

Shift Colors

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5720 INTEGRITY DRIVE
MILLINGTON, TN 38055-0500

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shiftcolors@persnet.navy.mil

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(901) 874-4012

Mail all reunion notices to:
NAVY PERSONNEL COMMAND
SHIFT COLORS (PERS-05)
ATTN: REUNION NOTICES
5720 INTEGRITY DRIVE
MILLINGTON, TN 38055-0500

E-mail all reunion notices to:

p05s@persnet.navy.mil

To submit reunion notices please use the following format:

USS Ships Name (USS 123)

Date of reunion

Contact phone number

Need to change your address?

If you are receiving pay and benefits, the only way that you can update your information is by contacting DFAS at (800) 321-1080.

Only "Gray Area" Retirees and surviving spouses of Retirees that are not receiving benefits should contact *Shift Colors* to change their address.

San Diego hosts 2002 Retiree Seminar



Rear Adm. Jose Betancourt, Commander, Navy Region Southwest (center), prepares to kick off San Diego's 2002 Retiree Seminar with Vice Adm. William St. George (left) and Mr. Gene Rice (right). For information and dates on upcoming seminars, see page 11. (Photo by Sgt. Francisco Gutierrez)

A message from the Chief of Naval Personnel

It doesn't take more than a glance at the television news to see how wonderfully your Navy is performing in these challenging times. The Fleet continues — by all measures — to answer every bell the President signals, and they are doing so magnificently. Just the other day, while visiting Sailors in Mayport, Fla., President Bush acknowledged the key role naval forces are playing. "You helped liberate the Afghan people," he told them. "You defended the American people. And each and every one of you here has made America proud. The United States Navy carries the might and the mission of America to the farthest parts of this world. In this challenging period for our country, great tasks lie ahead for the Navy ... And I know we can depend on you."



Indeed, as I write this, half our ships — some 155 — and 70,000 Sailors are forward deployed, a number that includes six carrier battle groups, two amphibious ready groups and two amphibious task forces. And most of those Sailors not deployed are being asked in one form or another to focus their efforts to support Fleet operations. Some are being handpicked to augment frontline forces, and Reservists are likewise being selected individually based on their skills. Our guiding principle in the personnel business is to provide the right people in the right place at the right time, a task that has never been more relevant — or more important — than it is right now.

At the same time, we remain committed to our Retirees. You've done your part for the nation; you served her well, and you deserve to be recognized for that service. Shift Colors exists primarily to help us do that, to provide you with valuable — and useful — information about your rights, your benefits and your concerns. In this edition, for example, you will find information on recently released recommendations from the SECNAV Retiree Council on pages 19 through 23. Also, there is information on DFAS's MyPay Web site and its improved services on page 6. We in the active duty today help future Retirees by working for the best benefits available to preserve the value of a military retirement.

In that vein, I also invite you to investigate other excellent resources for updates on Retiree issues. Two organizations come to mind, but this is by no means an exhaustive list: the Fleet Reserve Association at www.fra.org and the Military Officers Association of America at www.moaa.org. These and so many other organizations provide a great wealth of information on what they're doing to preserve Retiree benefits and their legislative agendas with Congress. The more I read about what these organizations do, the more I realize the term "retirement" is anything but.

Another resource you'll find extremely valuable is the NPC Customer Service Center at 1-866-U-ASK-NPC. It's been available to the Fleet for some time, and the response has been tremendous. Expanding the service to handle Retiree issues just made sense, and I'm happy to report to you that operators are now standing by. If you have a question, especially about your retirement benefits, please give them a call.

The range of issues that Retirees routinely pursue and your strident activism is impressive, to say the least. You have obviously taken your military tenacity to a new level, applying it to programs and policies that benefit all who have worn — or continue to wear — the cloth of this great nation.

On behalf of both the CNO and the active duty ranks, let me thank you all for your service and for what you have done to make us the most capable Navy in history. Please don't hesitate to let us know if there is anything that we can do to assist you. Kathy Wardlaw and her terrific staff are standing by to assist. You can reach them at (800) 255-8950 or contact Kathy directly at kathy.wardlaw@navy.mil.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. L. Hoewing". Below the signature, the name "G. L. Hoewing" is printed in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.



Retired Activities Branch

Straight from the source

Happy 2003! Hopefully, you all have enjoyed the holidays and are successful (so far) in the fulfillment of your New Year's resolutions. Let us wish each other luck in meeting those goals we have set for ourselves.

Well, what's new? By now you have received your COLA increases in your retirement checks, (and for those who qualify) Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation and Social Security benefits. Although the increase was small, I am sure many of you remember when retirees received no COLAs. I know you all wish a real life model would be used to determine our COLAs, i.e. gas prices, food cost and shelter and not the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Our last "Shift Colors" was another outstanding effort by the editor to provide readership a variety of features and information. I, as well as many I have talked to are really moved by the Centenarian Sailors section. Wow, those guys are something. When we find out the secret these gentlemen have for maintaining their longevity, we'll let you know. Many of you have called the editor and expressed your thanks for providing the cover page article "On the road again?" Hopefully the information will be of value to those of you who have been putting off venturing out because of the lack of awareness of the services the Moral, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) program offers. And please be advised the Navy, Army, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard all provide services to our community. Do not deprive yourselves of the splendid opportunities available via MWR solely because another service operates the program.

Let's review another important issue... full concurrent receipt (*Shift Colors - From the Source*, Oct-Dec 02). Most of you who have followed this initiative's progress are aware that the legislators had to regroup to have some sort of concurrent receipt included in the FY03 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). It looks like full concurrent receipt will not be realized anytime soon. Instead, a compromise with the Executive Branch of government and Pentagon produced a new version of the Senate and Congress's initial proposals. This "Limited Concurrent Receipt" has been

termed "Combat Related Special Compensation" (CRSC) and is included in the FY03 NDAA signed into law by the President on Dec. 2, 2002. See the web version of *Shift Colors* for additional information on the FY03 NDAA. The address is at the bottom of each page of the magazine.

Our Retired Activities Offices (RAOs) have reported that their fall Retiree Appreciation Days were a resounding success. Many of our RAOs have reported having from 1,500 to 3,000 curious and information seeking Retirees and spouses in attendance. We have repeatedly said that attending these events not only gives you the opportunity to get updated information, but allows you to meet and greet shipmates, and participate in base sponsored appreciation activities and discounts. The RAOs (who are volunteers) put in a lot of time and effort to provide our Retiree community information and services. The Staff at the Navy Retired Activities Branch are extremely thankful for their dedication to your service. If and when you have the opportunity to call or visit one of these outstanding volunteers please thank them for their service. Additionally, if you have some time on your hands and feel that you would enjoy assisting your shipmates, contact your nearest RAO to find out how you can help.

Finally, included on pages 19-23 of this issue are the 2002 Secretary of the Navy's Retired Council's recommendations and the Secretary of the Navy's responses. Due to the enormity of the report, the texts of the discussions have been slightly reduced. The report can be viewed in its entirety at the Retired Activities Branch's web-site. Visit www.persnet.navy.mil and click on Retirees.

In Your Service,

Dennis Mills

Head, Navy Retired Operations Section



Retired Activities Branch

Divorce may affect your Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)

Divorce is one of life's more trying experiences. Amicable resolution for both parties is not always possible. Divorce also affects your continued participation in the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP).

Much of what happens next depends on what takes place in the courtroom. The continued participation of the Retiree, and coverage for the former spouse coverage depend on the separation agreement and the final divorce decree. If continued coverage is a specific provision of the divorce decree, the Retiree is required by law to comply.

To do so, the Retiree or their attorney, must provide the Defense Finance and Accounting Service-Cleveland (DFAS-CL) a copy of the divorce decree with a letter requesting to

change the coverage category from spouse to former spouse.

Current law requires that this be accomplished within one year of the divorce. It is also possible for the former spouse to have an election "deemed" on their behalf within that one year as well. The procedures are essentially the same; however, the key is that this must be accomplished within one year of the date of the divorce. If this action is not taken, the DFAS-CL will terminate coverage upon notification that a divorce has occurred.

A Retiree can voluntarily decide to continue to cover the former spouse, however, the DFAS-CL must be notified, in writing, within the same one year period of their desire to voluntarily continue former spouse coverage.

How long will I have to pay for SBP?

Public Law legislates when you can stop paying for the Survivor Benefit Plan or Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan

Our readers continue to ask if -- or when -- they will be able to discontinue paying premiums on their Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) or Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan (RSFPP).

To clarify, no retired member will be considered paid up until Oct. 1, 2008. Public Law 105-261, enacted on Oct. 17, 1998 provided that a retired member who has reached **age 70, and** has paid SBP premiums for 30 years or more will be considered paid up and will make no further pre-

mium payments.

The key point to remember is that this law does not affect Retirees until Oct. 1, 2008. Until more favorable Congressional legislation is **passed into law**, the current provisions will apply to all current and future SBP participants. Additionally, Public Law 106-65 enacted Oct. 5, 1999, authorized similar guidelines for members currently participating in the RSFPP.

Are you preparing to apply for Social Security benefits?

If you are approaching your 62nd birthday and preparing to apply for your Social Security benefits, you should know the following:

- You may apply for benefits three months before your 62nd birthday.
- You should call the Social Security Administration Office for an appointment and list of required documents and information for your application for benefits.
- Your application for benefits will not be processed without **all of your DD214s** or verification of military service. If you do not have that information you may request copies from:

NATIONAL PERSONNEL RECORDS CENTER
9700 PAGE AVENUE
ST. LOUIS, MO 63132
ATTN: NAVY

This is an important benefit. Please be proactive and have all of the documentation required by the Social Security Administration prior to applying.





Defense Finance and Accounting Service

myPay improves services to America's Armed Forces

Military members, civilian employees, and military Retirees and annuitants of America's Armed Forces will soon enjoy improved services from myPay to manage their pay account information more easily and more securely than ever before.

"myPay is the key to taking control of your pay information," said Tom Bloom, director of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service. "By providing innovative and reliable tools to the men and women who serve our country, we help them focus on their mission by eliminating worry and hassle associated with their pay and benefits."

Formerly known as E/MSS, myPay allows active, Reserve, and Guard members; civilian employees; and military Retirees and annuitants to take charge of their pay accounts online. The new improved service was launched Oct. 15. With myPay, customers can perform the following activities by simply using their existing E/MSS Personal Identification Number (PIN):

- View, print and save leave and earnings statements
- View and print tax statements
- Change federal and state tax withholdings
- Update bank account and electronic funds transfer information
- Manage allotments
- Edit address information
- Purchase U.S. Savings Bonds
- Control Thrift Savings Plan enrollment (military only)
- View and print travel vouchers

myPay is easier than ever

myPay's new design helps customers find the information they want and complete any transaction in just three

clicks. Available nearly around-the-clock, myPay means no waiting in lines or on the phone. myPay also improves customer confidence by providing clear confirmation messages.

myPay is secure

myPay combines strong encryption and secure sockets layer technology with the user's social security number and PIN to safeguard information from unauthorized access.

myPay saves money

By using myPay, members and civilian employees can save the Armed Services and the American taxpayer millions of dollars in printing, postage and customer service costs. myPay provides leave and earning statements online, so customers can turn off the print version of their statements and save Uncle Sam money. If all civilian employees received their leave and earning statements electronically, the Department of Defense could save more than \$6 million annually.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service also estimates an additional 17 percent of costs associated with

traditional customer service activities can be eliminated by satisfying common questions and account updates online.

"One of our goals is to allow customers to do online anything that they previously had to stand in line to accomplish," Bloom said.

Begin using myPay now

Customers can continue to use their E/MSS log on information at mypay.dfas.mil. Those who need new Personal Information Numbers should follow these easy steps:

- Civilian employees, active Air Force and Marine Corps, all Reservists, and military retirees and annuitants receive PINs by mail. If you need a new PIN, just click "need new PIN." Log on once you receive your PIN in the mail.

- Active Army and Navy may request PINs by faxing name, social security number, phone number, signature, and copy of a government ID to DFAS at **(216) 522-5800**. Then, log on following the instructions provided.

Customers with questions about myPay can call customer support at **(800) 390-2348**, Monday through Friday between 7:00 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.

1099-R forms mailed by Jan. 15

The 2002 1099-R tax forms for all military Retirees and annuitants will be mailed by Jan 15, 2003 to the home addresses on file with DFAS. Former spouses who receive pay as a result of a court ordered division of community property will also have 1099-Rs mailed to them by Jan 15.

The 1099-R form has three copies of personnel information on one page with the form information on the back of the recipient's copy. For example, box 1 (gross distribution) does not contain gross income, but is the total amount of taxable income for the tax year – as shown in box 2a. For retirees, this amount does not include VA compensation or Survivor Benefits Plan premiums, as these monies are non-taxable.

myPay cont. on page 14



TRICARE Management Activity

Up-to-date DEERS info essential for seamless healthcare

Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

There are many problems people cannot foresee that may cause the need for medical attention. However, there is one aspect of medical health care that helps to make the process smoother.

For beneficiaries in the Military Health System - active duty, Reservists, Retirees and their family members - TRICARE is your healthcare benefit. TRICARE, however, is only available to those who are registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, or DEERS.

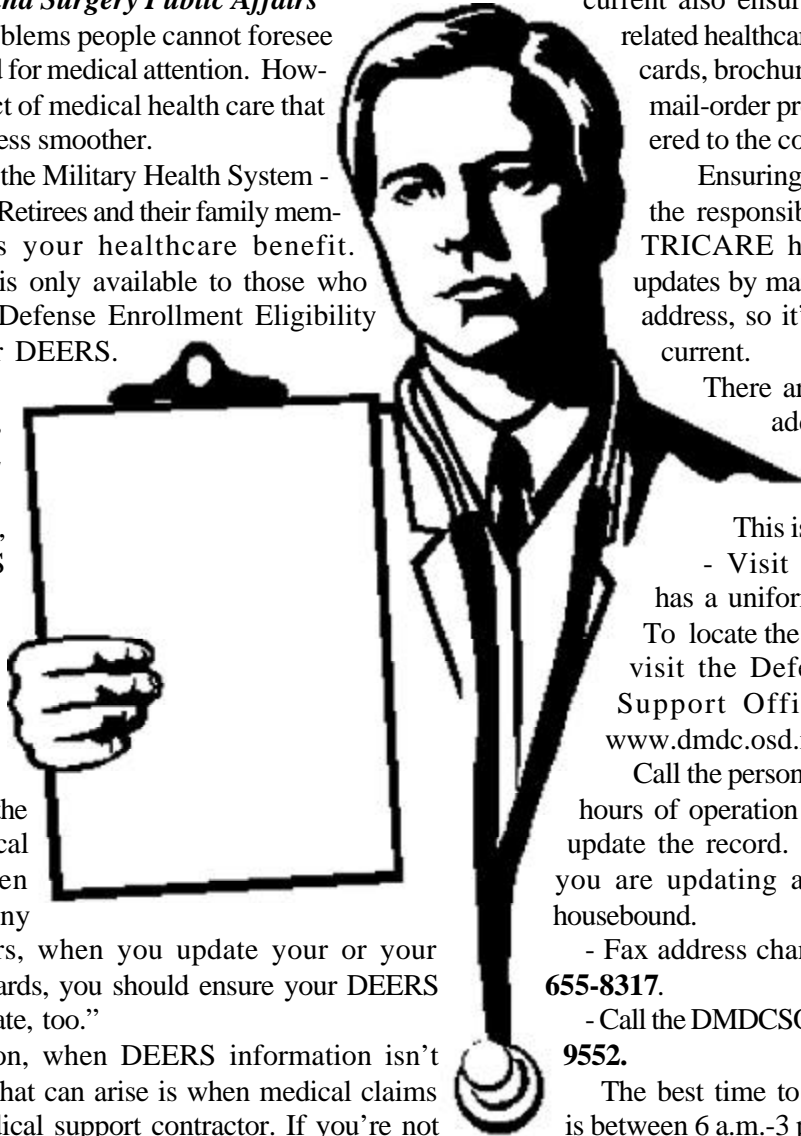
When beneficiary information is current, the door to TRICARE benefits is always open. Problems may arise, though, when DEERS information isn't up to date.

"Whenever you have a change in your life you should update your DEERS information," said Skip Katon, the Navy's DEERS medical project officer. "Even if you haven't had any life changes for years, when you update your or your family's military ID cards, you should ensure your DEERS information is up-to-date, too."

According to Katon, when DEERS information isn't current, one problem that can arise is when medical claims are filed with the medical support contractor. If you're not properly registered with DEERS, your claim may be denied. And while military treatment facilities won't turn you away if you're sick and need care, you will be directed to update your information within 30 days, or face the possibility of being billed for service.

Address and telephone numbers, promotions, marriage, divorce, transfer to the Naval Reserve, deaths, births, reenlistments and retirements are all examples of changes that should be entered into your DEERS as soon as they happen to keep current.

TRICARE administrators encourage periodic DEERS check-ups to ensure information is up-to-date. Keeping



current also ensures those important TRICARE-related healthcare documents, such as enrollment cards, brochures and privacy notices, and even mail-order prescription medications are delivered to the correct address and on time.

Ensuring accurate DEERS information is the responsibility of sponsors. DEERS and TRICARE helps you remember to make updates by mailing information to your current address, so it's essential that your address is current.

There are several ways to update your address:

- Visit the DEERS website, www.tricare.osd.mil/deers.

This is the quick and easy way to do it.

- Visit a local personnel office that has a uniformed services I.D. card facility.

To locate the nearest military ID card facility, visit the Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office (DMDCSO) website at www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl.

Call the personnel office before you go for their hours of operation and what might be required to update the record. This is especially important if you are updating a record for someone who is housebound.

- Fax address changes to the DMDCSO at **(831) 655-8317**.

- Call the DMDCSO Telephone Center at **(800) 538-9552**.

The best time to call the center to avoid delays is between 6 a.m.-3 p.m. PST Wednesday-Friday.

- Mail the changed information to: Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office (Attn: COA), 400 Gigling Rd., Seaside, Calif. 93955-6771.

To update information other than addresses, documentation such as marriage, birth, or death certificates; DD 214s; or divorce decrees often must be provided. Contact the nearest military ID card facility to find out what documents are needed to update DEERS eligibility information.

For more information about DEERS records, call the DMDCSO Telephone Center at **(800) 538-9552**. Hours of operation are 6 a.m.-3:30 p.m. PST Monday-Friday.



Department of Veterans Affairs

VA to distribute \$568 million in life insurance dividends

The VA recently announced its distribution of more than \$568 million in dividends to 1.5 million active policyholders of veterans life insurance.

Over the next year, veterans will receive the payments on the anniversary date of their policies, with the specific dividend amount varying according to age, type of insurance and length of time the policy has been in force. Recipients will automatically receive their annual dividend through one of the nine payment options they have selected in advance.

For current active-duty servicemembers and reservists covered by Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, no dividend is paid.

Dividends cover only veterans with government life insurance policies who served between 1917 and 1956. Veterans of subsequent eras are covered by government insurance programs that do not pay dividends.

However, for some older policies still in force today, the dividends represent a return of trust fund earnings on the premiums paid by policyholders through the years. These funds reflect the fact that veterans are living longer than originally predicted and are also attributable to the higher than expected yields earned by the trust funds from investments in U.S. government securities.

Only those with policies that have been kept in force when premiums were required are eligible for the payout. Stories periodically surface suggesting that those who have not maintained insurance are eligible for a special distribution if they contact VA, but this is false. Dividends are automatically sent to eligible policyholders.

The largest group receiving 2003 payments will be 1.3 million veterans of World War II with National Service Life Insurance ("V") policies. Total payments are expected to reach \$461.5 million.

Dividends totaling \$2.2 million will be paid to the 12,499 veterans holding U.S. Government Life Insurance ("K") policies. Some 206,367 veterans who have maintained Veterans Special Life Insurance ("RS" and "W") policies can expect to receive dividends totaling \$88 million. Veterans who hold Veterans Reopened Insurance ("J", "JR" and "JS") policies, currently numbering 57,048, will share \$17.2 million.

Although VA also administers a special life insurance program for disabled veterans and a program offering mortgage life insurance coverage, neither pays dividends.

Veterans who have questions about their policy can call the VA Insurance toll-free number: (800) 669-8477, or e-mail to: VAinsurance@vba.va.gov.

VA seeks volunteers to inventory old cemetery memorials

The VA is seeking more volunteers to research monuments in national cemeteries and soldiers' lots. With Veterans Day approaching, VA hopes the inventory project will spur the public's interest in the history found in national cemeteries.

VA began the documentation process last spring and now estimates approximately 500 memorials or monuments will be found in its 120 national cemeteries and 33 soldiers' lots.

"As stewards of these monuments — many of them dating to our cemeteries' founding in the Civil War — we have a responsibility to catalogue and preserve these markers of American history," said Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs S. Eric Benson.

More than 75 volunteers have signed

on so far to study 174 monuments. VA hopes to complete the project in the next few months but will continue to recruit volunteers into next year. The memorials yet to be studied are in cities as varied as Honolulu, Philadelphia and Prairie du Chien, Wis.

With instruction booklets, survey questionnaires and camera film provided to them, volunteers document the materials, inscriptions and condition of the memorials for historic and preservation purposes. VA officials said most national cemeteries are not staffed to conduct the research sometimes needed, and volunteers provide an objective assessment of the memorials' physical condition.

Civil War enthusiasts, scholars, teachers, archivists, active and retired military members, landscape architects

and parents looking for weekend activities for their children are among the current volunteers. Some volunteers asked to survey cemeteries away from where they live to have a reason for a short vacation.

Sites in 30 states need volunteers, including Illinois with six cities having a total of 47 monuments. Grafton, W.Va.; Maxwell, Neb.; Salem, N.J.; Biloxi, Miss.; Ft. Gibson, Okla.; and Bayamon, Puerto Rico, all have just one monument to be assessed.

For information, including a list of localities where volunteers are needed, visit VA's National Cemetery Administration website www.cem.va.gov under "What's New." You can also e-mail nca.memorials@mail.va.gov or call (202) 565-5426.



Armed Forces Retirement Home - Gulfport

Retirement Home offers great return on investment

By Doug LeMere, AFRH-Gulfport Public Affairs

The decline in the stock market and a slow economy surely make investors concern for the care of their money a high priority. It used to be anyone could throw a dart at the mutual funds page and find a good return on his or her investment. The caretakers of the investment at the Armed Forces Retirement Home-Gulfport (AFRH-Gulfport) have had the same challenges and found great returns.

168 years of fiscal responsibility, operational management and maintaining the traditional livelihood are still the priorities at AFRH-Gulfport. During the past year, the home has seen an amazing amount of positive changes with new leadership, expansion, renovations and an increase to resident occupancy unheard of in its history.

The Defense Authorization Act of 2002 implemented the full-time position of Chief Operating Officer (COO) and dissolved a National Board operating on a part-time basis. Mr. Tim Cox, as COO is responsible for the efficient direction of two homes: AFRH-Gulfport, Miss. and AFRH-Washington, D.C. Both homes are under the day-to-day operation of active duty military leadership; Captain John Zink, U.S. Navy in Gulfport and Colonel Arnold Smith, U.S. Army in Washington.

Mr. Pete Louque is one of 552 residents of AFRH-Gulfport and retired from the Marine Corps. He said he likes the active duty leadership at the home in Gulfport. "I wish we had more active duty personnel," Louque said. "It would save more money and provide good shore duty for naval personnel."

The home has a synergy about it. The purchase of ten acres adjacent to it has opened the doors to ideas for new facilities needed for the resident population. New carpet is being placed throughout the main building; elevators are being replaced; rooms have been remodeled; hallways and gathering areas are being renovated. The Public Works workforce is revitalizing an area underused for more than 20 years. This outside area will provide safety and serenity to the residents and staff alike.

Utilizing other resources has been profitable for AFRH-Gulfport. Active duty Navy Seabees are integrated with the Public Works division in an effort to provide excellent training

for the Seabees and reduce a maintenance trouble call backlog at the home -- a win-win solution.

Minor projects have been tasked and completed by the Seabees. The latest project in process is a security barrier system established in response to the attacks on America.

Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 133 in Gulfport are working this project.

"It's good to see Seabees doing a high quality security construction project," said Steelworker 1st Class Shane Fields, Quality Control for NMCB 133. "It's important to protect our retired veterans in this time of Homeland Security."

Security is more important than ever with the resident census in Gulfport at its highest level. One year ago, the resident population was at 475. Today the population is at 552, the highest in the history of the home.

Many residents would come and go with the mindset that there would be a vacancy upon return. This hasn't been the case this year. The reality is that AFRH-Gulfport enjoys a four to six-month waiting list for approved applicants. Resident retention has been excellent and more applications are in processing.

"The phone is ringing off the hook," said Ms. Cleo Neal, resident and receptionist in AFRH-Gulfport's admissions office.

Veterans are learning about the home and helping to spread the good word. It's no longer one of the "Best Kept Secrets." Captain Jerald Ulmer, Deputy Director of AFRH-Gulfport promotes the idea that the home is the "Most Valuable Benefit of Military Service," and the veterans are coming and staying.

That benefit is part of the investment that each and every enlisted person and resident pay into. The AFRH-Gulfport receives \$0.50 monthly withholding from active duty enlisted personnel from all services, fines and forfeitures imposed, and resident fees.

Generating interest and safely managing the monies invested for the future is the priority of the Armed Forces Retirement Home-Gulfport. The veterans of today and those of tomorrow can rest assured knowing their money has been placed wisely.

VETeran NETwork

‘Volunteers’

continued from front page

real-life volunteer job that matches up your talents and available time with a community group. This website database of community groups is keyed to your zip code. Just type in your zip code, select the distance you are able to drive, and the type of effort that interests you, and voilà, a list of volunteer opportunities that meet your criteria appears.

Volunteer Match and Network for Good partner in providing data to President Bush’s volunteer initiative, USA Freedom Corps (USAFC). On the USAFC website, you will find more ideas about volunteering from other partners, such as Senior Corps for volunteers aged 55 and older.

Community-oriented organizations are always looking for volunteers to fill their actual and virtual ranks. Finding the volunteer opportunity that fits your available time, talent, or interests may be just a click away with an online clearinghouse such as USAFC. While you are searching, though, don’t forget to look in your own backyard for valuable volunteer opportunities.

Volunteer Organization Contacts

Red Cross

www.redcross.org 877-272-7337

Armed Services YMCA

www.asymca.org 800-597-1260

U.S. Navy Memorial Foundation

www.lonesailor.org 800-821-8892

Network For Good

www.networkforgood.org

Volunteer Match

www.volunteermatch.org 415-241-6868

USA Freedom Corps

www.usafreedomcorps.gov 877-USA-CORPS

Senior Corps

www.seniorcorps.org 202-606-5000

Habitat For Humanity

www.habitat.org 229-924-6935

Fleet and Family Support Centers help citizens support Sailors

By JO2 Jeffrey Nichols, Editor *Shift Colors*

The Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) program management office at Navy Personnel Command (NPC) is helping distribute “Honor Those Who Serve” message books compiled from people all over the United States.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Foundation, in partnership with a major commercial organization, have collected letters from people who want to send their message of support to U.S. troops.

Boxes of the books are being shipped to FFSCs at fleet intensive and overseas installations for distribution to the ships and squadrons they support.

“Some of these messages are just extremely heart-warming,” said Kit Decker, branch head of the Fleet and Family Support Center Program at NPC. “It’s touching to see this kind of citizen support for our troops.”

An example of the sentiment includes, “There are not enough words to say “thank you” for putting your life on the

line for my family. We pray for you and your families and hope you will soon be home with them. Wishing you happy holidays and God’s blessings.”


The books are compilations of art and feelings from school children and adults. Each of the three ring binders are individually prepared, some with elaborate material featuring photos and flags.

“I was asked how many books we could use,” Ben Hill, management analyst for FFSC, “I said send what you have. I didn’t realize how many they had.” The FFSC received more than 1,000 binders with approximately 100 letters in each.



Retiree Seminars



<p align="center"><u>California</u></p> <p>Sunnyvale April 25 POC: Robert French, CAPT (USN, Ret.) (650) 603-8047 crandrcfrench@earthlink.net</p>	<p align="center"><u>Mississippi</u></p> <p>Gulfport May 3, 7:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. CBC Gulfport (228) 871-3000, ext. 35 rao@cbcgulfport.navy.mil jmlardner@cbcgulfport.navy.mil</p>	<p align="center"><u>Washington</u></p> <p>Marysville May 17, 8:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Navy Support Complex (Smokey Point) POC: Carl Rankin, HMCS (USN, Ret.) (425) 304-3775, (800) 531-1781 RetiredActivities@everett.navy.mil</p>
<p align="center"><u>Delaware</u></p> <p>Wilmington March 29 Dover AFB POC: Leon Stajkowski, MRCM (USN, Ret.) (302) 998-5194 uzonyi@cnrfnola.navy.mil</p>	<p align="center"><u>Tennessee</u></p> <p>Millington April 12, 9:00 a.m. - Noon Pat Thompson Conference Center (901) 874-5195 Ractivities@nsams.navy.mil</p>	<p align="center"><u>Help Wanted</u></p> <p>RAO Seal Beach CA Looking for volunteers. For more information, please contact: (562) 626-7152</p>
<p align="center"><u>Michigan</u></p> <p>Mt Clemens August 23 (tentatively) Bldg. 780, Johnson Street Selfridge, ANGB POC: Walter Melms (810) 307-5580 Selfrao@greatlakes.net</p>		

What happens at Retiree Seminars?

Military retiree seminars provide updated information on benefits and entitlements from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), TRICARE and the Social Security Administration.

Additionally, information about base activities, renewal of Military ID Cards, special MWR offers, legislative updates and other helpful information are

presented.

To top it off, you have an opportunity to meet other military members and Retirees.

So, the next time you receive a card or letter from the Retired Activities Office (RAO) advertising an upcoming seminar, please consider attending it with your spouse.

Centenarian Sailors

Cmdr. Donald Burling: former Reserve fights in WWII

Submitted by Dodie Frost

Cmdr. Donald O. Burling was born “Oscar Donald Bjorling” Nov. 20, 1901, in New London, Conn. He was named after his father who immigrated from Norrkoping, Sweden.



Midshipman First Class Donald Burling's 1925 yearbook photo

Poor health and poverty delayed him from starting school until the age of eight, but his thirst for learning enabled him to finish the first three grades in one year.

After only two years of high school he ran away from his Manhattan home and enlisted in the U.S. Navy in April 1919.

An appointment from Senator William McKinley, son of the assassinated president, led

Donald to the U.S. Naval Academy where he graduated in June 1925, and accepted his diploma from President Calvin Coolidge. He received the Newhall prize from the Academy for his literary achievements, a talent that he would carry with him for the rest of his life.

For the next 15 years, he served in the Naval Reserve, rising to the rank of Lieutenant. In his civilian career, he worked for telephone companies in St. Louis and New York before losing his job during the Depression and being forced to relocate to another phone company in Springfield, Mass.

Donald married in the winter of 1925, and he and his wife had two sons. But the marriage came to an end when Donald was sent to sea for five consecutive years at the outbreak of World War II.

After closing out his Reserve Division in Springfield, Donald was assigned to USS West Point, which was being outfitted as a troop ship in Norfolk. Their job was to transport British troops all over the world. On one trip, West Point carried 6,000 Canadian troops from Halifax to Singapore. Two days before arriving for a fueling stop in Cape Town, South Africa, Pearl Harbor was attacked. After the stop, Donald's ship pushed on to

Singapore, where his convoy unloaded 20,000 troops to battle the Japanese. The troops, however, had no more planes and no anti-aircraft guns that could reach the Japanese bombers that were bombing every hour. USS West Point (formerly the SS America) wasn't struck during this battle, but the ship astern of it, USS Wakefield (former Manhattan) had its bow blown off.

After two years aboard West Point, Donald was ordered to the large troop ship USS President Monroe as the Executive Officer.

The navigational skill he demonstrated so many years earlier at Annapolis earned him a new assignment, however, as he was ordered to the destroyer tender USS Cascade in the South Pacific to support General Mac-Arthur's drive up the Western Pacific.

From the island of Funa Futi, off Australia, he was assigned to pilot ships in and out of harbors, including USS Hornet and USS North Carolina.

Donald was soon given command of the cargo ship USS Vega, from which a company of Seabees installed outboard engines on cargo landing craft used to carry supplies ashore to islands during the push north to Japan. He finally reached the southern end of Okinawa where battleships and Marines were carrying out daily attacks on the northern end.

During his return to San Diego, the war ended. With his marriage now over, he looked for Captain Jennie Calhoon, a U.S. Army Nurse he had met on a troopship bound for Bombay, India.

The two were married, and the story of their lives and 50 year marriage are related in the book “The Soldier, the Sailor and the Singer.”

Today Donald continues to write in his Penn Yan, N.Y., home.



Lt. Cmdr. Floyd Matthews: battleships to submarines



Submitted by F.L. Looney, Cmdr., U.S. Navy-Retired

Floyd Matthews was born in Tennessee, Feb. 3, 1903. In 1919, at just 16 years of age, he and a friend left the farm in search of adventure and a paying job. They ran across a Navy recruiter posting flyers that extolled the advantages of life in the United States Navy.

After listening to the recruiter, Floyd signed on the dotted line. The recruiter adjusted his birth date to 1900 since 16-year olds weren't eligible to enlist.

Floyd was sent to "Boot Camp" at the U.S. Naval Training Center in Gulfport, Miss., for two months and upon completion was assigned to USS Pueblo, a coal-burning battle cruiser, scheduled for decommissioning in Philadelphia.

At this point, the president was Warren G. Harding and the Secretary of the Navy was Josephus Daniels, who declared the U.S. Navy would no longer allow alcoholic beverages aboard ships.

From the Pueblo, he transferred to USS Kansas, another coal burner. Floyd relates a lot of experiences about serving on a coal burner, none of which were very enjoyable.

USS Kansas, a World War I battleship that lived up to the Navy's motto of "see the world," received orders to proceed to American Samoa via the Panama Canal and to San Pedro, where they embarked the appointed governor of Samoa for transportation to that island to replace the previous governor who had committed suicide. The cruise took them to the Marquesas Islands for a short visit and on to their destination. En route, Floyd was initiated into the Royal and Ancient Order of Shellbacks and met King Neptune after some rigorous tests. After two weeks in Pago Pago, Samoa, USS Kansas returned to the States for decommissioning.

His next duty was aboard USS Bobolink, a WWI mine-sweeper that had been converted to a seagoing tug. This was probably a turning point in the young Sailor's career. His first enlistment expired while on the Bobolink, but by then he knew he was a career Sailor. He "shipped over" for duty aboard USS Colorado, a super dreadnought under construction at the U.S. Naval shipyard in New York that was placed in commission Aug. 12, 1923. During his service on the Colorado he applied and was accepted for submarine duty.

After completing training in New London, Conn., Floyd served aboard seven submarines. He then volunteered for a submarine experimental unit headed by Lt. Cmdr. Charles "Swede" Momsen, for whom the modern era USS Momsen (DDG 92) was named. Swede was renowned as the developer

of the Momsen Lung which enables submariners to escape a sunken vessel. This unit was also involved in developing the McCann Rescue Chamber (known as the diving bell) which was used to rescue some of the crew of the sunken USS Squalus -- as recounted by Peter Maas in his book "The Terrible Hours." During this period in 1939, Floyd served aboard USS S4.

By this time, Floyd had been promoted to Warrant Officer Bos'n and was ordered to USS Kalmia (ATO 23) operating out of Portland, Maine. He was then promoted to Lt.j.g. and assigned as Executive Officer of USS Diver (ARS 5). The Diver sailed for Europe in a convoy of 138 ships where it joined a salvage group headed by the famed Captain Ellsburg. The invasion of Europe was imminent. USS Diver participated in D-Day operations and other duties on the European coast during WWII salvage operations.

In December 1944, Floyd was ordered to command the ATR 59 which was under construction in Leesburg, N.J. Upon commissioning they were ordered to Bermuda where they picked up a tow for delivery to San Diego via the Panama Canal and other fueling stops along the way. The next tow was from San Francisco to Pearl Harbor. While operating around Pearl Harbor, he received orders to leave ATR 59 and take command of USS Chickasaw (ATF 83). The Chickasaw continued towing and salvage duties out of Pearl Harbor. Bos'n Harold Worrell was embarked in Chickasaw and a long friendship developed that lasts today between these shipmates.

In April 1946 the Chickasaw joined the task force that conducted the atomic bomb tests in the Atoll of Bikini. After much hard and dangerous work in Bikini, the Chickasaw was ordered to Guam for an upkeep period. While there she experienced one of Guam's famous typhoons. Chickasaw was then assigned to retrieve numerous tows in various islands while cleaning up the WWII leftovers. The ship returned to the States with a tow, followed by a trip to Panama and back.

After arriving back at Long Beach, Calif., Lt. Cmdr. Floyd Matthews received orders to New Orleans where he ended a long and illustrious career with the Navy.

He returned to Tennessee for a career with the VFW and served as chairman of the local selective service board before retiring again to skipper his own craft. Today he lives happily in Pensacola, Fla.



Doolittle Raiders to converge on Bay area

The 61st anniversary reunion of the Jimmy Doolittle Raiders will be held April 16 to 18 at Travis Air Force Base and the cities of Fairfield and Vacaville. The Doolittle Museum Foundation will host a wide variety of family-oriented events to commemorate the reunion.

Each year the remaining Doolittle Raiders reunite to commemorate the successful completion of their daring WWII mission.

Historians laud their "Tokyo Raid" as the deciding factor in Japan's fateful decision to engage US forces in the Battle of Midway — a turning point of WWII and victory for the Allied Forces. As the American response to Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, world-renowned aviator Jimmy Doolittle led 80 volunteer airmen on this secret mission fraught with danger and intrigue on April 18, 1942.

Each Raider reunion includes a plethora of crowd-pleasing events, spanning a three-day period. In maintaining the Raider tradition of promoting a non-profit organization, their reunion in April will draw public attention to the proposed construction of a \$55-million Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum financed entirely by private and local community funds.

Some events are free, while others require tickets. Ticket purchases qualify as tax-deductible contributions for the non-profit Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Foundation. Negotiations are underway to secure the attendance of celebrities from business, government and Hollywood.

Among the planned events are a patriotic parade in Fairfield with a B-25 fly-by, social hours with the Raiders, a gala dinner at the Fairfield Hilton with celebrity speakers, a barbecue and flight festival at the Nut Tree Airport featuring vintage and contemporary aircraft and a Military Salute.

The reunion will also include Raider memorabilia suitable for autographing, specially commissioned aviation art, World War II re-enactors, B-25 rides, free showings of the movie "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo" and other films, raffles, books, entertainers and the Air Force Band of the Golden West.

Navy Retirees who participated in launching the raid would be especially welcome at the event.

For more information, call (707) 424-5051, visit www.jimmydoolittlereunion.com, or contact Dr. Gary Leiser, Museum Curator, (707) 424-5598, Gary.leiser@travis.af.mil.

'1099-R forms' from page 6

Because the 1099-R is also used to report other types of income, the boxes that do not apply to retired members and annuitants will be left blank or have not been included in the form.

For example, boxes 2b and 9 will be blank, and boxes 3, 5, 6, and 8 have been removed from these forms. The remaining boxes correspond to IRS instructions for 1040 and 1040A forms.

Reissue Requests

Retirees or annuitants who do not receive their 1099-Rs by Jan. 31, have questions about their 1099-R forms or need to update their mailing addresses may contact:

- Air Force Financial Service Office
- Army Retiree Service Office
- Navy Local pay offices in Personnel Support Activity

(PSA) networks of Puget Sound (includes Hawaii); San Diego; New London, Conn.; and Jacksonville, Fla. (includes Pensacola).

•1099-Rs will also be available on-line through myPay, formerly the Employee/Member Self-Service system. Go to myPay.dfas.mil and enter your Social Security number and PIN in the Login box to access your account. Your PIN will be the same one used for the E/MSS system. You may also gain access at www.dfas.mil. Under Money Matters, click on myPay, then myPay: Enter Here. If you do not have or do not remember your PIN, scroll down to the bottom left hand corner of the myPay home page to Need A New PIN?, and click on New PIN or go to Popular FAQs and click on How Do I Get A New PIN?

If you do not receive your 1099-R or you believe it is incorrect, please alert DFAS-Cleveland, Retired and Annuity Pay Operations before April 15, 2003 at (800) 321-1080 to ensure the problem is resolved before the tax filing deadline.

Reunions

AEW PIONEERS - VX-4/VW-2	April 17-20	(251) 949-7179
ALL MEMBERS VIGALANTE COMMUNITY	May 28 - June 1	(407) 322-0380
ALL SEABEE	June 19-22	(626) 280-9495
AOG REUNION GROUP	May 8-11	(757) 217-2356
AP TRANSPORT GROUP	June 5-8	(516) 747-7426
ATTACK SQUADRON 144	May 9-10	(847) 356-3247
COMBAT CORPSMEN OF 1st MED, 1941 TO PRESENT	May 1-4	(315) 451-3695
CVWR-20 & CVWR-30	April 10-13	(253) 435-4277
FLYING MIDSHIPMEN ASSOCIATION	May 4-8	(239) 352-4280
HS 9	February 7-9	(843) 522-0543
LATE 1960 PREFLIGHT CLASSES 35-60 THRU 43-60	May 16-18	(281) 894-7752
LST 902	May 1-4	(979) 532-1890
LST 973	May 13-15	(972) 227-2271
MARINER/MARLIN ASSOCIATION	May 7-11	(321) 631-8648
MCB 11	June 19-22	(406) 454-1838
MCB 9 SEABEE ASSOCIATION	May 29 - June 1	(702) 897-6613
NAS ATLANTA	May 16-17	(919) 859-4663
NAS GLENVIEW SURVIVORS 40TH REUNION	May 16	(773) 792-2021
NAVAL AIR SPECIAL WEAPONS FACILITY	May 13-16	(706) 723-3613
NAVAL HELICOPTER ASSOCIATION	April 21-24	(619) 435-7139
NAVAL WEAPONS EVALUATION FACILITY	June 3-5	(505) 836-3189
NMCB 121	May 31 - June 2	(717) 545-6229
NMCB 40	April 3-6	(856) 875-1300
PBM MARINER/P5M MARLIN	May 7-11	(321) 631-8648
PREFLIGHT CLASS 35-64	April 22-24	(360) 856-4010
RADAR PICKET SHIPS (YAGR'S/AGR'S)	May 15-17	(401) 724-7278
SQUADRON VA 728/VA 155	April 30 - May 4	(816) 792-4160
SWIFT SAILORS ASSOCIATION	March 20-23	(757) 422-0514
U.S. NAVY CRUISER SAILOR ASSOCIATION	May 21-27	(617) 436-7202
USCGC BURTON ISLAND (WAGB 283)	June 9-13	(816) 454-7991
USS ACHERNAR (AKA 53)	June 4-8	(706) 673-2779
USS AJAX (AR 6)	June 26-30	(763) 757-9201
USS AMPHION (AR 13)	May 1-4	(919) 380-2169
USS ARCADIA (AD 23)	May 1-4	(516) 681-0725
USS ASHLAND (LSD 1/LSD 48)	June 4-7	(302) 834-1806
USS ATULE (SS 403)	May 18-21	(410) 360-2852
USS AUCILLA (AO 56)	April 28	(386) 671-1988
USS BASHAW (SS/SSK/AGSS 241)	May 29 - June 1	(504) 465-0765
USS BATAAN (CVL 29/LHD 5)	May 4-9	(815) 722-0292
USS BROWNSON (DD 868)	April 27 - May 1	(253) 537-4771
USS BUCK (DD 761)	June 5-8	(501) 922-3969
USS BURTON ISLAND (AG 88/AGB 1)	June 9-13	(816) 454-7991
USS BUSHNELL (AS 15)	May 30 - June 3	(570) 826-1811
USS CADMUS (AR 14)	May 1-4	(716) 655-5415
USS CAMBRIA (APA 36)	April 24-27	(419) 738-3786
USS CAPE COD (AD 43)	June 27-29	(228) 436-9835
USS CHARLES BERRY (DE 1035) (1960-1963)	Summer 2003	(785) 255-4368
USS CHARLES R. WARE (DD 865)	May 15-18	(843) 669-3380

USS CHICAGO (CA 29/CA 136/CG 11/SSN 721)	May 8-10	(405) 359-4878
USS CHOPPER (SS 342)	March 20-23	(813) 677-5485
USS CLARKE COUNTY (LST 601)	April 3-6	(478) 301-2762
USS COMPTON (DD 705)	April 13-16	(610) 583-5821
USS CONY (DD/DDE 508)	May 21-25	(863) 815-0882
USS CONYNGHAM (DD 371/DDG 17)	June 11-15	(732) 432-0588
USS DEKALB COUNTY (LST 715)	May 5-9	(928) 768-3867
USS DYESS (DDR/DD 880)	June 18-22	(904) 794-5781
USS ENGLAND (DLG/CG 22)	June 12-15	(714) 961-6840
USS ELMER MONTGOMERY (FF 1082)	April 25-27	(813) 908-1100/996-2194
USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVB,CVA, CV 42)	May 14-18	(800) 437-0869
USS GENERAL W. A. MANN (AP 112)	May 1-4	(610) 873-6304
USS GEORGE BANCROFT (SSBN 643)	May 1-4	(314) 487-6635
USS GOODRICH (DD/DDR 831)	April 30 - May 4	(973) 325-2684
USS GURKE (DD 783)	March 6-9	(623) 214-0937
USS HARRY E. HUBBARD (DD 748)	April 23-27	(727) 527-9448
USS HERMITAGE (LSD 34)	May 15-18	(352) 259-1443
USS HOUSTON (CA 30)	February 28 - March 1	(281) 493-5171
USS IDAHO (BB 42)	May 18-25	(858) 271-6106
USS INCHON (LPH/MCS 12)	April 4-6	(330) 920-1120
USS INDEPENDENCE (CVL 22)	April 23-26	(717) 263-2258
USS JALLAO (SS 368)	May 22-24	(954) 472-5410
USS JASON (ARH 1/AR 8)	June 2-6	(417) 649-6140
USS JENKINS (DDE 447)	May 14-18	(915) 944-8850
USS JOHN A. BOLE (DD 755)	May 14-17	(715) 536-1526
USS KALININ BAY (CVE 68/VC 3) ASSOCIATION	May 14-18	(517) 872-9932
USS KENNETH D. BAILEY (DD/DDR 713)	April 24-27	(617) 327-3286
USS KENNETH WHITING (AV 14)	May 5-9	(503) 761-4971
USS KING (DLG-10/DDG-41)	June 24-27	(360) 378-8685
USS KNUDSON (APD 101)	June 6-8	(386) 789-8612
USS KOINER (DER 331)(1963-1966)	Summer 2003	(785) 255-4368
USS LANG (DD 399)	May 7-10	(401) 437-3011
USS LASALLE (AGF 3)	Jun. 13-15	(352) 347-1272
USS LEXINGTON (CV 2)	May 7-10	(909) 681-1101
USS LLOYD THOMAS (DD/DDE 764)	April, May	(757) 467-6270
USS LST-447	April 2-6	(619) 224-3915
USS LUDLOW (DD 438)	June 8-11	(540) 427-3848
USS MACDONOUGH (DLG 39)	May 11-14	(803) 364-1778
USS MACOMB (DD 458/DMS 23)	May 14-18	(901) 873-2865
USS MACON (CA 132)	April 30 - May 4	(207) 967-4980
USS MARIAS (AO 57)	May 1-4	(863) 676-4047
USS MIDWAY OI DIV (CV/A/B 41)	June 19-21	(407) 671-0629
USS MISSISSIPPI (BB 41)	June 8-14	(870) 485-2362
USS MULIPHEN (AKA 61)	May 8-11	(302) 737-1751
USS NANTAHALA (AO 60)	May 1-4	(734) 455-9306
USS NASHVILLE (CL 43)	May 1-4	(505) 299-4132
USS NELSON (DD 623)	May 15-17	(570) 622-9867
USS NIMITZ (CVN 68) ASSOCIATION	June 15-19	(619) 400-5322/466-2132
USS NOBLE (APA 218)	May 1-5	(717) 774-3172
USS OKLAHOMA (BB 37)	April 25-27	(520) 421-0055
USS PALAU (CVE 122)	May 4-7	(410) 658-6043

USS PALMER (DMS 5)/USS ZANE (DMS 14/DD 337)	May 14-18	(813) 884-4019
USS PASCAGOULA (PCE 874)	June	(641) 524-2811
USS PAUL (DE 1080/FF 1808)	April 11-13	(757) 824-7066
USS PAWCATUCK (AO 108)	April 24-27	(623) 214-9835
USS PERRY (DD 844/DMS 17)	May 14-18	(501) 582-3665
USS PLYMOUTH ROCK (LSD 29)	June 5-7	(847) 336 2151
USS PURDY (DD 734)	March 27-30	(610) 433-4787
USS PYRO (AE -1/AE 24)	May 14-17	(352) 596-0701
USS RANGER (CV/CVA)	April 27-30	(410) 353-2603
USS REPOSE (AH 16)	May 12-14	(931) 645-6960
USS ROANOKE (CL 145)	Apr. 24-27	(520) 743-7383
USS SAN PABLO (AVP/AGS 30)	May 1-4	(585) 223-2713
USS SAVANNAH (AOR 4)	May 1-4	(812) 886-4252
USS SCHOFIELD (DEG/FFG 3)	May 29 - June 1	(770) 623-9022
USS SEA LEOPARD (SS 483)	April 30 - May 4	(636) 225-7528
USS SEQUOIA (AG 23)	April 14-16	(301) 322-1782
USS SHEA (DM 30)	May 1-4	(912) 868-6120
USS SHIELDS (DD 596)	June 1-6	(775) 882-7447
USS SIRAGO (SS 485)	April 30 - May 4	(636) 225-7528
USS SMALLEY (DD 565)	May 28 - June 1	(914) 736-6377
USS STICKLEBACK (SS 415)	May 27-29	(410) 544-3514
USS SUMTER (APA 52)	April 1-4	(252) 638-8961
USS TANGIER (AV 8)	June 4-8	(513) 752-1455
USS TARAUA (CV/CVA/ CVS-40/LHA -1)	May 7-10	(410) 879-0450
USS TERREBONNE PARISH (LST 1156)	April 30 - May 4	(614) 841-1223
USS THOMAS E. FRASER (DM 24)	May 19-21	(517) 522-8594
USS TOLOVANA (AO 64)	June 28 - July 1	(901) 756-1029
USS UTAH (BB 31/AG 16)	May 13-16	(805) 733-1646
USS VICKSBURG (CL 86)	May 15-18	(732) 382-3869
USS WABASH (AOR 5)	March 20-23	(580) 889-7707
USS WADDELL (DDG-24)	June 26-29	(410) 531-1250
USS WAHOO (SS 565)	May 1-3	(603) 362-5781
USS WARRICK (AKA 89)	May 18-22	(562) 425-0236
USS WASHBURN (AKA 108)	April 24-26	(856) 423-0938
USS WHITE PLAINS (AFS 4)	June 5-8	(915) 676-7379
USS WHITEHURST (DE 634)	June 26-28	(803) 356-4127
USS WILLARD KEITH (DDD 775)	May 14-17	(856) 303-9047
USS WORDEN (DLG 18)	June 19-21	(757) 481-4995
USS YARNALL (DD 541)	May 13-15	(818) 894-4982
USS YELLOWSTONE (AD 27)	May 1-3	(352) 854-1387
USS YOSEMITE (AD 19)	April 30 - May 4	(508) 674-4835
USS ZANE (DMS 14/DD 337)/USS PALMER (DMS 5)	May 14-18	(813) 884-4019
VC 35 & VA(AW) 35	June 16-19	(209) 477-4132
VIGILANTE COMMUNITY A-5/RA-5C	May 29 - June 1	(407) 322-0380
VJ-3/VU-3/ VC-3	April 11-12	(702) 897-4433
VO 67 SQUADRON	May 9-11	(850) 941-8556
VP-6	June 3-5	(970) 249-5685
VP-9	May 7-11	(308) 381-7673
VR 24	May 1-4	(301) 769-4569
VR-21	May 15-17	(318) 347-4641
VS 36/26 ALL HANDS	March 28-30	(610) 293-1167



Ready Reference Contact Information

Air Force Retired Affairs	(800) 531-7502	Navy Retired Activities Office p62s2@persnet.navy.mil	(800) 255-8950
Arlington National Cemetery	(703) 695-3250	Navy Uniform Shop www.navy.nex.com	(800) 368-4088
Armed Forces Retirement Home (Gulfport, Mississippi) www.afrh.com	(800) 332-3527	Navy Worldwide Locator www.bupers.navy.mil/services/locator.html	(901) 874-3388
Armed Forces Retirement Home (Washington, D.C.) www.afrh.com	(800) 422-9988	Reserve Component SBP Section (Code 416)	(800) 535-2699
Army Retired Affairs www.odcsper.army.mil	(703) 325-9155	Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) www.insurance.va.gov	(800) 419-1473
Awards Information	(202) 685-1770	Ships Historian Washington, D.C.	(202) 433-3643
Defense Finance and Accounting Service Cleveland Active Duty www.dfas.mil	(800) 346-3374	Social Security Administration www.ssa.gov	(800) 772-1213
DFAS Retired/Annuitant (Outside US) www.dfas.mil	(800) 321-1080 (216) 522-5955	TRICARE for Life	(888) 363-5433
Federal Long-term Health Insurance www.opm.gov/insure/ltc/index.htm	(800) 582-3337	TRICARE Headquarters www.tricare.osd.mil	(303) 676-3526
I.D. Cards Benefits and Eligibility P312d@persnet.navy.mil	(800) 443-9297	TRICARE Information	(800) 874-2273
Internal Revenue Service www.irs.gov	(800) 829-1040	TRICARE Senior Pharmacy Program www.tricare.osd.mil/pharmacy	(877) 363-6337
Marine Corps Retired Affairs http://osprey.manpower.usmc.mil	(800) 336-4649	VA Burial Benefits www.va.gov	(800) 827-1000
National Personnel Records Center www.archives.gov	(314) 538-4141	VA National Service Life Insurance www.va.gov	(800) 669-8477
Naval Reserve Personnel Center www.nrpc.nola.navy.mil	(800) 535-2699 (866) 250-4778	VA Regional Office (Benefits and Assistance) www.va.gov	(800) 827-1000
Navy Lodge Reservation Service www.navy-nex.com - click on 'Lodge'	(800) 628-9466	Veteran's Group Life Insurance www.insurance.va.gov osgli.osgle@prudential.com	(800) 419-1473

SECNAV Retiree Council releases recommendations

The Secretary of the Navy's Retiree Council recently released the recommendations and results from their 2002 meeting. The Council took note of the dramatic accomplishments which have taken place in the past two years in the health care arena, specifically the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy Program (TSRx) and the TRICARE for Life program. The Council thanked Secretary England on behalf of the Navy and Marine Corps retirees and their families for the role he played in helping these programs become a reality.

Subject: SURVIVOR BENEFIT PLAN (SBP)

Recommendation:

A. That the Secretary of the Navy continue to support legislation to increase the benefits provided to Survivor Benefits Plan (SBP) recipients; i.e., retain the benefit at 55 percent for life and eliminate the reduction to 35 percent at age 62.

B. That the Secretary of the Navy support the DOD review of current and projected actuarial assumptions to determine how much of an SBP increase can be accommodated without increasing current rates by restoring the government subsidy to proportions originally envisioned.

Discussion:

This issue continues an item submitted in 2000 and 2001 to recommend proposed improvements in the SBP program benefits. SBP continues to be a valuable program to insure that the surviving spouses and family members of military personnel who have elected SBP and die in retirement will continue to have a reasonable level of income.

The Survivor Benefit Plan provides an annuity for survivors of retired members of the uniformed services. Under the plan, the survivor is entitled to 55 percent of retired pay (or a lesser amount, if elected). The benefit is subsidized in part by the Government. In effect, the service member's contribution covers the first 35 percent of retired pay, and until the spouse reaches age 62 the SBP is subsidized to the full 55 percent by the Government. At age 62 the government subsidy is discontinued because Social Security can be received to offset the subsidy.

SECNAV Response:

A. Do not concur. In view of the significant costs involved, the Department of the Navy has consistently not been supportive of legislative initiatives to increase the SBP annuity for survivors age 62 and older, unless the funding to support this increase is programmed and appropriated by Congress. Without appropriations, this initiative will substantially diminish a retiree's limited income through much higher SBP premiums. **Status: Closed**

B. Concur. Correspondence was addressed to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management Policy) to request a review of SBP actuarial assumptions and whether there is evidence that a higher benefit could be supported without an increase in the current cost to the retiree. We have been informed that a working group is being set up to review these issues and expect to receive a report from OSD upon completion of the working group's review. **Status: Open**

Subject: CONCURRENT RECEIPT OF MILITARY RETIRED PAY AND DISABILITY COMPENSATION PROVIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Recommendation:

That the Secretary of the Navy press for funding to implement the change in the concurrent receipt law.

Discussion:

The Council supports the continuing Congressional efforts to expand concurrent receipt to all retirees with rated VA disabilities. It is the right thing to do. It must be recognized that retired pay is an earned benefit for past service and disability pay is for pain and suffering and

reduced future earning capability.

Uniformed services retirees with service-connected disabilities must forfeit a dollar of military retired pay for each dollar received in VA disability compensation. The 106th Congress gave the concurrent receipt issue considerable attention in 2000, and provided some legislative relief.

The FY 2001 Defense Authorization Act makes Chapter 61 (military disability) retirees eligible for the \$100-300 special compensation effective Oct. 1, 2001. The entitlement will be provided to retirees who have served at least 20 years of full-time active duty and were awarded at least a 70 percent disability rating by either their service or the VA within four years of leaving service. Those with 100 percent ratings receive \$300 per month; 90 percent ratings, \$200 per month; and 70-80 percent ratings, \$100 per month.

The 107th Congress authorized both receipt of retired pay and VA service connected disability compensation. The FY 2002 Defense Authorization Act also lowered the qualifying threshold to 60 percent disability ratings for special compensation for severely disabled retirees. The Congress failed, however, to provide funding for this issue.

SECNAV Response:

Defer to Congress. At this writing, Congress appears likely to provide appropriations for some form of concurrent receipt of retired pay and VA disability pay. This action is currently beyond the purview of the Department of the Navy. **Status: Closed**

Subject: INCORPORATION OF DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY RETIREES AS PART OF THE "QUALITY OF SERVICE" CONTINUUM

Recommendation:

That the Secretary of the Navy establish a program designed to utilize the talent pool represented by retirees of the Naval Service. A prototype program for the USMC is being developed as the "Marine For Life" program.

Discussion:

The concept of "USN/USMC Retired - Still Serving" can become a reality. Veterans and retirees, whatever their age, represent a valuable and available resource throughout the United States and overseas, to be ambassadors for the Department of the Navy and dynamic assets to assist in recruiting and transition programs.

The key components of the USMC "Marine For Life" program have been clearly defined by the Deputy Commandant, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, HQMC. The key components for the U.S. Navy program could include:

- A Blue & Gold mentor program linking Navy veterans and retirees via the Internet with Sailors in transition by job skills and/or region.
- Regionalization of Retired Activities Offices throughout the United States and, where existing, overseas. Link Retired Activity Offices with the SECNAV Retiree Council by affording the Regional Commander the opportunity to nominate a representative from his region for membership on the Council.
- Tighter relationship between Retired Activities Offices and TAMP, Spouse Employment and Personal Financial Management programs. Utilize retired volunteers to assist in the counseling of transitioning personnel about SBP benefits and Personal Financial Management programs.

- Key strategic partnerships with organizations such as Navy League, Marine Corps League, Fleet Reserve Association, and The Retired Officers Association to provide inter-connection with veterans and retirees to their local communities, and, in locations not served by a Retired Activities Office, assist in problem-solving for the individual.

- A central database for active and retired personnel through utilization of the Defense Integrated Military Human Resources System (DIMHRS). Information collected should include status, military qualifications/specialties and training. Additionally, a volunteer designation could be listed to match veteran/retiree to Service or community needs. This database would facilitate location of personnel in times of national emergency to assist in such things as casualty assistance and location of personnel for funeral details. The "People Soft" software program being utilized for the development of DIMHRS provides the flexibility to accomplish this element.

- An Internet web site replete with legislative information, benefits and entitlements information, a hotlink to DEERS and other information and program information. The established "Lifelines" website may provide the media for accomplishment.

The Council Report of 2001 submitted this concept as a "Sense of the Council" item. As the Department of the Navy improves and updates its personnel and information systems, it is logical to include this program in the planning to fully realize the development of the "Quality of Service Continuum." The accomplishment of this issue would send a strong message to veterans and retirees that "the Navy takes care of its own."

Summary: The key part of this recommendation is that the Secretary make it a priority task which imports to every Sailor and Marine that being a part of the Navy and Marine Corps team is a cradle-to-grave commitment. The primary element of this is that the DoN must pursue programs which send the message to all, that the DoN looks after its own from "Cradle to Grave!"

SECNAV Response: Concur. We have referred this item to the Chief of Naval Personnel and Deputy Commandant, Manpower and Reserve Affairs for possible action and will further explore using LIFELines to provide assistance and/or technical support as necessary. **Status: Open**

Subject: UNIFORMED SERVICES FORMER SPOUSE PROTECTION ACT (USFSPA)

Recommendation:

That the Secretary of the Navy support H.R. 1983, a bill which makes legislative changes to the USFSPA affecting payments.

Discussion:

Currently, under the Uniformed Services Former Spouse Protection Act, a former spouse is granted a percentage of retired pay based on the military member's grade at retirement, not at the time of divorce. For example, if a couple is married for 11 years and gets divorced and the military member is an E-6 at the time of divorce, goes on to complete a career, and retires at the grade of E-9, the amount of pay he/she is required to pay the former spouse is based on a percentage of E-9 pay rather than the E-6 pay.

Representative Bob Stump (R-AZ) introduced H.R. 72 in both the 105th and 106th Congresses to correct this inequity, but it received no congressional consideration. Representative Cass Ballenger (R-NC) introduced H.R. 1983, a similar piece of legislation, in the 107th Congress. H.R. 1983 proposes to base the award of retired pay on the service member's years of service and pay grade at the time of divorce and not on the grade and years of service at retirement; terminate military retired pay payments upon remarriage by the former spouse; and strengthen the current prohibitions against awarding VA disability

compensation to a former spouse.

In summary, the Council recommends support of the proposed legislative changes to the Uniformed Services Former Spouse Protection Act in H.R. 1983.

SECNAV Response: Concur. There are four major provisions contained within H.R. 1983. The bill: (1) requires payment from the monthly disposable retired pay of a member to his or her former spouse in compliance with court orders to terminate upon the remarriage of the former spouse; (2) provides that the award of retired pay to the former spouse be based on the retiree's length of service and pay grade at the time of divorce, and increases such amount concurrently with retired pay increases; (3) requires the former spouse to obtain a court order for reapportionment of a member's monthly disposable retired pay either within two years of the dates of the final decree of divorce, dissolution, annulment, or legal separation, or within six months after enactment of the Act, whichever is later; and (4) prohibits the court from treating as part of a member's disposable retired pay amounts which have been waived from such pay in order to receive veterans disability compensation.

A report from the Department of Defense to the Senate Armed Services Committee concerned the DoD's review of former spouse protection laws applicable to members and former members of the uniformed services and their former spouses. This report, which was also staffed through the three Military Departments before issuance, is currently regarded as the basis for DoD positions in regards to proposed amendments to the USFSPA. In the report, three of the four provisions in H.R. 1983 were addressed.

In the report, DoD supported the amendment of the USFSPA to base all awards of military retired pay on the member's rank and time served at the time of divorce, while allowing the former spouse to benefit from increases in the pay table between the time of divorce and the time of retirement. The DoD report did not address the time limitation on obtaining a court order to reapportion retired pay. Finally, the DoD report deferred the issue of termination of payments upon remarriage of the former spouse to the state courts, since domestic relations law is a subject principally reserved to the States, and deferred the issue of treatment of VA disability compensation to the Department of Veterans Affairs and Congress, as it is an issue beyond the purview of DoD.

Overall, therefore, we would have no objection with the provisions of H.R. 1983, but we would recommend that the provision that provided for termination of benefits upon remarriage be deferred to the States. **Status: Closed**

Subject: ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Recommendation:

A. That the Secretary of the Navy seek legislative or regulatory redress to compel the Health Care Trust Fund to reimburse military Medical Treatment Facility (MTFs) adequately for care provided to Medicare-eligible beneficiaries.

B. That the Secretary of the Navy seek changes in the reimbursement levels to which TRICARE is bound by legislation.

Discussion:

Retirees cared for within MTFs are unable to receive continuity of care due to rules that prevent payment by Medicare. This occurs once the facility's finite TRICARE Plus capacity is reached. Upon reaching Medicare eligibility, they are precluded from seeing the doctor who has been managing their health care and are instructed to locate another Primary Care Manager outside the MTF. Both access and quality of care are compromised by the abrupt cessation of care and the necessary re-establishment of care with a new doctor.

Access to care and the quality of health care delivered are significantly compromised when doctors refuse to participate in TRICARE because

the reimbursement levels are so low. These levels are calculated from legislatively mandated Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement guidelines.

The reimbursements are substantially below acceptable levels in many communities outside of large metropolitan areas with a sufficient population of doctors to generate price competition and economies of scale. A recent decline in Medicare reimbursement levels has aggravated an already negative situation in all locations. As a result, access to care varies considerably by location, and in many areas is inadequate to provide the minimal essential care for our TRICARE beneficiaries.

SECNAV Response:

A. Defer to TMA. The TRICARE Program for Medicare-eligible military retirees would be much easier to manage if the Military Health System were reimbursed for health care services like other Medicare providers. However, Medicare-eligible military retirees now enjoy the most robust health care benefit package of any sector of the United States population today. The prior Medicare Subvention Demonstration Program has been discontinued, but the current program complexities and adverse incentives encourage a limited number of Medicare-eligible military retirees to register at a MTF. Most seek care with a civilian physician outside the MTF. Those currently empaneled to the MTF are carefully managed to ensure appropriate continuity of care. We have referred this recommendation to the Executive Director of the TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) for appropriate review and action. **Status: Open**

B. Defer to TMA. Reimbursement rates for beneficiaries are set at the CHAMPUS Maximum Allowable Charge (CMAC) rate. The law requires use of "Medicare Physician Fee Scheduled Amounts." Managed Care Support Contractors have sometimes bid under the CMAC rate because of the advantage of development of network providers. At present, CMACs are equal to or higher than Medicare. We have referred this recommendation to the Executive Director of the TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) for appropriate review and action. **Status: Open**

Subject: TRICARE COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING

Recommendation:

That the Secretary of the Navy establish an aggressive, comprehensive, unrelenting, and non-traditional marketing and communication plan to provide essential information and guidance to all eligible TRICARE beneficiaries.

Discussion:

The Council notes with great pleasure the considerable improvement in the available benefits and correction of previously noted deficiencies in the military healthcare system. With resolution of many of the larger systemic problems, focus has narrowed to smaller, problematic populations of beneficiaries resistant to traditional channels of information distribution. These beneficiaries remain under-informed and, as a result, inadequately supported. Delineation of responsibility for marketing and education is not clearly defined between all Managed Care Support Contractors (MCSCs) and their medical treatment facilities (MTFs), resulting in varying degrees of dissemination and effectiveness.

Beneficiaries who do not belong to traditional military organizations or do not have access to established communication networks are a challenge to previous marketing and communication plans concerning TRICARE benefits. As a graphic example, a Retired Activities Office representative in the Southwest actively researched custodial care facilities in his geographic area and discovered 22 widows of military personnel who were eligible for benefits under TRICARE for Life, but had not renewed their ID cards or maintained current status in the DEERS database. His efforts included traveling to all the custodial care facilities with a photographer to capture the enrollment data. He was able to

obtain current information, establish eligibility, and enroll all 22 in DEERS to become eligible for benefits.

SECNAV Response: Defer to TMA. While Navy Medicine supports the TRICARE Management Activity in producing and updating marketing and education information for the TMA website, and assists in promulgation of TRICARE information through such avenues as the LIFELines web site, TMA has the lead on all communication and marketing efforts for TRICARE, as these issues impact all DoD beneficiaries.

Recognizing the importance of the kinds of issues the Retiree Council has outlined in this recommendation, TMA has taken a new step in the Next Generation of TRICARE contracts (T-NEX) and will develop a separate Request for Proposal that deals solely with communications and marketing of TRICARE. This new approach is expected to better focus marketing and communications efforts. Therefore, this recommendation has been referred to TMA for resolution. **Status: Open**

Subject: SUBSIDY FOR TRICARE RETIREE DENTAL PROGRAM (TRDP) AND OVERSEAS DENTAL BENEFIT

Recommendation:

A. That the Secretary of the Navy urge DoD to appropriately subsidize the TRDP.

B. That the Secretary of the Navy urge DoD to extend the TRDP benefit to retirees in overseas locations.

Discussion:

A subsidy of the TRDP will allow for an expansion of benefits and attract more dentists to the plan. The current level of benefits vs. cost and an insufficient number of dentists contribute to under-utilization of the plan (less than 15 percent of those eligible). Currently, the government subsidizes the TRICARE program, TRICARE for Life, and the (active duty) Family Member Dental Program. These excellent examples of government-backed programs allow these plans to be competitive with civilian programs and provide better coverage to protect our active duty families and retiree community. Given these precedents, the TRDP should have a similar subsidy.

In the current TRDP bidding process, retirees and family members overseas are still without coverage because the plan does not extend to other countries. All beneficiaries should be afforded the opportunity to participate in this program.

SECNAV Response: Concur. The Department of the Navy supports the Retiree Council's concept of lowered premiums through some subsidization of the TRDP, but that support is conditional on the budgetary pressure such an action would have on the entire military health care enterprise. Likewise, we support expanding the benefit to overseas retirees if feasible. A TRICARE-led working group looked specifically at the issue of expanding the TRDP to overseas retirees as part of the process of developing the next TRDP contract. The working group found that the target population of overseas retirees was much smaller than anticipated, and as a result, the premium cost for all members, including those in the United States, would increase to prohibitive levels. Since premium cost is a primary driver of this insurance program, it was decided not to include this expansion feature in the next contract. However, it is expected that this issue will be revisited in future option years of the contract. **Status: Open**

Subject: MONETARY PENALTY FOR MILITARY RETIREE LATE ENROLLMENT IN MEDICARE PART B TO QUALIFY FOR TRICARE-FOR-LIFE

Recommendation:

That the Secretary of the Navy urge DoD to adopt a policy to grant

waiver of Medicare Part B enrollment for military retirees eligible for TRICARE for Life (TFL) benefits if they were eligible but not enrolled in Medicare Part B prior to June 5, 2001.

Discussion:

To be eligible for TRICARE for Life, it is a requirement for all retired military members and eligible dependents over the age of 65 (or disabled prior to 65) to be enrolled in Medicare Part B. There are a large number of retirees that did not enroll in Part B when eligible and now face significant monetary penalties. Not only must these people enroll in Part B, but they are also assessed a monetary penalty to recover lost revenues. There are various reasons for their non-participation, usually related to living in geographical areas that did not provide Medicare. We find this enrollment plus penalty to be placing an extreme financial burden on this group of deserving retirees.

SECNAV Response: Defer to ASD (Health Affairs).

Enrollees in TRICARE Prime who turn 65 and become entitled to Medicare must be enrolled in Medicare Part B to become entitled to TRICARE for Life. Medicare Part B is not required to access care in the MTF but places our beneficiaries at potential financial risk for the majority of the cost of care not able to be provided in an MTF and rendered in the civilian community. We agree that these people should have some means of waiving the penalty, but a blanket change for everyone would create an injustice to those that have paid into the system. To avoid this, the Department of the Navy recommends that the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) establish a waiver process based on economic hardship. In other words, applicants must demonstrate a financial need to have the penalty waived. We defer to ASD(HA) to work with DHHS to establish parameters and stipulations for these waivers. **Status: Open**

Subject: AUTHORIZATION FOR PAYROLL DEDUCTION AND AUTOMATED PAYMENT OF TRICARE PRIME PREMIUMS

Recommendation:

That the Secretary of the Navy facilitate implementation of withholding and automated payment of monthly premiums for TRICARE Prime, similar to arrangements currently in place for the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program.

Discussion:

TRICARE Prime Managed Care Support Contractors (MCSCs) require annual lump sum or quarterly payments of premiums. Billing errors and record-keeping delays have resulted in dropped enrollments and catch-up billing with significant financial and health care delivery impact for participants.

Monthly allotments of TRICARE premiums would minimize the financial impact, ensure timely payment of premiums to MCSCs, avoid inadvertent and unintentional enrollment terminations, and make participation more attractive.

SECNAV Response: Concur. Automated payment of TRICARE Prime premiums would be a positive feature for beneficiaries. A decision to allow implementation of this initiative is currently with the leadership of the TRICARE Management Activity. If approved, automated payment could begin in Fiscal Year 2003. We will continue to track progress on this item. **Status: Open**

Subject: CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF THE VETERANS CEMETERY AT THE FORMER CLARK FIELD/CLARK AFB

Recommendation:

A. That the Secretary of the Navy liaise with the Director, Department

of Veterans Affairs to approach the Secretary of State to give direction to the U. S. Ambassador to the Philippines to obtain a long-term lease from the Philippine Government to the U. S. Government for the site of the Clark Cemetery.

B. That the Secretary of the Navy liaise with DoD to obtain Congressional funding/direction for the American Battle Monuments Commission to assume care and maintenance of the Clark Cemetery.

Discussion:

The American Military Cemetery in Manila is maintained by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC). It is the only such cemetery in all of Asia. It is closed to new burials other than spouses/dependents of those already interred.

Clark Cemetery contains the remains of many veterans of the Spanish-American War, the Philippine – American War (Philippine Insurrection), WWI, WWII (died after the war), and the Korean and Vietnam Wars, including over 2,100 Unknowns. Information on other individuals in many cases is only that available on the grave marker. The following facts are germane.

- Date of the earliest known original burial is 1897; a casualty of what became the Spanish- American War.

- Abandoned by the U.S. government in June 1991 when Clark AFB was evacuated for the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo. Cemetery maintenance was turned over to the Philippine Air Force, but when the Clark Development Corporation (CDC) was formed, no stipulation was included for cemetery maintenance. The cemetery fell into a state of severe disrepair.

- Beginning in 1994, refurbished by resident U.S. veterans spearheaded by Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 2485, Angeles City, and VFW Post 11447, Barrio Barretto, Olongapo City, with assistance from many other veteran and service organizations in the region. This entailed removal of trash, head-high weeds, and leveling of tons of volcanic sand and ash.

- Cared for by personnel of VFW Post 2485. The Post is able to budget the maintenance of the cemetery only through donations of money, services and equipment from various individuals, military organizations, veterans groups (national, local and throughout the VFW Department of Pacific Areas) and civic/business organizations. Annually the National VFW Headquarters donates \$3,500 and the Filipino-American Memorial Endowment (FAME) donates \$1,000.

- Cemetery maintenance costs \$600 - \$700 per month.

- Three full-time Filipino grass cutters, supervised by two full-time volunteers.

- Currently maintained under a Memorandum of Agreement between CDC and VFW Post 2485.

The time to transfer this responsibility is now. As the number of resident U.S. veterans and retirees dwindles due to age and the closure of the U.S. bases in the Philippines in 1991 and 1992, maintenance of this cemetery becomes more and more difficult.

SECNAV Response:

A. Do not concur. A lease-back of the land to the U.S. Government would be a necessary prerequisite for a potential assumption of responsibility of the Clark AFB cemetery by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), as recommended by the Council in recommendation B. However, a compelling case does not exist for this cemetery to be included under the jurisdiction of the ABMC, and State Department personnel have indicated that support for a request directing the U.S. Ambassador to obtain a lease for the cemetery is unlikely. **Status: Closed**

B. Do not concur. The Congress, through enabling legislation, vested in the ABMC the responsibility for American military memorial cemeteries and other monuments, memorials, and markers that commemorate the sacrifices of the U.S. military. While the enabling legislation

grants the Commission authority to assume responsibility for permanent military memorial cemeteries, it does not encompass assumption of responsibility for other cemeteries such as Clark AFB cemetery.

The ABMC's military memorial cemeteries are almost exclusively closed cemeteries containing U.S. War Dead that were killed in action. As mentioned above, the Clark AFB cemetery is open to burial for Filipino civilians and military, Japanese civilians and military, and American veterans and civilians. The U.S. World War II Dead that had been interred in the Clark AFB Cemetery were moved years ago to the Manila American Cemetery, which is under the responsibility of ABMC as a military memorial cemetery. Future burials at the Manila American Cemetery are limited to the remains of U.S. War Dead that may still be found on World War II battlefield sites, in keeping with its status as a military memorial cemetery. The Clark AFB cemetery falls well outside of the parameters for inclusion as an American military memorial cemetery under the jurisdiction of the ABMC, and a compelling case does not exist for the Department of Defense to request to Congress that the ABMC's enabling legislation be modified. **Status: Closed**

Subject: COORDINATION OF MEDICAL SERVICES

Recommendation:

That the Secretary of the Navy, through the Department of Defense, coordinate with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to share clinical information and medical records.

Discussion:

Many retirees access both the VA and TRICARE programs. In many locations, VA treatment facilities provide essential specialty care to augment primary care provided in Military Treatment Facilities. Lack of communication between the two systems results in unnecessary redundancies and expensive duplication of services for both agencies. Communication of clinical information and sharing of medical records would streamline the delivery of care to individual beneficiaries, improve the quality of care, and save significant resources for both the VA and DoD.

Precedent has been established by a demonstration project, which successfully showed a single retirement physical examination could be used by both agencies for determining health status retirement eligibility and disability ratings. Expansion of the scope of that demonstration to allow free exchange of clinical information, test results, and health care findings would improve the quality of care provided by both agencies.

SECNAV Response: Concur. DoD and VA are currently participating in a Presidential Task Force (PTF) to address interoperability and data sharing between agencies. Both MHS CHCS and the VA's Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VISTA) system share a common core development and developer, the Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC). However, the two clinical systems have diverged over the years.

Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS D) has been developing a web-based view of CHCS, referred to as "Easy-CHCS," which is a graphical user interface to display real-time patient health information for DoD's CHCS in a web-based format.

With further development and collaboration with the VA, NMCS D believes the potential is close at hand to integrate data from both CHCS and VISTA into a single graphical interface. This breakthrough presents a tremendous opportunity to share existing patient data between the two systems without the need to rebuild either system. DoD strongly supports NMCS D's efforts in pursuing this initiative. **Status: Open**

Subject: OVERSEAS POSTAL WEIGHT LIMITATIONS

Recommendation:

That the Secretary of the Navy, through the Department of Defense, implement waivers of the Military Postal System (MPS) weight limitation for pharmaceuticals delivered by mail.

Discussion:

The advent of the National Mail Order Pharmacy (NMOP) has been a great boon to some beneficiaries living overseas. However, the MPS weight limitation for allowed parcels (one pound for retirees) precludes the delivery of some medications which require special packaging that routinely exceeds that weight. As a result, beneficiaries who attempt to use the NMOP risk having the medication returned, and others choose not to access the program.

SECNAV Response: Defer to Military Postal Service Agency.

Upon review, it appears that this recommendation cannot be implemented as envisioned by the Retiree Council. There is no practical way within the military mail system to waive weight limitations for one type of mail (i.e., pharmaceuticals) and not others. Because transportation and management of postal operations overseas are funded by the four Military Services, it is also necessary to have the concurrence of the Services in order for the Military Postal Service Agency to consider a change in policy. The Military Services have been generally non-supportive of requests to raise or remove the weight limit for retiree mail, due to increased transportation and personnel costs. Additionally, in some foreign countries, raising the weight limit for military mail would violate Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) that the United States has with that country, and in each case the SOFA would have to be renegotiated by the Commander in Chief (CINC) for that region.

However, it should also be recognized that there have been significant changes in the last five to ten years with the advent of the National Mail Order Pharmacy (NMOP) program. The NMOP was developed to provide a user-friendly and cost-effective method to provide DoD beneficiaries with medication. However, the postal policy has not changed in any way during the corresponding time, and the unintended consequence of mailing pharmaceuticals overseas through the military mail system has been to discourage overseas retirees who are otherwise eligible for NMOP from accessing the program. With that in mind, we will initiate correspondence to the Military Postal Service Agency that requests they review the issue of raising the weight limit on retiree mail and provide the results of their review, as well as any actions taken or contemplated regarding this policy. **Status: Open**

Subject: CONDUCT OF CIVILIAN MEDIA COVERAGE OF MILITARY ACTIVITIES ABOARD SHIP AND ASHORE

Recommendation:

That the Secretary of the Navy direct the Chief of Naval Information to issue a comprehensive media guide sufficient for the national media to utilize proper terminology when discussing Naval Service personnel and our ships and stations.

SECNAV Response: Do not concur. The Chief of Naval Information provides the media with the correct information and terminology, and although there will always be some mistakes, the target of these reports is the segment of the general public not familiar with military operations and culture. While that may include references that seem overly simplistic to someone with military experience, the majority of today's Americans do not have that firsthand knowledge. Reporters communicating what the Navy and Marine Corps do at the most basic level is one of the most effective tools the Navy and Marine Corps has to tell its story, and on balance, the overall results have been superb. The majority of media reporting of the Navy and Marine Corps in recent months has been overwhelmingly positive, as has feedback from Sailors, Marines and their families about the recent coverage. **Status: Closed**

Your past service with the Navy may create a cleaner environment for the future

On behalf of the U.S. Navy, Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation is conducting interviews to gather information regarding past operations at the Navy Ammunitions Depot – Puget Sound (a.k.a. Bangor Annex). The area is now known as Jackson Park Housing Complex near Bremerton, Wash.

To further identify types and locations of hazardous substances, the Navy is seeking individuals with information about operations at the Navy Ammunitions Depot – Puget Sound. If you or someone you know worked at this site prior to 1959, please contact Steve Siefert with Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation toll free at **(866) 600-3164**. Your experience may once again be a service to our country.

Retiree and Annuitant Pay

Questions about Retiree or Annuitant pay should be directed to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service in Cleveland at **(800) 321-1080** or e-mail dfas-de-frb@dfas.mil.

Reporting a Retiree's Death

To report the death of a Navy Retiree, contact the Defense Finance and Accounting Service Casualty Assistance Branch at **(800) 269-5170** or **(216) 522-6680**.

If a Retired Activities Office is nearby, they can provide valuable assistance.

Retiree Dental Program

For information and eligibility guidelines, call the customer service number at **(415) 972-8300**. You can also visit their web page at: www.ddpdelta.org.

Service Records

Retirees desiring a copy of their discharge certificate (DD214), personnel records or medical and dental records should write to:

National Personnel Records Center
9700 Page Ave.

St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

All requests must be written, dated and signed, and should include full name, rate/rank, Social Security Number, dates of service and date of birth. Requests for records are processed in four to six months. More information is available at www.archives.gov.

ID Card Eligibility

For ID Card and DEERS information, contact the Navy Personnel Command Benefits Branch at **(901) 874-3362**, Fax **(901) 874-2766** or e-mail: p312d3@persnet.navy.mil

NAVY PERSONNEL COMMAND
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