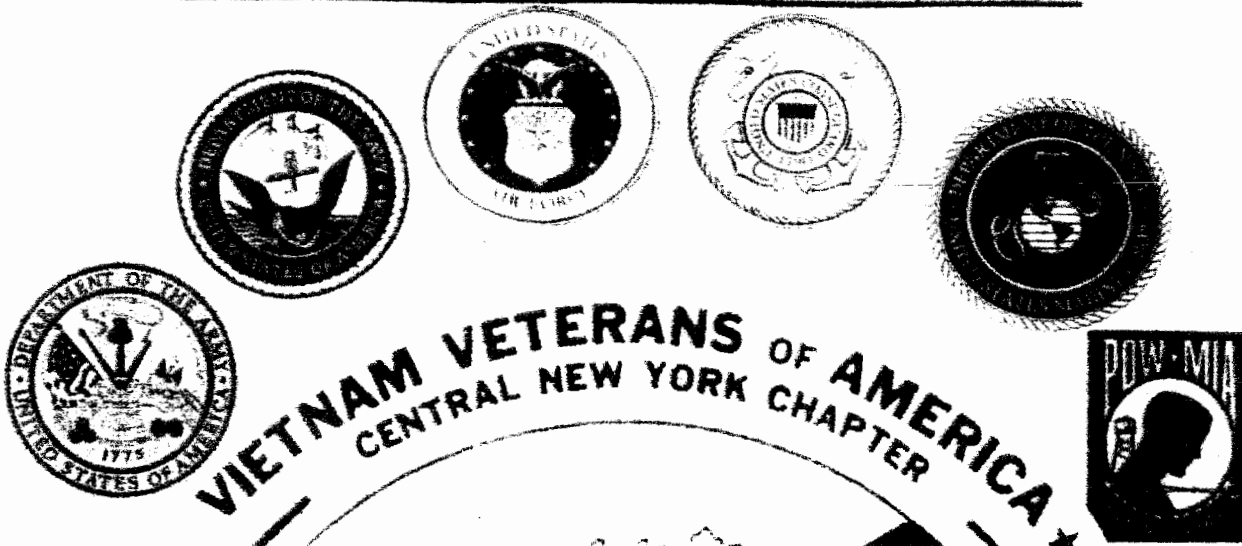


** AT EASE **



VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA CENTRAL NEW YORK CHAPTER



AUGUST 2006

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA CHAPTER #103
P.O. BOX 675, Liverpool, New York 13088

2005-2006

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Visit our website @www.cnyvva103.org

There will be no President's Message for this issue. He was taken ill, but has since recovered. The message will resume in next month's newsletter.

Pompey Country Club will be the venue for our annual Golf Tournament on Monday, September 18 to benefit our various veterans initiatives, including the Vietnam Veteran's Leadership Program. Sponsorships for the tournament are very important. One chapter member; one sponsor - not a bad goal. Let's see what can be done!

The VVLP Luncheon will be held at the Oncenter on Friday, November 10 from 11 a.m to 1 p.m. The guest speaker will be General Wayne A. Downing, who was in command of our air campaign during the first Gulf War.

September 15 is POW/MIA Recognition Day. Please pause and remember those who cannot be with us on this solemn day.

Our TV program continues to move forward in presenting veteran's issues to the public throughout Central New York. Please tune in on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. on Public Access channel 98. Our guys do a great job!.

Barbara Allen, Vice-President of the New York State Council of AVVA, is helping to raise support and awareness of women's PTSD issues in Moravia. Requests are for such items as towels and toiletries and can be brought to the next Chapter meeting.

The Onondaga County Veterans Council is working very hard towards the goal of filling up the War Memorial for Veteran's Day. A program has been put together to involve every veteran's organization in and around Onondaga County. The goal: raise involvement in and initiate ideas for veteran's issues. If all the veteran's groups are involved in this effort, overlapping programs for that day can be held to a minimum and increase attendance at other Veteran's functions. Planning sessions supporting this issue will be announced for the near future. The Council's installation dinner will be held on September 30 at 6 p.m. at 135 State Fair Blvd.

The Disabled Veterans Assistance Program is off and running. This is a great program for all veterans around Onondaga County. A veteran handicapped because of a disability, age or finances can have work done on their house. Contact social services at VAMC and fill out an application.

Don't forget to visit our display inside the 174th Air National Guard tent, which is located behind the Horticulture Building. Plenty of stuff for sale, exhibits and your friendly VVA staff on hand to help you with any questions. See y'all there!

Iraq War May Add Stress for Past Vets

1. Trauma Disorder Claims at New High

By ~~Donna St. George~~ Washington Post Staff Writer

Tuesday, June 20, 2006; Page A01

More than 30 years after their war ended, thousands of Vietnam veterans are seeking help for post-traumatic stress disorder, and experts say one reason appears to be harrowing images of combat in Iraq.

Figures from the Department of Veterans Affairs show that PTSD disability-compensation cases have nearly doubled since 2000, to an all-time high of more than 260,000. The biggest bulge has come since 2003, when war started in Iraq.

Experts say that, although several factors may be at work in the burgeoning caseload, many veterans of past wars reexperience their own trauma as they watch televised images of U.S. troops in combat and read each new accounting of the dead.

1. "It so directly parallels what happened to Vietnam veterans," said Raymond M. Scurfield of the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast campus, who worked with the disorder at VA for more than 20 years and has written two books on the subject. "The war has to be triggering their issues. They're almost the same issues."

At VA, officials said the Iraq war is probably a contributing factor in the rise in cases, although they said they have conducted no formal studies.

1. PTSD researcher John P. Wilson, who oversaw a small recent survey of 70 veterans -- nearly all from Vietnam -- at Cleveland State University, said 57 percent reported flashbacks after watching reports about the war on television, and almost 46 percent said their sleep was disrupted. Nearly 44 percent said they had fallen into a depression since the war began, and nearly 30 percent said they had sought counseling since combat started in Iraq.

"Clearly the current Iraq war, and their exposure to it, created significantly increased distress for them," said Wilson, who has done extensive research on Vietnam veterans since the 1970s. "We found very high levels of intensification of their symptoms. . . . It's like a fever that has gone from 99 to 104."

Vietnam veterans are the vast majority of VA's PTSD disability cases -- more than 73 percent. Veterans of more recent wars -- Iraq, Afghanistan and the 1991 Persian Gulf War -- together made up less than 8 percent in 2005.

VA officials said other reasons for the surge in cases may include a lessening of the stigma associated with PTSD and the aging of the Vietnam generation -- explanations that veterans groups also suggest.

PTSD is better understood than it once was, said Paul Sullivan, director of programs for the

group Veterans for America. "The veterans are more willing to accept a diagnosis of PTSD," he said, "and the VA is more willing to make it."

In addition, as Vietnam veterans near retirement age, "they have more time to think, instead of focusing on making a living all the time, and for some this is not necessarily a good thing," said Rick Weidman, executive director for policy and government affairs at Vietnam Veterans of America.

Max Cleland, a former U.S. senator from Georgia and onetime head of the VA who was left a triple amputee by the Vietnam War, said the convergence of age and the Iraq war has created problems for many of his fellow veterans -- as well as for himself.

1. "As we Vietnam veterans get older, we are more vulnerable," he said. When the war started in 2003, he said, "it was like going back in time -- it was like 1968 again."

Now he goes for therapy at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and is wary of news from Iraq. "I don't read a newspaper," he said. "I don't watch television. It's all a trigger. . . . This war has triggered me, and it has triggered Vietnam veterans all over America."

PTSD has become a volatile topic lately, with some skeptics questioning whether the rise in claims is driven by overdiagnosis or by financial motives. A report last week from the Institute of Medicine, part of the National Academies, concluded that "PTSD is a well characterized medical disorder" for which "all veterans deployed to a war zone are at risk."

1. VA's growing PTSD caseload became an issue last August, when the agency announced a new review of 72,000 PTSD compensation cases, expressing concerns about errors and a lack of evidence. That probe was dropped after a sample of 2,100 cases turned up no instances of fraud.

Still, some experts are not convinced that the Iraq war has driven up the caseload. "I'm skeptical that it accounts for a broad swath of this phenomenon," said psychiatrist Sally Satel, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. "These men have had deaths in their families, they had all kinds of tragedies over 30 years that surely affected them emotionally but they coped with."

Although a small percentage of veterans might be deeply affected, she said, she doubts "they have become chronically disabled because of it."

Around the country, many veterans dwell on the similarities between the wars in Vietnam and Iraq: guerrilla tactics, deadly explosives, fallen comrades, divisive politics. The way they see it, "Iraq is Vietnam without water," Weidman said.

"We have people who have symptoms that they haven't had in a long time," said Randy Barnes, 65, who works in the Kansas City offices of Vietnam Veterans of America. For some, "the nightmares and flashbacks have been very hard to deal with," he said. Group therapy sessions are "much more crowded," he said, "with Vietnam veterans particularly, but now also with the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans."

Barnes served as a combat medic in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969 and went into treatment only in

the late 1990s. By the time the Iraq war started, he said, he felt steadier -- but then his symptoms ramped up again.

"Depending on what I saw or heard that day or read, I would have night problems -- nightmares, night sweats," he said. Sometimes, he said, he would roll out of bed and wake up crawling on the floor, "seeking safety, I guess."

A study published in February by VA experts showed that veterans under VA care experienced notable mental distress after the war started and as it intensified. While younger veterans, ages 18 to 44, showed the greatest reactions to the war, "Vietnam era VA patients reported particularly high levels" of distress consistently, the study reported.

Powerful images of war have revived combat trauma in the past. "Traumatized people overreact to things that remind them of their original trauma," said Scurfield, the PTSD expert in Mississippi.

When the movie "Saving Private Ryan" was released, World War II veterans sought mental health help in great numbers, said Wilson of Cleveland State. "It rekindled it all," he said.

**Vietnam Veterans of America Applauds Recent Court Decision
In Favor of Service Members Who Served in the Offshore Waters of Vietnam**

1.

(Washington, D.C.) – “Some of the inequities of the application of presumptive coverage for exposure to Agent Orange have finally been set aside,” said John Rowan, national president of Vietnam Veterans of America. “We need to spread the word about this decision to all Navy veterans who served in the waters offshore of Vietnam and received the Vietnam Service Medal (VSM). This Court decision will allow for an untold number of veterans and their families to receive the compensation and health care they are entitled to, as well as other VA programs,” Rowan said.

On August 16, 2006, the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims rendered a decision in the appeal of *Haas v. Nicholson*. In their 31-page decision, the Court determined the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been unlawfully denying presumptive disability compensation for exposure to Agent Orange (AO) for service members who served in the waters offshore of Vietnam and earned the VSM.

Numerous veterans who served in Vietnam have been able to qualify for presumptive disability compensation for exposure to AO. Unfortunately the application of presumptive coverage has resulted in many inequities for veterans and their families. An example of this can be seen in the VA’s denials of presumptive service connection to service members who served on boats and ships off the coast of Vietnam. Although these veterans earned and received the VSM, many have had their claims denied by VA for presumptive disability due to AO exposure because they did not step foot on the ground in Vietnam.

“All veterans who served in the waters offshore need to speak with a service representative or service officer as soon as possible to see if they have a viable claim for compensation,” Rowan said. These veterans should also participate in the Agent Orange registry exam. I fully expect the VA will attempt to rescind and revise their interpretation of the law. If you have had a claim denied or have never filed, you must do so before the regulations change again in favor of the VA.”

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Vietnam Veterans of America

VVA Opposes Sunset Bills As Bad Government Initiatives

(Washington, D.C.) – “Under the guise of government reform, of ridding the federal bureaucracy of ‘unneeded’ agencies and ‘unwanted’ programs, two bills – H.R. 5766, which would create a Federal Review Commission, and H.R. 3282, the Abolishment of Obsolete Agencies and Federal Sunset Act – have been fast-tracked for consideration on the floor of the House this week,” John Rowan, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), said today in a letter to Members of Congress.

“VVA adamantly opposes the enactment of these anti-democratic bills. If passed, they would empower unelected commissions to usurp the oversight role of Congress. They represent a bald- faced attack on protections inherent in our Constitution, not a welcome attempt at government reform,” Rowan said. “They would set a dangerous precedent: If Congress or the President can’t muster enough votes to do away with a program or agency they find bothersome, those in power would have a commission they can depend on do what they have neither the political will nor popular support to do.

“These bills are no more than a brazen, backdoor attempt by those who would roll back programs that have become part of the fabric of our republic,” Rowan said. “While veterans’ programs may not be specifically targeted, there is every indication that they would be adversely affected should a sunset commission become law. Given the events of the past few years, it is clear to us that Post-traumatic Stress Disorder treatment and compensation programs would be among the first to be targeted, along with special programs at the VA for blinded veterans, those with traumatic brain injuries, and any program that addresses toxic exposures, such as Agent Orange and Gulf War Illness.

“We need more accountability, not less, and greater transparency in determining what programs are needed because they are doing what they were created to do, and what programs ought to be ended, because either they are not doing what they were created to do or their mission is completed and they are no longer needed.”

On behalf of the members of VVA, Rowan urged Members of Congress to vote “Nay” when H.R. 5766 and H.R. 3282 come to a vote.

Vietnam Veterans of America
Central New York Chapter #103
PO Box 609
East Syracuse, NY 13057

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Veterans must provide evidence of service (DD214 or Equivalent)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____

Veteran: (Y) _____ (N) _____

Are You a Vietnam Era Vet: (Y) _____ (N) _____

In-Country Vet: (Y) _____ (N) _____

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP is available to any Veteran or Non-Veteran who would like to support VVA Chapter No. ANNUAL DUES for both Veterans and Associate Members is \$20.00/Year. We accept checks, credit cards or money orders. Please do not send cash.

Type of Membership: () New () Renewal Amount Enclosed \$ _____

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VVA Chapter 103 holds its meetings at American Legion Post 188,
205 Cypress St, Liverpool, NY on the 3rd Thursday of each month
at 7:00 p.m.

Directions: From Heids Corner, follow signs to Rt 370 (2nd Street).
Take first left past Washington Park. The post is on your right side,
across from the park.