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A TRIBUTE TO OUR VETERANS 2022



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Thank you to our partners, Together We Served (TWS), for supplying the incredible veteran stories you will read in this publication. TWS is an online community connecting and honoring every American who has worn the uniform of the United States military. TWS provides servicemembers and veterans the chance to reconnect with old friends and share their story as a lasting legacy for generations to come. To learn more about TWS, visit them online at www.togetherweserved.com.



TOGETHER WE SERVED
RECONNECTING VETERANS SINCE 2003

The photos in this guide have been provided by Together We Served and the service members featured throughout this guide.

STARS AND STRIPES.

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U.S. Marine Corps Veteran Reflections



SSGT Walter Rivera
U.S. Marine Corps
(1981-1997)

MEMORABLE DUTY STATION

That would have to be Migrants Operations JTF 160, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba [1995]. I worked with a great Marine partner, and the Army was my chain of command. After 18 months or so for most Cuban Migrants, they had been cleared by [then] Immigration and Naturalization Service-I.N.S., the Dept. of Justice, the Community Relations Service-CRS whose [some] members were migrants at one time themselves - [Maria Exodus-1982/3]. S/Sgt. Shropshire and I's job was to board them on a chartered plane bound for Miami to link up with family there.

JTF 160's job was to provide security, administration, badges, food, and water, among a myriad of other tasks and services. CRS provides comfort and hands-on experience in easing the harsh condition of the camps, counseling, and disseminating information detrimental to the families and their future. Shrop and I were a liaison with DOJ, CRS, INS, etc. No two days were ever the same, which made it worthwhile working for JTF. To see the smiles on their faces while boarding the plane: Monday thru Saturday, two flights per day. Some would shout "FREEDOM" "Libertad" - Spanish for Liberty!



ADVICE FOR NEW MARINES

I made myself known in my unit to volunteer for every crappy job: standing fire watch,

guarding ammo, supplies, etc., in the cold, or on hot summer days, at night. It didn't matter, but I was seen and honored for those things and got promoted faster than many.

So I would encourage Marines today to go outside the box, volunteer, and pursue a higher degree than an HS diploma.

Read as many books as possible-Sgt. Harris 2/2 taught me that one.



LTCOL Carl Reynoso
U.S. Marine Corps
(1975-2010)



BOOT CAMP AND JOINING THE FIGHT

To become part of a brotherhood that is real and absolute can be earned only one way: Marine Corps Boot Camp. A daunting challenge where you must first conquer yourself by enduring and surviving recruit training. The Marine Corps is the only experience I know of where you elevate yourself by subjugating yourself, a contradiction. No matter where you come from and no matter what your socioeconomic background or circumstances, everyone starts out at the bottom; we are all equally unworthy of the uniform and the title. You turn your life over to the Corps to be torn down, rebuilt, remolded into something better than what you were before. I wanted to be part of that, and I wanted THAT experience. There is something quite noble about the desire to join the Corps because it just isn't like the other military services. I didn't sign up for a job, the GI Bill, or an education; I signed up to fight! I essentially put my life on the line when I signed that dotted line. I wanted my military service to be tempered by hardship and struggle, something that is hard earned and well respected. And from everything that I'd read and heard, I knew it wasn't going to be easy. But I wanted to be a US Marine. I stepped off the bus and onto those infamous Yellow Footprints and became part of Platoon 1018, Series 1017, B Co, 1st Recruit Training Bn, MCRD San



Diego. After Receiving Barracks, we were picked up by Staff Sergeant Andre Williams, our Senior Drill Instructor. SSgt Garcia and Sgt Safrit were his Junior DIs. I can still see the menacing SDI glowering at us on that first day. He was a tall, well-built, dark green Marine who looked like Smokey the Bear on that Campaign Cover, quite intimidating and impressive all at the same time. "What have I gotten myself into now?"

"Those 13 weeks changed me forever; everything that was beaten into me in Boot Camp I carried with me throughout my 34-year career."

SERVICE PROVIDED A NEW OUTLOOK ON LIFE

Having survived numerous close calls in countless combat actions, both on the ground and in the air, I've learned not to sweat the small stuff, to relish life, and enjoy family and friends. Whenever things aren't going right and it just isn't my day, I always remind myself that it could be worse, that I could be downrange on the two-way rifle range getting shot at. That alone puts everything into perspective for me.

U.S. Marine Corps Veteran Reflections



**GYSGT
Joy Parrish,
U.S. Marine
Corps
(1984-2001)**

CONVOY UNDER ATTACK

The one memory I have that sticks out is the day the convoy I was in took a wrong turn into downtown Fallujah. We were ambushed. Had it not been for my brothers and sisters doing what they had been trained to do, we would have all died that day. My gunner, "Cookie," was trying to take out a machine gun nest lodged in the corner of a crumbling building. I was busy having a shootout with an Iraqi who crept up to my truck door and attempted to pull his weapon from behind his back. Back then, we rolled with windows down and flak vests hung from our doors in lieu of up-armor. No one had it over there yet. It was more me shooting at him, him dropping his weapon and running for his life.

We had an MP unit with us at the rear. They had an M60 and took a lot of heavy fire that day, as well. Our 50 cal, about 2 trucks from the rear, was the gun that eventually took out the nest and we were able to move. I am thankful for each one of our team that did what they had to do. We all stay in touch with each other.

COMBAT ACTION RIBBON

I received the Combat Action Ribbon at a time when very few women could earn it. I was in combat support operations near the Kuwait airport during



Desert Storm. We were all in danger, coming under fire many times. I was also involved in discovering an enemy radio platoon hiding out in an abandoned farm's greenhouse. We tried to sneak out but driving a low-boy semi-truck was kind of hard to hide. Bullets were flying and it was right out of a "Mad Max" movie.



**SGT John
Gerena's,
U.S. Marine
Corps
(1980-1987)**

FIRST OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT

I wish I could point to some patriotic or altruistic motive. The truth is I was kicked out of high school in the 10th grade. My mom had died suddenly when I was 15, and my dad simply couldn't cope as the sole parent of me, my three brothers and older sister. I decided to leave home, but I had no place to go. Fortunately for me, the Marine Corps gave me a home. My dad gave his permission to my recruiter for me to enlist, and I began my recruit training at MCRDSD when I was 17-years-old. After graduating from Combat Engineer School in December of 1980, I was transferred to my first Duty Station, 9th Engineer Support Battalion 3rd FSSG Okinawa Japan Camp Hansen. In 1981 while serving in my first overseas deployment on "The Rock," our battalion was tasked with a humanitarian mission on the Island of Tinian, which was part of the Northern Mariana Islands. Navy Seabees, Military E.O.D., and 9th Engineer Support Battalion were tasked with several missions. The two northern airstrips, Alpha and Bravo, were cleared of vegetation. The limestone coral that had been disturbed by roots was excavated and replaced, and the resurfacing of both airstrips.

The island was also still riddled with un-explosive ordnance from the war. With the help of E.O.D. and our metal detectors, we could locate and eradicate the un-explosive ordnance so the islanders would not encounter danger or loss of life. The islanders were so grateful for the task we were all able to accomplish that at the end of our mission, they threw a big cook-out for all the service personnel, and I feel it gave all of us a sense of great accomplishment.



The Island of Tinian also housed the remains of the U.S. bomber base and Atom Bomb Pits of the two atomic bombs named Little Boy and Fat Man that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The two Atomic Bombs were delivered by B-29 bombers Enola Gay and Bockscar.

LIFE AFTER THE CORPS

Like many Marines looking to separate, I was still having a sense of wanting to serve. I decided I wanted to go Federal Law-Enforcement, so I applied to the United States Secret Service Uniformed Division. The process was very intense, with a written test, Initial Interview, Panel Interview, Medical Exam, Polygraph Exam, and Background Investigation for a Top-Secret Clearance. I separated from the Marine Corps in September of 1987 and received my acceptance letters of condition of employment to the United States Secret Service Uniformed Division in January of 1988.



I spent 24.2 years with the United States Secret Service; with my six-plus years in the United States Marines, I retired as a Sergeant with a total of 30 years of government service. I started as an Officer at the Foreign Mission Branch, protecting all Foreign Embassies assigned to the Washington, DC area.

I transferred to the White House Branch, where I stood post on the White House residential floors. I moved to the West Wing Standing post at the Oval Office and transferred to the Vice-Presidential residential home as a Mountain Bike Patrol Officer.

I was selected to serve as a Canine Handler in the United States Secret Service Special Operations Division. I was promoted to the rank of Sergeant while in the Canine Unit, becoming a supervisor in the unit. I also served as a Recruiter and a member of the Secret Service Ceremonial Honor Guard Unit.



U.S. Army Veteran Reflections



**LTC Edward Shyloski Jr.,
U.S. Army
(1966-2003)**

A LIFE-CHANGING MILITARY EXPERIENCE

My A Company, 20th Engr Bn, supported Special Forces camps from Ban Don to Ben Het, mines sweeps for 4th Div Arty, convoy mine sweeps between Pleiku and Kontum, built an underground radio station PsyOPs bunker outside Pleiku, built A/C control towers at Camp Holloway and Dragon Mountain Base Camps.

I was saved from injury by the Grace of God from some rocket and mortar fires in Pleiku and, with a 19-day drop, turned over my command in a day and miraculously avoided the Ben Het Special Forces camp conflagration where we were building bunkers and revetments for 4th



Div Arty. My driver and others were subsequently KIA between there and Kontum, as I now understand. My best Lieutenant, Timothy Baumgartner, was wounded but survived Ben Het, thank God. Timothy told me that LTC

Wall personally picked him up from being released from the Evac Hospital in Pleiku and told Tim he was a real Combat Engineer warrior.

RETURNING TO VIETNAM



When we arrived in Vietnam in February 2020, everything unrecognizable had changed for the better. I felt a wave of positive emotions that made me stop my

searching and stay focused on the greater good currently taking place. E.G. (12 of 18 Politburo Members strongly favor the USA and, in point of fact, want the US to base our Navy in one of its ports!) The emotions arising were happiness, excitement, and the new beginnings, which were showing everywhere in a market-driven economy even



though the Vietnam government owns all the land, oil, telephone, ports, etc., as in many socialist countries. As we got to experience all of the major cities and countryside, the economy was booming because it was all about people, food, travel, and color. There was no domineering physical military presence. For example, Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, is still called Saigon, even in Hanoi.



The picture enclosed is our Feb 2020 return trip with my Norwich University senior year roommate, Bob Omasta, and my veteran daughter, Laurie. We are standing on the easternmost of three hills that made up the Ben Het Special Forces camp. The slit trenches were still there, with small shards of sandbags still evident. Bob Omasta served 15 months as an MI BDA (bomb damage assessment) officer. The trip was especially memorable, and Vietnam thrives today even under its Communist Politburo.



U.S. Army Veteran Reflections



**SFC David McConnell,
U.S. Army
(1980-2000)**

JOINING THE ARMY

I believe I knew I would be a Soldier when I grew up at about age 5. My childhood next-door neighbor shared a story about when I was that age. She said that I was marching up and down the driveway between our two houses with a broom over my shoulder. When she asked me what I was doing, I just snapped around and said, "I'm Guarding," and went right back to marching up and down the driveway.

Of course, growing up with Combat!, Rat Patrol, and a slew of very cool WWII war movies did have its influence on me. And let's not forget G.I. Joe, rifles and guns that shot

cap-driven plastic bullets, with a whole bunch of plastic Army soldiers.

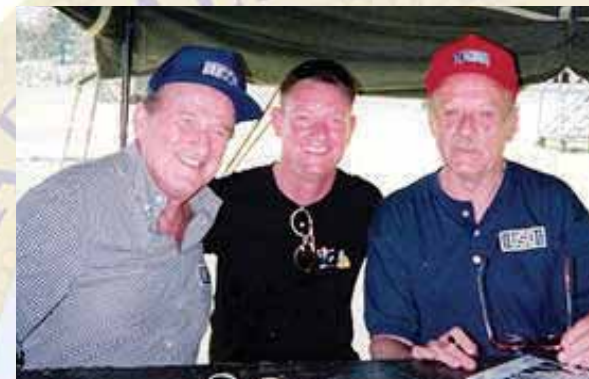
Another significant impact on my early childhood was the U.S. Army DESERT STRIKE exercises conducted in and around my hometown of Needles, California, in the 1960s'. I still remember the "Real Life" Army Soldiers walking around our neighborhood. My Uncle was Drafted in 1966 and sent to Vietnam to serve. While over there, he purchased two sets of children's khaki uniforms and a set of green U.S. Army cotton, complete with name tags and U.S. Army. I can still remember wearing these uniforms to school. One set of khakis was dark green and the other tan. As you might imagine, I wore them until they became utterly unwearable. I turned 20 years of age in basic training, so I guess it was time for me to get on with it.

FOND MEMORIES IN SOUTH KOREA

My tour of duty in South Korea was life changing for me (PTSD not diagnosed yet). I loved the beauty of the country and the respect of its people. I found the South Koreans' to be very family-oriented, which I believe was the true strength of their culture.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to meet two bonafide TV stars in South Korea. While

stationed on Camp Humphreys, my unit was in charge of conducting a ceremony to deactivate the last U.S. Army M*A*S*H unit in South Korea. As part of the ceremony, two cast members of the TV show M*A*S*H were present to sign autographs. My Wife of the time was a big M*A*S*H fan and was thrilled when I sent her the autographed photos.



ADVICE FOR NEW RANGERS

If your focus is on taking care of others only, you are destined to fail. You will be no good to others if you are no good to yourself. It is difficult to lead from the front if your limping; stay fit both mentally and physically.



**SGT Eric Andonian,
U.S. Army
(1992-2001)**

INFLUENCES IN JOINING THE SERVICE

Influencer #1: The military always fascinated me; my dad grew up in Tehran, Iran (an Armenian), and he served in the Persian Army (Iran, 1941). He was a very proud American and loved this country, and I remember him

taking us to Long Beach harbor (California) to see an aircraft carrier (the 1960s). That was an amazing experience. I can still visualize those torpedoes!

Influencer #2: We lived through the hushed horror of Vietnam, and I think my parents kind of shielded us from it. I don't remember ever seeing it on TV or talking about it. When I turned 18 (1978), my mom actually hesitated (slightly) when I jokingly questioned signing up for Selective Service registration. She talked about me staying with my friend in Canada if the next war was FUBAR like Vietnam. That surprised me because she strongly supported our nation and its laws.

Influencer #3: In high school, several



classmates enlisted. When I saw them later over the years, I always enthusiastically asked them about their service, whether they liked it or not, what they experienced, etc. They all affirmed that overall it was an exceptional adventure, and they were glad they served. I never forgot that.

Influencer #4: I learned that my great uncle had volunteered to fight in World War I; he was sent to France and died in combat. We have a beautiful hand-lettered calligraphy illustrated memorial proclamation from France thanking us for such sacrifice. He is buried in one of the American cemeteries there.

Influencer #5: In the summer of 1990, I would come home from work and watch the TV news coverage of Saddam Hussein. I was amazed and astonished at the incredible skills, technology, and awe of our fighting forces pounding the Iraq military into the sand during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. I just had to get involved! I enlisted on March 4, 1992.

ADVICE FOR NEW SOLDIERS

What advice would I give a new soldier? DEVOTE yourself, "embrace the suck," as we say. Hold tightly to the sacrifice you are making, and it will be gone before you know it, even if you serve 20 years.

I know it takes a lot of time, and the pay isn't great but work your ass off while you're in. Achieve as much as you can, "be the best that you can be "... you'll never have another opportunity like it, anywhere in the world.





U.S. Air Force Veteran Reflections



**MAJ James Webber,
U.S. Air Force
(1972-1992)**

BECOMING AN AIRMAN

Interestingly, back in August of 1968, when I first walked around the sign-up tables in the Washburn University gym, I decided on a whim to join the Air Force ROTC unit. The sales pitch was it was really easy for the first two years, plus you could take military science classes (which were supposed to be easier than most). It sounded good to this Kansas country boy who was just trying to stay out of the draft. I never dreamed that quick decisions would turn into a wonderful and rewarding career! That one decision formed and still rewards my life to this day!

AN IMPORTANT DUTY

Several times in my four years in Missiles, I was one step away from turning the keys on more destructive power than the world had ever known. Had I turned keys, we would not

have this website, and we would all be gone! I now know that no matter what I did, after “not” turning keys, I would NEVER EVER do anything as important again in my life!

FAVORITE ASSIGNMENT

The most enjoyable assignment I had was as a Space Command Liaison officer to RAF Fylingdales, UK. My family and I were the only American Service people around for 80 miles in a small coastal community of Whitby, right on the North Sea. It was a picture postcard place and a one-of-a-kind assignment for all of the Air Force. I was part space operations consultant and part diplomat for my country.



My lovely wife and I, fortunately, remained the Kansas country folks we were raised to be, with courtesy, humor, and pride.

Because of our ability to remain humble and appreciative of all the UK had to offer, we were treated like a prince and princess, invited to all events, and included in all things the Royal Air Force would provide for those of their own. We will never forget the feelings we developed for that wonderful place.



**CMSGT Katherine Burcio-Marple,
U.S. Air Force
(1969-1995)**

REASON FOR ENLISTING

My father was my hero, he served in the Army Air Force during World War II. I grew up listening to his “war stories” and seeing how proud he was to serve his country. He taught me that there was no greater honor than to defend and even give your life for our country. I decided that I wanted to follow in my father’s footsteps and service my country. Little did I realize what an adventure it would be!

A LESSON IN WAR

When I joined, I wanted to fight and defend

my country. I wanted to go to Vietnam to do this, but that never happened. I would go to CBPO once a week and try to volunteer to go. Week after week they would tell me I was wasting their time and mine and to stop coming over. I felt that I needed to fight side-by-side with the guys to feel like I truly contributed to defending my country.

My chance came 21 years later. I was deployed to Desert Storm. I was so excited to think I would finally be able to serve my country just like the men. That excitement quickly turned to sadness once I met the brave B-52 crew members that I would be sending off on missions. I suddenly realized that they may not all come back! I watched and listened to them joke and brag about who was the better pilot or how they were looking forward to getting into the fight. I envied them; they were so brave. But when the time came and they were off to war, I didn’t want any of them to go.

I had so many mixed feelings that I had a hard time functioning in my job. I questioned why we were fighting and after 21 years, did I



make a huge mistake? I knew I had to get a reality check, or I would fall apart even more. So, I called the one person I knew who fought in a war, lost close friends and survived. I called my dad. He listened to me talk about my feelings, fears, and doubts. Then in his soft matter-of-fact way said, “There is nothing good about war, but someone has to fight, someone has to die, someone gets to come home, but no one really wins. You chose to be one of them, now do your job.” That was my dad’s way of telling me to stop whining and get my butt in gear. That was all I needed to get my act together and realize I had a job to do. I got through it, along with my crews and we all came home safe and sound.





U.S. Air Force Veteran Reflections



SMSGT George H. Schryer, U.S. Air Force (1957-1981)

JOURNEY TO THE AIR FORCE

My career path resembles a mountain road made up of gravel and potholes sometimes and four-lane expressways at others. I began my career as a Navy enlisted man, and after high school, I was sent to Norfolk, VA, to start my active duty period. After flunking out of Radio School, I was assigned to the USS Mullinix DD-944, a destroyer based in Norfolk. While there, I served in the Deck Gang and the Gun Gang. Primary job while underway and during special sea detail was Helmsman. Loved it!!

Released from active duty and back to reserve status, I returned home for three months before signing up with the Air Force and going to Denver, Colo., for nine months of Electronics School for B-47 Bomb/Navigation Repair. For four years before they retired the B-47, did that

in Lincoln, Nebraska, then cross-trained to a B-52 Tailgunner.

Spent five years in Seymour Johnson AFB, NC, with one trip to SEA.

After five great years in NC was transferred to Loring AFB in Maine. Spent four years there on another trip to SEA. Was relieved of flight status for medical reasons and was cross-trained into the hospital in the Psychiatric career field. I was transferred to Adana, Turkey, for 15 months and then back to the US to Andrews AFB Md as Superintendent of Psychiatric services.

After 18 months there, I was selected by the AF Chief of Staff and two other individuals to set up a personnel evaluation office at the AF's Survival School at Fairchild AFB, Spokane, Wa. I retired there after three years.

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS AND PURPLE HEART RECIPIENT

I received the Distinguished Flying Cross and Purple Heart for a mission in which we were shot down. Our aircraft was hit by two Surface to Air Missiles,



which caused damage to six of our eight engines and lost all hydraulic and electrical power, including our aircraft radios. I used my survival radio to advise our Cell Leader of our situation and to coordinate our possible rescue with the rescue aircraft out of NKP AFB in Northern Thailand.

MEMORIES TO LAST A LIFETIME

I still reflect on being a 19-year-old kid and steering a 428 ft man of war next to an aircraft carrier to transfer supplies and steer that same ship into and out of harbors. Memories of each and every place I was stationed, my youngest daughter being born, and I couldn't be there, driving to the base and being told to go home because the base was closed due to temperatures being below -50 degrees, my crew members on the mission that we were shot down.

Watching the POWs coming home and knowing I had a small part in their release. Being part of the selection team that selected the first female survival instructor and my retirement ceremony.



SRA Richard Clark, U.S. Air Force (1989-1966)

FAVORITE DUTY STATION

Ramstein AB as a whole. The first three years were a special duty, Postal, during the first Gulf

War. Working six or seven days a week for 12 to 16 hours a day for 14 months was definitely hard work. We went from processing (pre-Gulf War) a single 40 ft. SeaLand container a week to an average of four, but plenty of traveling was to be done even then. Seeing the Porta Nigra in Trier, castle hopping up and down the Mosel and Rhine Rivers, wine festivals in Traben-Trarbach, Bernkastel-Kues, Stuttgart, Bad Durkheim and Oktoberfest in München. Who else has 'rested their eyes' on the grassy hill by the fest tents?

On my second tour, I returned to my original AFSC 702 (later 3A0), and I got along great with a few fellow airmen who were up for traveling. Camping, hiking, rafting, riding, skiing, skydiving; MWR services were awesome in Europe. Together with a job that became a standard eight-hour-a-day, five

days a week position, it allowed for travel on leave orders or weekend excursions to over 20 European countries. Barcelona Olympics in 1992, trips to Paris at 3 AM with a certain lovely lady.

We were eating regional foods in Tuscany and the Amalfi Coast...visits to Pisa and Rome.

Visiting the Salvador Dali Exhibit in Venice in 1995...count me in. White water rafting in Austria. Skiing in Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, Italy (I accidentally skied down the wrong side of a mountain once).

Sadly Offutt AFB NE were the bookends of my service. I never cared for Omaha, but it was more than that. At age 18, there wasn't much to do in the local area that didn't get done in the first six months: Henry Doorly Zoo, the SAC museum (I was on the flight line when the SR-71 arrived in the summer of 1990), Spaghetti Works and a few open mic nights at the comedy club I wasn't legally allowed to go inside the front door of. There are fond memories of a young lady who was enrolled at Creighton University. Yeah, I think about Nicky every once in a while.

Still, I took a special duty assignment to get out of there, and I returned six years later even though the base wasn't on my list. It was amazing that people I had met in 1989

were still stationed at Offutt AFB in 1996 when I returned. Still, honestly, I met people in Germany in 1990 who were shocked when they returned years later (usually as a base of preference selection following a remote to South Korea), and I ran into them again.

SOLDIERS THAT LEFT A LASTING IMPACT

The more I thought about this, the more it became apparent that everyone I met, worked with, and associated with; we're part of the community and military family I loved. But if I were to narrow it down to one, I would say CMSgt Estrem, 55 WG/CCC. Working for him was hard but very rewarding. That duty assignment also allowed me to meet several retired Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force. There was nothing like putting on CMSgt of the Air Force James McCoy's putting green on his birthday in 1998. Good to see he just hit 90.

ADVICE FOR NEW AIRMEN

Get overseas, don't buy a car, save 60% of your paycheck, eat in the chow hall, if you drink, don't drive, always walk with a buddy, never count your money in public, don't date a lady with a tattoo of a dagger on her inner thigh, smile, speak the language, be nice, get off base.



U.S. Navy Veteran Reflections



**ET2 Michael
BROWN**
U.S. Navy
(1963-1967)

JOINING THE NAVY

Three members of my family served in the US Navy. Two graduated from Annapolis in the early 1920s. One served as a Destroyer Captain up until the war began. He told me sea stories of 1941, tracking German submarines off the coast of Africa as part of the Lend-Lease Program with Great Britain. The other one was discharged from the service as soon as he graduated because the US fleet was gearing down in the post-WW1 era. Their little brother served on USS West Point AP-23, carrying troops to Europe. He attended boot camp in Idaho and then served as a helmsman on Atlantic crossings in U-Boat-infested waters. I think he attended Quartermaster School in Idaho.

My father never served, but he influenced my decision to become a Navy man by asking just a single question. A month after my high school graduation, he asked me, "Why are you still here?"

SHIPMATES WHO MADE AN IMPACT

I have many memories of many guys, but few associations lasted after my enlistment expired. Gary Jones, Radarman, the leading PO in OPS Dept. and my good friend. He shared his family life with me for many home-cooked meals and holiday feasts.

Ray Brown, Radioman and liberty buddy in Hong Kong and Sasebo. He was a standup guy, and I learned much from him about Navy life. He was a Navy brat raised in Hawaii, and that will put an edge on a white kid new to the school.

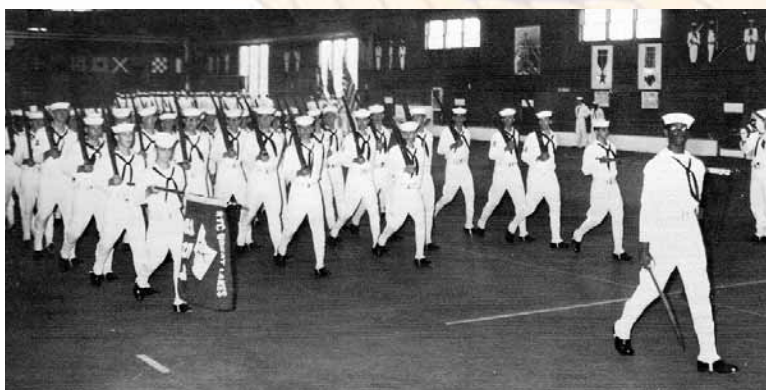
I knew Chuck Salvato as a Seaman Recruit, and he was the life of



that party. Our Company Commander tried to belittle him at every step, but he never succeeded, and Chuck was way too cool for him.

For all the others unnamed here, I was part of a veterans' association that included hundreds of USS Platte crew members from Commissioning in 1939 to WW2, Korea, and through Vietnam and decommissioning in 1972. We all enjoyed the camaraderie we came to know when we reunited every two years from 2002 through 2018.

My hat is off to you, and I salute you when I think of how you served our country. I hope the young folks there are as strong as you. Thank you for your service.



**ETCM Gene
TREANTS,**
U.S. Navy
(1966-1996)

**RESCUING REFUGEES
IN VIETNAM**

When I was with Commander Destroyer Squadron Thirty-Three, as we departed the IO, we came close to the coast of Vietnam. It was 1979, and many people were trying to escape from the Communist Regime there.

As we were near the coast of Nam, but still at least 50 miles away from the coast, fishing boats spotted us. They were boats full of refugees. As soon as they saw our ships, they scuttled their boats, sinking. American warships had been instructed to render assistance if this happened, and each of our ships took on over 60 refugees. To accommodate all of these people, we had to use every available bunk. There were not many, so we had to tie the helo to the deck so the hanger could be used as a place to sleep for the rest. As we outraced a Typhoon from the coast of Nam, we took the people to the PI and dropped them off.

The main thing I brought from this and remember to this day is the length people will go to escape from poverty and dictatorships to find a new life. America is a dream not all can reach, but many try to achieve.

PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

Without a doubt, my four tours as a CNO Designated Command Master Chief. I was able to handle my assignments on all of my duty stations professionally and impact the Sailors, Marines, and others I positively came into contact with in a good manner.

I believe I set the standards and was able to train my reliefs in the Navy, and more than one Master Chief went into the Program due to my influence. The Commanding Officers I worked for and with were able to trust me to do the job of caring for our troops and have a smooth running ship or station.



U.S. Coast Guard Veteran Reflections



CAPT. Dee NORTON, U.S. Coast Guard (1980-2005)

A MEMORABLE MILITARY CAREER

My first assignment out of Officer Candidate School was to a 378 foot Coast Guard Cutter - Mellon, based out of Seattle, Washington. Mellon primarily patrolled the waters off

Alaska for Fishery Patrols and enforced other laws of the ocean. Mellon was one of the first integrated ships, and at that time, the US Navy did not allow women to serve on their ships. I completed two years on the Mellon serving as Deck Watch Officer and Communications Officer. After that tour, I was assigned to the 13th District Office in Seattle, where I worked with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and Boating Standards. From there, I was assigned to Galveston, TX, as the Base Executive Officer (XO). This really started my career direction working in Operations Ashore. While I never went back to sea, I served in positions where the Coast Guard Cutters worked for me.

I always said I would stay in the Coast



Guard as long as I like it. I served 25 years and then did retire. I loved my time as an Officer in the USCG!

REPRESENTING FEMALE SERVICE MEMBERS

I loved representing all Women Officers in the military for the Women in Military Service to America Memorial. I still feel very honored that I was chosen for this. I was able to provide the Coast Guard Academy chorus and band to play at it, and I feel that the Coast Guard was well represented.

As Gender Policy Advisor, I participated in the Nato Conference on Women in Brussels, Belgium. That was an awesome experience.



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RESOURCES



photo courtesy of www.dvidshub.net

Programs That Hire Veterans

Courtesy of Military OneSource

Many organizations in the civilian world value your experience, skills, work ethic and training as a servicemember. You'll find that a number of military-friendly employers are committed to hiring veterans.

Explore several online programs to help connect you with employers who are looking to hire veterans. Here are some top sites:

Veterans.gov

This site offers resources from the U.S. Department of Labor for job-seekers and employers who want to hire vets. You'll find:

- Job opportunities by category: agriculture, energy, transportation, homeland security, federal government hiring, and more.
- A tool for finding jobs by location
- Your nearest American Job Center
- Help from the Small Business Administration for starting your own business
- Plus one-on-one assistance, career exploration, finding training, skills translator, veteran employment center, resume builder, interest profiler, transition resources and more.

CareerOneStop Veteran and Military Transition Center

The Veteran and Military Transition Center website is a one-stop online shop for employment, training and financial help after military service. If you're transitioning out, it offers some serious tools:

- Military-to-Civilian Job Search by military job title and/or location
- How to request important papers that you need

- Matching your skills to civilian careers
- Information about going back to school or getting training
- Also financial and unemployment assistance

The U.S. Department of Labor sponsors CareerOneStop. While the website is designed for the general public, there are plenty of tools and resources that can be useful for veterans. It partners with the American Job Center network. American Job Centers have a mandate to connect veterans to job openings.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring our Heroes

Hiring Our Heroes is a program of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. It's a nationwide initiative to help transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses find meaningful employment opportunities.

The program networks with businesses through the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and it partners with public, private and nonprofit organizations across the country.

- Check out the Hiring Our Heroes calendar. You'll find upcoming hiring events, job fairs, expos, transition summits and more near you.
- Hiring Our Heroes also has a number of digital resources:

- VirtualJobScout connects you with recruiters and attend virtual job fairs.
- Hiring Our Heroes dashboard allows you to access, customize and manage all your Hiring Our Hero resources.
- Resume Engine helps you build and post your resume for thousands of employers.
- Fast Track lists jobs by industry, with a map of locations and positions by date.

You've got skills, training and discipline.

Employers are looking for you. For more ways you can connect with a great job, check the Employment Resources and Services page on <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/>.



photo courtesy of www.dvidshub.net

RESOURCES



VALife Insurance Program Coming January 23 for Veterans with Service Connection

Courtesy of the Department of Veterans Affairs

In January 2023, VA will launch a new life insurance program called Veterans Affairs Life Insurance (VALife), which provides guaranteed acceptance whole life insurance coverage to Veterans age 80 and under, with any level of service-connected disability. Some Veterans age 81 and older may also be eligible.

What is Guaranteed Acceptance Whole Life Insurance?

Guaranteed acceptance is a whole life policy that does not require a medical exam or ask health questions. It also does not have a limited two year window to sign up. Whole life insurance provides coverage for the entire life of the individual policyholder, provided that premiums are always paid. Premium rates are locked in for the life of the policy, and unlike term policies will not increase as the policyholder ages.

What benefits does it offer?

Created by Public Law 116-315, the new program meets the needs of service-connected Veterans who may not have previously qualified for life insurance with VA. VALife offers guaranteed acceptance whole life insurance coverage that lasts for an individual's entire life and provides the following benefits:

- All service-connected Veterans age 80 and under with 0-100% VA disability ratings are eligible.
- Fully automated online enrollment with instant approvals.
- Coverage comes in increments of \$10,000, up to a maximum of \$40,000, and premiums are competitive – or better – than what's available in the private sector. There is a two-year waiting period for full face value coverage to take effect.

- No medical requirements for enrollment.
- Cash value that builds over the life of the policy after the first two years of enrollment.
- Rates are best the earlier you sign up. Once locked in, premiums will never increase.

Who is eligible?

All Veterans age 80 or younger with a VA disability rating of 0-100% are eligible for VALife, with no time limit to apply.

Veterans who are 81 or older may apply for VALife within two years of receiving a new service-connected disability rating if:

They applied for VA disability compensation before age 81, and;

They received a new service-connected disability rating after turning 81.

How does this impact other VA Life Insurance programs?

VALife opens life insurance coverage to more service-connected Veterans than ever before. In contrast to Service-Disabled Veterans Life Insurance (S-DVI), VALife has no medical requirements and there is no two year time limit to apply if a Veteran is age 80 or under.

Veterans who currently hold an S-DVI policy can either keep their current coverage or apply for VALife when the application goes live. Veterans can keep their S-DVI policy until the full coverage of VALife begins two years after enrollment as long as the application is

received between Jan. 1, 2023, and Dec. 31, 2025

S-DVI will close to new enrollment after Dec. 31. Veterans interested in S-DVI should apply by this date, even if they are interested in applying for VALife in the new year. Applying for S-DVI now allows eligible Veterans to have life insurance coverage while waiting the two-year period for their VALife coverage to become available.

How can you apply for both?

The application for VALife will go live on Jan. 1, 2023. Stay tuned for more information on VALife and the application process. Once the program is open, the application will be available online at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/VALife.asp>.

If you are interested in applying for S-DVI before VALife opens, or would like to learn more about the coverage, please visit the S-DVI webpage here: <https://www.va.gov/life-insurance/options-eligibility/s-dvi/>.

Where can I learn more?

To learn more about VALife and whether it's the right choice for you and your family, please visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/valife.asp>.

If you would like to receive email updates about VALife, please sign up at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USVAVALI/subscriber/new>.

RESOURCES



Veterans Affairs Health Care Benefits

Courtesy of Military OneSource

Veterans Affairs operates the nation's largest integrated health care system with more than 1,400 care sites, including hospitals, community clinics, community living centers, domiciliary, readjustment counseling centers and various other facilities.

Eligibility and Enrollment

If you served in active military service and were discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable, you may qualify for VA health care benefits.

Note: National Guard members may qualify for VA health care benefits if they were called to active duty (other than for training only) and completed the full period they were ordered to active duty.

Your Transition Assistance Advisor can help you enroll for VA health benefits by helping you complete the VA Form 10-10EZ (Application for Health Benefits), which may be obtained from any VA health care facility or regional benefits office, online or by calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387). Once enrolled, you can receive health care at VA health care facilities anywhere in the country.

Who should enroll:

- Veterans with a service-connected disability of 50% or more.
- Veterans seeking care for a disability the military determined was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, but which VA has not yet rated, within 12 months of

discharge.

- Veterans seeking care for a service-connected disability only.
- Veterans seeking registry examinations (Ionizing Radiation, Agent Orange, Gulf War/Operation Iraqi Freedom and Depleted Uranium).

During enrollment, each veteran is assigned to a priority group. VA uses priority groups to balance demand for VA health care enrollment with resources. Changes in available resources may reduce the number of priority groups VA can enroll. If this occurs, VA will publicize the changes and notify affected enrollees. You can find out about these priority groups and how the classification affects payment at the Veterans Affairs website.

Medical services and medication

VA health benefits account for the following medical services:

- Inpatient care
- Extended care
- Outpatient care
- Preventive screening (such as mammogram,

and vaccinations)

- Medication

Copays for your care may depend on your priority group classification. VA is also required to bill your private health insurance providers for medical care, supplies and prescriptions provided for treatment of veterans' non-service-connected conditions. Generally, VA cannot bill Medicare but can bill Medicare supplemental health insurance for covered services. VA is not authorized to bill a High Deductible Health Plan (which is usually linked to a Health Savings Account).

VA medical programs

Veteran Health Registries: Certain veterans can participate in a VA health registry and receive free medical examinations, including laboratory and other diagnostic tests deemed necessary by an examining clinician. VA maintains health registries to provide special health examinations and health-related information.

To participate, contact the Environmental Health Coordinator at the nearest VA health care facility or visit www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures to access the directory of EH Coordinators.

1. **Gulf War Registry:** This registry is available to veterans who served on active military duty in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War, which began in 1990 and continues to the present, including Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Gulf War examination registry was established after the first Gulf War to identify possible diseases resulting from U.S. military personnel service in certain areas of Southwest Asia. These diseases were endemic to the area or may have been due to hazardous exposures, including heavy metals. Furthermore, air pollutants such as carbon monoxide sulfur oxides, hydrocarbons, particulate matter and nitrogen oxides, singly or in combination, could have caused chronic health problems.
2. **Depleted Uranium Registries:** Veterans who are identified by the Department of Defense or have concerns about possible depleted uranium exposure are eligible for a DU evaluation. Depleted uranium is natural uranium left over after most of the U-235 isotope has been removed, such as that used as fuel in nuclear power plants. DU possesses about 60% of the radioactivity of natural uranium. It is a radiation hazard primarily if internalized, such as in shrapnel, contaminated wounds and inhalation. In addition to its radioactivity, DU has some chemical toxicity related to being a heavy metal (similar to lead). Note: VA maintains two registries for veterans possibly exposed to depleted uranium. The first is for veterans who served in the Gulf War, including Operation Iraqi Freedom. The second is for veterans who served elsewhere, including Bosnia and Afghanistan.
3. **Agent Orange Registry:** This registry is available for veterans possibly exposed to dioxin or other toxic substances in herbicides used during the Vietnam War, between 1962 and 1975, regardless of length of service, or while serving in Korea in 1968 or 1969, or as a result of testing, transporting or spraying herbicides for military purposes. DoD has provided a list of locations and dates where herbicides, including Agent

Orange, were used. For those sites not listed, a Vietnam veteran should provide some proof of exposure to obtain a registry examination.

4. **Ionizing Radiation Registry:** For veterans possibly exposed to, and who are concerned about, possible adverse effects of their atomic exposure during the following activities: on-site participation in an atmospheric detonation of a nuclear device, whether or not the testing nation was the United States; occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki from Aug. 6, 1945 through July 1, 1946; or internment as a POW in Japan during World War II, which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines resulted in an opportunity for exposure to ionizing radiation comparable to that of Veterans involved in the occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

Counseling services

VA provides outreach and readjustment counseling services through 232 community-based Vet Centers located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, American Samoa and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Veterans are eligible if they served on active duty in a combat theater during World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, or the campaigns in Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Global War on Terror. Veterans who served in the active military during the Vietnam-era, but not in the Republic of Vietnam, must have requested services at a Vet Center before Jan. 1, 2004. Vet Centers don't require enrollment in the VHA Health Care System.

Vet Center counselors provide:

- Individual, group and family readjustment counseling to combat veterans to help them make a successful transition from military to civilian life
- Counseling services for post-traumatic stress disorder and help with any other military-

related problems that affect functioning within the family, work, school or other areas of everyday life

- Outreach, education, medical referral, homeless veteran services, employment, VA benefit referral, and the brokering of non-VA services
- Military sexual trauma counseling to veterans of both genders and of any era of military service.

Bereavement counseling is also available through Department of Veterans Affairs) Vet Centers to all immediate family members (including spouses, children, parents and siblings) of service members who die in the line of duty while on active service. This includes federally-activated members of the National Guard and reserve components.

Vocational services

VA provides vocational assistance and therapeutic work opportunities through several programs for veterans receiving VA health care. Each program offers treatment and rehabilitation services to help veterans live and work in their communities.

1. **Incentive Therapy** provides a diversified work experience at VA medical centers for veterans who exhibit severe mental illness and/or physical impairments. IT services may consist of full- or part-time work with nominal remuneration limited to the maximum of one half of the federal minimum wage.
2. **CWT/ Sheltered Workshop** operates sheltered workshops at approximately 35 VA Medical Centers. CWT sheltered workshop is a pre-employment vocational activity that provides an opportunity for work hardening and assessment in a simulated work environment. Participating veterans are paid on a piece rate basis.
3. **CWT/Transitional Work** is vocational assessment program that operates in VA medical centers and/or local community business and industry. CWT/TW participants are matched to real-life work assignments for a time-limited basis. Veterans are supervised by personnel of the sponsoring site, under the same job expectations experienced by non-CWT workers. CWT/TW participants are not considered employees and receive no traditional employee benefits.
4. **CWT/Supported Employment** consists of full-time or part-time competitive employment with extensive clinical support. The focus of CWT/SE is to assist veterans with psychosis and other serious mental illnesses gain access to meaningful competitive employment. CWT/SE follow-up support services are generally phased out after the veteran is able to maintain employment independently.





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