

Inside This Issue

Chapter/State News

POW/MIA news

On The Hill

Veterans Affairs News

Book Review: Echoes of Our War

From AirForceTimes

Veterans' benefits could see a big cost-of-living boost later this year



Veterans may be in line for a big cost-of-living boost in their benefits payouts starting in December thanks to legislation finalized by Congress on Monday Sep.20.

The Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act passed unanimously in the House on Monday and without objection in the Senate earlier in the summer. It now

heads to the White House, where President Joe Biden is expected to sign it into law in coming days.

The legislation ties the cost-of-living boost for veterans' benefits to the planned increase in Social Security benefits. Although the Social Security boost is automatic each year, lawmakers must approve the veterans' benefits increase annually.

How much that boost will be next year is still not certain. The Social Security Administration is expected to announce the COLA rate for 2022 next month, based on economic trends over the last few months.

That increase will go into effect for benefits checks sent out starting this December.

The cost-of-living bump hasn't been above 3.0 percent since 2011, and has averaged less than 1.3 percent over the last six years.

But last month, officials from the Senior Citizens League predicted that next year's rise could top 6.2 percent, based on recent inflation and wage data released by federal economists. If so, it would be the largest increase since 1983 for Social Security and VA benefits recipients.

Lawmakers praised Monday's bill passage as needed support for American veterans.

"The cost-of-living adjustment to veterans' benefits is so much more than a rate adjustment tied to inflation," said Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif., in a statement. "It is a quality-of-life guarantee in the retirement years for veterans suffering with service-connected disabilities and ailments."

Meetings

Chapter 120 membership meeting will be held on Thursday, October 7, 2021 at 7:00pm in the Machinists Union Hall, 357 Main St., East Hartford. *State and East Hartford COVID-19 guidelines apply.*

The Board of Directors will meet on Thursday, October 28 at 7:00pm. Call the Chapter office for any changes in schedule. Chapter members are welcomed to attend.

Notice

If you have moved or changed your address, PLEASE notify us immediately. Call the Chapter Newsletter Editor at (860) 282-7470, or e-mail the Newsletter Editor at ctchapter120@aol.com.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: In accordance with Title 17 of U. S. C. Section 107, any copyrighted work in this newsletter is distributed under fair use without profit or payment to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for nonprofit research and educational purposes only.

CHAPTER 120 OFFICE	568-9212
Board of Directors	
Roger Anderson	528-4338
Paul Barry	569-3530
Peter Galgano	828-1999
Leigh Lovering	528-8312
Frank Zizzamia	569-0705
Executive Officers	
Bob Burgess, President	646-0205
Phil Morneault, Vice President	930-2122
Phil Morneault, Treasurer	930-2122
Peter Lund, Secretary	644-9770
VVA Service Representatives	
John Cutler	282-7470
E-Mail: VVA.Service.Rep@att.net	
Gerald Fabry, MD	884-7271
E-Mail : gerfab@comcast.net	
Gary Waterhouse	656-0430
E-Mail : gwaterhouse@cox.net	
Membership	
Frank J. Mello, Jr.	604-3879
E-Mail: Fmello336@yahoo.com	
Women Vietnam Veterans	
Patricia Dumin	620-4131
Product Sales	
Leigh Lovering	528-8312
lhlovering@gmail.com	
Newsletter/Website	
John Cutler	282-7470
E-Mail: ctchapter120@aol.com	
Notary Public	
Gary Gazdzicki, Sr.	812-5703
Vet Centers	
Hartford (Area Code 860)	563-8800
New Haven (Area Code 203)	932-9899
Norwich (Area Code 860)	887-1755
Danbury (Area Code 203)	790-4000
All Telephone Numbers are Area Code 860 unless otherwise noted	

Chapter/State News

Hurricane Ida Damage

The Louisiana State Council President Terry Courville reports that at least 5 of the state's chapters were in direct line of Hurricane Ida and they are in need of assistance. For VVA members and others who wish to make a contribution to assist the victims of the recent devastation, please make your check payable to: LA State Council Disaster Relief Fund. Send your check to Joe Jenkins, VVA State Council, 13606 Hico Drive, Baker, LA 70714. If you have any questions, you may reach Joe Jenkins at 225-603-3874.

Chapter 120 Dinner Dance is Back in Business

Our Holiday Dinner Dance - faithfully supported by our members for 33 years - is back. It is scheduled for Saturday, December 4, 2021, at the Machinists' Union Hall, East Hartford.

Once again, we will begin the evening by hosting a dinner from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., with dancing from 9:00 to 11:30 p.m. The doors will open at 6:30 p.m.

The Holiday Dance is not only a chance for Chapter members and their friends to get together, it is the Chapter's major fundraiser for the year. We continue to support veterans and the community with the basic necessities of life.

More details will be available in next month's newsletter.

Chapter 120 Meeting Minutes

You can view the Chapter's meeting minutes by going to the Chapter's web site at <http://www.vva120.org/>

National Convention

The VVA National Convention will take place from November 2-6 in Greensboro, NC. Consult the information in the Latest VVA Magazine for resolutions and other items on the agenda.

Region 1 Announces Pre-Convention Meeting

The Region 1 Conference, in preparation for the National Convention on 2-6 November, is scheduled for October 16, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at the Dante Club, 1198 Memorial Avenue, West Springfield, Mass.

Connecticut Stand Down 2021



The state Department of Veterans Affairs annual Veterans Stand Down event wrapped up on 24 September. The outreach initiative has been held for nearly three decades. This year combined two days of online benefits presentations and a day with five regional in-person Veteran resource access sites. Informational sessions covered a variety of topics including housing and homeless services, State labor/employment and vocational resources, caregiver support, legal assistance, education resources and others. Five in-person

service locations throughout the State, including Bridgeport, Danbury, Danielson, Norwich and Rocky Hill, took place from 8am-2pm. The locations were staffed by representatives of the regional Vet Centers, Connecticut Bar Association, the DVA and Veteran Service Organizations, along with community based providers. Veterans could get benefits information, pro-bono legal services and free COVID-19 testing, vaccines and flu shots.

Birthday Wishes

Birthday wishes go to our members born in October. May you have many more!

John J. Barry	Paul F. Barry Jr.
John Beas	Gary H. Benson
Robert T. Burgess	Clyde H. Callejo
Dean Clarke	Roger Conley
James H. Darby	Roger Feder
Michael Grip	Theodore A. Groenstein
Lawrence Labarre	Nancy Rousselle
Dennis Sines	David Spafford
Steven A. Wowk	

Happy Birthday!

Extracted from Citrus County Chronicle

License plate honors Purple Heart recipients – Chapter 120 member receives first one

On a recent Friday morning, members of the local chapter of the Military Order of the Purple Heart picked up Glenn Beaulieu's new motorcycle license plate for him at the Citrus County Tax Collector's Office in Crystal River.

But this was no routine errand. The plate is the first motorcycle Purple Heart license plate the office issued. And Beaulieu is the veteran responsible for the creation of the plate.



Beaulieu's colleagues mailed the plate, 1 PVT, to Beaulieu's summer home in Calais, Maine, near the Canadian border. Beaulieu, a permanent resident of Homosassa, considers himself a reverse snowbird. True, he heads north for cool summers, but Florida is his home now.

A native of Maine who spent much of his adult life working in Connecticut, Beaulieu served in Vietnam as an E-4 in the Army's 101st Airborne Division and was responsible for a squad of soldiers.

He was scheduled to return to the United States in October 1969, but in September, he set off a tripwire that triggered an explosion and Beaulieu's right arm was ripped apart. Another soldier also was wounded.

"It took me out of the jungle and to a hospital and eventually home," Beaulieu said. It would take several more years of rehabilitation before he could use his arm.

He received a Purple Heart for being wounded in combat. And he's proud of that. But he discovered that although he had a Purple Heart specialty license plate for his four-wheeled vehicle, there were no specialty license plates for motorcycles in Florida. And he wanted one.

So, Beaulieu got busy. Starting in February 2016, he contacted everyone he could think of to try to help him get a Purple Heart license plate for his motorcycle. Among the people he contacted was Curt Ebitz, adjutant with the Aaron A. Weaver Chapter 776 Military Order of the Purple Heart, a group based in Lecanto, of which Beaulieu is a member.

Ebitz said about Beaulieu, "Most people would give up, but he never did. He was persistent. Our chapter got involved when he ran into obstacles. And we were able to weigh in by contacting people we knew in state government and in the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs."

Beaulieu first started working with former state Rep. Jimmie T. Smith, who was succeeded by state Rep. Dr. Ralph Massullo, R-Lecanto.

After many stops and starts, Massullo successfully shepherded through the state Legislature a bill authorizing specialty license plates for motorcycles, as well as many other items. State Sen. Wilton Simpson, a Republican who also represents Citrus County, was instrumental, too.

Gov. Rick DeSantis signed the bill in October 2020, and it's taken this long for the Purple Heart plates to be manufactured and distributed to such outlets as the Citrus County Tax Collector's Office.

Beaulieu said the bill also authorized specialty motorcycle license plates for veterans and female veterans, as well as a specialty auto license plate for recipients of the Bronze Star.

He said one of the most important things is to "express my thanks to everyone who helped. They need to be recognized. This was not a one-person endeavor."



Glenn Beaulieu will put his new license plate on his 2008 Harley-Davidson Road Glide. His dog, Abby, is his constant companion, he says.

POW/MIA News



From DPAA

First-Ever United States and the Republic of Korea Joint Repatriation Ceremony

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) held its first-ever joint repatriation and wreath laying ceremony at Joint Base Pearl

Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, on September 22, 2021.

The strong and long-lasting partnership and shared noble effort between DPAA and the Ministry of National Defense Agency for Killed In Action Recovery and Identification (MAKRI) to return the Korean War fallen made the ceremony possible. DPAA’s mission is to achieve the fullest possible accounting for missing and unaccounted for U.S. personnel to their families and our nation.

During the ceremony, three transfer cases were exchanged between DPAA and MAKRI. One transfer case, bearing the remains of a U.S. soldier, represented the six sets of remains repatriated to the U.S. from the care and custody of the ROK. Identifications of the six possible U.S. remains have not been made but they will be assessed into the DPAA laboratory for further work on identification.

The remains were transferred between the ROK and U.S. through the United Nations Command (UNC). The remains were initially flagged with the country in possession of each service member. Honor Guards from the ROK, the U.S., and UNC solemnly and deliberately removed, folded, and replaced each flag, symbolizing the formal exchange between each country through UNC. After the Honor Guard loaded the respective remains, service members laid a wreath in honor of the fallen.

This ceremony will likely be the last of such magnitude and signifies the last of the 68 ROK servicemen in the care of DPAA. The strong partnership between DPAA and MAKRI will continue to thrive due to the shared values, missions, and objectives to search for, recover and identify missing service members.

To view the ceremony, please visit the archived link at: <https://www.facebook.com/dodpaa>



On The Hill



Sens. Moran, Tester Introduce Bill to Expand Treatment & Research for Prostate Cancer in Veterans

U.S. Senators Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) and Jon Tester (D-Mont.) – ranking member and chairman of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee – introduced legislation on Sep.13 to expand treatment and research of prostate cancer to help diagnose and treat veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

“Prostate cancer is currently the number one cancer diagnosed by the Veterans Health

Administration,” said Sen. Moran. “Early detection of prostate cancer should be a priority of the VA, and this legislation will help support critical research and expedite prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment among veterans.”

“With hundreds of thousands of veterans suffering from prostate cancer a year, VA needs a standardized pathway to increase detection and treatment of this disease as early as possible,” said Sen. Tester. “Our bipartisan bill will help support critical, science-driven research that’ll lead to earlier detections and save veterans’ lives.”

The Veterans’ Prostate Cancer Treatment and Research Act (S 2720) would:

- Expand upon the current VA and Prostate Cancer Foundation partnership.
- Require the VA to establish and publish an interdisciplinary clinical diagnosis and treatment pathway in the VA National Surgery Office, in collaboration with the VA National Program Office of Oncology, the VA Office of Research and Development and VA Primary Care for all stages of prostate cancer, from early detection to end of life care.
- Give the VA the authority to collaborate with other research entities on creation of clinical pathway including the National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) and the Department of Defense.
- Require the VA to establish a prostate cancer program utilizing the clinical pathway mandated in this legislation, which will receive direct oversight from the VA Undersecretary of Health, include yearly program implementation evaluation, be metric and data driven,

and include an education plan for patients and providers.

- Direct the VA to produce a plan to Congress detailing funding through the VA Office of Research and Development for supporting prostate cancer research to make certain no funding included is duplicative.
- Direct the VA to submit a report to Congress on the barriers and challenges associated with creating a national prostate cancer registry to include recommendations for centralizing data about veterans with prostate cancer in an effort to improve outcomes and research.

Veterans Affairs News



From Government Exec

30,177 Military Members Have Died by Suicide since 9/11. Why?

In the 20 years since the September 11 terror attacks, four times as many deaths among members of the

military have been caused by suicide compared to those killed in action.

That’s 30,177 active duty personnel and veterans of the post-9/11 wars who have taken their own lives.

While these high suicide rates can partially be attributed to the mental health toll of participating in war—exposure to trauma, stress, access to guns, difficulty returning to civilian life after duty—there are additional factors, one of the biggest being traumatic brain injury, unique to the wars stemming from 9/11, that contribute to the rising suicide rates among military members, says Thomas “Ben” Suitt, who earlier this year earned a PhD from Boston University’s graduate program in religion, specializing in the sociology of religion in the military and social ethics.

“Among the demographic of veterans aged 18 to 34, who most likely served in post-9/11 conflicts, the suicide rate per 100,000 was 25.5 in 2005. Today, that rate is 45.9 per 100,000,” Suitt says.

While pursuing his doctorate, Suitt was studying moral injury and the role of faith in 9/11 veterans. Talking with them for his research, he was struck by their stories of trauma.

“I was looking at Veteran Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DoD) data, and I saw that no one had put it in terms of how bad suicide rates are getting,” Suitt says. “Rates are getting worse and worse.”

Historically, he says, data indicate that suicide rates typically go down among members of the military during wars. But military suicides have gone up during the War on Terror, meeting and surpassing the suicide rate among civilians.

WHY HAVE MILITARY SUICIDES SPIKED SINCE 9/11?

Suitt decided to look into factors specific to post-9/11 combat that might contribute to the rise. In his findings, published in June, he firstly points out that there’s been an increase in military sexual trauma, which he says can be complexly traumatizing because victims often have to continue working alongside their attacker.

“Military sexual trauma affects 55% of women and 38% of men,” he says. “Seventy-one percent of female veterans are seeking therapy to treat [post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)] from military sexual trauma.”

Suitt says the military’s historically masculine, machismo culture affects how women are received by their peers in the military.

Another rising trend since September 11 has been exposure of soldiers to more and more improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which has led to a significant increase in the number of soldiers and veterans experiencing traumatic brain injuries, known in shorthand as TBIs.

“On one hand, [soldiers] have the stress burden of knowing that [while deployed in combat zones] there are IEDs everywhere,” Suitt says. “Then, people involved in an IED explosion get TBIs—these have become the signature injury of the War on Terror.”

Some soldiers, he says, have experienced between 15 and 20 IED explosions and subsequent brain injuries. “The crazy thing is that because of medical advances, people are surviving [explosions] and being redeployed. You want soldiers to survive—but they are being redeployed so many times, contributing to chronic pain, PTSD, and TBI.”

Those three factors add up to create what’s known as polytrauma, a condition that Suitt says became common among post-9/11 veterans. On top of that, there’s another issue awaiting veterans when they finally do return home to the US.

“What makes the War on Terror unique is that a poll in 2018 showed that 42% of voting Americans didn’t know we were still at war,” Suitt says. Although the recent US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan helped thrust the war back into the spotlight, he says veterans of post-9/11 wars have for the most part been returning home to a disinterested public.



MORAL INJURY

To help prevent military suicides, Suitt says focusing on how to better receive veterans back into civilian communities is a good place to focus energies.

“Civilians should really care,” he says, “and the first step is inviting veterans to talk with you, building relationships with them, and actively making sure that veterans are invited to be a part of the community.”

That reintegration into civilian life—and acknowledgment from the public of what veterans have been through—could help to counterbalance the effects of moral injury.

Suitt says the term “moral injury” was first coined in the 1990s by a psychologist who worked with Vietnam veterans. What they described wasn’t PTSD, but a sense of betrayal by their higher-ups, the government—or, in a religious sense, divine betrayal by a higher power.

“They thought God would protect them, or their best friend, but when terrible experiences happen or your best friend gets killed, it destroys their sense of faith and goodness in the world,” Suitt says.

Veterans can also feel a sense of injury from the perpetration of killing someone in combat, and then they may no longer view themselves as good people, which makes it so that they can’t participate in their communities or continue living their lives, as their sense of self has been destroyed.

“I recently spoke with a veteran who experienced moral injury because he witnessed enemy forces killing women and children,” Suitt says. “If he and his troops were forced to make difficult choices as a result of that? At its simplest, it’s a betrayal of what’s right—a rupture in your self-narrative that you’re a good person.”

PREVENTIVE, NOT REACTIONARY ACTION

The military relies heavily on their chaplains to do a lot of counseling, but Suitt believes those efforts could be bolstered by incorporating social workers and mental health counselors more holistically into debriefing troops after combat missions.

As much as Suitt says he does not want to be critical of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense, he does want to hold the government to task, to make sure they are doing everything in their power to take care of troops. He spoke directly with the head of suicide prevention at the VA, a conversation in which they discussed the VA’s new campaign focused on gun prudence and safety, based on an idea of creating a large triangle between guns, ammunition, and a veteran who may be struggling with suicidal ideation.

“You want to increase the lengths of the legs between those triangles,” Suitt says, which could mean removing guns from the house, or keeping guns in a locked safe with ammunition stored separately.

Above all, Suitt wants to raise awareness about the new challenges that the post-9/11 wars have presented to American troops, and to crush stereotypes that prevent progress being made in caring for veterans’ mental health.

“There’s a prevailing stereotype that veterans are simultaneously heroes and broken people because of the traumatic experiences they have endured—which makes it easy to conclude, oh, well of course suicide rates are bad among veterans,” he says.

That’s why, he says, military leadership needs to bake today’s new research and resources around suicide prevention into military culture.

“If [soldiers] are going to clean their weapons and take care of their physical health, then their mental health has to be a primary factor too. We have to be preventative, not reactionary,” he says.

From Military Times

Veteran Disability Claims Backlog Expected to Grow in Coming Months



Veterans Affairs officials don’t know how bad the backlog of veteran disability claims will get this fall, but they know it’s getting worse.

The backlog — defined as the number of first-time disability and pension claims that have been awaiting decisions for more than four months — topped 215,000 the week of Sept. 13, up 16 percent since July and nearly triple what it was in early 2020 before the coronavirus pandemic in America.

In a press conference with reporters on Sept. 15, VA Secretary Denis McDonough acknowledged that the problem is going to get worse before it gets better.

“We anticipate the backlog to further increase this fall as we process claims for new presumptive conditions from the Vietnam and Gulf wars,” he said.

“We’re in the field fulfilling those claims now. But we want to keep warning our veterans about what to expect, so they see what’s coming in the same way that we do.”

Before the coronavirus pandemic, the claims backlog hadn’t been above 200,000 cases since 2015. In the years before that, the delayed cases swelled to more than 600,000, drawing national criticism from advocates and lawmakers who said the slow pace of work was delaying needed financial support for injured veterans.

After the department digitized most of its medical records and hired more claims processors, officials had been able to keep the backlog under 100,000 cases up until early 2020.

Office closings due to the pandemic and new claims filed for blue water veterans from the Vietnam war — individuals who served in coastal waters but were given presumptive disability benefits status by Congress because of possible exposure to chemical defoliants — led to the recent spike in delayed processing.

Past VA leaders have said that reaching zero backlogged cases is impractical, because in many cases the complexity of claims or concerns about incomplete medical records require staff to take extra time to ensure veterans are getting all of the payouts they are owed.

Officials could close out those cases quicker to meet the backlog deadline, but then the files would end up in the appeals process, which can take years to resolve.

But McDonough said he is committed to driving the backlog claims number back down. VA officials plan to hire about 2,000 new personnel to help sort through the existing files and anticipated surge of new ones coming this fall, as the department begins to offer presumptive benefit status for certain burn-pit related illnesses for the first time.

“We think that we’re staying ahead of this so that we don’t fall into some of the big backlogs we’ve seen in the past,” he said. “But any individual who is impacted matters very much to me, so I want to make sure we’re communicating about that and preparing for it.”

Despite the recent surge in caseload, VA officials have not seen a corresponding decrease in claims processing accuracy. According to internal department data, about 95 percent of cases are correctly completed, a figure that has remained steady over the last three years.

From MOAA

VA Report: Many ‘Inaccurate Decisions’ on Blue Water Navy Veteran Claims



A sampling of thousands of VA claims filed primarily by veterans who served in the waters off Vietnam showed about 46% were inaccurate, resulting in over- or underpayments to a group familiarly known as Blue Water Navy veterans.

Of the 4,600-claim sample highlighted in a 43-page report by the VA’s Office of Inspector General 2,100 veterans “had inaccurate decisions,” the report states. This resulted in \$25.2 million in overpayments and \$12 million in underpayments. The bulk of the errors – 95% – “involved [Veterans Benefits Administration] employees not following general rating policies, such as inaccurately assigning retroactive effective dates for evaluations.”

The report’s authors recommended the VA clarify portions of its Blue Water Navy claims process, including how staffers should address potential discrepancies in data generated by the department’s Ship Locator Tool, which uses digitized deck logs to help determine a veteran’s benefit eligibility. Service members aboard vessels operating as far as 12 nautical miles from the Vietnam coast, as well as those who served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides and may be eligible for benefits connected to conditions related to that exposure.

VA officials also said staffers underwent additional training on the claims process. That training wrapped up in the spring of 2021, after the report’s authors analyzed the sample cases.

Veterans with improperly processed claims will receive notification from the VA. Underpaid veterans can expect a letter stating they’ll receive retroactive payments via the same method they receive their regular VA compensation.

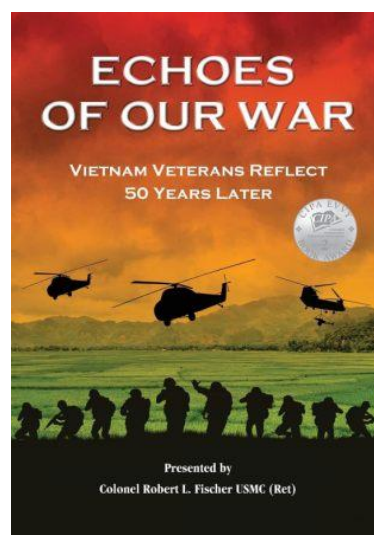
Overpaid veterans will get a letter explaining the error and giving them 60 days to reach out to the VA’s Debt Management Center to arrange a repayment plan. If the center doesn’t hear from the veteran in 60 days, it will send a letter notifying the veteran of plans to recoup the funds.

The report also found the VA had “met the outreach requirements” of the 2019 law, doing so via radio and television ads, letters, social media messaging, and other lines of communication.

MOAA joined other military and veterans service organizations in support of the bill, which was signed into law in June 2019 after failing to clear Congress in previous sessions. A January 2019 Federal Circuit court ruling granted presumptive exposure to Blue Water Navy veterans; the bill further codified and expanded the presumption.

Book Review

From Vietnam Magazine - by Marc Leepson



Echoes of Our War: Vietnam Veterans Reflect 50 Years Later Review

Marine vets from all recent wars who meet for lunch monthly at a steakhouse near Denver, ruminate on their wartime service and the war itself in *Echoes of Our War: Vietnam Veterans Reflect 50 Years Later*. Retired Marine Col. Bob Fischer, a 1955 Naval Academy graduate who

served as an adviser to a South Vietnamese marine battalion in 1966-68, selected these 10 veterans—nine Marines and a Navy

corpsman—to share their stories because, he writes, “it is time to examine and reevaluate precisely what happened to them and the many thousands who served honorably in a confusing war that was anything but honorable.”

Fischer had significant help in editing the book from Mark Hardcastle, an Air Force Academy graduate who served in the 1990-91 Gulf War. He also received editing assistance from two Marines whose stories are told in the book: the novelist and poet Dan Guenther, and Grady Birdsong, a writer whose nearly 60-page entry is the longest one.

Guenther developed 10 questions that the veterans answered while writing their entries. Most focused on the first one: “Describe your role, including the duration and place of your Vietnam tour, and several significant events that you think are representative of that experience.”

Former Pfc. Bill Purcell, who served with the 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, in Vietnam from September 1967 to February 1968, provides a detailed account of his 13 days of street combat in the 1968 Battle of Hue during the communists’ Tet Offensive. His tour ended abruptly when a mortar shell dropped into the middle of Purcell’s platoon and he “got thrown up in the air, slammed down into the pavement and knocked out cold.” Purcell suffered severe injuries and was medevaced out.

Guenther, who served in Vietnam for 19 months with the 1st Marine Division’s Fleet Marine Force, vividly recounts his tour as a lieutenant with the 3rd Amphibious Tractor Battalion and later with the 1st Motor Transport Battalion at the 1st Marine Division headquarters. Like all of the other entries, Guenther’s contains in-country photos, along with a list of his awards.

Birdsong was a corporal with the 1st and 3rd Marine divisions from February 1968 to November 1969. He gives an extensive response to Guenther’s question: “As you look back, what are some of the thoughts and feelings you have about the war?” His answer jibes with those of virtually every Marine in the book. He castigates Gen. William Westmoreland and other “generals at the highest levels of command” and “politicians at the highest levels of government” for seriously mismanaging the war.

“Militarily, we had the war won,” he writes. “We could have finished the job. . . We simply walked away, washed our hands and left [the South Vietnamese] to their fate.”

The veterans were also asked: “Was the Vietnam War a waste?” Purcell answered: “A complete waste.” In response to another question about whether the Vietnam War was morally wrong, he concurred with the views of other Marines in the book. “I firmly believe what we were doing was right,” Purcell said. “Granted, there were events, some documented and some not, of immoral acts. But it was war.”

The “real immorality,” he added, “was our elected leaders in D.C. trying to dictate how the war should be prosecuted.” Westmoreland, he said, was a “pompous showboat and a fool.”

Newsletter articles/ stories/photos

Any articles, stories and/or photos submitted for the newsletter must be received by the "cut off" date for any given month. Photos must be accompanied by text which describes the event, names, dates and any other pertinent facts so our readers understand the story behind the photo(s). The newsletter editor will announce the "cut off" dates at each Chapter meeting. The "cut off" date for our November 2021 newsletter is 22 October 2021. Due to space availability, the editor reserves the right to include or not include photos for a given month.

This newsletter printed by



**97B Pierson Lane
Windsor, CT
www.printhubct.com
print@printhubct.com
860-580-7909**

Hartford Vet Center



25 Elm Street, Suite A
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Phone: (860)-563-8800
Fax: (860)-563-8805



**Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.
Greater Hartford Chapter 120
P.O. Box 4136
Hartford, CT 06145**