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FRA *today*

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Featured

18 U.S. COAST GUARD SERVICE IN VIETNAM

When advisory and material support wasn't enough to help South Vietnam defend itself against invasion from their communist neighbor to the north, the United States sent combat troops to help, including more than 8,000 members of the U.S. Coast Guard.



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LOYALTY, PROTECTION AND SERVICE

FRA IS A CONGRESSIONALLY CHARTERED, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION ADVOCATING FOR CURRENT AND FORMER ENLISTED MEMBERS OF THE U.S. NAVY, MARINE CORPS AND COAST GUARD ON CAPITOL HILL. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP, PLEASE VISIT WWW.FRA.ORG OR CALL 800-FRA-1924.

ON THE COVER

Crew members aboard USCGC Point Lomas firing an 81-mm mortar round at a suspected enemy hideout near Danang. Naval Gunfire Support was just one of several missions conducted by Coast Guard personnel during the Vietnam War.

Pictures Telling Thousands of Words



Eileen Murphy

WE RECEIVE DOZENS OF photos each month as submissions for *News From the Branches* or as examples of outreach efforts. Unfortunately, we cannot print all of the photos we receive. We try hard to assure that branches are represented as often as possible, and this month we had an opportunity to include some extra photos. The *Membership Matters* article focuses on outreach activities conducted by branches and Headquarters staff. Several branches sent in information about their Memorial Day events and included photos, which we certainly wanted to share with readers. Page 30 includes photos submitted from branches to let the essay contest winners shine.

ALTHOUGH WE CAN'T PUBLISH EVERY PHOTO WE RECEIVE, HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO MAKE YOUR PHOTO RISE TO THE TOP:

1. Submit electronically when possible. Please do not put the photo in a document and send it, but rather send a .jpeg file as an e-mail attachment. Send the e-mail to fratoday@fra.org.
2. If you are sending a photo by mail, please send a professionally printed photo to: *FRA Today*, 125 N. West St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2754 **Do not use your home printer.** If you have the digital image, please send it electronically to fratoday@fra.org.
3. Pictures that are not in clear focus or have been taken from a camera phone will not be usable.
4. Here are tips for telling your branch's story through photographs:
 - Take action shots. Pictures of shipmates talking with prospective members tells a more of a story than a posed photo.
 - Take a look at your photo composition before you click the shutter. Make sure every face can be seen and the background is clean and uncluttered.
5. Don't forget to send your stories and photos to your local newspaper. Editors are always looking for out-of-the-ordinary human interest stories about community residents and may be more likely to publish a story if it's accompanied by a great photo.

FRA Today readers are invited to join Chris Slawinski for a free teleconference on July 14 at Noon, EDT to discuss veterans' issues.

Are you interested in learning more about the Veterans Service Officer program? Do you have questions about Agent Orange claims? Would you like to get information on the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) program? If you've answered yes to any of these, this call is for you. If you have other veteran-related items you'd like to discuss, e-mail chris@fra.org and let him know before the call.

To participate in the free tele-conference, please call 1-800-391-1709 and enter bridge number 444143 when prompted. The call will be recorded and posted on the Member News page for reference at a later date.

Eileen Murphy is the Director of Marketing and Communications and serves as the Managing Editor of *FRA Today*. Please contact her at eileen@fra.org.

FRA today

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VOLUME 89 NUMBER 7



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In This Economy...

Overpaying For Luxury is Just Bad Taste

Stauer introduces the 27-jewel, automatic luxury wristwatch that's starting a retail revolution.

If there is any good to come out our rollercoaster economy, let it be the death of ostentatiousness. Motoring around in a limo and flaunting a \$20,000 watch with a big "R" on the face is now considered bad manners. Ostentatiousness is what got us in trouble in the first place. Honestly, our parents taught us better than that...I know mine did. Yet so many of us still fell for the fool's gold of designer names and the notion that higher prices equal higher status. We've never had that problem at Stauer. For years we've been stirring up a sort of retail revolution. And the good news is that it has truly caught on. The Stauer *Legacy* Automatic is a true value. Now priced at only \$95.

99% OFF is the new gold standard.

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FRA Hosts 12th Annual Coast Guard Caucus Breakfast

FRA HOSTED ITS 12TH annual Coast Guard Caucus Breakfast on June 17, an event sponsored by the Association to highlight the Coast Guard's tremendous service to our nation and promote dialogue between members of Congress and key Coast Guard leaders.

The Caucus, a bipartisan group of 96 lawmakers who share a common interest in the varied missions of the Coast Guard, is co-chaired by three members of Congress who served in the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) — Representatives Howard Coble (N.C.), Gene Taylor (Miss.), and William Delahunt (Mass.). The chairmen co-hosted the breakfast, which was also attended by Representatives Joseph Courtney (Conn.) and Frank LoBiondo (N.J.) — both of whom represent districts with a strong Coast Guard presence.

Coast Guard Commandant Bob Papp spoke at the event, acknowledging the Coast Guard's leadership in responding to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and the great work of USCG personnel in clean-up efforts there. Admiral Papp also referenced his vision to modernize the service, better train and equip USCG personnel, strengthen the service's partnerships with other federal agencies and organizations like FRA, and provide greater support for Coast Guard personnel and their families. He thanked FRA for its "sustained effort to support of the Coast Guard" and specifically referenced the Association's sponsorship of the service's Enlisted Persons of the Year program, which recognizes outstanding USCG performers.

In dialogue with Papp about the needs of the Coast Guard, Rep. Taylor urged the USCG leader to request the resources needed to advance

technologies that "haven't been improved in decades" and ensure the service is prepared to meet its responsibilities. Rep. Courtney expressed concerns about funding and manpower shortages due to USCG personnel being mobilized to the Gulf area. Papp acknowledged the dangers of shifting assets — both infrastructure and manpower — to support the spill, saying, "We are working our people harder with the resources we have, but we are lean, tired and at risk."

Papp also presented a Coast Guard Distinguished Public Service Award to Representative Delahunt, who is retiring at the end of the year. Delahunt was instrumental in forming the caucus in 1999 and has strongly supported the Coast Guard during his 13-year tenure in the House. Rep. LoBiondo will replace Delahunt as co-chair of the USCG Caucus.

The Coast Guard was also represented by Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard (MCPOCG) Michael Leavitt, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Reserve Force (MCPOCGRF) Mark Allen and other senior enlisted leaders.

Much of FRA's advocacy work focuses on compensation, health care and various quality-of-life programs that affect USCG personnel and their families. FRA works to ensure Coast Guard pay and benefits remain on par with those enjoyed by Department of Defense personnel and that adequate funding is available to support these programs. FRA is committed to educating members of Congress, their staff and the public about the Coast Guard's critical missions as a part of the Department of Homeland Security.

Photos by Chris Slawinski



Commandant of the United States Coast Guard Adm. Bob Papp and FRA NVP Scarbro



NED Joe Barnes with MCPOCG Michael Leavitt



(l to r) MCPOCG Michael Leavitt, MCPOCG-8 Vince Patton and Rep. Gene Taylor discuss Coast Guard issues.



Joe Barnes

Spending Cuts in 2012 and Beyond

THERE ARE MULTIPLE INDICATORS that the 2012 budget request will include significant changes (translation: funding cuts) to key DoD and other government programs when it's sent to Capitol Hill next February. Serious concerns about federal spending and the associated level of national debt are forcing agencies and lawmakers to take a hard look at ways to address the situation.

Health care, quality-of-life programs and other military benefits won't be immune from this process. Everyone is familiar with the Defense Department's proposals to drastically hike health care fees in recent years (2007–2008), but many are not aware of recent across-the-board directives requiring federal departments and agencies to identify specific funding and personnel reductions to meet specific budget cuts for FY2012 and beyond.

In a May 8, 2010, speech in Abilene, Kansas, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced directives to the military services, the joint staff, the major functional and regional commands and civilians to take a hard look at operations with a goal “to cut our overhead costs and to transfer those savings to force structure and modernization ... to convert sufficient ‘tail’ to ‘tooth’ to provide the equivalent of roughly two to three percent real growth — [and provide the] resources needed to sustain our combat power at a time of war and make investments to prepare for an uncertain future.” He also indicated that savings must stem from “root-and-branch changes” to be sustained and added to over time. Specific recommendations to reduce or eliminate DoD program and/or personnel costs are due to Gates by July 31, 2010.

Gates' objective was further outlined in a recent (June 3, 2010) *New York Times* story by Thom Shanker, who states that Gates' goal “is \$7 billion in spending cuts and efficiencies for 2012, growing to \$37 billion annually by 2016.” Achieving this goal — or even a portion of it — will impact many programs.

A recent report from the Sustainable Defense Task Force calls for military compensation reform, changes to TRICARE, and significantly reducing military recruiting expenditures as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down.

Specifically referenced in these discussions are increases in health care spending, which is projected to soon reach \$50 billion per year — a spending spiral Gates repeatedly characterizes as “eating the Defense Department alive.” He's also weighed in on the current Capitol Hill debate on whether military pay raises should be higher than the Employment Cost Index (ECI) given other benefit enhancements authorized by Congress in recent years. The *New York Times* story also references calls to examine Pentagon agencies that “handle specialized tasks,” including the Defense Commissary Agency which runs 284 commissaries

throughout the world. A recent report from the Sustainable Defense Task Force calls for military compensation reform, changes to TRICARE, and significantly reducing military recruiting expenditures as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down.

In addition to these Defense-related initiatives, the new 18-member National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform met at the White House for the first time in April and is working on plans to cut spending in order to balance the federal budget by 2015. According to *CQ Today*, President Obama clearly stated that “everything has to be on the table” for evaluation prior to reporting recommendations to Congress by December 1, 2010. This includes Medicare, Social Security and other entitlement programs along with federal and military retired pay and associated cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs).

These projects, coupled with growing public anxiety and associated pressure to reign in federal spending, are all aspects of the increasingly difficult challenges associated with maintaining and/or enhancing health care, pay, benefits and quality-of-life programs for active, Reserve, retired and veterans of the Sea Services.

Joe Barnes is FRA's National Executive Director and Chairman of the National Committee on Legislative Service and a member of the Special Committee on Future Strategic Planning. A member of Navy Department Branch 181, he is also an advisor to the National Committees on Budget and Finance and Membership and Retention.

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America's Lost Masterpiece

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Vets Losing Disability Benefits Illegally

Disabled military veterans are losing their Veterans Affairs (VA)/service disability and Social Security benefits illegally through the divorce courts. Federal Law 38 USC 5301[a] prohibits these disability payments to be used in the award of alimony, either directly or indirectly. However, local family court judges ignore this law and give these benefits to the ex-spouse in the form of alimony. In my case, my ex was awarded \$3,000 per month from the only income I have. I am rated 100 percent [disabled] by the VA. Before his decision, the judge was made aware of this federal law without any effect in his decision.

Disabled veterans cannot afford to go through the appeal process, which cost in excess of \$35,000. We need public support to have a law that requires local judges to honor the federal law protecting our disability benefits from alimony. Could you use your [magazine] to make the public and these judges aware of the wrong that is happening to our veterans who have given so much for their country? I would hope that some attorney who hears about this would come forth and help us veterans appeal this illegal judgment through the Supreme Court.

I served my country for 30 years in the U.S. Navy and would do it again if I could. Now we veterans need help to save what we have suffered so much for, our disability benefits.

Larry L. Johnson

FRA Response: *FRA is an outspoken advocate for reforming the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act (USFSPA). Few of the law's provisions protect the rights of the service member and none are enforceable by either the Departments of Justice or Defense. If a state court violates the federal law, the service member's only recourse is to appeal the decision in court. FRA believes Congress needs to take a hard look at the USFSPA and amend it so that states can no longer ignore its provisions.*

It's a Team Effort

I wish to thank [members of the FRA Headquarters staff] for filling my request for USCG-specific FRA materials on a very short fuse. Shipmate Paul Camardo (Branch 46) invited members of Branch 94 to attend the local USCG Sector Corpus Christi Family Appreciation Day event. Shipmate John Herzer and I manned an information table and introduced our Coast Guard brothers and sister to the FRA. The flyer design that was e-mailed to us (with two hours notice) showed our shipmates that the FRA has their back on Capitol Hill and why we need their support/voice in order to continue making a difference.

Life's easier knowing that FRA HQ has a dedicated team willing to provide one-to-one service so that we can provide outreach. I don't believe I would have gotten this service from any other organization!

Jr. PRPSC Don Larson

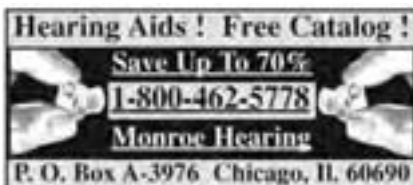
The Forgotten War

FRA Today (June 2010) contained the much appreciated "Remembering the Forgotten War" article, [that cites] more than 52,000 America casualties. This is at least the fourth reporting of American casualties that I have read or heard, and each number is different. The highest I've seen is 54,246; the lowest is 33,000. This is a difference of 21,246 or more than a 39-percent difference. Can you clear up this huge discrepancy?

Gerald D. Chastain

FRA Response: *The number of casualties cited in the FRA Today article came from the Korean War 60th Anniversary Memorial Project Web site (www.kw60project.com), which states that "57,976 lives were sacrificed, of which over 54,246 were from the U.S." The American Battle Monuments Commission also cites 54,246 as the number of American casualties. Although this doesn't necessarily guarantee historical accuracy, we believe both to be reputable sources.*

Submissions: Send *Shipmate Forum* letters to: Editor, *FRA Today*, 125 N. West St. Alexandria, VA 22314. E-mail submissions may be sent to fratoday@fra.org. Please include "Shipmate Forum" in the subject line. FRA reserves the right to select and edit letters for publication. Letters published in *Shipmate Forum* reflect the opinions and views of FRA members. They do not necessarily reflect the official position of FRA as a whole. FRA is not responsible for the accuracy of letter content.



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Defense Authorization Process Moves Forward



John Davis

AS FRA TODAY GOES to press, the FY2011 Defense Authorization bill is moving through the legislative approval process. Both bills have been approved by their chamber's respective Armed Services Committees and the full House has approved its version of the legislation (H.R. 5136). Most notable about both proposals is what is NOT included in their present form. Neither bill seeks TRICARE fee increases, improves eligibility for the concurrent receipt of military retired pay and Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation, repeals the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) offset for survivors, or allows retroactive (back to September 11, 2001) early retirement credit for frequently mobilized Reservists.

The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) approved its version of the bill (S. 3454), which authorizes TRICARE beneficiaries to purchase coverage for dependent children through age 25; a 1.4-percent active duty pay increase, which equals the Employment Cost Index (ECI) and the Administration's request; and a monthly stipend for wounded warrior caregivers equal to those provided by the VA. It also authorizes \$30 million in Impact Aid for schools that educate military children, \$5 million in assistance to schools impacted by base realignment and closure (BRAC) initiatives and \$10 million in aid for military children with disabilities. Amendments during upcoming floor debate are expected to address concurrent receipt eligibility, repeal of the SBP/DIC offset, and early retirement credit for Reservists.

The full House approved its version (H.R. 5136) of the legislation prior to Memorial Day and, like the SASC-approved version, the House measure allows TRICARE beneficiaries to purchase coverage for their older dependent children. Also included are provisions to pay retirees on the first day of the month or earlier if the first day of the month falls on a weekend or a holiday (as is currently done for active duty pay); increase active duty pay by 1.9 percent; increase monthly combat pay from \$225 to \$260 and raise the family separation allowance from \$250 to \$285. The bill also authorizes an increase in Navy end strength (4,000) until Navy Individual Augmentees (IA) are withdrawn from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The table on pages 14 and 15 compares the two bills (H.R. 5136 as passed by the House and S. 3454 as approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee) as they relate to key issues of importance to FRA members.

After both chambers pass their respective bills, a conference committee will reconcile differences and create a final version that must be approved by both the House and Senate and sent to the President for his signature. This is an election year and, with strong anti-incumbent sentiments being expressed by voters, senators and representatives are eager to get back home and campaign for re-election. That sense of urgency should help motivate our elected officials to get their work done before the start of the next fiscal year (FY2011) on October 1, 2010.

Senate Passes Six-Month Doc Fix Without Concurrent Receipt

As this issue of *FRA Today* goes to print, Congress is still struggling to resolve pending cuts to Medicare and TRICARE reimbursement rates. Although the Senate failed to pass the so-called Tax Extenders bill (H.R. 4213) that includes language delaying the 21-percent cuts in Medicare and TRICARE payments, the chamber did pass a separate "doc fix" measure in mid-June. The doc fix legislation extends current reimbursement rates for another six months and awaits House approval at press time. FRA remains concerned that many doctors will choose not to serve Medicare and TRICARE patients if these cuts take effect.

The Senate is still debating ways to reduce the financial impact of H.R. 4213, which also addresses expanded eligibility for the concurrent receipt of military retired pay and veterans' disability compensation. The measure would authorize those who are medically retired with less than 20 years of service (Chapter 61 retirees) and have a disability rating of 90 to 100 percent to receive both payments, without offset, starting on January 1, 2011. The following year concurrent receipt would be expanded to those with 70- to 80-percent disability ratings. These temporary provisions would expire on October 1, 2012, but FRA believes

Congress can be persuaded to make the changes permanent before provisions expire.

Assuring TRICARE and Medicare patients have access to physicians and concurrent receipt improvements are high priorities for FRA. Members are urged use the FRA Action Center (www.fra.org) to ask lawmakers to resolve the ongoing threat to doctor reimbursement rates and support concurrent receipt improvements.

Hot Topic: How will further delays in correcting the reimbursement rate problem affect you? Visit www.fra.org/hottopics to share your views.

FRA Meets with House Speaker Pelosi, White House Staff

FRA's National Executive Director Joe Barnes participated in a roundtable meeting of 30 military and veterans' organization leaders hosted by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (Calif.) in mid-May. FRA National President Gary Blackburn and Director of Legislative Programs John Davis also attended. Barnes asked the Speaker to eliminate scheduled cuts in doctor reimbursements for Medicare/TRICARE, enact the "Agent Orange Equity Act" (H.R. 2254) that would abolish claims limitations for "Blue Water" veterans who served off the coast of Vietnam and were exposed to Agent



Orange and other herbicides, and grant veteran status to Reservists who served 20 or more years without being mobilized. Other issues discussed include the backlog of unresolved disability claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), concurrent receipt improvements, improved administration of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and adequate pay and end strength for active duty forces.

More than a dozen key House lawmakers attended the event including House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (Md.), House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (Mo.), Chairman of the House VA Committee Bob Filner (Calif.), Chairman of the House Military Construction/VA Appropriations Subcommittee Chet Edwards (Texas) and House Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt (S.C.).

Later in the month, FRA and other military and veterans organizations met with White House staff to discuss priority issues. FRA welcomed the opportunity to discuss concurrent receipt, full funding of TRICARE and VA health care programs, the backlog of VA disability claims, annual pay increases for active duty personnel and the seamless transition from DoD to VA health care systems for disabled service members.

Budget Concerns Come to the Forefront

The White House recently instructed all federal agencies to compile a list of "least critical" programs that can be trimmed or eliminated to reduce discretionary spending by five percent beginning in 2012. Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Ike Skelton (Mo.) warned Secretary of Defense Robert Gates that there should be no cuts to end strengths for active duty and Reserve forces that are already stressed with fighting two wars for more than eight years. Any such budget cuts for the Department of Defense (DoD) require congressional approval. (See the *NED Perspective* column on page 5.)

In related news, the final report of the Sustainable Defense Task Force was recently released. A bipartisan group of legislators (Representatives Barney Frank (Mass.), Ron Paul (Texas), and Walter Jones (N.C.), along with Oregon Senator Ron Wyden), reviewed possible DoD budget cuts that would not "compromise the essential security of the United States." Among the Task Force's recommendations are increased TRICARE fees for retirees under age 65, changing the calculation for determining active duty pay increases to include other benefits, and reducing end strength and recruiting budgets as the military begins to withdraw from Afghanistan. These recommendations will be sent to the President's Debt Commission.

FRA Opposes Auto Loan Exclusion in Financial Regulation Bill

As this issue of *FRA Today* goes to press, a conference committee is deliberating a sweeping financial regulation measure (H.R. 3217) that includes language related to questionable lending practices by dealers and others who offer auto loans. Auto loans are a major financial obligation for most service members and FRA strongly opposes efforts to exclude auto dealers from financing and sales restrictions proposed in the bill.

Although the House version of the measure (H.R. 4173) exempts auto loans, FRA, other Military Coalition members, consumer groups and the Pentagon successfully defeated efforts by powerful interest groups to exclude them from the Senate version of bill. FRA urged the chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate Financial Services Committees to adopt the Senate's stand on this facet of the legislation as the conference committee addresses difference between the two measures. The committee will create a final version of the bill, which must be approved by the full House and Senate before it can be approved by the White House.

QRMC Meeting at FRA NHQ

DoD regularly conducts a review of military pay and related issues, and the 11th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) began work on May 11, 2010. In conjunction with the QRMC's early research, FRA hosted a meeting of Military Coalition organizations with Tom Bush, QRMC director, to discuss priority concerns relevant to the year-long review.

President Obama has directed the QRMC to focus on compensation for service performed in a combat zone, combat operation or hostile fire area; the Reserve and National Guard's compensation and benefits; compensation and benefits available to wounded warriors, caregivers and survivors; and pay incentives for critical career fields.

Changes Proposed to Post-9/11 GI Bill



Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Daniel Akaka (Hawaii) recently introduced “The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act” (S. 3447) that makes extensive changes to the new education benefit program. Among the changes proposed in the bill are replacing the current formula with a national average formula, expanding the program to reimburse vocational training and some on-the-job-training programs, and providing a reduced monthly stipend (50 percent) for distance-learning students that take online classes. The measure would also allow active-duty service members and their spouses to receive the \$1,000/year book stipend (currently available only to veterans and retirees) and provide a reduced monthly stipend based on the number of classes in which the student is enrolled.

Similar legislation is expected to be introduced in the House. FRA is monitoring the legislation and remains committed to improving education benefits for active duty personnel, Reservists, retirees, veterans, family members and survivors.

Coast Guard Leadership Changes

Vice Admiral Robert Papp, USCG, became the 24th Commandant of the Coast Guard when he relieved Admiral Thad Allen on May 25, 2010. Papp previously served as Assistant Commandant for Acquisition at Coast Guard Headquarters and subsequently as Commander of the Coast Guard’s Thirteenth District.

Master Chief Petty Officer Michael Leavitt became the 11th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard (MCPOCG) on May 21, 2010. Leavitt, who was the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Deputy Commandant for Operations when selected for the post, relieved retiring MCPOCG-10 Charles “Skip” Bowen.

Master Chief Petty Officer Mark Allen relieved Master Chief Petty Officer Jeffery D. Smith in a change-of-watch ceremony on May 15, 2010, to become the 6th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Reserve Force. Allen’s previous duty assignments include Coast Guard Leadership and Professional Development and Coast Guard Reserve Affairs, Washington, D.C.; Coast Guard Station St. Ingoes, Md.; Coast Guard Station Washington, DC; and Coast Guard Station Alexandria, Va.

FRA wishes these new Coast Guard leaders great success and salutes their predecessors for their service to our nation and unwavering support of Coast Guard personnel.

FRA Opposes Protestors at Military Funerals

In a recent press conference, FRA joined Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (Nev.) and others in the fight to prevent protestors from disrupting military funerals. The Supreme Court will hear the case of *Snyder v Phelps* (No. 09-751) to determine whether protests at the funerals of American service members are protected by the First Amendment. FRA supports existing laws that prohibit such demonstrations and protect a family’s right to mourn in peace.

FRA signed on to a Friend of the Court (Amicus) brief for the upcoming Supreme Court case that originated with protests at the funeral of Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder, a Marine killed in action in Iraq in 2006. Demonstrators from the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas, carried signs at the funeral saying “Thank God for Dead Soldiers” and other inflammatory statements. According to the church’s Web site, the protest was one of more than 43,000 organized by the church and its pastor, Fred W. Phelps Sr., since 1991. Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia have submitted similar briefs to the Supreme Court in support of the Snyder family. (Maine and Virginia declined to take a stand on the matter.)

The brief also supports upholding the constitutionality of the “The Respect for America’s Fallen Heroes Act,” which prohibits protests within 300 feet from the entrance of any cemetery under control by the National Cemetery Administration and at Arlington National Cemetery from 60 minutes before to 60 minutes after the funeral.

Please use the Action Center (www.fra.org) to urge your representatives to pass legislation (H. Con. Res 261) that expresses the sense of Congress that the Supreme Court should uphold laws that allow the families and friends of fallen service members to mourn their loved ones in peace and privacy.

Hot Topic: Are funeral protests a demonstration of free speech or blatant disrespect for grieving families? Visit www.fra.org/hottopics to share your views.

Instructors of the Year



FRA congratulates the Naval Education and Training Command Military Instructors of the Year, who visited FRA National Headquarters as part of their weeklong visit to the D.C. area. FRA NHQ hosted a reception and presentation for the honorees and also coordinated a tour of the Capitol for the finalists and their families.

House Approves Navy Department Name Change

The House approved legislation (H.R. 24) that renames the Department of the Navy as the Department of the Navy and Marine Corps. Language addressing the department's name change was also included in the House version of the Defense Authorization bill (H.R. 5136).

The Association has long supported this legislation and thanks North Carolina Representative Walter Jones for his leadership on this matter. FRA believes the Corps has filled a unique niche in the nation's history, not duplicated by any other Armed Service. Recognizing the Corps as an equal partner in a new Department of the Navy and Marine Corps would give the Marines the distinction and esteem they truly deserve. The bill now moves to the Senate for further consideration, where a companion bill (S. 504), sponsored by Senator Pat Roberts (Kansas), has 78 co-sponsors. Members can use the Action Center at www.fra.org to contact their Senators urging support on this issue.

Service Flag Protection Bill Passes House

The House passed the FRA-supported "Blue Star/Gold Star Act" (H.R. 2546) that prohibits a residential association from adopting any policy that restricts or prevents a member from displaying a service flag on their residential property. (Service flags are those showing a blue star for a loved one's wartime service or a gold star to show a family member died during military wartime service.) The House bill, introduced by Ohio Rep. John Bocchieri, is mirrored in a Senate measure (unnumbered at press time) introduced by Sen. Jim Webb (Va.).

Members are urged to use the Action Center (www.fra.org) to ask their Senators to support these initiatives.

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ERIN BROCKOVICH

VETERANS ISSUES

Agent Orange Reform Put on Hold

Senator James Webb (Va.) recently won approval for an amendment to the FY2010 War Supplemental bill (H.R. 4899) that would delay new Veterans' Affairs (VA) disability claims for more than 86,000 Vietnam veterans who suffer from ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's disease or B-cell leukemia. Based on medical evidence, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki determined there was a link between these conditions and Agent Orange exposure, and authorized presumptive status to Vietnam vets suffering from these diseases. Despite the policy announcement last fall, the VA has yet to publish the regulation that allows disability payments to be made.

Now Webb, a decorated Vietnam veteran who chairs the Senate Personnel Subcommittee and serves on the VA Committee, wants Congress to delay claims processing by 60 days until the scientific data can be examined more closely. Additional information on this story is included in Tom Philpott's *Military Update* column (6-10-10), available at www.fra.org.

Hot Topic: Are you or someone you know affected by exposure to Agent Orange? Share your concerns at www.fra.org/hottopics.

President Signs Caregiver Bill

The President recently signed "The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act," (S. 1963) into law. The legislation creates a caregiver support program, improves health care services for rural and female veterans, and expands the mental health services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The law creates a program to offer caregivers of all disabled veterans training, access to mental health counseling, and 24-hour respite care for a disabled veteran in his home, allowing caregivers temporary relief without having to leave the veteran at a medical facility. Veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) are eligible for enhanced benefits.

Key provisions also improve health care and support services for rural veterans by authorizing stronger partnerships with community providers and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Additionally, the measure expands and improves VA services for the 1.8 million women veterans' currently receiving VA health care.

President Approves the VA Affirmation Act

"The VA Affirmation Act" (H.R. 5014) recently became law, clarifying that Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care programs meet the minimum coverage requirements under recent health care reform legislation. Specifically, the legislation clarifies that the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA), Spina Bifida Health Care Program, and the Children of Women Vietnam Veterans Health Care Program meet the "minimum essential coverage" requirement under the health care law.

In April, the President signed the "The TRICARE Affirmation Act" (H.R. 4887) that makes similar clarifications for TRICARE beneficiaries. Both measures reflect FRA's work to ensure TRICARE and VA health care benefits are not impacted by national health care reform.

Congressional Panels Review VA's Agent Orange Claims Policy

The House Veterans' Affairs (VA) Committee conducted a hearing in late May to examine the needs of Vietnam veterans and military retirees who were exposed to Agent Orange and discuss related legislation. Many Navy and Coast Guard veterans who served off the coast of Vietnam, so-called "blue water" veterans, have health problems frequently associated with herbicide exposure, but have endured lengthy legal struggles to prove these problems are service-related. Currently the VA requires a "foot on land" occurrence in country or on ships patrolling inland waterways in order to award service-connected disability compensation, making blue water veterans ineligible for benefits related to Agent Orange exposure.

Rep. Bob Filner (Calif.), who chairs the committee, introduced the FRA-supported "Agent Orange Equity Act" (H.R. 2254) to provide these veterans with benefits based on their exposure regardless of arbitrary geographic limits imposed by the VA. If enacted, this bill would clarify service in Vietnam to include those who served in the waters offshore, air space above Vietnam, and on Johnston Island where disposal of Agent Orange occurred after the war. Under this bill any veteran awarded the Vietnam Service Medal or the Vietnam Campaign Medal would be entitled to the benefit of Agent Orange presumptions just like other Vietnam era combat veterans.

The Senate VA Committee also held a hearing recently to discuss companion legislation (S. 1939), introduced by Senator Kristin Gillibrand (N.Y.). FRA is an outspoken advocate for both measures and welcomes the committees' interest and concern. Members are urged to use the FRA Action Center at www.fra.org to ask their elected officials to support this legislation.

COMPARISON OF THE TWO NDAA BILLS

ISSUE	HOUSE (H.R. 5136) as passed by the House	SENATE (S. 3454) as approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee	COMMENTS
TRICARE Fees	No TRICARE fee or pharmacy co-pay increase. (Section 701)	No TRICARE fee or co-pay increase for retirees.	<i>FRA opposes excessive TRICARE fee increases. DoD must implement cost-saving options as alternatives to shifting costs to retirees.</i>
TRICARE Benefits for Older Dependent Children	Authorizes TRICARE beneficiaries to purchase coverage for dependent children through age 25. (Section 702).	Allows TRICARE beneficiaries to purchase coverage for dependent children through age 25. (Section 1110b)	<i>FRA supports this provision.</i>
Active Duty Pay Increase	Provides a 1.9-percent active duty pay increase, which is half a percent (0.5%) higher than the Employment Cost Index (ECI) and above the Administration's request of 1.4 percent. (Section 601)	Provides a 1.4-percent active duty pay increase which is equal to the Employment Cost Index (ECI) and the Administration's budget request.	<i>FRA supports House provision.</i>
Retired Pay	Authorizes paying retirees on the first day of the month or earlier if the first of the month falls on a weekend or a holiday, as is currently done for active duty pay. (Section 646)	No changes to current policy.	<i>FRA supports House provision.</i>
Concurrent Receipt of Military Retired Pay and VA Disability Compensation	No changes to current policy.	No changes to current policy.	<i>FRA supports full concurrent receipt for all disabled retirees. This is also addressed in the Tax Extenders Act (H.R. 4213). (See page 8.)</i>
Early Retirement Credit for Reservists	Reserve wounded warriors will get credit for service retroactively to 9/11/01.	No changes to current policy.	<i>FRA supports the reduction (90 days active duty = 3 months reduction) of retirement age for all Reservists who have served since 9/11/01.</i>
Special Pay & Bonuses	Authorizes increased monthly combat pay from \$225 to \$260 and raises family separation allowances from \$250 to \$285. (Section 604)	No changes to current policy.	<i>FRA supports House provision.</i>

COMPARISON OF THE TWO NDAA BILLS

ISSUE	HOUSE (H.R. 5136) as passed by the House	SENATE (S. 3454) as approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee	COMMENTS
Combatant Senior Enlisted Pay	Authorizes pay hike to senior enlisted leaders serving in combatant commands commensurate with E-10 pay. (Section 606)	No similar provision.	<i>FRA supports House provision.</i>
SBP/DIC Offset	No changes to current policy.	No changes to current policy.	<i>FRA supports repeal of the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) offset for survivors.</i>
Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)	Allows two-member Navy couples to each receive BAH when one member is on sea duty. (Section 602)	Requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to review DoD standards for BAH and DoD to review of levels of compensation for those assigned to sea duty. (Section 605)	<i>FRA supports the House and Senate provisions.</i>
End Strength	Authorizes a 4,400-billet increase in Navy end strength for FY 2012. (Sections 401 & 402)	Authorizes a 4,400-billet increase in Navy end strength for FY 2012. (Section 401)	<i>FRA strongly supports adequate service end strengths to meet operational requirements.</i>
Education Assistance	Full funding (\$345 million) for the first-phase of construction to modernize DoD Schools, additional Impact Aid funding (\$50 million) for schools that educate military children and additional funding (\$15 million) for schools impacted by base realignment and closure (BRAC). (Section 561)	Authorizes \$45 million in Impact Aid.	<i>FRA supports the more robust House provision.</i>
Department of the Navy Name Change	Changes the name of the Department of Navy to the Department of the Navy and Marine Corps.	No similar provision.	<i>FRA supports Department name change.</i>

The FRA Legislative team is Joe Barnes, National Executive Director; John Davis, Director of Legislative Programs and Branch 181 President; Bob Washington, Health Care Advisor and Outreach Manager; Chris Slawinski, National Veterans Service Officer and Ed Dockery, Assistant Director of Legislative Programs.

Showing Your FRA Spirit

TODAY'S OUTREACH COULD MEAN tomorrow's increase in membership and there are numerous opportunities for FRA shipmates and branches to share our great organization with others. In recent weeks, several FRA branches participated in events that highlighted the association's legislative work, community involvement and patriotic spirit. Here are some highlights:

Memorial Day is one of the most inspiring days of the year and FRA branches around the country paid tribute to fallen heroes. Whether in FRA-organized events or ceremonies sponsored by communities or other organizations, FRA's patriotism and pride was well represented. Shipmates from Branches 98 (Shreveport, La.), 267 (St. Louis, Mo.), 5 (Norfolk, Va.), 17 (Cleveland, Ohio), 244 (Grand Junction, Colo.), 21 (Fort Collins, Colo.), 288 (Scranton, Pa.), the Tidewater Area Council (Norfolk/Virginia Beach, Va.) and the Central Liaison Committee (D.C. area) — to name just a few — hosted and/or participated in Memorial Day tributes, many of which included solemn Two-Bell ceremonies. In other shows of spirit, shipmates from Branch 254 (Myrtle Beach, S.C.) took part in the 2nd Annual Military Appreciation Days Celebration, sponsored by the City of Myrtle Beach. For three days, these shipmates manned an FRA information booth, making FRA literature available to the thousands who attended. In Washington, D.C., shipmates from Branches 24 (Annapolis, Md.), 181 (Arlington, Va.), and Branch and Unit 182 (Bethesda, Md.) spoke with some of the 100,000+ motorcycle riders who came from all over the country to participate in Rolling Thunder. These FRA representatives shared the benefits of FRA membership with the riders,

many of whom are military veterans and included members of Branch 141 (Havelock, N.C.) who rode their motorcycles to D.C. to participate in the festivities. These events reached thousands of people who witnessed FRA's community involvement and learned about our important legislative work on their behalf.

FRA was a sponsor of the Sea Service Leadership Association's (SSLA) 23rd Annual Leadership Symposium, held recently in Washington, D.C. Over 1,000 active and Reserve members participated in workshops and seminars. Many of the participants expressed interest in FRA's Education Foundation and associated scholarship program.

Those who deploy frequently found FRA's Personal Affairs booklet to be a useful tool for organizing important personal documents. Some participants took extra literature to share with their commands and the symposium also garnered some requests for follow-on presentations in local areas. (The National Headquarter's staff is happy to help branches coordinate local presentations.)

FRA also answered the call to provide information at the Annual Coast Guard Family Hurricane Preparedness Day, sponsored by USCG Sector Corpus Christi, Texas. PRPSC Don Larson and Shipmate John Herzer participated in this event and explained



Penny Collins



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how FRA supports service members and dependents, both active duty and Reserve.

FRA's Outreach Manager Bob Washington, PRPEC Ray Santee and Shipmate Norm Gapter participated in the Family Readiness Symposium in Norfolk, Va. Over 400 Family Readiness Officers, the Family Readiness

Group Leadership volunteers and Ombudsmen (military spouses who serve as a link between deployed members and their families) stopped by the information table to learn more about the FRA.

These are just a few examples of opportunities to share your FRA pride within your community. If your branch

is looking to expand its outreach efforts, check your community or Chamber of Commerce Web sites for planned events, or consider planning your own. If you need promotional materials, contact FRA Member Services on 1-800-372-1924 to place your order at least four weeks in advance so your items can be shipped in a timely manner.



Master Chief Kurt Shoemaker, Command Reserve Master Chief of the 9th USCG District, was the guest speaker at Memorial Day ceremonies sponsored by Branch 17.



Branch Treasurer Dan Nicolais, PRPNE and President Francis Tyson and Secretary Joseph Tully (l to r) post new flags and holders at the branch's annual pre-Memorial Day charge.



The annual wreath floating ceremony is hosted by Colorado West FRA Branch 244 on Memorial Day to honor deceased Branch/Unit members and all veterans of the sea services.



Branch 141 shipmates traveled to D.C. to participate in Rolling Thunder 2010. Shown (back row, l to r) are PRPEC Paul Gunther (Br. 182), Jamie Orr, Leon Lacy, Clifford Boehnkem, Branch President Jim Ballard, Vice-President Dwight Bowman, his son Rex Bowman, James Ballard, Tiffany Ballard, Jon Orr, Kim Orr, Jacie McVicker, Zack Hirshfield, Steve Azok and FRA Staff Member Jimmy Short. Front Row (l to r) are Thomas Radford, Kelly Bowman and PRPEC Bob Washington (Br. 181).



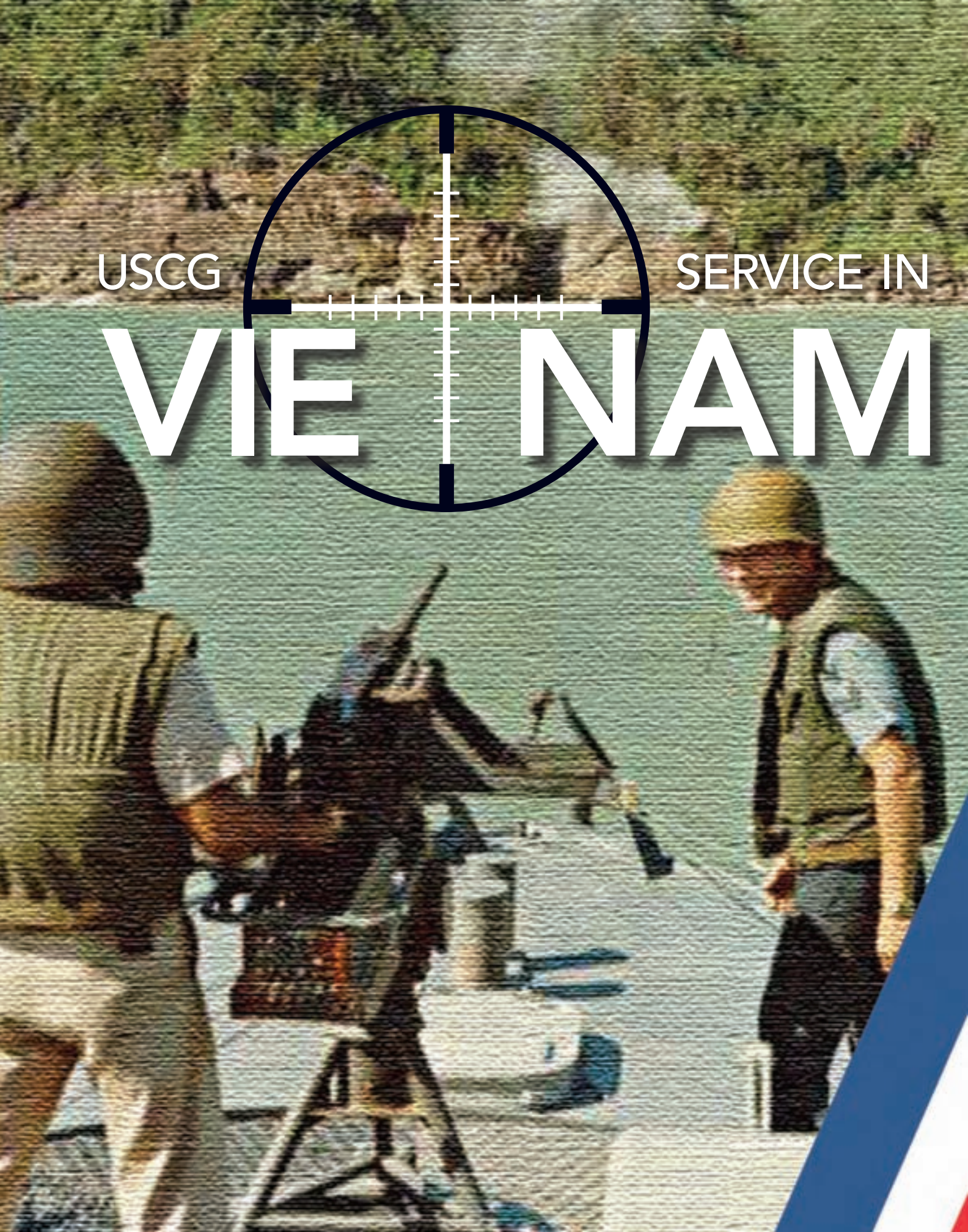
Members of Branch and Unit 21 conduct a Two-Bell ceremony at the Grand View Cemetery in Fort Collins, Colo. Shown (l to r) are Shipmates Taladay, Carter, Irvin, and Ladies Phyllis Brown, Shirley Taladay, Camille Irvin.

Penny Collins is FRA's Director of Membership Development and a member of FRA Branch 24 in Annapolis, Md. She can be reached at penny@fra.org.

USCG

SERVICE IN

VIE NAM



WHEN NORTH VIETNAM AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE insurgents sought to spread communism across Indochina, the U.S. came to South Vietnam's aid with advisory personnel and material support. But when the South Vietnamese military continued to struggle, the U.S. ramped up its involvement in the conflict, increasing its manpower from 900 in 1960 to more than 543,000 in 1969. By 1975, when U.S. forced withdrew from the clash, more than two-and-a-half million U.S. military personnel had taken part in the bloody turf battle between North and South Vietnam, among them more than 8,000 Coast Guardsmen.

The Coast Guard's (USCG's) role in Vietnam is unknown to many. Compared to the tens of thousands Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps personnel who participated, the Coast Guard's numbers may not seem particularly significant. But the smallest service's assets — both manpower and military capability — contributed greatly to mission success in Southeast Asia. Coast Guardsmen distinguished themselves and their service honorably in the conflict, interrupting enemy supply transports, providing naval gunfire support, providing port security, establishing and maintaining aids to navigation and myriad other roles.

BY LAUREN ARMSTRONG

ENEMY INTERDICTION

North Vietnamese forces were transporting troops, armaments and other supplies by water to positions in the south. In March of 1965, the U.S. began Operation Market Time to halt this logistical flow. The U.S. Navy began using ships and air power to close these transport lanes and, by May of that year, South Vietnam gave U.S. forces the authority to stop, search and seize suspicious vessels if they ventured within 12 miles of the nation's shore. When the Navy realized its deficit in shallow- and confined-water operations, they asked the Coast Guard for help.

"The Navy needed small boats for smuggling interdiction," explains Bill Wilkins, who commanded USCGC Point Partridge in 1966 and 1967. "At that time, they didn't have the 'swifts' or other small boats, so they asked the Coast Guard for 82s [82-foot patrol boats or WPBs]. Commandant Eddie Roland hadn't forgotten how the Coast Guard got absorbed into Navy units during World War II, so he said he was willing to let 17 of his 82-foot cutters go to Vietnam, but only if they were manned by Coast Guard crew. They were assigned to Division 11 in Denang and Division 12 in An Thoi,

near the southern tip of Vietnam on the west side. Later, another nine 82s went to Division 13 in Vung Tau."

The Coast Guard's initial assignment was to curtail smuggling. "We'd patrol a specific area and our job was to detect, inspect and board [Vietnamese] vessels to ensure there was no contraband," explained Jerry Echols, who commanded the Point Partridge later in the conflict (1969 and 1970).

Chief Gunners Mate Ed Eno participated in these interdiction patrols. "We'd leave at about 10 p.m. and, early the next morning, we'd see hundreds of fishing boats heading out," recalls Eno. "Most were of no concern to us, but on their way back in, after dark, some would be carrying contraband."

A South Vietnamese liaison officer accompanied the crew on these patrols, translating as needed when a boat was intercepted. "When we stopped these boats, we would board them, which was the only time I felt a little leery," continues Eno. "We carried a shotgun when we boarded and, if we found VC [Viet Cong or South Vietnamese insurgents] without papers, we'd handcuff them to our boat and call the Army to retrieve them.

Blue Water Veterans

Many Navy and Coast Guard veterans of the Vietnam War are experiencing health problems related to their exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides. Those who served offshore, however, are not eligible for veterans' disability benefits related to this exposure. The Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) grants service-connected status for these maladies only if the veteran can prove his/her service included "boots on the ground" or "brown water" operations on the inland rivers of Vietnam.

FRA is working to expand the VA's policy to include these so-called "blue water" vets. The Association is actively supporting pending legislation (H.R. 254 and S. 1939) that would grant presumptive status to all Vietnam veterans exposed

to herbicides, not just those who served inland. All veterans are encouraged to visit the Action Center at www.fra.org and ask their elected officials to support these measures.

In addition to legislative initiatives, some progress is being made in helping blue water veterans. While the VA acknowledges that some veterans were exposed to herbicides while their ships operated on inland rivers of Vietnam, it hasn't always been easy for veterans to prove their ship traveled inland during their tour of duty.

Proving exposure may be easier now that the VA has released a list of Navy and USCG vessels with confirmed participation in brown water operations. (All USCG personnel who served on WPBs and WHECs are eligible for "presumption" of herbicide exposure.) FRA strongly

encourages all Vietnam veterans and retirees to review the list of "blue water" vessels and operation dates released by the VA. (The list is posted on the News page of www.fra.org.) If a veteran's service aboard one of these ships can be confirmed through their military records during the time frames specified, exposure to herbicide agents can be presumed without further proof, thus expediting the VA claims process.

If you or someone you know served aboard any of these vessels during the times indicated, a VA claim for exposure to an herbicide agent should be filed. Contact your nearest VA Regional Office (a list is available at www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/offices.asp) or contact Chris Slawinski at vafra@fra.org or 1-800-FRA-1924 (ext. 115).

◀ Views of USCG Point Hudson (WPB-82322), Division 13, on first Saigon River Patrol.

▶ USCGCs Point Orient and Point Lomas tied up in Danang.

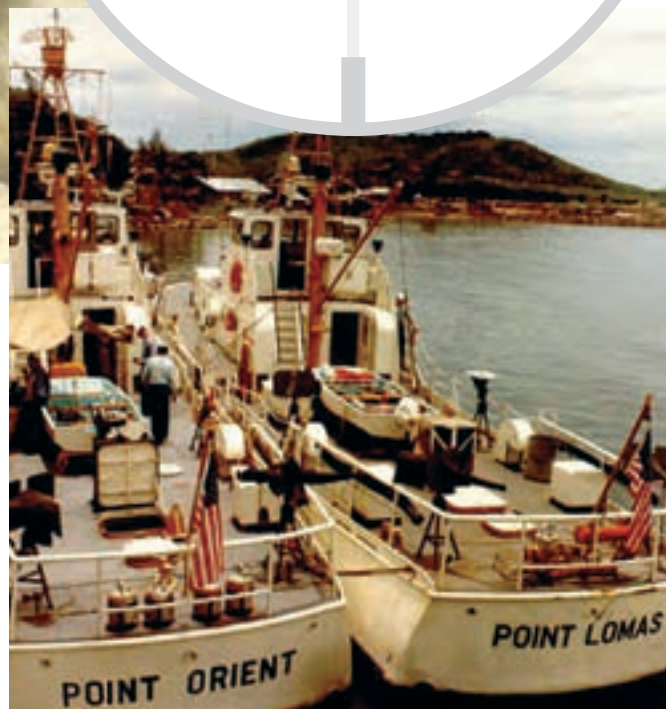
“We’d patrol a specific area and our job was to detect, inspect and board [Vietnamese] vessels to ensure there was no contraband.”

It was tempting to kick or beat them, but we never did. We always showed restraint.” Some detainees were also turned over to Naval Intelligence Liaison Officers.

Offshore operations involved Navy minesweepers and destroyer escorts patrolling 10 to 15 miles from the coast. (See page 20) The Coast Guard also operated further off shore, offering patrol support. “Larger cutters — 255s, 311s and 378s — would cruised specific patrol areas, about 25 miles off shore,” explained Echols. “We could run out to them to secure supplies, ammo, and medical support, as needed. They also provided gunfire support.”

RIVER PATROLS

The Coast Guard also used the 82s to patrol some of Vietnam’s inland waterways, complementing the efforts of the Navy’s PCFs (patrol craft fast), often called swift boats for their high-speed capabilities. The 82s had steel hulls and dual diesel engines. “They were beauties,” Echols recalls fondly. “They were designed for Search and Rescue [missions] and were ideal for Vietnam. They had a six-foot draft and could go into the [deeper] rivers and canals.”



Patrols lasted seven to 10 days, depending on the patrol parameters, followed by a couple days off to refuel, paint and maintain the vessel, and resupply for the next patrol. Sometimes patrols required the 82s to lay ambushes and wait for enemy boats to move. Occasionally, they’d support Navy SEALs who were doing night survey missions, dropping them off at night and retrieving them before daylight. Other times, the 82 crew worked with military aircraft to accomplish their mission. But regardless of the specific patrol mission, they never forgot they were in a combat zone.

"Swifts would run upriver and spray all the lead they could," adds Echols. "[In response,] the enemy would string wire three or four inches below the water to snag the swift boats, foul their props, and make them sitting ducks. One of our missions was to [take the larger 82's upriver and] rip out those wires. If we had time, we'd go up the rivers and spread hate and discontent on seek-and-destroy missions that were part of Operation Sealords [Southeast Asia Lake, Ocean, River and Delta Strategy], mostly in and around the Mekong Delta."

"We'd go upriver looking for the enemy or boats to board. Sometimes we'd go on our own or sometimes a Bronco, fixed-wing aircraft would go in ahead of us. This wasn't always a good thing," Echols continues, "because it alerted the enemy that we were coming. When we'd encounter the enemy, the bad guys would disappear. If we destroyed a sampan or bamboo hooch, they'd just rebuild another one in an hour, but our job was to keep them guessing and keep them agitated, so they couldn't stir up mischief elsewhere."

"For entertainment, we'd sometimes team up with an Army helicopter. We'd go toward shore and lure enemy fire. Just about everyone in our crew was under the age of 25 and we felt invincible," adds Wilkins, who was a brand new lieutenant junior grade (LTJG) when he took command of Point Partridge. "Once the enemy started shooting, we'd fire back and mark their location with smoke. Then the helo would take them out with rockets."

Standing watch is a way of life in the Sea Services, but it's even more important during war. On patrol, the executive officer, chief and first-class boatswain's mate stood two four-hour watches each day. Chief Gunners Mate Eno, whose primary responsibility was to maintain the guns and order ammo as needed, stood the midnight-to-four watch one night out of 10.

"We had to watch for swimmers who might be setting mines or attaching explosive charges to hulls or anchor chains. We'd obviously keep our eyes open looking for them and we'd also drop concussion grenades periodically, just to keep them guessing. It's amazing that we all learned to sleep through those," Eno chuckles.

WPBs were underway about 70 percent of the time and patrols were longer for 82 crews, but living conditions were better than for those who served aboard swift boats. "We had a galley and a cook; we could come out of a fire fight, go back to sea and have a steak dinner," recalls Echols. "The boats were air conditioned — when they worked — and our water



◀ United States and Vietnamese sailors off loading some of the 80 tons of ammunition aboard a captured Vietcong trawler that was run aground and set afire.

supply was limited, so no shaving, no showers and lots of deodorant. We still got shot at; but it beat the hell out of a fox hole!"

NAVAL GUNFIRE SUPPORT

Coast Guard vessels also provided naval gunfire support to ground troops fighting on the Vietnam shores. During Echols' tour aboard *Point Partridge*, there was usually at least one call a day for such support. "We'd be given coordinates and we'd fire. Sometimes we'd see our target, but often we wouldn't. We'd often be firing blind," he remembers.

"We had 81mm mortars on the bow and we'd shoot at the shore if we were advised of enemy presence. If we saw [the enemy], we let 'em have it. It wasn't fun and I felt uneasy for a long time afterwards," says Eno. "I could feel the adrenaline for two or three days. I don't have that killer instinct."

Coordinating with the other services was crucial, but things didn't always go smoothly. For example, Wilkins recalls a time when the Navy was tasked to provide gunfire support for Army troops in the coastal areas. "The Army dropped a group of Rangers in the free-fire zone at night — an area where it was assumed anyone we saw was a bad guy. The Rangers got pinned down

and requested gunfire support from a Navy destroyer. Unfortunately, the destroyer was on R&R that night and nobody had bothered to tell the Rangers. When they called for help, nobody answered the phone. Thankfully, *Point Partridge* got the word and we went in to help. It was the only time I've ever run my vessel aground intentionally. Our range was 5,000 yards and the tide was coming in. I kept running her into the mud to keep getting closer to the shore. We helped the Rangers repel the enemy until morning when they could withdraw."

PORT SAFETY AND SECURITY

South Vietnam's seaports were ill-equipped to handle the steady flow of ordnance required to support the military's need. Merchant ships waited weeks before they could offload their explosive cargo, only to have inexperienced stevedores roughly toss bombs and other munitions as if they were handling food stores.

"The Vietnamese hauled ordnance around in dump trucks and would throw them into piles. They were lucky they



◀ While on patrol in the Saigon River, crewmen stand ready with guns on board the 82-foot U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Point White* (WPB-82308) as another crewman boards and searches a junk.

didn't blow themselves up," said Wilkins. "The USCG sent Explosive Loading Detachments in to supervise the offloading of explosive ordnance."

In addition to unsafe handling of munitions, port security was lax, at best. Vessels would dock without proper searches while South Vietnamese sentries slept at their posts. Ordnance were piled haphazardly, with little concern for safety or security. Warehouses and dock areas weren't fenced or secured, allowing for potential attack. Trespassers came and went at will and often walked away, unchallenged, with precious supplies. The Coast Guard was again asked for assistance.

"We had 81mm mortars on the bow and we'd shoot at the shore if we were advised of enemy presence. If we saw [the enemy], we let 'em have it..."

Coast Guard Port Security and Waterways Details were dispatched to assess port security and make necessary improvements to protect against attack, pilferage and fire.

Their contributions not only improved the flow of munitions and supplies, they also saved lives.

AIDS TO NAVIGATION

In addition to the limited number of accessible ports and lack of knowledgeable cargo handlers, merchant and military ships were also hampered by a lack of navigational aids. "We'd navigate by fishing stakes, logs, trees, whatever was available," says Wilkins.

"The charts were poor, but the aids to navigation (ATON) were even worse." And again, the Coast Guard took action to improve the situation.

The Coast Guard would later deploy buoy tenders from Hawaii and Guam to mark channels, but in early 1966, no provisions had been made to place navigational aids where none had existed before. A three-man team of Coast Guardsmen was tasked with the job, using their collective ATON background and ingenuity to create makeshift channel markers.

"They had no buoys, no supplies and limited manpower," Echols recalls. "They got a boat from the Army, some day-glow paint from the Air Force, sinkers, wire rope and other supplies from wherever they could, and made buoys [until more permanent ones could be brought in]. It was a great cooperative effort."

The Coast Guard was also responsible for operating LORAN (Long Range Aid to Navigation) stations in Thailand and off the coast of Vietnam. "These stations, known as the Tight Rein system, provided precision navigational fixes for the Air Force's B-52 bombers flying high altitude missions over North Vietnam and Laos. Without this system the bombers could not accurately place their ordnance," explains Wilkins.

LIFESAVERS

In the early stages of the war, search and rescue (SAR) missions were orchestrated on an ad hoc basis, using whatever assets were available at the time of need. As more aviation missions were conducted, more pilots and aircrews were at risk. The need for designated SAR aircraft and pilots with SAR experience became obvious, and yet again, the Coast Guard's expertise was called upon.

In March 1967, the Air Force and Coast Guard agreed to establish a pilot-swap program, in which the USCG sent three helicopter pilots and two fixed-wing pilots to the Philippines to support SAR requirements. One of those first USCG helicopter pilots in particular, Lieutenant Jack Rittichier, repeatedly distinguished himself by making heroic rescues in his Jolly Green Giant (Sikorsky HH-3E), earning two Distinguished Flying Crosses. In June 1968, Rittichier and his three-man Air Force crew were killed in action trying to rescue a downed U.S. pilot. His dedication to save lives at the risk of his own is reflective of the Coast Guard's lifesaving ethos.

The Coast Guard's lifesaving efforts weren't limited to air rescues, nor were they limited to aiding American warfighters. Wilkins recalls a Point Partridge rescue of a swift boat that had been hit by a rocket-propelled grenade. And Echols speaks of transporting an injured Chinese fisherman to a Taiwanese cargo ship that had medical supplies and staff. "It wasn't heroics," Echols is quick to point out. "We were just doing a good deed."

Some believe the services' heroic combat actions in Vietnam have taken a backseat to its lifesaving image. "In subsequent years, I think the Coast Guard tried to pretend we weren't there. We're portrayed as lifesavers, not warriors."

USCG PRIDE RUNS DEEP

As Coast Guardsmen worked side-by-side with members of the other services, there was a healthy sense of service



◀ Lieutenant Jack Rittichier (right).

pride. Although they might not have understood the Coast Guard or its capabilities, the other services generally viewed her efforts in a positive light. Even so, USCG personnel sometimes received a ration of ribbing from their counterparts in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force.

"I sometimes felt like the Coast Guard was perceived as a red-headed stepchild by the other services," says Eno. "We were called 'mud pirates' and told we couldn't make it in the other services. For the most part, I think the comments were all intended to be kidding, but I didn't appreciate them."

Even the color of the cutters' hulls became a way to show Coast Guard pride. White-hulled vessels have always been a trademark of the Coast Guard, but orders from Market Time headquarters mandated the cutters be painted gray to make them less visible to the enemy. Crewmen grudgingly complied, but refused to use the Navy's traditional haze gray. Instead, they distinguished their service by using a dark, black-gray shade.

"The Coast Guard vessels started out white, but [leadership] decided they should be gray. They were painted gray, but not Navy gray — a darker shade," Echols explains. "We had to paint them every couple months because the sun faded them quickly. With a fresh coat of paint, the 82s were invisible at night. They couldn't be seen at 50 feet, unless there was a reflection from a window."



◀ HH3E Jolly Green rescue helicopters. In April 1968, three Coast Guard helicopter pilots were assigned to the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Danang.



◀ A crew member standing in a small boat sprays on the now dark gray paint over the hull of the 82-footer USCGC Point Gammon, assigned to Coast Guard Division Twelve at Danang, South Vietnam.

LOOKING BACK

Coast Guard personnel who served in Vietnam have every reason to be proud of their personal and their service's contributions. Each of the men interviewed for this story recalls his Vietnam experiences in a different light, but all believe they made a difference.

Bill Wilkins was in Vietnam, "when it was still a 'good war,' before the tide [sentiment] turned in the U.S. Part of our mission was to win the hearts and minds [of the South Vietnamese]. We'd help people when we could," he recalls. "The Vietnamese would tell us they loved us, but we never knew how they really felt. When the North Vietnamese took over, they found new people they loved."

Jerry Echols volunteered six times before he was selected to go to Vietnam. "My country was at war and, as a career Coast Guardsman, I'd been training for years. When I couldn't go, I felt I'd been left behind. I still get furious when I hear news reports that say the military 'lost' the Vietnam War. It was lost stateside by people who didn't care. I tried to contribute to a cause I believed in, but the military was not allowed to do the job as they should have been."

USCGC Point Partridge was Ed Eno's first shipboard assignment when he joined the Coast Guard. After weeks of training, he and a shipmate arrived in Saigon to an unforgettable scene. "The entrance to our hotel

was sandbagged and there were armed guards on the roof. We heard explosions and gunfire all night. It didn't take us long to understand where we were and why we were there."

More than 35 years after the fall of Saigon and the inglorious end of the Vietnam War, the debate about "why we were there" continues. But that doesn't diminish the efforts made to help the South Vietnamese people, for whom the fighting continued long after the U.S. withdrew. Those not fortunate enough to be evacuated would endure murder, interment in prison camps and hazardous journeys across the South China Sea to seek new lives.

"I'll always marvel at what people will endure to escape a totalitarian government," adds Echols ruefully. "It's heartbreaking."

Author's note: Coast Guard Action in Vietnam, Stories of Those Who Served, by retired Guardian Paul C. Scotti, was a highly useful resource in researching this article and is a must-read for anyone who wants a more in-depth description of the Coast Guard's vital service in Southeast Asia.



Lauren Armstrong is the Contributing Editor and an LA FRA Member at Large. She can be reached at lauren@fra.org.

BRANCH 22 PENSACOLA, FLA.

Shipmates (l to r) Bill Eaton, Walt Phillips, Don Krauss, Burnell Beal, Mark Kilgore, Babe Kilgore (Unit 22), and Don Settell display the FRA flag that will fly with other Veteran Service Organizations' flags in front of the VA Joint Ambulatory Care Center in Pensacola.



BRANCH 186 HERNANDO, FLA.

Branch and Unit members donated stuffed animals to the Southwest Branch of the Marion County, Fla., Sheriff's Department. The animals are given to children involved in traumatic situations. Shown (l to r) are Peggy Delfraisse, Unit Treasurer/Secretary Bev Woods, Sgt Bill Padgett, Deputy Kim Bray, Sgt Grady Grimes, and Branch Treasurer James Delfraisse.



BRANCH 11 FORT WORTH, TEXAS

FRA memberships were presented to NAS JRB Fort Worth Sailors of the Year. Shown (l to r) are Branch President Arthur McAvoy, Command Master Chief and Shipmate Ellen Zubke, Sailor of the Year AO1(AW/SW) Erich Francis, Junior Sailor of the Year AZ2(AW) Percy Diaz, Blue Jacket of the Year AO3 Benjamin Poroda and Commanding Officer Captain T.D. Smyers.

BRANCH 59 CHEYENNE, WYO.

Past Branch Presidents congratulated Shipmate Ted Walton on his 40 years of continuous FRA membership. Shown (l to r) are Lewis Hansen 2007-2008, Bill Green 2008-2009, Jim Marshall 2009-2010, Current President Larry Hastings 2010-2011, Doug Owens 2005-2006, Shipmate Ted Walton, Mike Archer 2003-2005, Dave McHenry 2006-2007.



BRANCH 104 TACOMA, WASH.

Branch President PNP 'John' Johnson (left) recognizes Shipmate Robert Cutcher's 25 years of continuous FRA membership with a certificate and pin.

**BRANCH 162 GRETNA, LA.**

Staff and volunteers at the Plaquemines (Parish) Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) were hand-shredding newspapers for the animals' cages until shipmates donated a commercial shredder. Shown (l to r) are Branch Vice President Rick Garrett, PAWS Director Liz Carl, Branch President Tom Craine and Bootsy, who'll directly benefit from the donation.

**BRANCH 281 REDDING, CALIF.**

Branch President Mike Braden presents PO1 Newberry with a copy of *Sea Power*. Shipmate Newberry is the Recruiter in Charge at Navy Recruiting Station Redding.

**BRANCH 358 OSCODA, MI**

Branch President Bill Kubik congratulates Shipmate Samuel J. Fulmer as he receives his 40-year continuous FRA membership certificate and pin. The branch also recognized 40-year members John C. Jones and Dean O. Thomas, who were unable to attend.

**BRANCH 42 QUONSET POINT, R.I.**

RVPN Eng Phil Justin (left) presents Shipmates Jerome Farr (center) and Ralph Allen with certificates that acknowledge their 40-years of continuous FRA membership.

BRANCH 136 MINNEAPOLIS, MINN. (WILCOX)

Shipmate Clyde Wilcox (left) accepts his 35-year membership pin from Branch President Thomas Dooley.

To submit a photo for *News From the Branches*, please E-mail a photo as an attachment in jpeg format to FRAToday@fra.org or mail a high-quality photograph to *FRA Today*, 125 N. West Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Please include a brief description of the photograph and include the names of those pictured. Laser prints and scanned copies of photographs cannot be accepted.

American Association of Navy Hospital Corpsmen (AAoNHC)

September 22–26, 2010, Great Lakes, Ill. Contact Paul Denis 315-699-5274, AAoNHC@yahoo.com or Art Boyle at aboyhm@yahoo.com.

Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association

May 4–7, 2011, Dulles, D.C. Contact Baker Herbert, 330-887-5539, USCGW64@neo.rr.com.

Distinguished Flying Cross Society

October 24–27, 2010, Riverside, Calif. Contact Michael O'Neil, 866-332-6332, reunion@dfcsociety.com.

Filipino Submariners

September 23–25, 2010, Groton, Conn. Contact Rudy Encina, 757-479-1479.

IUWGRU-TWO/MIUW-210

September 18, 2010, Baltimore, Md. Contact Bill Ganz, 3436 Nanmark Ct., Ellicott City, MD 21042, 410-418-5597, yncganz@yahoo.com.

NANP/Navy Photographers

September 21–23, 2010, San Diego, Calif. Contact Tim Timmerman, 620 Riverview Dr., Ellenton, FL 34222, 941-720-1719, NANPSectry@tampabay.rr.com.

NAS New York (Floyd Bennett Field)

September 30–October 3, 2010, Virginia Beach, Va. Contact Chet Atkinson, PO Box 62066, Virginia Beach, VA 23466, 757-495-1338.

Naval Station Guantanamo Bay Cuba

October 25–29, 2010, Branson, Mo. Contact Karen Steele, 155 Industrial Park Dr., Hollister, MO 65672, 800-542-6768, karen@bransongrayline.com.

Naval Support Activity, DaNang, Data Processing Dept

September 24–26, 2010, Washington, D.C. Contact Ted Belden, 210-694-0235, beldenjo@sbcglobal.net.

Navy Hurricane Hunters Squadron

September 30–October 03, 2010, Pensacola, Fla. Contact E. R. Eaton, Hurricane Hunters, Inc., 482 W. River Rd., Paltka, FL 32177-8009, 770-251-9088.

NMCB 2 Reunion Association Korea-Vietnam

September 22–24, 2011, Port Hueneme, Calif. Contact Scott Williams, 725 Summer Ridge Rd., Villa Rica GA 30180, 770-456-4246, williash@aol.com.

Old Antarctic Explorers Association

November 3–5, 2010, San Antonio, Texas. Contact John L. West, 2024 Quail Creek Drive, Apt. 507, Laredo, TX 78045-8259, 956-568-3737, OAEA2010Reunion@hotmail.com.

Tang Class Boats: SS563, 564, 565, 566, 567 and 576

August 30–September 5, 2010, Fort Mitchell, Ky. Contact Dan Craw, 8607 46th Ave., Cir. W., Bradenton, FL 34210, 941-761-2234, dcraw1@tampabay.rr.com.

U.S. Naval Facility Barbados

June 2–June 8, 2011, Barbados. Contact Mike Noonan, 14 School St., Milton, VT 05468, 802-893-6187, rmn570@gmail.com.

U.S.S. Tripoli (CVE-64)

October 7–10, 2010, Reston, Va. Contact Henry L. Wegner, 155 Alverta's Way, St. Leonard, MD 20685, 410-586-0657, hlwmlw@comcast.net.

USS Aldebaran (AF-10) Association

October 11–13, 2010, Savannah, Ga. Contact Ed Pepling, 772-224-8822.

USS Bristol (DD-857)

October 7–10, 2010, Philadelphia, Pa. Contact Doug Lipert, 5 Locust St., N. Reading, MA 01864, 978-397-3095, drlipert@comcast.net.

USS Casa Grande (LSD-13)

October 3–8, 2010, Virginia Beach, Va. Contact John Kalnasy, 38270 Kingston Dr., Northridgeville, OH, 440-353-3498, parforeyou@yahoo.com.

USS Colonial (LSD-18)

September 8–12, 2010, Rapid City, S.D. Contact Vernon Kinchen, 101 Club Rd., Dover, AR 72837, 479-567-5675, vgkinc@suddenlink.net.

USS Coral Sea (CVA-43)

October 7–9, 2010, Tampa, Fla. Contact George Haase, 9001 Hogans Bend, Tampa, FL 33647, 813-973-3159, ghaase@msn.com.



USS Davidson (DE/FF-1045)

October 7–10, 2010, Branson, Mo. Contact Mike Peck, 952-922-8536, davidson1045@msn.com.

USS Davis (DD-937)

October 14–17, 2010, Jacksonville, Fla. Contact Peter Lennon, 5 Skyline Dr., Plainville, CT 06062, 860-747-8761, ptlii37@aol.com.

USS Enoree (AO/TAO-69)

September 16–20, 2010, Atlanta, Ga. Contact Floyd A. Carriker, 10342 Westminster Ave., Apt. 2, Garden Grove, CA 92843, 714-534-3025.

USS Grenadier (SS-525)

October 6–10, 2010, Virginia Beach, Va. Contact Reggie Thurlow, 800-418-9195, rcricri@embarqmail.com.

USS Ingersoll (DD-652/990)

September 9–12, 2010, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Dennis Harris, 979-676-0612, oldsailor62@gmail.com.

USS Jason (ARH-1/AR-8)

June 6–10, 2011, Branson, Mo. Contact Bill Stansberry, 8435 Country Rd 290, Carl Junction, MO 64834, 417-649-6140, sssl@att.net.

USS John Rodgers (DD-574)

September 29–October 2, 2010, Wilmington, N.C. Contact Jack Mindock, 326 W. 3rd St., Oglesby, IL 61348, 815-883-8443.

USS Liddle (APD-60)

October 13–17, 2010, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact Richard Davis, 330-452-7322.

USS Missouri (BB-63)

September 15–20, 2010, Lisle, Ill. Contact Bill Morton, 803-469-3579, MO63@FTC-I.net.



VR-1 Radiomen or Flight Mechanics

Who flew the R-6s, 1956 to 1959. Please contact James Hindel, 4701 Pine Lake Dr., Myrtle Beach, SC 29577-2442, JamesHindel@webtv.net, 843-449-1856.

Shipmates of Arbert Wooten

I'm looking for my old shipmates, 1943 to 1965. My first assignment was MOB 9, Brisbane, Australia, and my last was aboard USS Cochrane (DDG-21). Contact Arbert Wooten, 4400 Philadelphia St, Spc 89, Chino, CA 91710-2222.

USS Nicholas Reunion Association

October 11–15, 2010, Lake George, N.Y. Contact David McComb, P.O. Box 1695, Bolton Landing, NY 12814-1695, 518-644-3268, nicholas@domeisland.com.

USS Perkins (DD-26/DD-377/DDR-877) Association

September 9–12, 2010, Houston, Texas. Contact Dan E. Jackson, Sr., P.O. Box 890301, Houston, TX 77289-0301, 281-414-6917, dnjacks@swbell.net.

USS Pollack (SSN-603)

November 8–11, 2010, Branson, Mo. Contact Cliff Smith, 559-877-2873, smittyss@sti.net.

USS Prichett (DD-561)

September 14–19, 2010, Romulus, Mich. Contact Don Calvin, 305 Columbus St., Coatsburg, IL. 62325, 217-455-3167, ramona@adams.net.

USS Providence (CL 82/CLG 6)

October 6–10, 2010, San Diego, Calif. Contact David Abdouch, 127 Amberwood Dr., Walnut, CA 91789, 909-594-9273.

Shipmates from Company 51-893, NTC San Diego, Calif.

I'm looking for a photo of the company. Please contact Richard Hiser at 231 N. Arnaz Ave., Ojai, CA 93023 or RHiser33@msn.com.

BTCM Albert Dunmore

Last known duty station was COMNAVAIRPAC, NAS North Island, San Diego, Calif. Contact CWO4 Arthur P. Calvert at 619-980-5553.

PO3 Jimmy Birmingham

Was stationed at NAAS Mayport, Fla., 1956–1957. Contact HMC Don Ledbury at 850-342-3308 or 850-459-3255.

James R. Roton

Last known duty station was Main Dental Clinic, NTC San Diego, Calif., 1950–1951. Please contact Sam F. Cogdell, 151 Ramblewood Dr., Jackson, TN 38305, 731-668-0311.

A Military Father

He was an Icelandic student named Unnur, in the London area, 1968/69. Contact Joe Thacker at 863-687-6912 or skcmjkt@yahoo.com.

USS Razorback (SS-394)/USS Redfish (SS-395)/USS Ronquil (SS-396)

September 6–10, 2010, N. Little Rock, Ark. Contact Ron Sagaert, 828-433-7851, rtsagaert@msn.com.

USS Renville (APA-227)/Navy

August 25–29, 2010, Colorado Springs, Colo. Contact Lynda Rumble, 187 Lakeshore Dr., Mooresville, NC 28117, 704-906-7622, lyndahd01@aol.com.

USS Richard E. Byrd (DDG-23)

September 29–October 2, 2011, Nashville, Tenn. Contact David L. Cunningham, 916 Timberlake Dr., Virginia Beach, VA 23464-3232, 757-467-6682, DCunnin884@aol.com.

USS Samuel Gompers (AD-37)

October 1–3, 2010, Reno, Nev. Contact Mary Snider, P.O. Box 459, Pinole, CA 94564, mary@samuelgompersreunion.org.

USS Sea Poacher (SS-406)

November 8–11, 2010, Branson, Mo. Contact Bill Brinkman, 514-788-4441, seapoacher@austin.rr.com.

Survivors from USS Drexler (DD-741)

Drexler was sunk in May of 1945. I found a photo album of the crew and family members from the 1989 reunion in New Orleans, La. I'd like to return it to a crewmember or surviving relative. Please contact Harry Gruen at naswfnavy@msn.com.

CPOs Who Built YMCA Camp in Lebanon

On the 1963 USS Enterprise cruise, Chaplain Jolly led 40 First Class Petty Officers as they build a YMCA camp in the interior of Lebanon. I would like to contact them. Please contact Kenneth Rodgers, AE1, RVAH-7 at kcpapa@comcast.net.

DPCS Don Phelps

He was stationed at NSA Danang, Vietnam, in 1969. Contact Nick Roberts at niroberts99@aol.com or 623-975-7679.

These notices are published on a space available basis. Notices must be submitted in writing. E-mail fratoday@fra.org or mail your request to: FRA, *Looking for...*, 125 N. West St., Alexandria, VA, 22314.

USS Sierra (AD-18)

October 19–21, 2010, Ocean City, N.J. Contact Dan Romando, 8 Tisdale Road, Whiting, NJ 08759, 732-849-4657, drom1111@aol.com or Malcolm Jones, 2613 W. Highway 83, McAllen, TX 78501, 956-343-3644, jnauto@att.net.

USS Thomas Jefferson (SSBN-618)

September 16–18, 2010, Groton, Conn. Contact John Sweat, 248 N. Anguilla Rd., Pawcatuck, CT 06379, 860-287-2766, jvsweat@sbcglobal.net.

VAQ/VAK 208/308

September 9–12, 2010, Reno, Nev. Contact Billy C. Chartrand, ka3b654@comcast.net.

VP-60

July 29–31, 2011, Great Lakes, Ill. Contact Dennis Blau, 646 Longmeadow Cir., Longwood, FL 32779, 407-774-7506, limasierra60@gmail.com.

Members can post reunions online at www.fra.org, submit to reunions@fra.org or mail to: FRA Reunions, 125 N. West St., Alexandria, VA 22314.



1, PHILADELPHIA, PA.
Sarah Parmacek of Baldwin School (Bryn Mawr, Pa.) accepts a \$5,000 U.S. Savings Bond, plaque and certificate from PRPNE Charles Rainey, while school administrator Eric Hodge looks on. Sarah is this year's 11th grade national winner in the FRA Americanism Essay Contest.



17, CLEVELAND, OHIO
Branch President Ed Blind (left) and Treasurer Al Albergottie recognize Michael Taylor for his participation in the Essay Contest. Michael is an NJROTC Cadet at Admiral King High School (Lorain, Ohio).



23, BUFFALO, N.Y.
Branch President Walter Zawieruszynski presents a First Place Regional Award to Hamburg Middle School seventh grader David Ludwig, while David's parents and Americanism Chairman Richard Hadley look on.



41, ROANOKE, VA.
Ben Copper, 12th grade winner from Vinton, Va., is congratulated by Americanism Chairman Joe Black.



93, LEXINGTON PARK, MD.
Branch President Pat "Bear" Porter congratulates Essay Contest winners from St. Michael's School (Ridge, Md.). They are (l to r): Samuel Heilman, who is a 1st place winner at the branch level and 3rd place winner for the East Coast Region; Annie Kayser, who was the branch's 2nd place winner; and Marianne Luffey, who placed 3rd at the branch level.



126, JACKSONVILLE, FLA.
Plaques, savings bond and certificates of achievement were presented to students who placed in FRA's Americanism Essay Contest by Branch President James J. Thomas and Americanism Chairman David Pippin.



229, NEWBURGH, N.Y.
Marlboro (N.Y.) High School students (l to r) Jessica Corrado, Emily Adamo, Marissa Ragonese and Jacqueline Toro were recognized for their participation in FRA's Americanism Essay Contest. Shipmates Norman Sivertsen and Tom Hoey flank the young ladies.



267, ST. LOUIS, MO.
Grant Hollander (left), an eighth grader at St. Peter School (St. Charles, Mo.), was a national winner in FRA's Americanism Essay Contest. Shown here with Branch President John Hollowood, Hollander received a plaque and a \$5,000 savings bond for his outstanding entry.



275, PLACERVILLE, CALIF.
Americanism Chairman "Bud" Sweet (far left) and several teachers are shown with honorees at the branch's Americanism Essay Contest Awards Dinner.



276, OMAHA, NEB.
Branch Essay Contest Chairman James Black (center) poses with 9th grader Michaela Randall (left) and Jacqueline Muellner, a 7th grader. Both girls were local and regional winners in FRA's Americanism Essay Contest.



NAME	BRANCH	NAME	BRANCH
Densmore, Lawrence V., SM1	MAL	Mote, Dick, SSGT	170
deWit, Louis B., CSCM	192	Mucci, John J., DCCS	MAL
Doughty, William G., BMC	166	Mullen, Maurice F., MMC	290
Durham, Gerald D., EMCM	202	Niehoff, Luther P., YNC	099
Eldridge, Roy A., MMC	098	Nolan, Thomas J., CDR USCG	024
Ezell, J. C., ACC	MAL	Pagal, Fausto, MSC	004
Fell, Oscar M., STGSN	263	Parker, John H., Jr., AT1	126
Fernhout, Allan R., BTCS	053	Patterson, John A., GMC	175
Ford, Robert E., GMCS	022	Perkins, Gerald D., POCS USN	MAL
Forteza, Pedro, SH2	101	Perry, Joseph, SH1	060
Gann, Willie R., ABCM	289	Pettit, Paul D., MMCS	MAL
Gantley, Robert F., PNMC	060	Reigottie, Ronald L., Jr., CWO4 USN	MAL
Gillogly, James R., CS3	097	Ribelin, Charles J., RMC	159
Graves, Charles H., OSCS	MAL	Riccitelli, James A., ETCS	101
Gurley, John H., ADRC	049	Ridlehoover, Thomas A., ADRC	022
Harvey, Lawrence, PO1 USN	MAL	Riley, Ronald A., Sr., FA USN	071
Hempel, William E., MMC	151	Ritter, Franklin O., CDR USN	MAL
Hipp, Robert M., CDR USN	MAL	Roberts, Bentley M., ADC	060
Hoffman, Warren R., AMSC	156	Roberts, Don K., STC	160
Hoheisel, Carl F., AO2	027	Robinson, Richard R., SMC	234
Hull, Jack E., LCDR USN	005	Robitaille, Robert, ADR2	MAL
Humphreys, Gordon, HTC	MAL	Roebuck, Robert L., SCPO USCG	174
Jaskiewicz, John F., QMC	MAL	Rose, Dale H., ADC	042
Jensen, Sidney G., SHC	MAL	Rose, James R., USN VET	130
Johnson, Jay D., HMCM	047	Rubay, Alexander, MMC	008
Karnis, Jos Jas, YNC	066	Sabatucci, Pete, SKC	096
Kaspar, Rudolph, AME1	136	Saccone, John A., PO3 USN	292
Keefe, Arthur A., BM1	MAL	Sanborn, Ray H., MMCS(SS)	020
Kellar, Joseph W., CTRCS	MAL	Sarsfield, William E., ENC	020
Keller, Daniel R., BMCS	061	Saulter, Marion, CTCM	101
Kelley, Donald, PO1 USN	MAL	Schauble, Otto C., MUC	MAL
Kendall, James E., CAPT USMC	097	Scott, William S., Jr., HMC	MAL
Kennedy, Alton E., BMCS	MAL	Settles, Robert W., CTC	004
Kronbauer, Robert P., SHCM	001	Shanley, Aaron W., GMC	175
Krupp, William H., LT USNR	MAL	Shannon, Francis B., AE1	263
Lavan, J. P., 1STSGT	MAL	Shiple, James L., AEC	MAL
Leahy, Francis X., AVCM	361	Smith, William R., DKC	137
Lee, Jue H., ADRC	267	Squyres, Earl, OSC	MAL
Lenington, Ervin H., TMC	175	Swearingen, Lowell H., PN1	018
Levakis, Gust N., AQC	010	Szombathelyi, Norbert, MSGT	022
Levander, Walter R., ENC(SS)	008	Travelbee, Richard B., DT1	021
Mackenzie, Allen, AMS1	MAL	Travers, Robert M., PNC	003
Marble, Arlyn E., AC1	276	Truster, Frederick A., ENC	160
Marceau, Karl, PO1 USN	MAL	Vandenberg, Cyril, SK1	MAL
Martinez, William, EM1	029	Watts, Thomas T., ATC	MAL
McClain, James G., BMCS	251	Weiss, Edward, YN3	175
McClung, Thomas A., EMC(SS)	011	Whigham, Byron S., GMTCS	MAL
McIntyre, Charles A., USMC VET	183	Witzman, John, SCPO USN	MAL
Metcalf, Robert D., ADR2	026	Woerner, George W., YNC	034
Mierkey, Clarence, PO1 USN	MAL	Worzel, Arthur H., SKC	098
Miller, Dale F., EMC(SS)	060	Wright, James T., BTC	041
Mills-Price, Edgar J., LTJG USN	MAL	Wrobleski, Henry E., RMC	246
Mitchell, Jack C., ENC(SS)	MAL	Zawislak, Walter J., CT1	024
Mitchell, Robert G., LT USN	104		
Moore, Jackie Gene, FTCS(SW)	269		
Morr, James A., PH1	272		
Morris, Rolland E., AQ1	147		

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Acosta, James W., BTC	282
Adams, Edward, BMC	MAL
Addington, Alvin E., EMC	269
Albertsen, Norman A., CWO1 USN	120
Allen, Donald C., ADR2	163
Alway, Lester, USN RET	049
Appel, Leland J., EN1	MAL
Armstrong, Edward L., CAPT USN	175
Atiland, Joseph R., AMSC	010
Baker, Donald S., MCPO USN	366
Baker, Richard L., LCDR USN	060
Baldrige, Archie H., ETC	175
Barnett, Donald C., LT USN	101
Barnett, James E., CTRCM	223
Beck, Robert J., CTRCS	289
Behrendt, Leroy R., AME	238
Bernard, William E., HMCS	MAL
Beth, William P., HMC	182
Bouchard, Raymond T., HTC	072
Bowman, Charles V., ADJC	MAL
Branstiter, Eugene A., ADRC	MAL
Bricker, William E., ACC	050
Brooks, Don I., ADC	MAL
Brown, Lloyd W., SHC	053
Burns, William F., Jr., MMC	106
Butler, Bart M., AMH1	MAL
Butler, Henry F., ETC	017
Calver, Howard W., EMC(SS)	106
Carlson, Harry M., ETC	254
Carlsten, Raymond S., ADRC	136
Carlyon, Robert, AE1	MAL
Cassidy, Martin I., BM1	022
Cathcart, Henry J., MMC	101
Cerillo, Rafael Panga, CPO USN	127
Chamberlain, Robert J., CSC	060
Chapin, Ronald C., CWO4 USN	269
Chowning, Clyde W., ETC	046
Conway, Charles R., PO1 USN	098
Cox, Thomas R., QMC	MAL
Coyle, James E., CWO2 USN	168
Cross, Thomas F., ADRC	MAL
Cruz, Francisco P., SK1	073
Curtis, Mark A., ATCS	093
Daniels, James H., ENC	223
Darge, Ronald S., AE1	MAL
Delaney, Peter J., FTCS	MAL

Names in **red** indicate 50 year continuous members.
 ☛ indicate a Past National Officer.



Chief Aviation Ordnanceman John William Finn, USN. Halftone reproduction, copied from the official publication "Medal of Honor, 1861–1948, The Navy," page 183.

Shipmate John Finn — American Hero

AMERICA LOST A HEROIC icon in late May when Medal of Honor recipient John W. Finn passed away at the age of 100. Shipmate Finn, a member of FRA Branch 9 (San Diego, Calif.), earned the nation's highest military honor for his counterattack on the Japanese airplanes that struck Pearl Harbor. His actions are arguably the first of World War II to merit the prestigious honor.

Finn was a Navy chief in charge of aviation ordnance and munitions in 1941. He was at home on the morning of December 7th, when he heard the low-flying aircraft. A neighbor knocked on his door and told him he was needed immediately at his squadron at Kaneohe Bay Air Station, about 15 miles from Pearl Harbor.

When he arrived, he commandeered a .50 caliber machine gun from a painter assigned to the squadron. "I said, 'Alex, let me take that gun,'" Finn is quoted as saying. "I knew I had more experience firing a machine gun than a painter."

And fire it, he did. He constructed a makeshift mount and began "shooting at Jap planes." His post in an open area allowed him to clearly see the approaching enemy, but it also allowed them to clearly see him as they strafed so low Finn could see the pilots' faces.

Finn remained at his vulnerable post for two-and-a-half hours, despite suffering more than 20 injuries, which included a bullet wound in his left arm, a broken foot, numerous shrapnel wounds, and a laceration to his scalp. He only left his post after receiving a direct order to get medical attention. Once his wounds were bandaged, he returned to the hangar where he helped rearm returning planes. He would later spend two weeks in the hospital recovering from his injuries.

Finn, a seventh grade drop-out who enlisted in the Navy at age 17, became an officer shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack. Following a 30-year military career, Finn retired as a lieutenant in 1956 and moved to a ranch in the desert near San Diego, Calif.

Of the 15 Medals of Honor awarded for heroism exhibited on December 7, 1941, 10 were awarded posthumously. At the time of his death, Finn was the oldest surviving Medal of Honor recipient and the only surviving Pearl Harbor recipient. Although he is quoted as saying, "That damned hero stuff is a bunch of crap," Finn understood the impact of his action and the magnitude of the award. "[You] don't get that Medal of Honor by accident."

MEDAL OF HONOR CITATION

The President of the United States, in the name of The Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to

FINN, JOHN WILLIAM

Rank and organization: Lieutenant, U.S. Navy. **Place and date:** Naval Air Station, Kaneohe Bay, Territory of Hawaii, 7 December 1941. **Entered service at:** California. **Born:** 24 July 1909, Los Angeles, Calif.

Citation:

For extraordinary heroism, distinguished service, and devotion above and beyond the call of duty. During the first attack by Japanese airplanes on the Naval Air Station, Kaneohe Bay, on 7 December 1941, Lt. Finn promptly secured and manned a .50-caliber machinegun mounted on an instruction stand in a completely exposed section of the parking ramp, which was under heavy enemy machinegun strafing fire. Although painfully wounded many times, he continued to man this gun and to return the enemy's fire vigorously and with telling effect throughout the enemy strafing and bombing attacks and with complete disregard for his own personal safety. It was only by specific orders that he was persuaded to leave his post to seek medical attention. Following first aid treatment, although obviously suffering much pain and moving with great difficulty, he returned to the squadron area and actively supervised the rearming of returning planes. His extraordinary heroism and conduct in this action were in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.



Retired U.S. Navy Lt. John W. Finn speaks with Capt. Richard Kitchens, commanding officer of Naval Station Pearl Harbor, during Finn's trip to see the USS Arizona Memorial aboard the White Boat bearing his name on Dec. 6, 2009. Finn, the oldest living Medal of Honor recipient, was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. DoD photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Robert Stirrup, U.S. Navy.



Honorary guest and one of seven Medal of Honor recipients, Lt. (ret) John Finn is presented with the Midway American Patriot Award and The National World War II Museum's American Spirit Award by Adm. Timothy J. Keating, commander of U.S. Pacific Command during a black-tie gala, "Beyond the Call of Duty," aboard the USS Midway Museum. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jennifer R. Hudson.



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Message from Southeast Regional President

IT HAS BEEN AN honor to serve as the Regional President of the Southeast Region Ladies Auxiliary of the FRA for the year 2009–2010. Time flies when you want to accomplish so much for your region in such a short time.

The units in the Southeast Region are keeping with their three principles of Loyalty, Protection and Service. Although small, they have done much in the way of community and volunteer service. Without these volunteers, programs like the following would falter: The Angel Tree Program, Ronald McDonald House, coupons for the military stationed here and abroad, parties for children, assisting the elderly and the handicapped. We are also involved with bingo fund raisers and a Southeast Regional Scholarship Program sponsored by past southeast regional presidents. I want to thank the units, especially, for being there to assist me and others as we work on these many programs.

It was an honor to participate in the Pilgrimage with our National President Cindy Rodham-Tuck. At the *Mast of the Maine*, she paid homage to the fallen crew of the *USS Maine*. Then we proceeded to the *Tomb of the Unknowns*, where with a military escort, she placed a wreath. Emotions were high with the presence of our disabled World War II veterans in attendance.

For her outstanding participation as an Arlington Lady, I want to give a heartwarming thank you to PNP Doreen Huylebroeck. I am so very proud of her dedication to this organization.

I am very proud to be a member of the Ladies Auxiliary Fleet Reserve Association. It has been my second family for the past 30 years, and I know I can always count on them.

Since we need membership growth, community awareness, sponsors for special-needs children, as well as other volunteers to help in the Southeast Region Ladies Auxiliary and all other regions, I pray the next generation of members will be as active as we all need them to be.

Fran Hoadley is the editor of *LA FRA News* and the *FRA Today* Liaison.



NANCY HUNTER
Southeast Regional President



March 2010
Tennessee Caucus, Millington Tennessee,
Hosted by Branch and Unit 86. Shown (l to r)
are Debbie Simpson, Susie McDonough and
Unit 86 President Helen Reedy.



2009 Pearl Harbor Ceremony, hosted by
Branch and Unit 290, Atlantic Beach, Fla.
Shown (l to r) are Pearl Harbor Survivor
Duane H. Reyelts, RPSE Nancy Hunter, Pearl
Harbor Survivor Edward M. Kmiec (Branch
126) and Shipmate Elbert W. Sawley, Jr.
(Branch 126)



Unit 290's 2009 Christmas Party at
Avanta Nursing Home. Shown (l to r)
are Honorary Member Pat Gardner and
granddaughter Heather, with Unit
President Margaret Horvath.



Southeast Region Mid Year, Atlanta, Ga.
Shown (l to r) are RPSE Nancy Hunter, Unit
89 President Reta Fitton, RVPSE Mildred Brice
and NP Cindy Rodham-Tuck.



Asbestos Cancer Hits Former Sailors

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