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Meetings

Chapter 120 membership meeting will be held on Thursday, January 6, 2022 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, January 27 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.

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Study Finds Increased Risk of MGUS in Vietnam Vets Exposed To Agent Orange



A study that used stored blood samples from U.S. Air Force personnel who conducted aerial herbicide spray missions of Agent Orange during the Vietnam War found a more than 2-fold increased risk of the precursor to myeloma known as monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS), according to an article published online by JAMA Oncology.

While the cause of MGUS and multiple myeloma (plasma cell cancer) remains largely unclear, studies have reported an elevated risk of multiple myeloma among farmers and other agricultural workers and pesticides have been thought to be the basis for these associations, according to study background.

Ola Landgren, M.D., Ph.D., of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York, and coauthors examined the association between MGUS and exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War in a study sample of 958 male veterans, including 479 Operation Ranch Hand veterans who were involved in aerial herbicide spray missions and 479 comparison veterans who were not.

The study found the overall prevalence of MGUS was 7.1 percent in the Operation Ranch Hand veterans and 3.1 percent in the comparison veterans, which translates to a 2.4-fold increased risk for MGUS in Operation Ranch Hand veterans.



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Chapter/State News

CT Veterans Hall of Fame Inducts Nine Veterans



On Friday, December 3rd, the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) in partnership with the CT Military Department and the Office of Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz inducted nine Veterans into the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame. DVA Commissioner Thomas J. Saadi, Lt. Governor Bysiewicz and CT Adjutant General Fran Evon presented the honorees with their medals and certificates of induction into the Veterans Hall of Fame. Also, speaking at the ceremony were U.S.

Senator Richard Blumenthal and Director Alfred Montoya of the Federal VA Healthcare System in CT.

Induction into the Hall of Fame recognizes the impact and inspirational work Veterans have contributed to their communities after their military service. The Hall of Fame class of 2021, collectively served for decades in the military in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps – beginning in the Korean War and continuing throughout the Cold War, the Vietnam War, Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terrorism. Their commitment and honor demonstrated through their military service set the foundation for their continued contributions and achievements throughout their post military lives during which they have collectively served tens of thousands of people as volunteers, advocates, in appointed and elected offices and in the professional careers at the local, state and federal levels – we honor them for their service and contributions achieved for others across this state and Nation.

“It was a great honor to induct such an accomplished group of Veterans into the Veterans Hall of Fame. Their commitment to service demonstrated in their military careers set the foundation for their continued contributions and achievements on behalf of others throughout their post military lives. These Veterans measure success by what they have achieved for others - their neighbors, their fellow Veterans, and for a multitude of communities, causes and residents across this state and Nation. They are true patriots who have placed service to others before service to self”, said Commissioner Saadi.

The 2021 CT Veterans Hall of Fame Inductees:

- Gerald Augustine - U.S. Army - Middletown
- Paul Barry - U.S. Marine Corps - East Hartford
- John Bevins - U.S. Navy - Waterbury
- Stanley Borusiewicz - U.S. Marine Corps - Naugatuck
- Carlita Cotton - U.S. Air Force - U.S. Air Force - Mansfield
- William Currin - U.S. Army - Middlefield
- Brian Ohler - U.S. Army - North Canaan
- James Shelmerdine - U.S. Army - East Hartford
- Brendan Sniffin - U.S. Air Force - Danbury

Birthday Wishes

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

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Vernon Biederman</i> | <i>Stephen Brown</i> |
| <i>Andrew Crafa</i> | <i>Arthur N. Desrosiers</i> |
| <i>Stanley T. Duro</i> | <i>Henry E. Jackson</i> |
| <i>Helen McDonald</i> | <i>Thomas Parker</i> |
| <i>William M. Quirk</i> | <i>Penny Siggia</i> |
| <i>Jim Tackett</i> | |

Happy Birthday!

Receive “The Connection” by E-Mail

The monthly Chapter 120 newsletter, *The Connection*, is available by e-mail. Currently, 100 members receive the newsletter by e-mail, saving the Chapter over \$1,600 in printing and postal fees annually. The newsletter is available in Adobe format (.pdf), attached to your e-mail. If you wish to receive the newsletter via e-mail, please e-mail the newsletter editor at ctchapter120@aol.com

Paul Francis Barry, Jr.
Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame
VVA Chapter 120 Life Member



CPL. Paul Francis Barry, Jr., a Vietnam Veteran, served honorably in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1966 to 1972. As a former Veterans Service Office, Paul coordinated burials for three Connecticut state veteran's cemeteries and dedicated 30+ years servicing veterans and communities. In 2019, Paul and the Military Advisory Council worked hard and tirelessly in terms of funding, designing and the development of what is now known as the Falling Star Memorial with three bronze statues paying homage to veterans and Gold Star Families. Paul's commitment to veterans is evident based on the number of Veterans Boards, Councils, and Commissions he's seated on including the 1st Congressional District Veterans and Military Advisory Committee, Vietnam Veterans of America East Hartford Chapter 120, CT Fallen Star Memorial Steering Committee, and the CT Department of Veterans Affairs Board of Trustees. Paul is also the Honorary Captain of the 1st Governor's Foot Guard and Delegate to 12 Vietnam Veterans of America National Conventions. In March 2019, Paul hosted the Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pinning Ceremony at the CT State Armory. His commitment to his brothers and sisters in arms is unwavering. The ceremony acknowledged and welcomed Vietnam Veterans who when returning home did not receive a warm welcome. The ceremony had a profound impact on every veteran in attendance and Paul pinned and saluted each veteran. Paul's civic contributions include advocacy for policies that assist veterans and their families. This advocacy brings the issues to the table and has helped with the implementation of the expansion of the Educational Benefits for Post 9/11 Veterans and the Cares Act which provided funding to expand telemedicine, deploy mobile treatment centers and make

improvements to VA facilities and state-run veterans' homes to address the needs of veterans being treated for Covid-19. Paul's moral compass is guided by the U.S. Marine Corps motto "Ductus Example"; lead by example and behave in a manner that inspires others.

From State Senator Saud Anwar

I was honored last week to present citations to two local veterans who have served our country and community admirably as they were inducted into the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame. We are lucky to have Corporal Paul Francis Barry Jr., a veteran of the Vietnam War who served in the Marines, and James Shelmerdine, who earned a Purple Heart during his time serving in the Korean War.

Their service is far from the only admirable thing about them; both men have volunteered in our communities for decades. Cpl. Barry served on many veterans boards, helping to advocate for educational benefits for post-9/11 veterans and fighting for improvements to VA facilities and veterans homes; Mr. Shelmerdine's service includes as an East Hartford constable, overseeing and dedicating East Hartford's Korean War Memorial, and managed the town's Memorial Day Parade, as well as a 17-year member of the Connecticut Veterans Day Parade and a member of the Connecticut Veterans Memorial Committee.

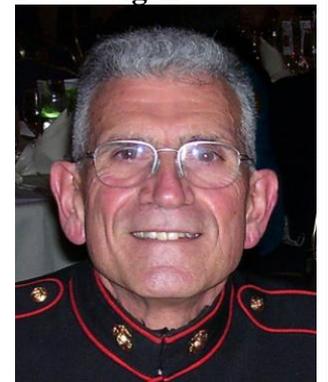
Chapter 120 Members of the Year
Paul Barry and Pete Galgano

Paul Barry



Paul has advocated for veterans and their families for years. He has worked on many projects throughout the state, coordinating with federal, state and local governments - and getting positive results. Paul is a member of the Board of Trustees at the State Veterans Home. He is a 2021 inductee to the CT Veterans Hall of Fame.

Pete Galgano



Pete, like Paul, has advocated for veterans and their families for years. He is the Veterans Outreach Coordinator at Middlesex Community College, assisting student veterans at the college. Pete is a member of the Board of Trustees at the State Veterans Home. He is a 2012 inductee to the CT Veterans Hall of Fame.

Appreciation Award to Nicole Burgess



Nicole received the Chapter 120 Appreciation Award in recognition of her continuous participation and enthusiasm in supporting Chapter 120 special and fund-raising events benefiting veterans and their families.

Congratulations to all three of you!

POW/MIA News



Connecticut Soldier Accounted For From Korean War

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that Army Cpl. Benjamin R. Bazzell, 18, of Seymour, Connecticut, killed during the Korean War, was accounted for April 16, 2020.

In late 1950, Bazzell was a member of Headquarters Battery, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported killed in action on Nov. 30, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered.



On July 27, 2018, following the summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un in June 2018, North Korea turned over 55 boxes, purported to contain the remains of American service members killed during the Korean War. The remains arrived at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii on Aug. 1, 2018, and were subsequently accessioned into the DPAA laboratory for identification.

To identify Bazzell’s remains, scientists from DPAA used anthropological analysis, as well as circumstantial evidence. Additionally, scientists from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System used mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), Y chromosome (Y-STR), and autosomal DNA (auSTR) analysis.

Bazzell’s name is recorded on the American Battle Monuments Commission’s Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, along with the others who are still missing from the Korean War. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for.

Bazzell will be buried in Kent, Washington. The date has yet to be decided.

For family and funeral information, contact the Army Casualty Office at (800) 892-2490.

On The Hill



President Biden signs 4 bills benefitting veterans, families

President Joe Biden on Tuesday signed four bipartisan bills benefiting veterans into law, including a measure that would order a study on race and ethnicity disparities related to the Department of Veterans Affairs compensation benefits.

“Keeping faith with American veterans requires much more than laying wreaths or making more oaths. It requires acts,” Biden said.

S. 1031, sponsored by Sen. Raphael Warnock (D-GA), directs the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to study race and ethnicity

disparities in compensation benefits administered by VA, disability ratings determined by VA, and claims rejection for VA benefits.

“The weapons of war and the nature of injuries they inflict don’t differentiate based on race,” Biden said.

The bill requires that GAO brief Congress on the study results within a year and submit a report on its findings.

The Hire Veteran Health Heroes Act of 2021 requires the VA and Defense Department to develop a program that actively recruits and hires medical personnel in federal health care jobs following their military service.

The measure was introduced by Sens. Mike Braun (R-Ind), and Maggie Hassan, (D-N.H), and Reps. Kathleen Rice (D-N.Y), and Bob Latta (R-Ohio). It passed both houses of Congress unanimously.

“For both our veterans and our military medical personnel, service isn’t just what they do, it’s who they are,” Biden said.

The Colonel John M. McHugh Tuition Fairness for Survivors Act of 2021 will expand in-state tuition benefits for family members of veterans.

“For so many of our service members, their service to us is also about building a better life for themselves and for their families,” Biden said.

The law ensures that surviving spouses and children of veterans who access the Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance (DEA) program are eligible for in-state tuition wherever they choose to go to school, regardless of what state they live in.

The bill was introduced by Sens. John Tester (D-Mont), and Jerry Moran (R-Kan) and Reps. Barry Moore (R-Ala), and David Trone (D-Md). It passed unanimously in both chambers of Congress.

The Protecting Moms Who Served Act of 2021, directs the VA to begin a maternity care coordination program giving providers training and support to address the needs of pregnant and postpartum veterans.

The bill authorizes \$15 million in additional program funding for fiscal year 2022 and was introduced by Iraq war veteran Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill), Sen. Susan Collins (D-ME) and Rep. Lauren Underwood (D-Ill). It passed the Senate unanimously. Only nine House members, all of whom are Republican, voted against the measure.

Veterans Affairs News



VA statement on GPO printing and mailing delay

Due to supply chain and staffing shortages, the vendor contracted by the Government Publishing Office to provide printing services for the Department of Veterans Affairs is experiencing delays in printing and mailing notification letters to Veterans and claimants. The disruption may impact the ability of some claimants to meet required deadlines via written correspondence with VA.

In response to the mailing delays and to protect the best interest of claimants, the Veterans Benefits Administration is extending their response period by 90-calendar days for claimants with letters dated between July 13, 2021 and Dec. 31, 2021.

If a claimant does not reply to a time-limited notification, such as, making an election of benefits or services, or reporting for a scheduled compensation and pension examination, VBA will not take adverse action to deny, reduce or terminate benefits and services unless: 1) the claimant is contacted and there is documentation of their right to respond; 2) the requested information has been received; or 3) the response period has lapsed.

VA and GPO are proactively working to quickly address the mailing delays. For questions on this matter, Veterans and claimants can contact VA at 800-827-1000.

Veterans who filed an appeal with the Board of Veterans’ Appeals can contact the Board directly, or contact their VSO who has power of attorney for information specific to Board correspondence, scheduled hearings at the Board and receiving your Board decision.

From Stars & Stripes

VA looking to move resources to facilities in southern US to meet growing veterans population in the region

The growing veterans’ population in the southern region of the United States is forcing the Department of Veterans Affairs to reassess how it manages and expands its health care facilities throughout the country, VA Secretary Denis McDonough said Thursday, Dec.16.

As part of a national tour that’s taken McDonough to 23 states, he spent Thursday visiting VA hospitals, cemeteries and Vet Centers in Texas. His first stop was the South Texas Veterans Health Care System in San Antonio, which has seen a 15% increase in patients in the past two years. It’s now the fastest growing VA facility in the country, he said.

Market assessments show veterans appear to be moving to the South and West, particularly to Texas, California, Arizona and

Florida, McDonough said. This has caused the VA to begin evaluating its resources to determine how they could shift them to better suit the demand in those areas.

The VA will submit a report in January to a congressionally approved commission that will spend 2022 evaluating the report and making proposals.

It could mean some resources move from one location to another, though McDonough said he expects pushback from Congress and communities that could see their resources downsized or moved to another location.

“It’s a very real problem, but the thing that I think is most important for our veterans and our health care providers to know is that our commitment to our veterans is rock solid wherever you live,” McDonough said. “It may be that the mode of care that we provide changes, but the fact of care and the fact of the presence will not.”

During those changes, he said it will be important to expand the options available to women veterans, who are now enrolling at the VA at nearly the same rate as men, 44% to 49%, respectively.

In San Antonio, women are the fastest growing demographic at the VA, which is in part because women make up about 12% of the veteran population in Texas. That national average is 9%, McDonough said.

“It’s also a harbinger of what we will see, including a tripling up to 30% of our veterans just over the next decade and a half or so, which is why it’s so important that we’re increasing access to gender specific care,” he said.

The VA has already added a women’s services coordinator to each facility, but the agency is looking at ways to offer child care during appointments as a means to encourage women to choose the VA, McDonough said.

Overall, only about 9 million of the nation’s 19 million veterans choose to go to the VA for health care.

Meanwhile, the Veterans Benefits Administration is also dealing with increased demand. McDonough has already pledged to hire about 2,000 new workers to help reduce the backlog of claims, which has grown to about 260,000. A backlogged claim is one that has been waiting more than 120 days for assessment.

The VA has hired about 900 personnel so far. McDonough said he anticipates they will get all 2,000 new personnel trained and rating claims by the end of the spring, and the backlog will be below 100,000 by 2024.

That backlog, in part, increased because of a new eligibility afforded veterans of the Vietnam War who are diagnosed with hypothyroidism, Parkinson’s-like symptoms and bladder cancer, McDonough said.

He said he is concerned the timeline could be impacted as the VA considers expanding the types of illnesses connected to toxic exposure.

During conflicts of the past 30 years, the military often used open-air burn pits to dispose of waste, which meant toxic plumes of smoke blew around bases. Veterans diagnosed with cancer, respiratory issues and lung disease at young ages have blamed the pits for exposing them to airborne toxins. They have sought VA benefits and health care, but the department contended for years that there wasn’t sufficient evidence to support their claims.

Last year, the VA added asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis as conditions presumed to be caused by the exposure and President Joe Biden has asked the VA to research if several rare respiratory cancers and constrictive bronchiolitis could also be connected.

In Texas, McDonough said there are also serious discussions about building a new VA hospital south of San Antonio in what’s known as the Rio Grande Valley.

“We’re having, believe me, intensive, top-to-bottom discussions about where we need facilities, where our facilities need to be updated, and where facilities may be over-weighted,” he said. “We’ve talked about our infrastructure needs in every market in the country.”

From Vietnam Magazine

A Marine Who Made the Ultimate Sacrifice and Why He Did It



Marine Pfc. Douglas Dickey

Why, one must ask, would a healthy young man in the prime of life throw his body onto a live grenade and simultaneously pull a second one underneath himself, knowing it meant his certain death?

On Easter Sunday, March 26, 1967, while desperately battling North Vietnamese Army regulars near Vietnam’s Demilitarized Zone during Operation Beacon Hill, U.S. Marine

Pfc. Douglas Dickey, 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, did exactly that. Knowing he would surely die, 20-year-old Dickey leapt on the grenades, smothered the blasts with his body and saved the lives of five Marines in his platoon. For Dickey’s selfless “final valiant act” he posthumously received the Medal of Honor.

The reason why Dickey consciously dove on those grenades cannot be known with absolute certainty yet can be surmised by reading an excellent new book, *A Final Valiant Act*:

The Story of Doug Dickey, Medal of Honor, by retired Marine Lt. Col. John B. Lang. A Naval Academy graduate and decorated combat veteran of the Gulf War, Iraq War and operations in Somalia, Lang has crafted a compelling, detailed and comprehensive examination of Dickey's life, woven into the lives and too-often tragic deaths of comrades in 2nd Platoon.

Lang takes readers to the platoon's annual postwar reunions, moving reminders of the courage and sacrifice exhibited by Dickey and his fellow fallen Marines. The author also provides an excellent "snapshot" of the Marine Corps in northernmost South Vietnam in 1967—then facetiously termed "Marineland" (think "Disneyland" with live ammo) by their Army counterparts. The Corps does everything in its own unique manner, Lang emphasizes.

Importantly, this book provides readers the best insight into the life and experiences of a Medal of Honor recipient since the acclaimed autobiographies of World War II Army hero Audie Murphy, *To Hell and Back*, and U.S. Special Forces officer, Roger H. C. Donlon, the Vietnam War's first recipient and author of *Beyond Nam Dong*.

Reading Lang's book, we get to really know Dickey. He wasn't a natural athlete, as revealed at Marine boot camp, where his struggles with the physical training test led to a delayed graduation after a miserable, humiliating stint in the dreaded "Physical Conditioning Platoon." What Dickey lacked in physical skill, he made up for in grit, guts and determination. He was a dependable, hard worker on his family farm in western Ohio and with his Marine squads in Vietnam. A genuinely nice guy, he was someone friends and colleagues knew always "had their back."

Dickey knew exactly what he was doing when he unhesitatingly leapt on those grenades and understood precisely what it would cost him, as Lang proves through eyewitness accounts revealed in his book.

The testimony of 2nd Platoon's Navy hospital corpsman, Greg "Doc" Long, echoes the recollections of several other eyewitnesses. Long "saw Doug look down at the first grenade. Then he saw Doug look up—and glance into the faces of the men around him who were trapped in the grenade's blast area—they were his friends. 'He kind of glanced around before he dove on the grenade,' Long said... 'he fell on top of [the first grenade]—and looked up—and here come another [grenade],' Long said, 'and he grabbed that one...I remember him turning his head and looking me right in the face...And it seemed like forever and we were just looking at each other. I mean, he knew he was going to die...And he had this pacified look on his face...I was just starting to think, "Whew! They're duds!"—when they exploded.'"

Dickey's body absorbed the full blast of the two Chinese stick grenades. He died instantly. Long lamented how close Dickey came to avoiding this supreme sacrifice. He was killed just three days before he could have gone home.

Dickey did, of course, go home to Greenville, Ohio—his broken body traveled there in a military casket. He was laid to rest with

full military honors in the town's Brock Cemetery on Friday, April 7. It seemed like all Darke County turned out to honor Dickey. By the end of the war, 24 more young Darke County men joined Dickey in Brock and surrounding village cemeteries.

Dickey's self-sacrifice was not the first time a U.S. Marine had done the exact same thing in nearly exact circumstances. On Iwo Jima on Feb. 20, 1945, 17-year-old Marine Pvt. Jack Lucas threw his body on an enemy grenade, then, like Dickey, grabbed a second grenade and pulled it underneath his body. Incredibly, Lucas survived the explosions and lived an additional 60 years.

The World War II Marine provided an answer to the question of "why" anyone would dive onto live grenades: "I saw two grenades over in front of my buddies...I hollered 'Grenades!' to alert my buddies," then jumped onto them as they exploded.

Dickey dived on those grenades to save his buddies. Everything about Dickey, as told in Lang's outstanding book, leads to that conclusion: "Fifty-eight Marines eventually earned the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War," he writes. "Forty-four of those were posthumous awards. They went to young men who, like Douglas Dickey, died saving their buddies."

Added confirmation comes from former Marine Colin "Mac" McClelland, who related a prophetic anecdote from the time he and Dickey were discussing an article "in Stars and Stripes about a Marine or soldier who had just been awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor for diving on a grenade to save his comrades...And I remember [Dickey] straight out looked at me—right in the eye, and said, 'You know, Mac, I'd do it.' And I said, 'Are you serious? ...You won't know that!' And [Dickey] goes, 'Yes, I do. I would.'" On Easter Sunday, March 26, 1967.

Army Aviation Hall of Fame Colonel Van T. Barfoot, Retired.



COL Van T. Barfoot received the Medal of Honor, Silver Star, three awards of Purple Heart and a battlefield commission to Second Lieutenant during WWII for the single handed capture of 17 German soldiers and killing eight others on May 23, 1944.

He completed flight training as a Major at the age of 40 in 1960 and was assigned to the legendary Howze Board which established Air

Mobility and modern Army Aviation. During Vietnam, he again answered the Nation's call as the Deputy Aviation Officer, 1967-68, and flew 177 combat hours earning an Air Medal with two clusters and Legion of Merit.

He was a Senior Army Aviator in both fixed and rotary wing aircraft with just 14 years of aviation service. In retirement and

among the last surviving Medal of Honor recipients of WWII, he faithfully raised and lowered "Old Glory" daily on the lawn of his modest Henrico, Virginia home. When ordered to take down his flagpole or face court action by the local homeowners association citing "curb appeal and aesthetics," he adamantly refused. Support poured in from across the nation, he stood his ground, and the homeowners relented, dropped their case and his flag flew until he could raise it no more.

COL Barfoot passed away March 2, 2012 at the age of 92 – a true patriot to the end.



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 February 2022 newsletter is 21 January 2022. Due to space availability, the editor reserves the right to include or not include photos for a given month.

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