

**** AT EASE ****



Vietnam Veterans of America Central New York Chapter #103
P.O. Box 675, Liverpool, NY 13088
www.cnyvva103.org

July 2007

**VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
CHAPTER #103
P.O. BOX 675. LIVERPOOL, NY 13088
(315) 458-1323
WWW.CNYVVA103.ORG**

2007

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**SYRACUSE VET CENTER
478-7127**

**BUFFALO REGIONAL
OFFICE
1-800-827-1000**

The website of the New York State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America is www.nyvietnamvets.org.

Sue Doan, our State Veterans Counselor, has the following address:

Sue Doan
State Veteran Counselor
State Office Bldg. 4th Floor
333 E. Washington Street
Syracuse, NY 13202

If any veteran has a question or problem that needs to be addressed, give Sue a call at 428-4046 at the State Office Building. She helped many veterans last year, especially through referrals from members of this chapter. The Iraqi/Afghan vets we've helped send to her are very thankful to Sue for watching out for them.

President's Message

The State Fair is creeping up on us and once again we will need a number of volunteers to help man our booth in the 174th Tent. Call Billy Martin at 468-5898 or me at 451-5986. Many hands make light work for everyone. You can pick a day and a shift. And get in the Fair free plus we have some parking passes to provide you with free parking... On top of all this the ANG brings a grill and cooks burgers, dogs and sausage sandwiches for everyone at "Dollar Store" prices.

We have already mentioned the Golf Tournament in our last message—but we have not had not had enough calls to sign up yet. Did I forget to tell you that you get a free lunch and huge charcoal broiled steak dinner at the end? And BEER if you like that stuff is help yourself at the tap.

I want to revisit setting up an Associates of VVA Chapter in 103. I have been contacted by 3 ladies who are most interested in organizing a group and help out in whatever way they can to make 103 more notable in the community. I would very much welcome any spouse or significant other or companion to contact me and I will put you in touch with one of these 3 ladies to discuss getting something started. I have talked with Val Hendrickson who is the NYS President of AVVA and if there is enough interest I will ask her to come to Syracuse and make a presentation to inform everyone about AVVA.

Chapter 103 is YOUR chapter. We are all getting on in years and this organization will last only as long as we have members who want to keep it alive---get up and leave the T.V. programs and come to a meeting, sign up to help at the Fair or the Golf Tournament—do something—even if you do it wrong it is better than that to not do anything at all.

For the good of the Chapter,

Ron Fairbank

OF SPECIAL INTEREST...

WOULD YOU WANT A SEPARATE HONOR ROLL AT OUR WAR MEMORIAL FOR VETERANS WHO WERE NOT RESIDENTS OF ONONDAGA COUNTY AT THE TIME OF ENTRY INTO THE SERVICE BUT YET MEET ALL OTHER REQUIREMENTS? WE AS A CHAPTER NEED TO CAST OUR VOTE AS AN ACCREDITED VETERAN'S ORGANIZATION BEFORE SEPTEMBER 15TH.

WE AS A CHAPTER WILL DISCUSS THIS ISSUE AND CAST OUR VOTE AS AN ORGANIZATION TO THE ONCENTER COMPLEX VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE AT THE AUGUST 15TH MEETING.

I hope we have a full audience of members on August 15th to make this decision.

July Notes

Here's a small item from the American Free Press – Nearly 2 million vets or their widows are missing out on up to \$22 million in pensions from the U.S. government and the Department of Veterans Affairs has had only limited success in locating them, leaving millions of federal dollars unclaimed. Widows are the hardest hit. The VA estimates that only one in seven surviving widows who likely qualify for a pension actually get the monthly checks and participation in the program is declining, according to a Knight Ridder analysis of VA records.

The reason for the low participation, a VA study found, is that poor veterans generally are completely unaware that the program exists and the government certainly is not locating and informing them about it. A widow of a WWII veteran living in Sparks, Nevada lives on \$9,732 in Social Security benefits. She is frail, legally blind, suffers from dementia and is in need of regular assistance at home. She could be eligible for \$1,608 more a year under the VA formula – an income boost of 17 percent.

Her daughter said that neither she nor her mother had ever heard of the VA pension. Her daughter had no idea of this pension, she told Knight Ridder. Those vets and widows who believe they may be eligible for the pension can contact the VA toll free at 1-800-827-1000

The founding principle of Vietnam Veterans of America “Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another” is a worthy ideal. While we deal with a wide variety of problems concerning ‘Nam vets, we also shine a light on the difficulties concerning a new generation of veterans and the obstacles they encounter. While there is a wide difference of opinions within the national and local chapters on the Iraq war, the common thread that winds through all of those opinions is our strong support of all the men and women who serve there. It is truly unconscionable that those vets have to surmount obstacles concerning their post-war care (sound familiar?), yet that is precisely what these soldiers are going through. With this and future issues, we hope to shed some light on their problems in the hope that those who initiate and form legislation concerning veterans problems will take notice, see how agitated we are over their treatment and do something to correct them.

We don't want to see present-day veterans waiting for 30-35 years – like we had to – before somebody in our government says “Hey – you guys really do have some problems that need attention.” Our brothers and sisters in uniform deserve much better treatment. They need their needs met now – not thirty years from now. More people have to be hired to process the horrible backlog in veteran's claims, and that's just for starters. We are still dealing with problems with ‘Nam vets, but perhaps if we can make enough noise, our Persian Gulf vets and our Iraqi/Afghanistan soldiers won't have to suffer such indignities.

At our last VVLP luncheon, we had the honor and privilege of having as our guest speaker General Wayne Downing. He was a soldier's soldier. As I watched him walk down the stairs at the OnCenter, he just seemed to have the commanding presence that only a man of his rank and stature could have. We are truly saddened that this man left us too early. His legacy and what he stood for will be long remembered. We have included in the newsletter a brief article on his considerable career. He will be missed. May God bless his memory.

Editor's note: the second Thursday of each month is the cutoff for articles/information to be submitted for inclusion in the newsletter. My phone number is 635-2019; my e-mail address is rmadden002@twcnny.rr.com. Comments, suggestions and criticisms are welcome.

Change of address? Please let us know if you have moved so that we can keep our member list up to date.

Notable News

- ❖ **Veterans Issues** continues the month of July with Pat Driscoll, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation for the City of Syracuse discussing the numerous Veterans monuments scattered throughout the neighborhoods of our city.
- ❖ **In August** we will feature an interview with Ms. Linda Chew and Russ Park beginning Wednesday, August 1st at 6:00 p.m. on Channel 98. They will discuss the history of the Veterans Party, and how they select-interview and vote on the local political candidates they endorse for election. I'm sure you will find this to be an interesting 29 minutes.
- ❖ **Help Wanted** Veterans Issues needs at least 2 people who are interested in learning about producing a television show. We will train you and coach you as you learn. One night a month for 3 hours-believe me-you will enjoy it once you get started. Call Ron at 451-5986.

In the April 16, 2007 issue of *U.S. News and World Report* there was an article titled **Insult to Injury**. The article described in detail the problems that veterans are facing regarding the downgrading of disability ratings. The article is too lengthy to include in the newsletter but I have included a couple of excerpts that I thought might be of interest. You can read the article in its entirety on the web at www.usnews.com.

Now an extensive investigation by U.S. News and a new Army inspector general's report reveal that the system is beset by ambiguity and riddled with discrepancies. Indeed, Department of Defense data examined by U.S. News and military experts show that the vast majority-nearly 93 percent-of disabled troops are receiving low ratings, and more have been graded similarly in recent years. What's more, ground troops, who suffer the most combat injuries from the ubiquitous roadside bombs, have received the lowest ratings.

A systemic fix doesn't appear to be anywhere in sight. A March 2006 report by the Government Accountability Office found that Pentagon officials were not even trying to get a handle on the problem. "While DOD has issued policies and guidance to promote consistent and timely disability decisions," the report concluded, "[it] is not monitoring compliance." But the GAO report did spur Army Secretary Francis Harvey, who was forced to resign last month in the wake of the Walter Reed scandal, to order the Army's inspector general to conduct an investigation of the disability evaluation system. After almost a year of work, the inspector general's office last month issued a 311-page report that begins to pierce the confusion and opacity surrounding the process. While it does not determine how many erroneous ratings were accorded to the nearly 40,000 soldiers rated 20 percent disabled or less since 2000, it does make three critical points: 1) the ambiguity in applying the ratings schedule should end; 2) wide variance in ratings is indisputable, even among the three Army boards, and 3) the Army's oversight body is not doing its job.



General Wayne Downing

General Downing died of meningitis July 18, 2007 at the age of 67. He spent his life defending freedom.

A graduate of West Point, Downing had 34 years as an active duty Army Officer. He eventually oversaw all US Special Forces, including the Green Berets and Navy SEALs. In the first Gulf war, Downing headed a joint task force dedicate to prevent SCUD missile attacks on Iraq's neighbors. Downing formally retired in 1996.

But, he was called out of retirement following the events of September 11th. He returned to public life, taking an assignment at the National Security Council in counterterrorism.

Friends and colleagues remember General Downing as a brilliant military theorist. And perhaps, most importantly, as a man of grace and valor. As one student, Jack Jacobs, put it, "Wayne Downing was the consummate gentleman, that perfect alloy of intelligence and valor that was once the stuff of romantic legend. It's occasionally seen in those, who like Wayne Downing, consider honor the most precious component of character."

May Wayne Downing rest in peace

From a Chaplain in Iraq:

"I recently attended a showing of "Superman 3" here at LSA Anaconda. We have a large auditorium we use for movies as well as memorial services and other large gatherings. As is the custom back in the States, we stood and snapped to attention when the National Anthem began before the main feature. All was going as planned until about three-quarters of the way through the National Anthem the music stopped.

Now, what would happen if this occurred with 1,000 18-22 year-olds back in the States? I imagine there would be hoots, catcalls, laughter, a few rude comments, and everyone would sit down and call for a movie. Of course, that is, if they had stood for the National Anthem in the first place.

Here, the 1,000 Soldiers continued to stand at attention, eyes fixed forward. The music started again. The Soldiers continued to quietly stand at attention. And again, at the same point, the music stopped. What would you expect to happen? Even here I would imagine laughter as everyone sat down and expected the movie to start.

Here, you could have heard a pin drop. Every Soldier stood at attention. Suddenly there was a lone voice, then a dozen, and quickly the room was filled with the voices of a thousand Soldiers

'And the rockets red glare,
the bombs bursting in air,
gave proof through the night
that our flag was still there.
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave,
o'er the land of the free
and the home of the brave?'

It was the most inspiring moment I have had here in Iraq. I wanted you to know what kind of Soldiers are serving you here.

Written by Chaplain Jim Higgins on 5/14/07.
LSA Anaconda is at the Balad Airport in Iraq, north of Baghdad

Units to house homeless veterans

Wednesday, July 04, 2007

By Greg Munno

Staff writer

Four U.S. military veterans now have a place of their own to call home. The four once-homeless vets are the first people to move into the still-under-construction Eaglewood East development on East Fayette Street, the culmination of a partnership between the Syracuse VA Medical Center and Housing Visions Unlimited. Two vets moved in last week, and two more this week. Eleven more of the 26 units at Eaglewood will be set aside for veterans. The VA and Housing Visions also have decided to expand the program to include Housing Visions' Maple Heights project, which will replace the dilapidated Cherry Hill housing development on East Genesee Street.

Housing Visions will reserve 12 of the 50 units at Maple Heights for veterans, according to Ben Lockwood, senior development manager for Housing Visions, a Syracuse-based nonprofit agency. Unfortunately, there are enough homeless veterans in Syracuse to fill all those apartments relatively quickly, said Frank Ernenwein, coordinator of the Healthcare for Homeless Veterans program at the Syracuse VA. "We have 24 veterans right now who are in temporary living situations at the Rescue Mission and Le Moyne Manor," Ernenwein said. "There's a real need for permanent, affordable housing for these veterans." At both Eaglewood and Maple Heights, veterans will get the chance to live in brand-new apartments at well-below market rates. A one-bedroom at Eaglewood, for instance, is \$175 a month, and two bedroom units start at \$210, according to Rebecca Pierson, senior operations manager at Housing Visions. Dr. Larry Lantinga, co-manager of the behavioral care line at the VA, said the apartments are nice places that the veterans will be proud to call home.

"I make my permanent home in Buffalo where my wife lives and rent an apartment on James Street," he said. "And I can say that the Eaglewood apartments are far nicer than what I rent. This partnership is a no-brainer for us here at the VA. Housing Visions is really doing the work. Our role is simply to continue providing the case management." In addition to truly homeless vets, veterans at risk for becoming homeless will also be able to apply for the units. "Some vets are living in substandard, demoralizing housing," Ernenwein said. "Others are situations where they're in recovery with a roommate who starts using again, putting a newly sober veteran in a terrible position." The average veteran Ernenwein works with in the homeless health care program is in his or her early 40s, Ernenwein said. Lantinga explained that studies show veterans become at-risk for being homeless about four years after discharge from the service. The VA estimates that nearly 200,000 veterans are homeless on any given night, nearly 400,000 experience homelessness over the course of a year.

Overview of Homelessness

About one-third of the adult homeless population have served their country in the Armed Services. On any given day, as many as 200,000 veterans (male and female) are living on the streets or in shelters, and perhaps twice as many experience homelessness at some point during the course of a year. Many other veterans are considered near homeless or at risk because of their poverty, lack of support from family and friends, and dismal living conditions in cheap hotels or in overcrowded or substandard housing.

Right now, the number of homeless male and female Vietnam era veterans is greater than the number of service persons who died during that war - and a small number of Desert Storm veterans are also appearing in the homeless population. Although many homeless veterans served in combat in Vietnam and suffer from PTSD, at this time, epidemiologic studies do not suggest that there is a causal connection between military service, service in Vietnam, or exposure to combat and homelessness among veterans. Family background, access to support from family and friends and various personal characteristics (rather than military service) seem to be the stronger indicators of risk of homelessness.

Almost all homeless veterans are male (about three percent are women), the vast majority are single, and most come from poor, disadvantaged backgrounds. Homeless veterans tend to be older and more educated than homeless non-veterans. But similar to the general population of homeless adult males, about 45% of homeless veterans suffer from mental illness and (with considerable overlap) slightly more than 70% suffer from alcohol or other drug abuse problems. Roughly 56% are African American or Hispanic.

Keller Williams Realty

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**VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
CENTRAL NEW YORK CHAPTER #103
P.O. BOX 675
LIVERPOOL, NY 13088**

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) ___

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"Putting Veterans First"

**To purchase hats, T-shirts,
stickers, pins, ect. Go to:**

**Westvale Gardens
2400 West Genesee St.
Syracuse, New York 13209**

And say "HI" to Bill Martin!

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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 Heid's Corners, follow signs to Rt. 370 (2nd Street). Take first left past Washington Park. The Post is on your right side, across from the park.