps from this marker);

5th Infantry Division (Mech) Marker image. [Click for full size.](#)

Photographed By Lee Hattabaugh, November 17, 2010

2. 5th Infantry Division (Mech) Marker

[Global War on Terrorism Monument](#) (within shouting distance of this marker); [Fort Polk](#) (within shouting distance of this marker); [2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment](#) (within shouting distance of this marker); a different marker also named [5th Infantry Division \(Mechanized\)](#) (within shouting distance of this marker); [The Seventh Armored Division](#) (approx. half a mile away). [Touch for a list and map of all markers in Fort Polk.](#)

The History of Our Society Quilt

My first reunion was in Louisville, Kentucky in 1997-1998, 27 years after my Vietnam tour. As a newbie again, I was ready to find out more about the Society of the Fifth Division and to figure out where I fit in.

At my first banquet, I sat with some Vietnam veteran attendees and at this table I met Harold and Lori Weston. I also sat with Tommy Doris, who got me to come to the reunion. The President that year was Cullen Slone. He was having an impressive reunion with around 200 WWII Vets and around 20 or so Vietnam Vets. President Slone went out of his way to welcome the Vietnam Vets to the society. He impressed upon us that we were the future of the Society along with Panama. We are the last groups to see the Society into the future.

During my dinner with my new found friends, Lori and Harold, our conversation went to how we can be more involved in the society and make a difference. Lori said she would bring something to raffle off and Tommy and I vowed to keep looking for Vietnam Vets.

The next reunion Lori presented me with a large quilt with a red diamond, white five and letters spelling A.E.F, WWII, Vietnam and Panama. This was designed and made by Lori and her mother. I, in turn, gave it to the Society to raffle off. That years President, Jay Balderson made sure everyone purchased tickets. Raffle tickets were sold and by sheer luck and \$40 worth of tickets, Tommy Doris won the quilt with ticket number 161. I thought how perfect, me being in H.H.C. Recon 1/61. It was meant to be.

Tommy lived five minutes from my office, FBR Reality, and I started to spend more time with him helping do phone calls and searches for new members. Dennis and Jeanie Knight were the driving force behind the growth of the Vietnam Vet membership. While at Tommy's I came up with an idea to donate the quilt back to the Society and have all members who attend a reunion sign it, hoping to create a history of members attending. Tommy agreed and the rest is history.

Twenty five years have passed and a lot of signatures have been added to the quilt. The first to sign were Tommy Doris, Harold and Lori Weston and then

myself. What a history this one item has created for the Society of the Fifth Division.

Hopefully while looking for your name and or signing as a new member you will see those who you fought with, those who you trusted your life with and who you have become brothers and sisters with for the rest of your life. I look every reunion for those I served with and got to know through the Society of the Fifth Division and I'm proud to be friends with to this day. Some of the names have passed on but when I see their names I remember the time we had together and cherish these memories. One close to my heart was Melvin Gainer, WWII, he came to me at my first reunion and told me we were going to be friends. He was a Recon Scout for Patton and I was a Recon Scout for 1/61, we did the same things in war. You know him better as Gainer the Gunny, nicknamed by Patton. You may have watched what he did in the movie Saving Private Ryan. P.S. If you watch the movie, he can be seen in the church steeples.

Yours Truly,
Michael Sperling
Past President, 2005





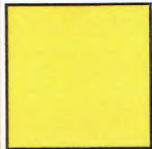
Self Hydration Guide



Compare your urine against the colors below to help assess your hydration level



Orange: May indicate dangerously low hydration level



Dark Yellow: May indicate very low hydration level



Yellow: May indicate low hydration level



Light Yellow: May indicate adequate hydration level



Clear: May indicate good hydration level



Cola: May indicate Rhabdomyolysis

Always drink fluids in accordance with the fluid replacement guidelines found in Fort Jackson Regulation 385-10

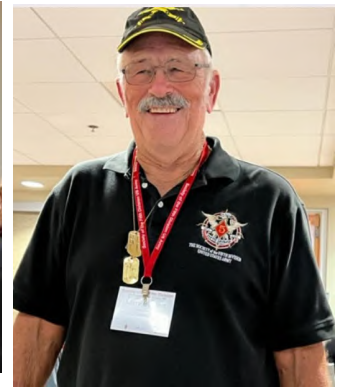
Drink at least 1 glass of water, juice or milk with each meal and eat complete meals with a variety of foods.

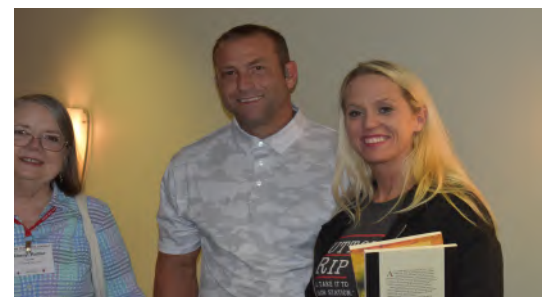
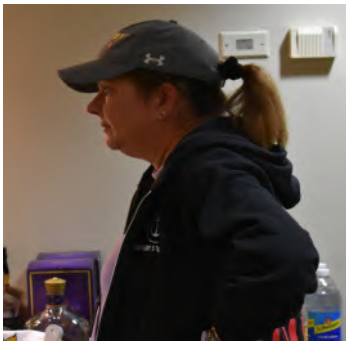
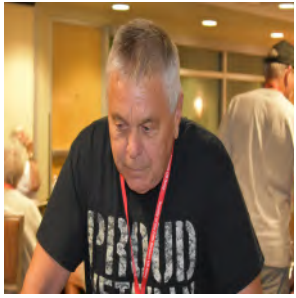
Do not drink more than 1&1/2 quarts of fluid per hour or more than 12 quarts per day.

Mission First—Safety Always
Fort Jackson Safety Office











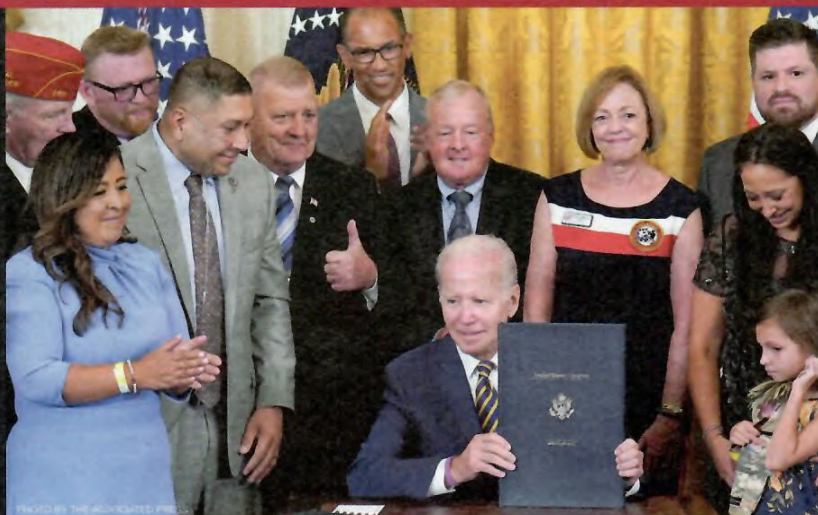
All photos are donated by Robert Galloway and Ron VanBeek I hope that your photo is amongst the array of photos I am sorry if you are not. Thank you all for attending the 2022 Reunion, pray to see next year in San Antonio, Texas.

LEGISLATIVE Spotlight

America's PACT with veterans

The Honoring our PACT Act is the biggest toxic exposure veterans bill to ever be considered

By Matt Saintsing



Veterans exposed to harmful substances will find it easier to receive their earned benefits now that the largest and most comprehensive toxic exposure legislation ever is now law.

Signed by President Joe Biden in August, the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act (Public Law 117-168) expands health care benefits to millions of veterans of all eras—including future generations—who come into contact with noxious material while serving in uniform.

Among its many impactful provisions, the Honoring Our PACT Act will reduce bureaucratic obstacles for an estimated 3.5 million veterans who seek VA benefits due to burn pit exposures during the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and other hostile locations. The law adds nearly two dozen presumptive conditions related to burn pit exposure, meaning veterans who served in overseas locations with active burn pits no longer have to prove their exposure or establish direct service connection if diagnosed with ailments listed in the law that are known to cause such conditions.

The new law also expands medical coverage by extending, from five to 10 years, the time period that combat veterans who were discharged or released on or after Oct. 1, 2013, have for guaranteed enrollment in the VA health care system. For combat veterans whose service was completed before that date, the law provides a one-year open enrollment period.

The signing of the PACT Act is the culmination of years of work by DAV members and advocates who

lobbied Congress to keep our promise to America's veterans. In 2008, DAV brought the critical issue of burn pits to the American public's attention. DAV initiated the pilot for a Burn Pit Registry, which the Department of Veterans Affairs adopted in 2014.

For Vietnam veterans, this landmark legislation will finally make hypertension a presumptive condition for those exposed to Agent Orange, making it simpler for the VA to award benefits to them or their survivors. The law also expands all Agent Orange presumptions to cover veterans who served in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Guam, American Samoa and Johnston Atoll.

"The Honoring Our PACT Act represents a major shift in how the VA will care for veterans exposed to toxic chemicals and other hazardous substances," said DAV National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. "This legislation is another step toward ensuring this nation makes good on its promise to care for all the brave men and women who volunteer to serve their country and defend our freedom."

"No longer will our veterans exposed to harmful substances have to fight the VA for the benefits they earned in service to us all," added DAV National Commander Joe Parsetich. "This is a historic victory for veterans, and DAV is proud to have been there every step of the way in advocating for this lifesaving legislation." ■



Learn More Online

Find updates to other major veteran legislation by joining DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network) at DAVCAN.org.

BETTER HEALTH | NEWS TO IMPROVE YOUR LIFE



Arthritis Is More Prevalent Among Veterans, Impacting One In Three

This inflammation of the joints limits more than 58 million adults in the U.S. It is an even more prevalent condition among veterans.

BY JANICE PHELAN

Arthritis is a painful condition that often results in physical limitations for the more than 58 million adults diagnosed with inflammation of one or more joints, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For veterans, arthritis is even more prevalent, with approximately one in three receiving an arthritis diagnosis, compared to one in four among adults overall.

The term arthritis covers more than 100 conditions impacting joints, tissues surrounding joints and other connective tissues, with the most common form known as osteoarthritis. Others include rheumatoid arthritis, gout, fibromyalgia and lupus, as well as childhood arthritis.

Determining the source of your arthritis-related symptoms is an important first step in obtaining relief.

“Talk to your doctor about your joint pain,” said Joe Tolman, founder of HurtSkurt, a corporate partner of the Arthritis Foundation. “It’s important to get a diagnosis. There are many forms of arthritis, and they are treated differently.”

Pain and anti-inflammatory drugs, including topical pain relievers, are among the common treatments for arthritis, Tolman added.

“Inflammatory arthritis is treated with medications that can minimize the autoimmune response, causing inflammation and joint damage,” he said. “Additional treatment options include physical therapy to strengthen muscles to take stress off joints. Surgery is an option for some with sig-

nificant joint damage.”

In addition to medications, individuals with arthritis are encouraged to get and stay active; manage their weight; eat a healthy balanced diet, including lean protein, whole grains and a variety of vegetables and fruits; make sure they are getting enough sleep; and work on reducing stress, Tolman said.

“Movement is medicine,” he added. “Start low and go slow. The more you incorporate physical activity into your day, the better to help prevent further pain and keep the joints happy.”

Tolman also recommends the Arthritis Foundation’s Your Exercise Solution (YES) website, which includes stretches and exercise videos that provide modifications to movements based on specific joint issues.

“You can create your own movement routine, starting from the chair,” he said. “From there, you can progress to doing movements standing, and as you progress, you can put together your own exercise routine.”

Among veterans, arthritis is more common in older individuals, although veterans of all ages can also develop arthritis due to overuse and traumatic injuries that occurred during their military service.

“The Arthritis Foundation is investing in research to better understand how to better study and treat post-traumatic osteoarthritis, which



results from an injury and can start in people in their 20s and 30s when they are most active,” he said.

In addition to physical symptoms, Tolman shared that arthritis can cause stress, anxiety and depression. Recommendations from the Arthritis Foundation include sharing your feelings with health-care providers or caregivers, finding a support group or working with a mental-health professional, prioritizing self-care, getting adequate sleep each night, spending time outdoors and participating in appropriate physical activities.

The Arthritis Foundation offers a virtual national support group for active-duty and veteran military service members, with more information available at <https://www.arthritis.org/veteran>. ★

EMAIL magazine@vfw.org

Janice Phelan is a freelance writer based in Lee’s Summit, Mo.

Expanding VA dental care

DAV-backed Senate bill would ensure all enrolled veterans receive dental benefits

By Matt Saintsing

Just 15% of the more than 9 million veterans enrolled in Department of Veterans Affairs health care are eligible for dental benefits. However, the number of veterans actually receiving VA dental care is much lower—about 463,000—according to senators supporting legislation that would significantly increase access.

The Veterans Dental Care Eligibility Expansion and Enhancement Act of 2021 (S. 3017) would remove the current barriers to VA dental care by broadening eligibility for all veterans enrolled in VA health care. The bill also seeks to address the shortage of dentists by providing incentives to dental school students and mandates the expansion of VA dental clinics in all 50 states.

“As the former chair of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, I have seen up close the pain, death and despair caused by war and its aftermath,” Sen. Bernie Sanders said when introducing the bill last October. “Honoring that extraordinary sacrifice and bravery is one of the most important commitments we have as a country. That means making sure our veterans and their families have access to the best and most comprehensive health care, including dental care, our country can provide.”

Right now, to receive VA dental benefits, veterans must have a service-connected dental disability or condition they receive compensation for; be a former prisoner of war; have a noncompensable service-connected dental disability caused by combat or service trauma; have a dental condition verified by the VA as aggravating a service-connected disability; be rated

100% disabled or rated for Individual Unemployability; be receiving Chapter 31 educational benefits; or require dental care due to a condition being treated through inpatient VA care.

“Today, dental care is not treated like the vital health care it is, and only a small fraction of veterans are eligible to receive dental care through the VA because of stringent eligibility requirements,” added Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand. “This bill would help eliminate eligibility restrictions and make dental care more affordable and accessible to all veterans.”

Research has linked gum disease to several chronic conditions affecting veterans, such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

DAV supports S. 3017, in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 18, which recognizes the importance of oral health as a basic need for veterans and calls on the VA to expand dental care for all veterans.

The leadership of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee held a roundtable on VA dental care in April, which DAV took part in.

“Dental care is an integral part of an individual’s overall health, and we should treat it as such,” said National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. “Right now, there are too many limitations that prevent veterans from obtaining this essential benefit that we believe should be part of VA’s ‘whole health’ approach, so we greatly appreciate the opportunity to have this discussion and highlight this important issue.” ■

Find updates to other major veteran legislation by joining DAV CAN (Commander’s Action Network) at DAVCAN.org.

BETTER HEALTH | NEWS TO IMPROVE YOUR LIFE



Protecting the 'Health and Welfare of Veterans'

VFW service officers are at the ready to discuss options for veterans with current conditions or previous exposure covered by the newly passed *PACT Act*.

BY JANICE PHELAN

The *PACT Act*, signed into law by President Joe Biden in August, was praised by veterans' advocates for expanding and extending access to VA health care and disability benefits to veterans harmed by burn pits and other toxic exposure sources during military service.

For veterans with a current condition or previous exposure, it is crucial to learn how the new law impacts them. Veterans exposed to burn pits or toxic water are encouraged to make an appointment as soon as possible with a VA-accredited VFW service officer to discuss eligibility and options.

"The passage of the *PACT Act* is a momentous piece of legislation designed to protect the health and welfare of veterans, their families and survivors in providing health coverage and benefits," said Michael Figlioli, deputy director of VFW National Veterans Service. "I dare say, it is as important as the *Agent Orange Act* in its scope and the range of disabilities it covers."

Veterans who have been suffering for decades from respiratory illnesses and cancers (including rare cancers such as glioblastoma and head cancers) and who were denied disability benefits will now have access to health care, as well as compensation for their suffering, he added.

The legislation also adds Thailand, Laos and Cambodia to locations where Vietnam veterans had a presumptive exposure to Agent Orange.

In addition, spouses and other survivors may be eligible for death and indemnity compensation for a former military service member who passed away from a previously or newly established presumptive condition.

"This is why we encourage anyone who has questions, may believe they



are eligible or may have been previously denied a claim for benefits to seek out a professionally trained, VA-accredited VFW service officer for further assistance before they file for any other outside benefit," Figlioli said.

Help is available from more than 2,000 VA-accredited VFW service representatives. This service is offered free to all veterans, regardless of VFW membership. Visit www.vfw.org/service-officers for more information and to find a VFW service officer nearest to you.

"VFW is with you from the initial filing all the way to the decision and any additional appeal actions," Figlioli said. "Others who charge fees for providing a 'service' or 'consultation' and promise faster, more accurate results are generally misleading the claimant. There is no magic bullet or way to make the process go any faster."

Section 804 of the *PACT Act* covers veterans, family members, civilian employees and contractors stationed at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina between Aug. 1, 1953, through Dec. 31,

1987, due to exposure to toxic water. They may have legal recourse in a tort claim against the U.S. government in federal court. Figlioli cautioned that veterans may want to think twice before pursuing a tort claim.

"VA has clearly indicated that veterans who file these tort claims will have VA benefits offset by any settlement," Figlioli said. "Veterans need to be aware of any court costs, attorney fees or service charges that will be deducted from a settlement. This is another reason veterans need to talk to a VFW service officer first and maximize their earned service-connected benefits before agreeing to participate in a lawsuit."

It is important to thoroughly read any contracts, ask questions and then make a decision, Figlioli added.

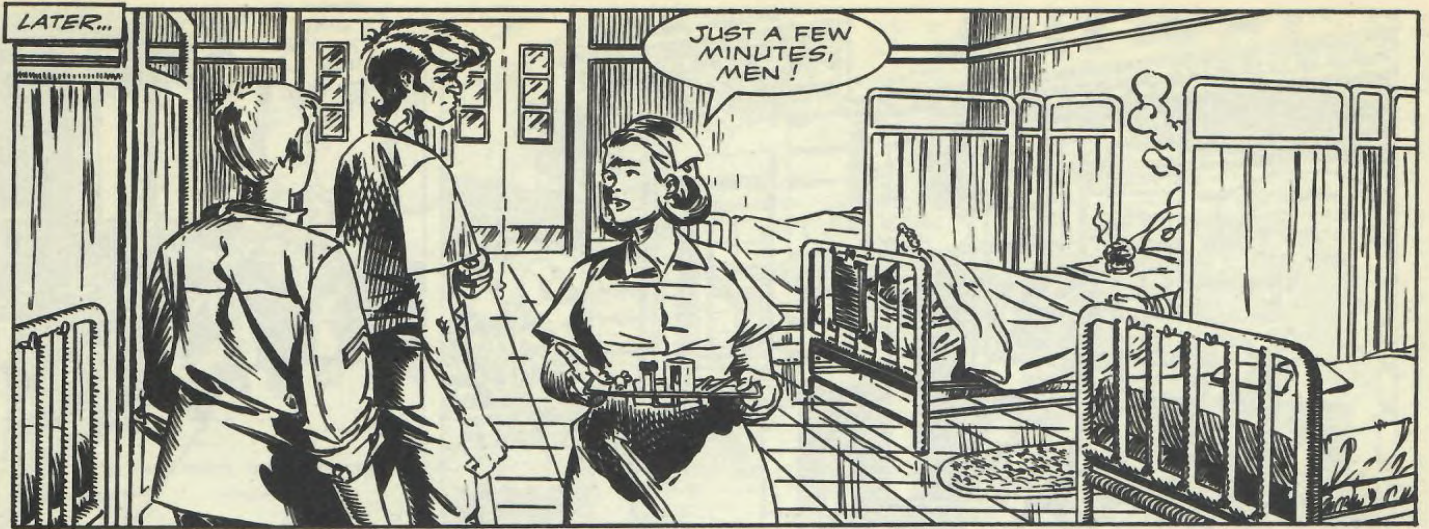
VFW representatives are always willing to provide more information and assistance, he said.

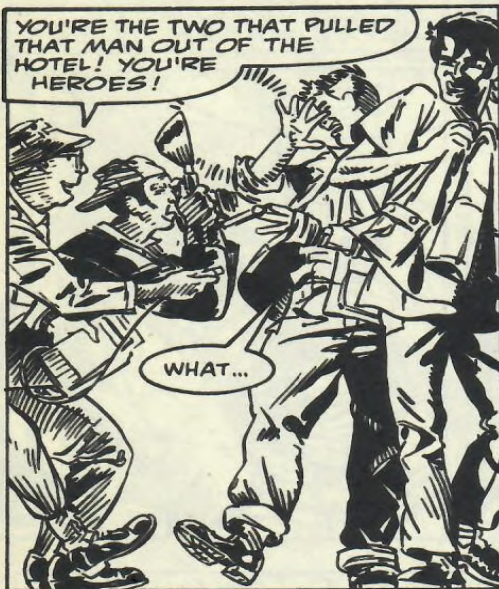
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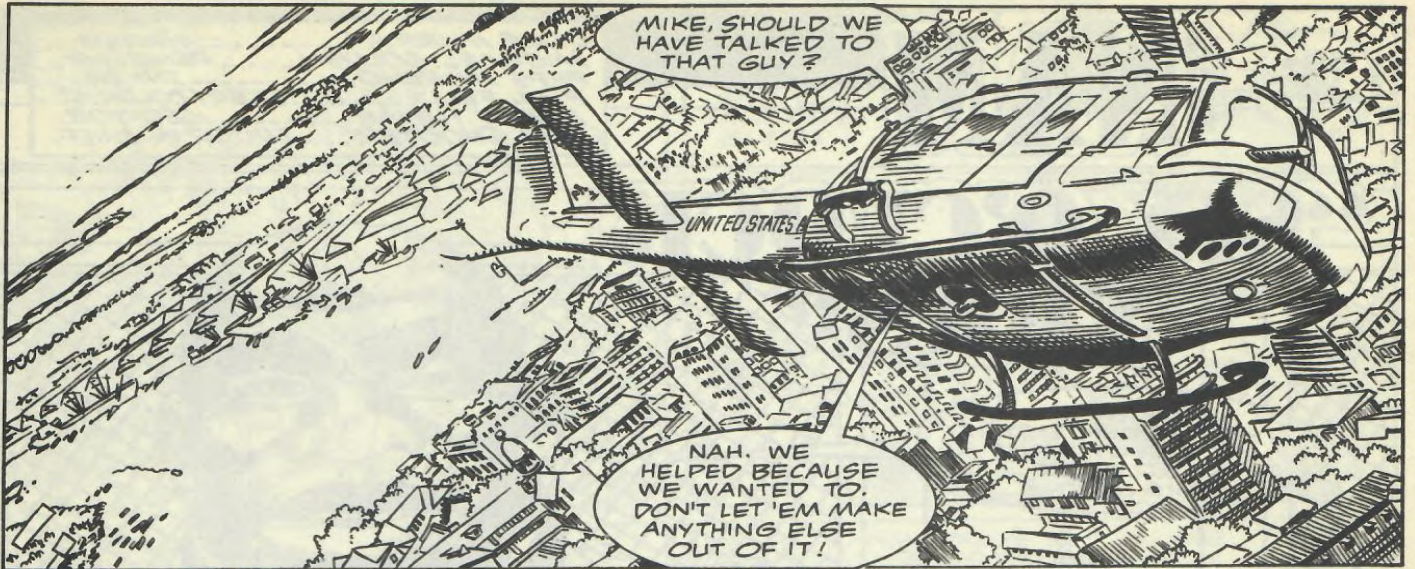
Janice Phelan is a freelance writer based in Lee's Summit, Mo.



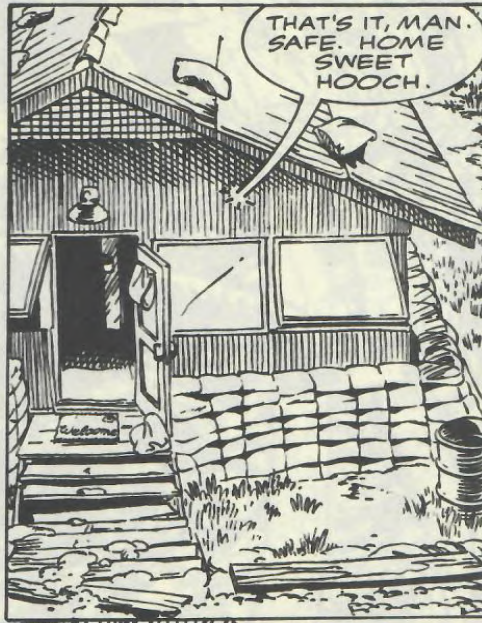
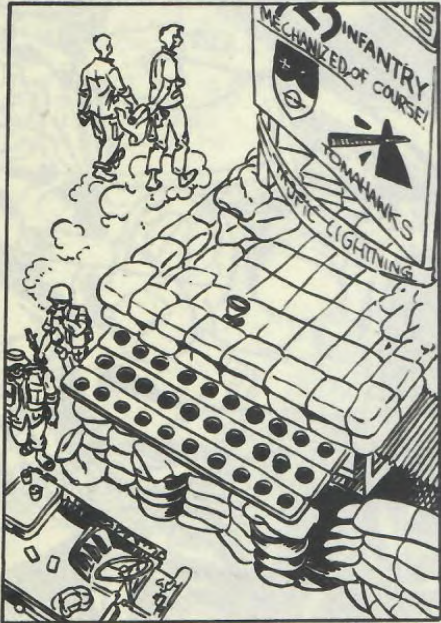








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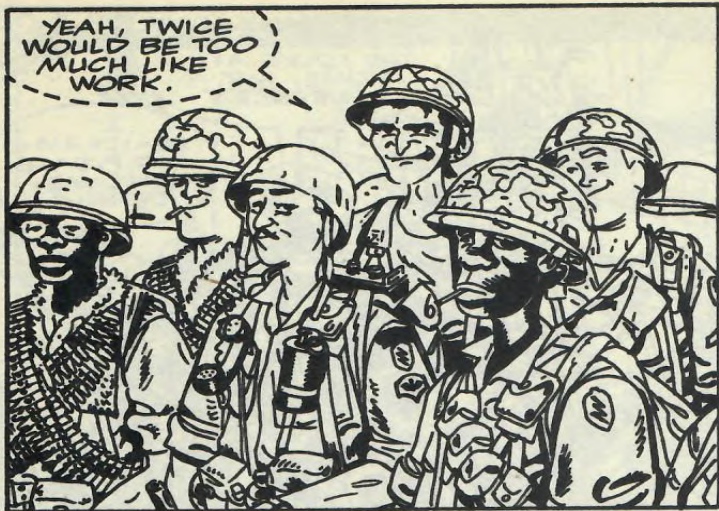
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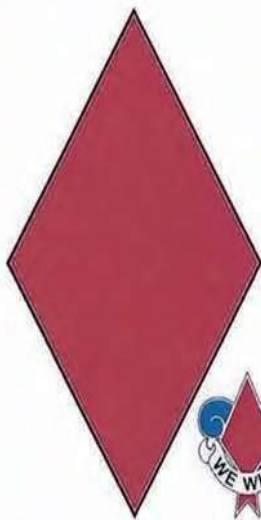


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