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FRA *today*

The magazine of the Fleet Reserve Association

MAY 2023/\$3.75

ARLINGTON LADIES: UNSUNG HEROES



INSIDE:

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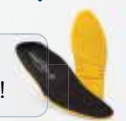
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Cover: Service members bear the casket during a Navy funeral held at Arlington National Cemetery. Photo by Elizabeth Fraser. Above: An Arlington lady presents a card following the Martin funeral held at Arlington National Cemetery. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser.

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The Arlington Ladies: Unsung Heroes

The Arlington Ladies started in 1948, when Gladys Vandenberg, wife of then-Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg, began asking her friends if they would be willing to attend funerals at Arlington. Witnessing some services with only the chaplain present, the Vandenberg's felt that every airman should have a member of the Air Force family present at his funeral.

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The "Jolly Green" Coasties of Vietnam

The U.S. Coast Guard typically operates solely within the U.S. and its waterways. But in wartime, it's all hands on deck, so when the Coast Guard's sister branches in the DOD requested its help in Vietnam, they got it.



**LOYALTY,
PROTECTION
AND SERVICE**

The FRA is a congressionally chartered, nonprofit organization advocating on Capitol Hill for current and former enlisted members of the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

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Honoring the Fallen, Supporting Those Left Behind

I will never forget the windy Florida morning when I stood beside my friend at Jacksonville National Cemetery, watching two sailors fold an American flag over one of my husband's former shipmates. All around me, other members of his squadron stood at attention in their dress whites, a sea of silent dixie cups and combination covers. The carefully executed traditions and reverent moments like these had been moving in a way I had not expected, and my handful of tissues was saturated beyond capacity.



But more than any of the ceremonies, I found myself watching the sailor's two young sons and their sobbing mother in the front row. My husband was deployed at the time, and I could not stop thinking, "That could be me. Any day, I could become that wife." Years later, I have been to funerals for both family members and friends, but never have I cried harder than I did at that service for a man I had never met.

Every Memorial Day, we take the time as a nation to remember those who have died in service to our country, honoring their sacrifices with flowers, wreaths, flags, ceremonies and prayers. As members of the military and veteran community, however, I challenge us all to take it one step further this Memorial Day by finding a way to support the families left behind by our fallen Shipmates s, who have also sacrificed so much for our country. You could pray, make a donation or volunteer at a relevant organization. If you know someone who has lost a service member, you could call to let them know you're thinking about them on this difficult day or offer to accompany them to their loved one's gravesite. If they'd rather not dwell on the loss, maybe it's a day to distract them with a movie, a day out or a good old-fashioned cookout. Just your presence can make a huge difference to someone who is hurting.

Hopefully, we can all leverage our unique insight into military life to provide some particularly on-target comfort for military families this Memorial Day. After all, the FRA exists to make a difference for the sea service members — and their families — in our communities.

FRA

In Loyalty, Protection and Service,
Elise M. Howard, Managing Editor

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ON & OFF *capitol bill*

News & Notes *from the Fleet Reserve Association's Legislative Team*



John Davis
Director, Legislative Programs

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Concurrent Receipt Reform Gaining Support

The first year of the 118th Congress is now well underway and your earlier messages through the FRA Action Center regarding the Major Richard Star Act are having an impact. As *FRAtoday* goes to press, the House version of the bill (H.R.1282) already has 267 co-sponsors, and the Senate bill (S.344) has 62 co-sponsors.

Recently, FRA staff members, as well as staff from other organizations, visited congressional offices to urge legislators to co-sponsor the Major Richard Star Act. This legislation, which would extend concurrent receipt to veterans unable to complete 20 years of service due to combat-related injuries, has been reintroduced from the last session of Congress. More than two-thirds of Congress co-sponsored the Major

Richard Star Act during the previous session of Congress.

Later in the day, the sponsor of the Senate version of the bill, Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jon Tester (Mont.), held a press conference to demand congressional action on this bipartisan legislation. The bill is named in honor of decorated war veteran Maj. Richard A. Star, who was forced to medically retire due to his combat-related injuries and later died from burn pit-related lung cancer.

Keep sending lawmakers messages to tell them that reducing retirees' retired pay because they are disabled is an injustice! Ask your legislators to co-sponsor this important legislation by going to the FRA Action Center at www.fra.org.

FRA Honors Sen. Jerry Moran With Pinnacle Award

FRA National President James E. "Robbie" Robbins presented the FRA's prestigious Pinnacle Award to Sen. Jerry Moran (Kan.). Since the FRA National Board of Directors was scheduled to meet when Congress was not in session, the award was presented to Moran in his Senate office on Capitol Hill. FRA NVP John Handzuk, LA FRA PNP Sandy Robbins, NED Chris Slawinski, Director of Legislative Programs John Davis and Assistant Director of Legislative Programs Theo Lawson attended the award presentation.

Moran currently serves as the ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs

Committee. He was raised in a small town in west-central Kansas and was first elected to Congress in 1996. Moran represented Kansas' 1st District in the U.S. House of Representatives and in 2010 won his first election to the U.S. Senate.

He also was a leading supporter of the Honoring Our PACT Act, the comprehensive veterans' toxic exposure law that was enacted this past session of Congress. Moran was instrumental in allowing the FRA to be one of only three associations that testified before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee on veterans' toxic exposure in March of last year.

FRA Testifies on Capitol Hill

FRA National Executive Director Chris Slawinski testified before a joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs committees expressing FRA members' concerns on veterans issues. Slawinski thanked both committees for their work to pass the comprehensive veterans' toxic exposure law known as the PACT Act, which was signed into law in August 2022.

Slawinski also thanked Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jon Tester (Mont.) and Rep. Gus Bilirakis (Fla.) for reintroducing the Major Richard Star Act (H.R.1282, S.344), which would expand concurrent receipt through Combat Related Special Compensation to veterans who are medically retired with less than 20 years of service. He noted that the membership of the association strongly believes that reducing a retiree's retired pay because they are disabled is an injustice. The FRA supports authorizing the immediate payment of both full military retired pay and full veterans disability compensation for all disabled retirees, and believes that the Major Richard Star Act is an

important step in the right direction.

Continuing his testimony, Slawinski informed the committees that a majority of FRA members are opposed to restrictions on in-ground burials at Arlington National Cemetery and support creating a second national cemetery that would afford full military honors, perhaps on the West Coast, in lieu of additional burial restrictions. Veterans who have earned the honor of in-ground burial should not be forced to change their plans.

Slawinski also urged the committees to closely oversee the ongoing implementation of the technology upgrades at the Department of Veterans Affairs that will provide a joint VA-DOD electronic health record. This oversight is vital to ensuring improvements to the system. The FRA wants to ensure adequate funding for DOD and VA health care resource sharing.

FRA National President James E. "Robbie" Robbins, LA FRA Past National President Sandy Robbins and FRA National Vice President John Handzuk attended the hearing.

Biden Administration's FY2024 Budget Released

The Biden administration released its FY2024 annual budget request, which would spend more than \$6.8 trillion. This spending would be partially offset by \$800 billion in program cost reductions and \$4.7 trillion in tax increases — primarily for businesses and high-income households — over the next 10 years. The proposed budget requests \$842 billion in Pentagon funding for fiscal 2024, which would be the largest Defense Department budget ever and a \$26 billion, or 3.2%, increase above what Congress approved for the agency for FY2023.

There is no request in the budget to enact any new TRICARE fee increases. The proposed Pentagon budget reduces Marine Corps active-duty end strength by 5,000 and increases Navy end strength by 5,000. Overall military end strength will be reduced by 13,000. The budget provides for a 5.2% pay increase for active-duty personnel. By law, the annual military pay raise is tied to what's called the Employment Cost Index, which the Bureau of Labor Statistics calculates quarterly to determine changes in the cost of labor. The 5.2% proposed raise is consistent with the ECI and would take effect Jan. 1, 2024, without any presidential or congressional action. It would be the largest raise since

a 6.9% average pay increase in 2002. By comparison, this year's raise, which was the largest in a decade, was 4.6%. However, this was less than the annual rate of inflation, which was approximately 6.5%.

The administration's request for the Department of Veterans Affairs is \$325.1 billion for FY2024, a 5.4% increase above FY2023 enacted levels. The budget requests \$20.3 billion for health care, research and benefits related to the recently enacted and FRA-supported Honoring Our PACT Act. This request is \$15.3 billion more than FY2023's allocation for veterans exposed to toxic materials and their survivors. The proposed VA budget also provides \$16.6 billion in 2024 for mental health efforts, a \$1.6 billion increase from 2023. That funding includes \$2.5 billion for medical care related to suicide, as well as \$559 million for veteran suicide prevention outreach programs. Additionally, the administration's budget provides \$3.1 billion for permanent housing, health care and other supportive services for veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The FRA supports budget initiatives that provide adequate funding for the VA, with special attention to VA health care to ensure access and care for all beneficiaries.

Expanding America's National Cemetery Act Introduced

Rep. Lisa McClain (Mich.) introduced a bipartisan bill that would expand veterans' access to interment with full military honors at a national cemetery. As Arlington National Cemetery — a sacred resting place — nears capacity, the Expanding America's National Cemetery Act (H.R. 1413) would expand another existing national cemetery to ensure it provides the full military burial honors that Arlington currently offers to eligible veterans.

"I am proud to introduce the Expanding America's National Cemetery Act to ensure our veterans and future servicemembers are honored with the full and proper final respects they deserve," McClain said in a press release. "Our men and women in uniform should know how much their sacrifices mean to our country and expanding America's National Cemetery is one way we can show them."

In recent years, the Department of Defense has implemented burial restrictions at Arlington National Cemetery to delay ANC reaching full capacity. Some have suggested creating a second

national cemetery that would afford full military honors, as this bill would, in lieu of additional burial restrictions. When FRA members were surveyed about this issue in January, 73.2% agreed with the idea of creating a second cemetery like ANC, with only 8.8% disagreeing and another 18% feeling undecided.

The FY2019 National Defense Authorization Act directed the Secretary of the Army to revise eligibility criteria to keep Arlington National Cemetery functioning as an active burial ground "well into the future" — defined as 150 years. Acting Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy proposed changes to the eligibility criteria for burial at ANC in September 2019, which included restricting military retirees to above-ground inurnment only.

Many retirees believe that 20 or more years of arduous military service have earned them the option of being provided with an in-ground burial at ANC. Members are urged to use the FRA Action Center at www.fra.org to ask their representatives to support the bill.

TRICARE for Dependents Older Than Age 18

A bill known during the last session of Congress as the Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act (H.R. 1045, S. 956) has been reintroduced in the House and Senate by Rep. Patrick Ryan (N.Y.) and Sen. Mark Kelly (Ariz.), respectively. The legislation would eliminate TRICARE Young Adult and allow young adults to stay on TRICARE until age 26. This bill would ensure access to affordable health care for military kids as they transition to adulthood, consistent with federal requirements for commercial health plans. Members can weigh in on this issue through the FRA Action Center at www.fra.org.

House Committee to Investigate Express Scripts

The House Committee on Oversight and Accountability has launched an investigation to determine whether or not pharmacy benefit managers' practices are limiting patient care and increasing costs for consumers. Committee Chairman James Comer (Ky.) has requested documents and communications from senior officials at the Defense Health Agency, Office of Personnel Management, and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to help the committee examine the extent to which government-administered health care programs are negatively impacted by the strategies of pharmacy benefit managers. PBMs are contracted by health insurance companies to handle prescription drug claims by beneficiaries. They determine which pharmacies are in-network, which drugs are covered and how much medications will cost. The largest PBMs — CVS Caremark, Express Scripts and Optum Rx — have also been asked to provide documents, communications and information related to their practices as part of the committee investigation.

In December 2022, the FRA signed a letter

from The Military Coalition that was dispatched to Lt. Gen. Ronald Place, the director of the Defense Health Agency, expressing concern that the recent cuts to the TRICARE Pharmacy Program had gone too far. That year, nearly 15,000 independent pharmacies had left the TRICARE network managed by Express Scripts in response to medication reimbursement rates being significantly reduced. The loss of so many independent pharmacies had cut off many beneficiaries from essential medications and services that could not be replaced by the remaining TRICARE network participants or the TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery program. The letter stated that service members, retirees, their families and their survivors had earned a high-quality health care benefit. The FRA and the other groups that signed onto the letter were concerned that reduced access could result in medication nonadherence, leading to poor outcomes, increased health care utilization and higher overall health care costs. It was later announced that 2,000 of the independent pharmacies would return to the network.

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Senior Enlisted Leaders Testify on Capitol Hill

Senior enlisted military leaders summarized prepared testimony and ranked their respective quality-of-life concerns during two separate hearings before the House Appropriations Committee's Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Subcommittee and the House Armed Services Committee's Military Personnel Subcommittee. Those testifying included Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy James M. Honea, Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps Troy E. Black, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael A. Grinston, Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Joanne S. Bass and Chief Master Sgt. of the Space Force Roger A. Towberman.

These hearings focused not just on quality-of-life concerns, but also on the impact these matters are having on recruitment and retention. Military recruiters have said that 2022 was the most difficult recruiting year since 1973. Overall, the military met only 85% of its recruiting goal.

HASC Military Personnel Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Jim Banks noted that Congress needs to do more for enlisted personnel to address housing problems, improve access to health care, eliminate food insecurity and provide adequate child care.

In his written testimony, Honea noted: "Although the military has seen a 4.6 percent basic pay increase in fiscal year 2023, we are still falling below current inflation rates. ... This has a ripple effect, as our Sailors continue to find themselves struggling to house themselves, feed their

families, and find safe and affordable child care. For our single Sailors, I want to create balance by separating work from home, allowing all of them to live in unaccompanied housing, away from the shipboard environment. If we want to retain our professional and qualified service members, we must continue to close the pay gap between military compensation and the private sector, and ensure they have a secure place to live." The MCPON also said that service members who were forced out of the military after their waivers for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine were denied now have a path for rejoining.

Black noted in his testimony that "in the face of a lower propensity to serve, a smaller recruiting pool, and other challenges," the Marines made their recruiting goal for 2022. Although this goal was made somewhat easier by a 1,500 person reduction in the Marine Corps' end strength last year, Black credited the "tremendous determination" of the Corps' recruiters for the success. Black also noted that 16% of Marine Corps barracks are in poor or failing condition. In 2022, the Marine Corps renovated 14 barracks and plans to renovate 16 barracks in 2023.

The FRA welcomes subcommittee hearings that allow legislators to hear enlisted concerns. There was broad bipartisan concern that military pay in recent years has not kept pace with inflation, as well as a bipartisan desire to reform compensation and benefits to compete with the private sector in the middle of a recruiting decline.

Navy and Marine Corps Drop COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate for Deployment

In a recent naval administration message, the Navy officially reversed its requirement that all sailors in operational Navy units receive full COVID-19 vaccination, and the Marine Corps confirmed that it was following suit shortly thereafter. This means that unvaccinated sailors and Marines can deploy overseas once again. Although the National Defense Authorization Act passed last December had ended the requirement that service members receive the COVID-19 vaccine, unvaccinated sailors and Marines had been considered undeployable until this recent policy change. The reversals officially remove the logistical concerns expressed by Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro in

December about having a divided force of deployable and nondeployable sailors. The difficulty now will be in determining how much, if any, shore or off-base liberty can be granted for unvaccinated sailors and Marines in host countries with their own vaccine mandates.

Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. David Berger, acknowledged last December that the COVID-19 vaccine mandate was negatively impacting recruitment, particularly in the South. However, Berger viewed the mandate as critical for force readiness at the time, stating, "That's what you need to maintain a healthy unit that can deploy, on ship, ashore — it doesn't matter."

FRA Staff Discusses EHR Modernization Issues on Capitol Hill

NED Chris Slawinski and Director of Legislative Programs John Davis met with House Veterans' Affairs Committee staff on Capitol Hill to discuss problems in implementing the VA's Electronic Health Record Modernization program. Later the same day at a Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee oversight hearing, Chairman Jon Tester (Mont.) demanded answers from top officials at the Department of Veterans Affairs and Oracle Cerner on the future path of the VA's EHRM project on behalf of veterans, medical personnel and taxpayers. In July 2022, the program implementation was put on hold until January 2023; then an October 2022 investigation of system performance by the VA discovered even more issues,

pushing implementation back until June 2023. When the program started, it was estimated that the cost would be \$16 billion over 10 years. However, a more recent independent estimate by the Institute for Defense Analyses predicts the true cost will be \$39 billion over 13 years. The VA plans to continue implementation of the EHRM project at the end of June.

"I don't see what has fundamentally changed in system training or program management [in recent months] that will make the implementation more successful," said Sen. Jerry Moran (Kan.), ranking member of the SVAC. He said results so far "suggest to me that the whole effort may be sleepwalking forward and extremely disruptive."

DOD Urged to Fix Errors on Korean War Veterans Memorial

Rep. Mike Rogers (Ala.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, and several other lawmakers wrote to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin requesting that his agency correct more than 1,000 misspellings and other mistakes on the Wall of Remembrance that lists the names of the more than 36,000 Americans who died in the Korean conflict. The wall was added in 2022 to the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., which was dedicated in 1995. Federal funds were not used to construct the wall, which cost \$22 million. The wall was funded by a private foundation that used information provided by the Department of Defense.

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HASC Subcommittee Hearing on Diversity Training in the Military

The House Armed Services Committee's Military Personnel Subcommittee held a hearing to provide an opportunity to hear from the Department of Defense and the military departments on the effects of diversity, equity and inclusion policies, procedures and training within the DOD. The hearing focused on the impact of DEI policies and training on the readiness, lethality and cohesion of the armed forces.

Gilbert Cisneros, the undersecretary of Defense for personnel and readiness, stated that "diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential to unit cohesion and trust." The assistant secretary of the Navy for manpower and reserve

affairs, Franklin Parker, argued that diversity increases "our military readiness and maritime dominance by accessing the full range of our nation's talent."

Many subcommittee members expressed concern that DEI is doing the exact opposite and is a divisive distraction to readiness. At the end of the hearing, Subcommittee Chairman Jim Banks (Ind.) cited earlier testimony that nearly 530,000 DOD man-hours had been spent on DEI training, but said that the officials had not provided any "empirical evidence" that it was worth a "single man hour."

"That's why this hearing matters," Banks added. "What's the justification for that giant investment?"

Military Suicides Decreasing

The Pentagon's "Annual Report on Suicide in the Military" for 2021, along with preliminary data for the first six months of 2022, indicate that active-duty service member suicide decreased over those 18 months, driven by more than 30% drops in Air Force and Marine Corps suicides and a 10% reduction in Navy suicides in 2021. The Army also experienced a 30% decline during the first six months of 2022. This data is a welcome reversal of the upward trend in active-duty suicide rates seen in recent years. In 2020, the Pentagon had reported a 15% increase in active-duty suicides compared to 2019.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin recently ordered the Pentagon to hire more behavioral health specialists and implement a scheduling system for appointments in which patients receive multiple health care visits weekly when they first seek care. He also ordered military primary care health clinics to screen for unhealthy levels of alcohol use, make unhealthy alcohol use treatment easier to receive and make sure that mental health care is available through service members' primary care as well.

VA Changes Agency Mission Statement

The Department of Veterans Affairs has changed the Abraham Lincoln quote in its agency motto to make a more inclusive mission statement. The former motto — "To fulfill President Lincoln's promise 'to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan'" — was derived from Lincoln's second inaugural address and had been in use since 1959.

The new motto drops male-only language and reads: "To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors." The VA noted that the updated motto is more welcoming to women and provides proper respect to its more than 600,000 female veteran beneficiaries, as well as to the millions of noncombat veterans, family members and caregivers served by the VA.

State of the Coast Guard Address

Director of Legislative Programs John Davis attended the 2023 State of the Coast Guard speech delivered by the 27th commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, Adm. Linda L. Fagan, on Capitol Hill. Before an audience of government officials, senior military commanders and partner agency leaders, Fagan provided her vision for the future of the service and committed to prioritizing support for those in the Coast Guard workforce, who serve our nation's interests around the world. She discussed the growing demand for Coast Guard operations

throughout the world and how advances in technology, changes in the global economy and the impacts of climate change influence this demand.

Fagan outlined how the Coast Guard will continue to facilitate and protect the uninterrupted flow of commerce in the rapidly changing Marine Transportation System. She emphasized the importance of new Coast Guard assets and shore facilities as critical to national security, public safety and the future success of the service.

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An Arlington lady walks with her U.S. Air Force escort during the burial ceremony for the Hellkamp funeral, which was held at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser.

The Arlington Ladies

*Unsung Heroes Assuring
No Soldier, Sailor, Airman
or Coast Guardsman is
Buried Alone*

By Dawn Klavon

It is among the most hallowed grounds in all of America. Established in 1864, Arlington National Cemetery is the 639-acre resting place of about 400,000 military service members and their family members. The Arlington, Virginia, cemetery — located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. — welcomes over 3 million visitors annually, many of whom are there to attend the funerals of loved ones and comrades.

Arlington Ladies Represent Family
As much as this national treasure housing the

remains of numerous heroes is about honor, courage and patriotism, at its root, Arlington National Cemetery is about family. Each branch of the military is a family to its members, and is committed to assuring that they will be honored during their interment at the cemetery. To that end, at least one member of a dedicated group called the Arlington Ladies attends all funeral services at ANC to ensure that no soldier, sailor, airman or Coast Guardsman is buried alone.

“That person [who served] will always be cared for, remembered and honored,” said Christine Mavity, co-



Sailors from the U.S. Navy Ceremonial Guard and the U.S. Navy Ceremonial Band conduct military funeral honors for U.S. Navy Gunner's Mate 3rd Class Herman Schmidt in Section 70 of Arlington National Cemetery, on Feb. 23. Schmidt died on Dec. 7, 1941, when the battleship he was assigned to, the *USS OKLAHOMA* was attacked by Japanese aircraft at Pearl Harbor. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser.

chair of the Arlington Committee, the Air Force's branch of the Arlington Ladies.

The mission of the Arlington Ladies started in 1948 when it came to the attention of the chief of staff of the Air Force, Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg, and his wife, Gladys, that some funeral services were conducted with no one in attendance except the military chaplain. The Vandenberg family felt that an airman should have a member of the Air Force family present at his funeral, so Mrs. Vandenberg asked her friends if they would be willing to attend services. And with that, the Arlington Ladies began. Over the years, each military branch has founded a version of the group except for the Marine Corps, which sends a representative of the commandant to every funeral.

"It amazes me that the streak is unbroken," said Mavity of the Air Force's 75-year history. "It's a no-fail mission that we take very seriously."

Any given weekday at Arlington National Cemetery includes 27 to 30 funeral services, and Saturdays can contain between six and eight services. The cemetery's grounds tell the story of the nation, with service members from each of America's major wars interred on the site, from the Revolutionary War to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"When somebody takes an oath to protect the United States Constitution, that's a very big deal to me," said Army Arlington Lady Shannon Brady. "Being out at a gravesite with those soldiers who have taken that oath — that's why I'm there."



An Arlington lady presents a card and offers her condolences during a graveside service. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser.

The Navy Arlington Volunteers

Christine Boltz, the interim chairman for the Navy's Arlington Ladies, is a retired captain in the Navy Nurse Corps, having served 29 ½ years. She said the members of her 35-person team volunteer a minimum of a half day each month, but are often on call to provide further support, depending on the number of funerals held. At present, the Navy Arlington Volunteers, as they're called, are recruiting new members — including men — to increase their numbers. These volunteers attend the funerals of military members, as well as the funerals of military spouses for service members who are still alive.

"The role of the lady, or the volunteer, is to support a family," Boltz said, noting that lag times between when someone dies and when he or she is

interred at the cemetery can be between four and six months for a casket burial and over a year and a half for a cremation funeral.

Weather Is No Factor

Jill Miller has been an Army Arlington lady for eight years, spending every fourth Monday of the month attending Army service members' funerals. At 83 years old, Miller is a vivacious retired kindergarten teacher, mom and grandmother who takes her role at Arlington National Cemetery very seriously.

"This, to me, is an honor and a privilege," Miller said.

She has a partner, and they divide up the funerals, leaving her usually about five Army funerals to



The U.S. Coast Guard Band and the U.S. Coast Guard Ceremonial Honor Guard conduct military funeral honors for U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer 1st Class Nicholas Bogue in Section 60 of Arlington National Cemetery on Nov. 19, 2019. Bogue died of an illness on July 2, 2019. His spouse, Laura, received the U.S. flag from his casket. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser.

attend. There may be pouring rain, bone-chilling snow or scorching heat, but Arlington Ladies like Miller will attend every funeral.

Army Arlington Lady Cindy Risch remembers one memorable weather incident at a funeral. It was raining out and a strong gust of wind blew an awning over on top of her and her military escort.

“It was so embarrassing,” she said. “I’m in a dress and I got knocked over — my dress was up around my neck! But the chaplain just kept going and the awning blew off of us and hit a van and knocked the front windshield out of the van — the service just continued.”

Mavity, from the Air Force’s Arlington Committee, recalled services during a snowstorm in January of 2022.

“Arlington itself never cancels services; the

family might, but Arlington never will,” she said.

During the daylong snowstorm, the Air Force Honor Guard’s buses couldn’t make it through the snow that morning, so each member of the honor guard drove themselves to the cemetery and was fully dressed, ready to go.

“When you’re out there at the gravesite, it catches your breath,” she said. “The bugler was there too; the man was literally standing in rows of headstones with snow falling on him and he’s out there playing. It was just amazing.”

The Role of an Arlington Lady

The criteria for becoming an Arlington lady vary by military service, but volunteers are generally required to have some connection to the branch they will be serving. Often, they have served in



An Arlington lady presents a condolence card to the next of kin during a graveside service at Arlington National Cemetery. Army photo by Rachel Larue.

the respective branch themselves, or have been a spouse of a service member in that branch. Miller said the ladies represent their branch's highest commissioned officer and are considered an official part of the funeral service. At the end of the funeral, an American flag is presented to the next of kin, then the Arlington lady is escorted to the family and she offers her condolences and a handwritten note.

"I have written a personal note, and hopefully I have found [out] something about the service member," she said. "Just a small personal tidbit about this individual, and I try to either say something in the note or when I go up and present my card."

But sometimes, there is no one else at the funeral. "I have done several funerals where there's no

one there," Miller said. "And that's why I'm there — because there needs to be someone attending when that person is being laid to rest at Arlington. No soldier will ever be buried without someone standing by their side."

Shelley Kimball has also attended funerals where no one else was there. The head of the Coast Guard's 10-volunteer Arlington Ladies, she recalled one such funeral held in the fall of 2022.

"It was just myself and the [military] escort and the funeral rep," she said. "I never really question why we're the only ones there, but I'm grateful that we can be and that we're the ones that have this moment to provide honor to the person who has passed."

Army Arlington Lady Risch attended a service where no family was there, so she sat in the next of kin's spot and was presented with the American flag.



A photo of Columbarium Court 9 at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, taken Aug. 26, 2019. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser.

“That was very hard,” she said, “but it makes it feel like, Wow, this is why I’m here.”

Meaningful Moments

Pat Toth’s husband, William, was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery in 2004, and she remembers the gentle Arlington lady who graced the funeral. Toth still keeps the handwritten note the kind woman presented to her and said that, as beautiful as the military service was, the finishing touch of the Arlington lady “meant more to me in the sense that it was personal — this incredible woman took the time to write me a note and be there to represent the Army — and it still means a lot to this day.”

“These women are true patriots to do what they do, to give their time and heart,” she said. “Their patriotism is absolutely inspiring.”

Though the Arlington Ladies quietly stand in the wings, these faithful and committed volunteers’ depth of service is not lost on the military community.

“This is all performed on a volunteer basis, demonstrating their love of country, appreciation for their freedom and truly understanding the sacrifices made by both the soldier and family,” said retired Army Maj. Gen. Eldon P. Regua.

There is consensus across military branches. “These women are heroes to the fallen,” said Rear Adm. Jeff Spivey in an email interview. “Those who gave the ultimate sacrifice while defending our nation are deeply revered. The Arlington Ladies help shoulder the burden of this sacrifice with the families of the fallen warrior; they are a powerful display of our enduring gratitude.”

And so the Arlington Ladies will continue, with every funeral including the gracious presence of a selfless volunteer standing by to offer support and condolences to a grieving family. These servants are grateful for the opportunity.

“Every time I drive into the cemetery first thing in the morning, there’s a tranquility about the whole thing,” Mavity said. “You walk around and you’re like, ‘Oh my gosh, this is where I have the privilege of being.’” **FRA**

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The “Jolly Green”



Coast Guardsmen conduct a sea rescue with a Sikorsky HH-3F Pelican, a variant of the HH-3E “Jolly Green Giant” used by Coast Guard aviators in Vietnam. It features a substantially revised fuselage with a rear loading ramp, different nose-mounted radar equipment, and a conventional, though watertight, hull to facilitate water landings. The fuselage layout was used by Sikorsky for the larger CH-53 variants, and by the much later (though similarly sized) S-92. Photo courtesy of the United States Coast Guard.

Coasties of Vietnam

Coast Guard Aviators Who Made a Mighty Contribution

By Bethanie Hestermann

The Vietnam War was a long, costly and controversial affair. From the United States' point of view, there were many moving pieces that made it a particularly challenging war. For instance, the U.S.-backed government of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem was ineffective and corrupt, and there was an upwelling of political unrest at home, culminating in events like John F. Kennedy's assassination and the Nixon-era Watergate scandal. Nevertheless, during the U.S.'s period of most active involvement, between 1968 and 1975, the armed forces fought together to curtail communism's hold in Southeast Asia. But one branch of the military — the U.S. Coast Guard — is often overlooked in discussions about this divisive, deadly conflict, and it shouldn't be.

Each branch of the American military played a vital role in advancing the U.S.'s mission in Vietnam — even though that mission was at times a moving target. According to the U.S. Army Center of

Military History, the Army's presence in Southeast Asia peaked at around 360,000 troops in the late 1960s, and the branch sustained the heaviest losses. The Marine Corps played a vital role in the conflict over the years, including its defense of the Da Nang Air Base near the demilitarized zone. The Navy provided support in a variety of ways and fought alongside other branches in battles near water. The Air Force provided air support and carried out missions like the bombing campaign Operation Rolling Thunder. And then there was the Coast Guard, which typically operates solely within the U.S. and its waterways. But in wartime, it's all hands on deck, so when the Coast Guard's sister branches in the DOD requested its help in Vietnam, they got it.

The Coast Guard Answers the Call

Over the course of the U.S.'s involvement in the Vietnam War, about 8,000 Coast Guardsmen went to Vietnam to serve in different capacities, according to Coast





A U.S. Air Force Sikorsky HH-3E “Jolly Green Giant” rescues a pilot from the water off the coast of Vietnam. Air Force photo.

Guard Atlantic Area Historian William H. Thiesen. Those capacities included patrolling Vietnam’s coastline and rivers, destroying enemy supply ships, supporting ground units from offshore vessels, and providing humanitarian support. For example, when the Navy needed reinforcements in 1965 for the Coastal Surveillance Force, which was carrying out Operation Market Time, the Coast Guard answered the call with equipment, including 82-foot cutters, and personnel. Market Time was an important and successful coastal surveillance operation that kept supplies from traveling from North Vietnam to South Vietnam.

A handful of the Coast Guardsmen who served in Vietnam did so in a different capacity than those listed above — as pilots. Though this group of volunteers was small in number, its contribution was mighty. Circa 1967, the Air Force realized it was in a tight spot and needed an influx of qualified aviators. A pilot exchange program between the Air

Force and the Coast Guard resulted in 12 Coast Guard aviators coming to Vietnam to fly combat search and rescue missions with the Air Force’s 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron. Each of these volunteers served with high honor, and between the 12 of them, there were many Silver Stars, Distinguished Flying Crosses, Air Medals, and other distinctions earned.

The Coast Guard aviators who joined the 37th ARRS were mostly helicopter pilots, although there were also two fixed-wing aviators. They flew hundreds of rescue missions over jungles rife with Viet Cong adversaries and saved many American pilots from becoming prisoners of war. The helicopter pilots flew Sikorsky HH-3Es, lovingly called “Jolly Green Giants” because of the helos’ green camouflage and large size, along with HH-53s, also known as “Super Jolly Green Giants.” For downed American fighter pilots, the sight of a Jolly Green Giant or Super Jolly was a jolly sight indeed.



Equipped with a powerful external winch, the Jolly Green Giants could extract a downed pilot without landing. Here, an aircrew practices lowering a jungle penetrator. Air Force photo.

The saying went, “Fighter pilots have no fear, Jolly Green Giants are always near.”

Respect for the Jolly Greens

When the Coast Guard aviators arrived in Southeast Asia between 1968 and 1972, they were able to hit the ground running. These gaurdsmen were fully qualified to jump in and start conducting combat search and rescue missions, often flying with Air Force officers who outranked them as their co-pilots. The search and rescue missions in Vietnam required extreme skill. The mountainous terrain posed unique challenges for recoveries, and there was always the threat of enemy gunfire. The Viet Cong sheltered in the dense jungle foliage, ready to pepper any machine within reach with a barrage of bullets.

Despite these conditions, the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service recovered more than 3,880 downed airmen during the conflict in Vietnam,

according to the Center for Air Force History. Coast Guard Aviation Association Historian and aviator John “Bear” Moseley wrote about the group’s astounding success rate: “A report prepared by the Air Force Inspection and Safety Center, summarizing helicopter use in combat rescues, noted that ... between 1965 and 1972, helicopters came under significant hostile fire in 645 opposed combat rescue operations involving downed aircraft. Crews were rescued in six hundred and one, or 93 percent, of these cases.” What’s more, the Coast Guard volunteers also helped train other pilots to repeat their success.

These efforts did not go unnoticed. The National Coast Guard Museum Association reports that in 1967, Gen. Wallace Greene Jr., commandant of the Marine Corps, said of the Coast Guard’s incredible contribution to the cause, “I want to make sure that the Coast Guard people in Vietnam know that I am hearing about them often and that I am pleased



This period map shows the three bands of Operation Market Time patrol and interdiction along the length of the South Vietnamese coastline, with areas of responsibility divided up between various naval units. Photo courtesy of the Naval History and Heritage Command.



A photo of Gen. Wallace M. Greene Jr., commandant of the Marine Corps from 1964 to 1967. Marine Corps photo.

Coast Guard Aviators Who Served With the 37th ARRS in Vietnam

- Lt. Richard V. Butchka
- Lt. Cmdr. Joseph L. Crowe
- Lt. Lance A. Eagan
- Lt. Thomas F. Frischmann
- Lt. Robert E. Long
- Lt. James M. Loomis
- Lt. Roderick Martin III
- Lt. Cmdr. Lonnie L. Mixon
- Lt. James Casey Quinn
- Lt. j.g. Robert T. Ritchie
- Lt. Jack C. Rittichier
- Lt. Jack K. Stice

with what I hear.”

The Jolly Greens were more than respected by combat pilots for the rescue work they did in such hostile conditions. Moseley quotes Col. Frank Buzze, who was himself rescued by a Jolly Green,

as writing: “They were called Jolly Greens with near reverence by US combat pilots. Jet pilots are a pretty individualistic lot, and will argue about almost anything but a sure way to start something is for someone to bad-mouth the Jollys. No one did.”

And in an interview for a 1968 news release, Air Force Lt. Col. Charles R. Klinkert, then the 37th ARRS commander, said: “The Coast Guard aviators have been a terrific assist to the Air Force. Very few of us had any experience in this helicopter. These gentlemen came in here and helped us become real effective in this type of mission. I can’t say enough about them.”

Despite the Jolly Greens’ tremendous success, there were failures, and there were tragedies. The 37th ARRS lost 28 men in Vietnam, including Lt. Jack C. Rittichier of the U.S. Coast Guard. Here is his story.

Lt. Jack C. Rittichier

Described by a college football teammate as “James Dean and Marlon Brando all in one package,” Lt.



Air Force Capt. Angelo Pullara, a Jolly Green Giant pilot with the 37th ARRS, died due to enemy fire during the rescue of Col. Frank C. Buzze on Feb. 16, 1967. Heavy fire had forced Buzze to eject from his F-100 over an enemy position in Southern Laos. Photo courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.



Coast Guard Lt. Jack Columbus Rittichier was born on Aug. 17, 1933. On June 9, 1968, Rittichier died while attempting a Jolly Green Giant rescue in the Quang Tri Province of South Vietnam. Photo courtesy of the unofficial Arlington National Cemetery Information website.

Jack Columbus Rittichier joined the Coast Guard in 1963. He already had an Air Medal under his belt by the time he joined two other Coast Guard exchange pilots as part of the first batch of Coasties to voluntarily fly combat search and rescue missions with the Air Force's 37th ARRS in South Vietnam. Within a month of Rittichier's arrival, he had saved many lives and earned multiple Distinguished Flying Crosses for his heroic rescue efforts.

On June 9, 1968, Rittichier and the crew of his helicopter, Jolly Green-23, set off to rescue a downed Marine Corps fighter pilot. After the Jolly's first attempt to land went awry due to heavy enemy fire, gunships swept the area to prepare for a second attempt. As Rittichier flew his Jolly near the comrade in peril a second time, however, he came under intense bullet fire once again, and this time the Jolly set aflame, ultimately exploding and killing all on board. This included not only Rittichier, but also three U.S. Air Force personnel: Capt. Richard C. Yeend, Staff Sgt.

Elmer J. Holden and Sgt. James D. Locker. The Marine pilot was never rescued, but the men who tried gave it everything they had.

Because they were downed in enemy territory, Rittichier and the crew of Jolly Green-23 were officially missing in action for more than 30 years until their remains were discovered, identified, repatriated and ultimately laid to rest in 2003. Rittichier's bravery in Vietnam earned him a Silver Star, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, three Air Medals and a Purple Heart.

Rittichier and his Coast Guard comrades who joined the cause in Vietnam embodied the ideals of the service: always on duty and "Semper Paratus" — "Always Ready." The unique and challenging combat search and rescue operations required skilled aviators who were personally dedicated to rescuing every downed ally from enemy territory, and — luckily for all those saved by Jolly Greens in Vietnam — the Jolly Green Coasties and their brave team members were the perfect men for the job. **FRA**



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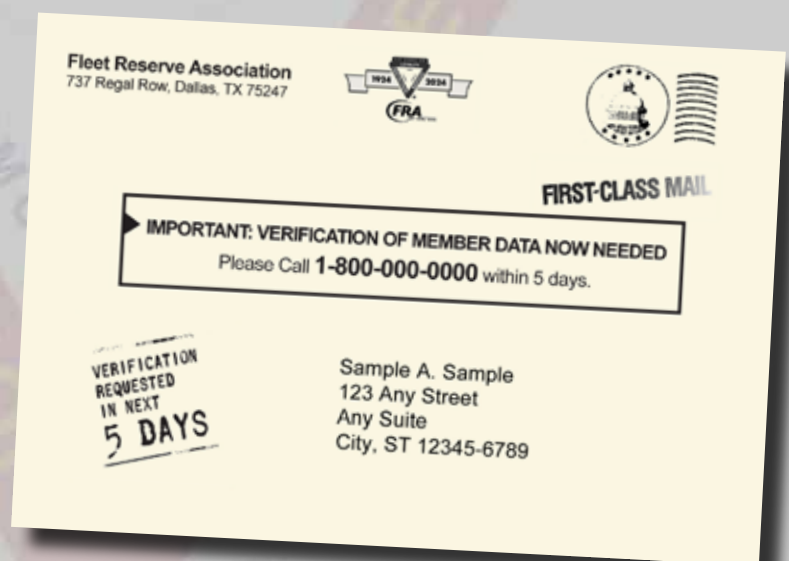
To commemorate our **100th Anniversary**, our upcoming engagement campaign will compile a unique oral history archive, uniting Fleet Reserve Association members across generations, professions, geography, and life experiences.

We have partnered with Publishing Concepts (PCI) to help collect stories from as many members as possible and produce the **Fleet Reserve Association 2024 Oral History Publication**.

By sharing your memory, you'll ensure that the rich history of Fleet Reserve Association will be preserved for generations to come.

PCI will soon be contacting you via mail and email asking you to participate and updating your contact information.

Thanks for your participation!



Member Information Verification and Oral History Projects for the FRA Centennial



Christina Hitchcock

As many of you know, we are working hard on initiatives in support of the FRA's upcoming centennial, to be celebrated in 2024. One of the initiatives is a project that will verify current and former members' contact information and provide an opportunity for Shipmates to share their stories about their time in service — it's called the Oral History Project, and it runs through this July. We've had an outstanding response so far. Shipmates have submitted thousands of stories, many with supporting photographs. We have so many now that we may end up publishing the final project in two volumes, instead of just one. For those who have already contributed, thank you! For others who haven't quite gotten to it yet, it is not too late. The stories we have received are inspiring, heartwarming and full of delightful details.

Many stories touch on the Shipmate's circumstances as a young person, and why they enlisted in the military. Some were motivated by examples they saw set by friends and family. Others wanted to make a fresh start after earlier life choices didn't work out as hoped. Still others met a recruiter by chance and had a motivating conversation about opportunity. Some stories prompted a few laughs when the Shipmates spoke about why they chose one of the sea services and not the Army or Air Force. More than one Shipmate spoke in glowing terms about the quality of the food they enjoyed while deployed at sea!

Many of the stories explore the transition from time in service to time in the civilian world afterwards, and note how the skills and connections acquired during a Shipmate's service became so valuable later in life. The GI Bill is mentioned frequently as a tremendous benefit for not only the Shipmate, but also other family members. Education, in general, is a popular theme — both because of the real-world training and experience gained during service,

and because of the credibility and perspective it provided after discharge.

Family is another prominent topic. There are stories about starting families and growing up together while enlisted. We've been touched by examples of reunions, as well as celebrations of life and memorials for those who have passed on. Some Shipmates speak of meeting the brother they never knew they would have and forming friendships as strong as family bonds. Others talk about the joy of having their spouses and children with them while stationed overseas, embracing another country and building connections to the local community as a result.

Lastly, there are frequent mentions of service. Sometimes Shipmates speak in terms of loyalty; other times, they speak about how they learned what it meant to serve with honor. Some members talk about difficult decisions and how their military training and thinking helped them proceed.

It's clear that the words themselves, while important, are most useful when put in a Shipmate's own context; everything then snaps into focus for them, and they're left with a memory that becomes the most personal keepsake they can imagine. They become an example to be shared with the next generation, sometimes in solemn terms, other times with a smile or laughter.

We are thrilled with the submissions. We extend our gratitude to every Shipmate who has contributed so far and hope to see more stories coming in until we cannot extend the deadline any further. As a reminder, please call 800-767-5596 by June 1 to have your own stories included in the Oral History Project. This is what the FRA is about, and if you recruit new members today, they can also be a part of the project. **FRA**

Yours in Loyalty, Protection and Service,
Christina Hitchcock

Christina is the FRA's director of membership and can be reached at ChristinaH@fra.org or 703-683-1400, ext. 123.



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Nicholas Polizzi, inTransition's program manager, explained that the program "can help clients discern what services they're qualified or eligible for, and then help get them connected to providers, wherever and however they're moving."

Polizzi, who holds a doctorate in educational psychology, added, "We have that really narrow, but so important, scope of making sure people don't fall through the cracks after transitioning because health care, especially behavioral health care, are what's the first thing often to go by the wayside when somebody is transitioning, or even just moving from one location to another."

One veteran who used the program, retired U.S. Army Capt. Joel Serrano, said that when he transitioned after 26 years in the U.S. Army, he felt a sadness and struggled to understand why. "The inTransition Program, ... it gave me the stability, a type of mentorship guiding you to stay on the path," he said.

Continuity of care is important because "situations like these are precisely when behavioral health care is needed the most, due to the stressors of transitioning and being potentially more at risk as a result," said psychiatrist Dr. Charles Hoge, the senior scientist at the behavioral health division of the Office of the U.S. Army Surgeon General in Falls Church, Virginia. "InTransition is one of the safety nets."

Services are available to all military members, regardless of their length of service or discharge status, and there is

no expiration date to enroll.

Leaving the Military

Most notably, inTransition supports service members and veterans who are transitioning between behavioral health care providers, mostly because they are leaving the Department of Defense due to separating from service or retiring.

"They're leaving the DOD and that culture, becoming a civilian, and pursuing behavioral health care in the civilian sector," Polizzi explained. "We help them find resources in their geographic area, and then support them until they are connected to the resources [and] providers who are working for them. And then we follow up to make sure they're happy with the care."

"We won't rest until we help you get connected to care that works for you," he stressed.

InTransition coaches, who are licensed behavioral health care professionals steeped in military culture, work with clients to create specific goals for getting them connected to care. Those goals depend on the service member's level of motivation and desire to get connected, Polizzi explained. The power is in the client's hands.

"We're not telling the service member or veteran what to do; we are mutually coming to an agreed-upon number of goals to address between now and the next coaching session," Polizzi said.

Even if you don't want care now, he noted, "it's good for you to know that inTransition remains as a service should you wish to use it in the future." **FRA**

This content was written by Janet A. Aker and provided by the Defense Health Agency.

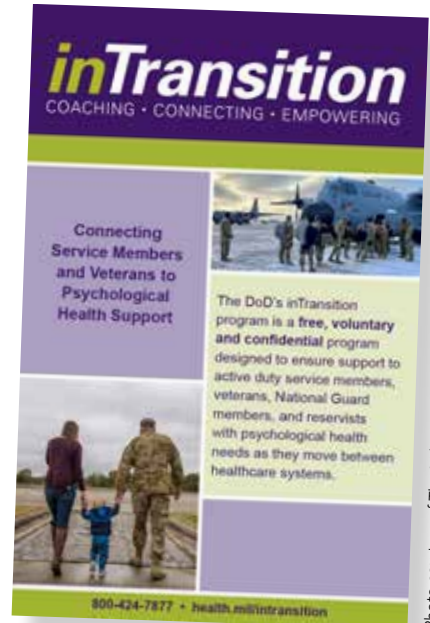


Photo courtesy of The Military Health System

1. BRANCH 302, CARSON, CALIF.

Members from Branch and Unit 302 came together with the family of Shipmate Danilo Magbitang during his memorial service. Magbitang was born on July 18, 1937, and joined the FRA June 1, 1997.



2



2. BRANCH 15, WALHALLA, S.C.

The branch hosted their Americanism Essay Contest winners for 2023. (L to R) Branch President Clyde Albertson, 11th grade winner Cody Aker from Easley High School, ninth grade winner Brandon Grayley from Easley High School, eighth grade winner Lilliania Nellist from Belton Middle School and Americanism Essay Contest Chair Joyce Jones. CHECK SOURCE FOR IMAGE

3. BRANCH 294, CROSSVILLE, TENN.

Shipmate Gordon Kinney (L) is a 94-year-old Navy retiree who served in WWII, Korea and Vietnam. His enlisted in the beginning of 1946 and retired as a lieutenant commander 24 years later. He served on many aircraft carriers as an aviation n's mate. He recently received his 25-Year Continuous Membership Certificate and Pin. Bravo Zulu!



4. BRANCH 226, STATEN ISLAND, N.Y.

Branch 226 donated gift certificates to the food pantry operated by Blue Star Families' Craig Newmark New York Tri-State Chapter. The pantry supports active-duty Coast Guard on Staten Island. (L to R) Al Klingele, Anthony Giuliani, Jim Brown and Blue Star Families Chapter Director Andie Coakley.



5. BRANCH 146, JOHNSTVILLE, PA.

Branch 146 honored their Americanism Essay Contest winners in January at St. Isidore Catholic School in Quakertown, Pennsylvania. (L to R) The Rev. Ken Brabazon, Dick Murphy, Tom Concannon, Branch Secretary Joe Millman, seventh grade second place winner Jagoda Trybowska, Branch President Carroll Hamilton, seventh grade first place winner Anna Maigur, eighth grade first place winner Brynn Gillin and eighth grade second place winner Eliana Cangialosi.

6. BRANCH 15, WALHALLA, S.C.

During the monthly branch meeting that was held on Feb. 18, Branch Americanism Essay Chair Joyce Jones (L) received a Certificate of Appreciation from Branch President Clyde Albertson (R).





7. BRANCH 126, JACKSONVILLE, FLA.

Isa Pillari was the first place winner at the branch level of the Americanism Essay Contest and second place in the Southeast Region. Her certificate and gift card were presented by Branch President and PRPSE J.J.Thomas.

8. BRANCH 261, LEMOORE, CALIF.

Branch President Doug McCann (L) and Americanism Essay Contest Chair Bob Craig (R) visited Selma High School to recognize Dayanara Ramirez, 11th grade essay contest winner. She received her award and the distinction of being the best in her class.



9. BRANCH 316, SPRINGFIELD, MO.

The branch Americanism Essay Contest award presentation was held at St. Agnes Cathedral. (L to R) eighth grade first place winner Addison Weibrecht, eighth grade second place winner Chase Reed, eighth grade third place winner Joslyn Naeger, seventh grade third place winner Reece Weiler and Branch Americanism Essay Contest Chair Norma Wright.

10. BRANCH 14, MILWAUKEE, WIS.

Branch 14 presented their Americanism Essay Contest winners with their awards at Milwaukee Jewish Day School in Fox Point, Wisconsin, on March 23. (L to R) RPNC Marcia Cunningham, eighth grade second place winner Noah Goldenberg, first place eighth grade winner Gregory Raykh and social studies teacher Colleen Coveney.



11. BRANCH 15, WALHALLA, S.C.

On Feb. 13, members of Branch 15 were treated to an excellent lunch by their local Mission BBQ in recognition of Coast Guard Day, which commemorates the founding of the United States Coast Guard as the Revenue Marine on Aug. 4, 1790.

12. BRANCH 70, POWAY, CALIF.

Branch 70 President Lou Irvin (R) and Past Branch President Alice Smith (L) presented Christmas baskets to the families of Gunnery Sgt. Michael Enciso (in black sweater) and Cpl. Matthew Rumpff (center). The baskets contained non-perishable food, a frozen turkey, an MCAS commissary gift card and a check to help local military families.



Submit a photo by email as a high-quality attachment in jpeg format to FRAtoday@fra.org. Please include a brief description and include the names of those pictured.

THE FRA CONGRATULATES THE FOLLOWING Shipmates who became Life Members during the first quarter of 2023. The listing below, which is arranged alphabetically and by the month joined, includes their branch number or Member-at-Large (MAL) designation. Call 1-800-FRA-1924 to learn how you can become a Life Member of the FRA.

JANUARY

Abendschan, Bonnie MAL
 Amberg, Richard A. 289
 Britton, Thomas W. 269
 Campbell, John W. MAL
 Castroni, Janelle R. 29
 Cervantes, Mario C. 247
 Chilson, Adam 261
 Cline, Raymond M. 183
 Cusumano Sr., Joseph P. 261
 Cutcher, Robert L. 104
 Dancel, Pedro MAL
 Davis, Kent H. 269
 Doty, William H. MAL
 Faircloth, Kim N. MAL
 Feiffer, Brian P. 67
 Felhofer, Mark W. 94
 Foleyk, Chad 70
 Forrester, Larry R. 41
 Goralski, Mark 24
 Goss, Danny 170
 Hebron, Robert F. 182
 Hogan, Jason 24
 Jackson, Reginald MAL
 Jandrin, Lawrence J. 238
 Keller, Kenneth E. 258
 Kelly, David G. MAL
 King, James A. 22
 Larson Sr., Steven M. 346
 Mancias, Joseph MAL
 McGilloway, James MAL
 Menge, James A. MAL
 Moore, Michael D. 269
 Moore, Robert F. 269
 Oberlander, Todd A. MAL
 Porter, Rainey W. 94
 Reed, David E. 197
 Ruger, Robert G. 99
 Schirle, Christopher J. 289
 Schwalbe, Kenneth E. MAL
 Slusser, Albert E. 29

Springer, Richard A. MAL
 Talbot, Stacy 346
 Taylor, Todd N. 70
 Terry, Jerrold D. 290
 Wagner, William P. 61
 Williams Jr., Darin E. 86
 Williams, Norris D. MAL
 Winstead, Raymond A. MAL
 Witmer, Justin S. 60
 Wread, Joseph M. 20
 Wright, William 23

FEBRUARY

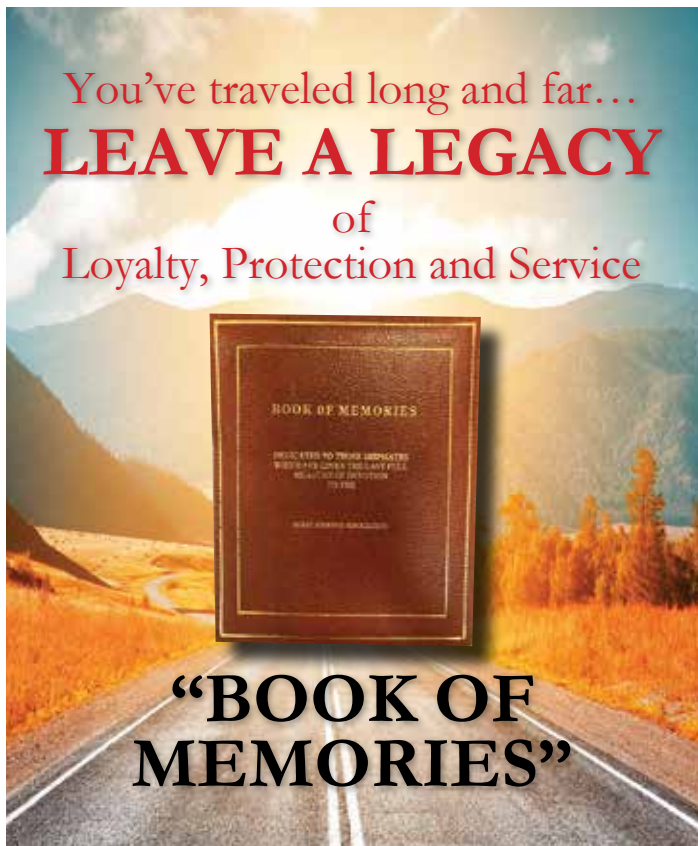
Antero, Felix J. 302
 Apodaca, Reuben V. MAL
 Asuncion, Angelito D. 247
 Beach, David 103
 Biggs, Walker O. 299
 Bothe, Dale MAL
 Bradt, Robert G. MAL
 Brown, Gerald W. MAL
 Carr, Michael C. MAL
 Chatfield, Brett A. 24
 Cherry, George N. 301
 Chubb, Richard 24
 Craig, William T. MAL
 Davis, Robert MAL
 Dawson, Clinton W. 261
 De Guzman, Benjamin B. 154
 Flaherty, Carroll G. 93
 Foster Jr., James J. MAL
 Frankenfield, William 24
 Hamilton, Roger 301
 Hardy, Samuel 301
 Harris, Robert J. 269
 Holzwart, Leigh 32
 James, Richard 261
 Kent, John 174
 Kinsella III, Robert F. 24
 Kirchknopf, Matthew B. 24
 Landree, Norman W. MAL

Langille, James 94
 Larkin II, John S. 24
 Leeds, Phillip C. 94
 Lutes, Gerald MAL
 Manalo, Ric 302
 Manwiller, William A. 104
 Maydwell, Joseph 226
 Miller, Kevin L. 24
 Mills, Stanley 268
 Pickard, Andrew, MAL
 Robles, Guillermo F. MAL
 Rooksberry, Chris MAL
 Roorda, James P. 261
 Rosemier, Dennis A. MAL
 Rugenius, Kurt A. MAL
 Sales, Jumel 302
 Scherer, William MAL
 Schmoll, Peter 226
 Schmoll, Steven R. 226
 Schroeder, Harry W. 301
 Sears, Scott A. 371
 Stroncheck, John 188
 Stultz, Franklin E. 24
 Sullivan, Patrick L. 105
 Theisen, Michael F. MAL
 Turnbull, Stephen 24
 Umholtz, Norman 162
 Villarin, Freeman A. MAL
 Way, Ryan K. 90
 Wolcott, Paul G. MAL
 Wolfe, Donald P. 301

MARCH

Albertson, Clyde W. 15
 Allfrey, Richard G. 263
 Bacon, Donald MAL
 Ballester, Herminio L. 127
 Bates, James MAL
 Bennett, James M. 105
 Bennett, Richard M. 136
 Bitter, Charles S. MAL

Bloomer, George M.	MAL	Gray, Gary K.	MAL	Reatiraza, Jaime R.	156
Bradley, George R.	70	Grimes, William T.	294	Rivera, Sisenando C.	166
Brown, Larry W.	24	Hanks, Arthur O.	67	Roth, Michael J.	269
Broyles, Duane R.	MAL	Hine, John M.	70	Schiffgens, Thomas H.	24
Burton Jr., Willard V.	269	Houser, Darryl C.	346	Showers, Robert E.	MAL
Campbell, Stephen K.	MAL	Judkins, Allen	115	Spence, Joseph B.	MAL
Castillo, Angel	289	Kennedy, Dion P.	MAL	Summers, Ermal N.	MAL
Chase, Maurice J.	53	Khoon, Jayson	302	Taggart, William D.	90
Cramer, Andrew W.	91	Lange, David F.	67	Thomas, Charles	MAL
Davis, Ross K.	MAL	Lewandowski, James J.	367	Thomas, Roger D.	161
Eaton, Thomas B.	MAL	Livingston, David	201	Varela, Emanuel	MAL
Emling, Steven B.	97	Mallon, Ronald J.	MAL	Viloria, Jaime A.	MAL
Essary, Ronald S.	32	Meade, Pat	90	Wallace, David	MAL
Fetterman, Jerry J.	201	Millan, Rolando R.	302	Whiteley, Edward E.	269
Fleming, Christopher J.	MAL	Nieto, Victor	61	Whiting, Jonathan C.	182
Fluitt, Cleotha	24	Nuccio, Donald	55	Wood, Lamar	MAL
Fowler, Virgil E.	MAL	Orante, Alexander R.	247	Wray, K. E.	182
Gallagher, Sean	24	Ostenson, Donald	136	Zeldis, Jennifer A.	24
Gatchalian, Willie A.	154	Pool, Bert W.	MAL		
Gray, Michael C.	156	Ramer, Bryan K.	99		



The “**Book of Memories**” was instituted in 1959 to perpetuate the memory of Shipmates and Ladies who have joined the Staff of the Supreme Commander.

Originally, the donations received were placed in a special fund established to pay the mortgage on the National Executive Offices building. The mortgage was paid in full by the date of the 1961 national convention. However, the Shipmates decided that memorializing their departed members in this manner was most fitting and the program was continued.

Create a lasting tribute and perpetuate your commitment to the guiding principles of our organization.



To learn more, contact FRA National Headquarters at 1-800-372-1924 or email at phillipr@fra.org.

In Memoriam

Name	Rating	Branch						
Allen, Friel H.	AECS, USN	289	Gerdes, Henry H.	AT1, USN	162	Moore, Donald D.	GMCS, USN	47
Anderson, Ardner B.	ENC, USN	MAL	Golovich, Steve F.	AE1, USNR	11	Mulch, Matthew A.,	CTC, USN	MAL
Andris, Paul J.	CAPT, USN	01	Gray, Harry S.	PNCS, USN	269	Murphy, Joseph P.	CWO4, USN	226
Andrus, Atwood	ADR1, USN	281	Greenlee, William D.	CPO, USN	346	Nelson, Eldon K.	ADRC, USN	136
Barley, Cecil E.	CDR, USN	MAL	Hall, Franklin D.	BTC, USN	290	Neves, Richard	FTBC(SS), USN	117
Batdorf, Andrew J.	AFCM, USN	335	Hanson, Claude D.	MM1, USN	346	Newman, Milton,	FC1, USNR	MAL
Bemis, Donald R.	BRC, USN	101	Harden, Charles E.	LT, USN	166	Nungesser, Kenneth D.	MMCS, USN	382
Bernardi, Ronald	HMC, USN	MAL	Harris, Clifton V.	GYSGT, USMC	40	Ochs, Eugene	CDR/RD2, USN	MAL
Biesiadny, Lawrence L.	CAPT, USN	14	Hart, Frank M.	CDR, USN	MAL	O'neill, Eugene	AOC, USN	117
Bigham, Billy J.	YNCS, USN	268	Hatchel, Hubert L.	QM1, USN	68	Owens, Homer D.	PNCS, USN	251
Birden, Robert J.	ENC, USN	37	Hicks, Donald E.	AO1, USN	97	Owens, James E.	YNC, USN	MAL
Bosco, Samuel A.	HMC, USN	72	Hinson, A. T.	DPCM, USN	MAL	Pailes, Edward W.	ETC(SS), USN	MAL
Bowen, William A.	PO1, USN	MAL	Hoffman, Richard R.	SGT, USMC	67	Perez, Lawrence	YN1, USN	60
Brooks, Emma	SK1, USNR	130	Holland, Eulyss C.	DPC, USN	89	Piper, Earnest M.	PNC, USN	MAL
Buck, Robert A.	EN1, USN	185	Holland, Wilburn D.	CSC, USN	89	Porter, James K.	MM3, USN	MAL
Burkhart, Jack T.	EMC, USN	316	Hollander, Bernard (Red)	USN	163	Quenga, Pedro C.	DK1, USN	289
Burris, Harry	CDR, USN	24	Hollander, Bernard (Red)	USN	163	Quion, Augusto	SKC, USN	101
Burwell, Bransford A.	PCC, USN	MAL	Ingersoll, Francis	BM1, USN	MAL	Radford, James E.	CE1, USN	382
Carpenter, Gerald E.	USN	MAL	Jacox, Lawrence E.	RM1, USN	192	Reed, Wayne P.	AT1, USN	MAL
Clark, Jewel W.	ATC, USN	24	Johns, Jack	CDR, USN	MAL	Rich, Read E.	SCPO, USN	156
Clark, William J.	MA1, USN	01	Johnson, Curt H.	GYSGT, USMC	MAL	Rodriguez, Eduardo G.	HM1, USN	247
Collins, Kieran F.	BUCS, USN	42	Johnson, James M.	ADCS, USN	MAL	Seefeldt, Neil L.	ABH1, USN	53
Conforti, James	AVCM, USN	MAL	Jones, Charles T.	AE1, USN	91	Sestak, Daniel W.	AW1, USN	287
Culp, Jack H.	HT1, USN	61	Jones, Fredrick M.	SC3, USN	130	Shields, William B.	YNCS, USN	161
Cushing, Daniel F.	OTCM, USN	24	Jones, Paul C.	CTRC, USN	MAL	Sides, Paul E.	SKC, USN	MAL
Danielson, Raymond C.	USN	MAL	Jose, Senecio S.	HMCS, USN	MAL	Singhofen, Richard	QMCS(SS), USN	MAL
Davis, Loren E.	PRC, USN	183	Kauffman, Thomas A.	BMC, USN	MAL	Skaggs, Arthur L.	BUCS, USN	42
Defibaugh, Ronald E.	NCCM, USN	17	PNP, Kaye, George R.	HM1, USN	269	Slade, Roscoe	EMCS(SW), USNR	MAL
Delos Santos, Amancio	DKC, USN	127	Kehoe, James J.	YNC, USN	57	Slappy, James T.	ETC, USN	MAL
Derr, Lester W.	PN1, USN	MAL	Kelley, Howard R.	HMC, USN	89	Smith, Rodney E.	YNC, USNR	136
Dewald, Roger H.	AEC, USN	97	Kessack, James A.	PRCS, USN	97	Sullivan, Donald L.	CPO, USN	90
Dittmar, Frederick J.	ETCM, USN	298	Kitchen, Rollen H.	SHC, USN	22	Syfrett, Riley D.	PO3, USN	210
Dorsey, Thomas A.	USN	47	Kivett, Jack O.	BT1, USN	53	Taylor, William T.	SHC, USN	MAL
Driver, Robert J.	RMC, USN	223	Kowalewski, Zygmund W.	ACCS, USN	342	Teeters, James L.	ATC, USN	22
Duffy, William R.	AVCM, USN	99	Krogh, David R.	SO2, USN	244	Valentine, Roger C.	CS1, USN	22
Eason, Berton W.	AMS1, USN	MAL	Kulu, Harry	PH(DV), USN	289	Van Guilder, Edward W.	FTCM, USN	70
Edstrom, Robert A.	HMCM, USN	MAL	Kurjan, John M.	HMC, USN	268	Watts, Jennings L.	YNC, USN	181
Elkin, Robert D.	ENC, USN	29	Lester, Charles E.	LCPL, USMC	23	Wiggins, Theodore A.	SD1, USN	166
Evans, Albert R.	PC1, USN	MAL	Liptak, Lester H.	ADRC, USN	22	Wilson, Carroll E.	CPO, USN	289
Evans, Maynard L.	GMC, USN	MAL	Littlejohn, Ronald B.	HMCM, USN	309	Workman, George H.	BTC, USN	MAL
Ferguson, Thomas R.	ATCS, USN	126	Lucas, George H.	ACC, USN	302	Wrobel, Thomas P.	PO1, USN	117
Fields, Floyd C.	PNC, USN	126	Mahaffey, Bobbie E.	CSC, USN	53	Yacovelli, Carl J.	PO1, USN	115
Flores, Philip F.	SMC, USN	289	Mall, Robert L.	AMS1, USN	268	Younger, Moses	HMC, USN	57
Fontecha, Jimmie U.	SD2, USN	84	Marshall, Austin W.	GMG1, USN	53			
Frederick, Raymond F.	ETN2, USN	24	Martishius, John A.	BTC, USN	MAL			
Fultz, Leroy W.	ENC, USN	185	McCarthy, John	CPO(AW), USN	70			
Gemenez, Dan G.	USN	247	McCarthy, Joseph E.	LT, USN	124			
			Metcalf, Olen D.	AFCM, USN	289			
			Micochen, Hyman	MGYSGT, USMC	117			
			Miller, John R.	DKCS, USN	MAL			

Names in **red** indicate 50-year continuous members. Any names in **bold** indicate past national officers. To report a Shipmate death, email: mserfra@fra.org or call 703-683-1400, ext. 1.



Photo courtesy of DVIDS.

REUNIONS

USS RASHER (SS/SSR/AGSS-269)

9/13/2023 – 9/17/2023
Buffalo, N.Y.
Contact: Richard Moore
Telephone: 804-815-0730
Email: drifterpilot2@gmail.com

USS STEINAKER (DD-863)

9/14/2023 – 9/17/2023
Dayton/Miamisburg, Ohio
Contact: Ken Kohnen
Telephone: 904-654-7321
Email: ken.kohnen@yahoo.com

USS BAUSELL (DD-845)

9/20/2023 – 9/25/2023
Miamisburg, Ohio
Contact: Randy Holton
Telephone: 614-332-4540
Email: ussbausellreunionplanner@gmail.com
Website: www.ussbausell.com/reunion-2023

USS RATON (SS/SSR/AGSS-270)

9/22/2023 – 9/24/2023
Manitowoc, Wis.
Contact: Larry Kramer
Telephone: 360-697-2842
Email: LDKramer43@hotmail.com

USS DIXIE (AD-14) and USS PIEDMONT (AD-17)

9/28/2023 – 10/2/2023
Nashville, Tenn.
Contact: Ken Robinson
Telephone: 858-245-9988
Email: robinson4ken@gmail.com
Website: www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/bnapa-four-points-by-sheraton-nashville-airport/overview/

Mine Division 113 Vietnam

9/28/2023 – 10/1/2023
Nashville, Tenn.
Contact: Don Hecke
Telephone: 501-620-0593
Email: don9329@hotmail.com or
MineDiv113Reunion@msn.com

A list of reunions is available online at: www.fra.org/Reunions. Looking For/Reunions must be submitted online, via email to reunions@fra.org, or in writing to FRA Looking For/Reunions at 125 N. West St., Alexandria, VA 22314.

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LA FRA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION: Founded in 1930, the LA FRA is a federally chartered organization. LA FRA Units are located throughout the United States and the Philippines. Eligible persons may also become Members-at-Large (MAL) who do not have access to, nor desire to join a Unit. The LA FRA has a proud standing tradition and heritage that supports this great nation and recognizes the sacrifices, past and present, of those who kept us strong and free.

WHAT WE DO: The LA FRA plays an active role in our communities. Local units sponsor youth programs, welfare projects, social and patriotic activities to benefit the communities at large, veteran programs and the active duty community. The organization provides annual scholarships to outstanding students each year.

WHO CAN JOIN? All applicants must be at least sixteen (16) years of age.

Membership in the Ladies Auxiliary of the Fleet Reserve Association is limited to spouses, parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers, children, stepchildren and grandchildren not less than 16 years of age of members of the Fleet Reserve Association and widows, widowers, parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers, children, stepchildren and grandchildren not less than 16 years of age of persons who were members at the time of death or eligible to be members of the Fleet Reserve Association at the time of death.

HOW CAN I JOIN? Members fall into two categories. Members who belong to an LA FRA Unit or Members who do not but join as "Members-at-Large."

Join the Ladies Auxiliary of the FRA (DBA Auxiliary of the FRA)

Name in Full: _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Address: _____
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip + 4)

Telephone: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Email: _____



The following service member information validates this application:

(Serviceman's Full Name) (Rate/Rank) (USN/ USMC/ USCG)

Certify that the information is true and accurate and that my sponsor is a member of FRA Branch _____ or is MAL

Certify that the information is true and accurate and that my sponsor was eligible for membership at the time of death.

Unit Preference _____ Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

Recruiter _____ Member # _____ Unit/Branch # _____

Verified by _____ Title _____ Unit/Branch _____ Date _____



I am the:

	Wife		Mother
	Sister		Father
	Daughter		Widow
	Stepdaughter		Widower
	Husband		Granddaughter
	Brother		Grandson
	Son		Grandmother
	Stepson		Grandfather

Annual Memberhsip Dues:

	\$25.00 for 1 Year
	\$50.00 for 2 Year
	\$75.00 for 3 Years
	\$100.00 for 4 Years
	\$125.00 for 5 Years

Make all checks or money orders payable to LA FRA.

Along with signed application and payment, mail to:

National Financial Secretary
 PO Box 3037, Carson City, NV 89702

An Active Region Looking Ahead



Kelly M. Pena
LA FRA West Coast
Regional President

The West Coast Region has an eager and active auxiliary group. We are proud members of the Auxiliary of the Fleet Reserve Association and are excited to be of service to our veterans and our community.

An Active Region

The West Coast Region's units have participated in many events over the past year, including Veterans Day parades, Nevada Day events in local communities, and flag-raising and -lowering ceremonies at local cemeteries. They have also been generous with their time and resources in various ways, such as by volunteering face-to-face at their local veterans hospitals, creating ditty bags for veterans who stay at the Defenders Lodge or Fisher House, volunteering with Toys for Tots, and participating in National Wreaths Across America Day programs. Some of the units also hold monthly breakfast fundraisers and bingo games to raise money to support the Fleet Reserve Association's national programs, such as the Americanism Essay Contest, national scholarships and memorial funds.

Investing in the Future

My goal this year is to get involved with more youth programs and activities, as children are the future. Also, we do this to encourage and invite eligible parents to join our organization, as we all are aware that the average age of an FRA or LA FRA member is up there. So by encouraging younger members to join our organization, we help keep our association alive and productive.

Upcoming Conventions

The West Coast Regional Mid-Year Convention and business meeting will be hosted by Branch and Unit 197 in Modesto, California. The objective for these meetings is to provide training to unit members while simultaneously having fun. Our upcoming regional convention will be



FRA West Coast Regional President Joe Nash and LA FRA West Coast Regional President Kelly Pena at the West Coast Regional Convention last year.

hosted by Branch and Unit 59 in Cheyenne, Wyoming, from Aug. 17 to 19 at the Red Lion Hotel and Conference Center. We invite everyone to attend — the more, the merrier.

Regional Remembrances

The West Coast Region has experienced two great losses already this year. Shipmate Dale Wild of Branch 197 has left us to go serve the Supreme Commander. We give our deepest sympathy to the entire family. Also, one of our youngest unit members in Unit 287, Amber Reaves, has gone home to the Lord after a tragic car accident. Amber was 28 years old and a loving mother of three beautiful children. She was enrolled as a student in Turlock, California. She went back to school to make a better future for her family. Our hearts go out to her family during this sad and difficult time. **FRA**

In Loyalty, Protection and Service,
Kelly M. Pena, RPWC

Kelly is the LA FRA West Coast regional president.

How to Manage Cash vs. Borrowing When Interest Rates Rise



Carl M. Trevisan, CFP®



Stephen M. Bearce

Many of us use credit in our daily lives, whether it's to help optimize cash flow, create tax efficiencies or make purchases. An environment of rising interest rates could be a good time to take a closer look at liquidity strategies and other forms of borrowing.

Using Cash Versus Borrowing

It could make sense to pay cash instead of borrowing in some instances. Let's say you have a fair amount of cash and are not planning to invest it in the market. That could be a good solution for buying a car or a house, paying for a child's education, or expanding a business.

Amid higher interest rates, paying cash could be a better option than securing a long-term loan to buy a costly item.

"Increased rates may also impact purchasing power for bigger-ticket items (such as homes, boats, and airplanes) traditionally financed over longer periods," says Brian Singsank, senior lead wealth custom lending specialist with Wells Fargo Wealth & Investment Management. "It's important to evaluate your balance sheet and wealth plan to make sure they are aligned to help meet upcoming liquidity needs."

Also, if you have an existing variable-rate loan, such as an adjustable-rate mortgage or line of credit, that rate could go up, resulting in higher interest costs.

"If it's still a long-term funding need, when interest rates are rising could be the time to evaluate," Singsank says.

Whatever you decide, timing can be critical. Your investment planners can help you decide on what is best for your current situation.

Discuss Credit and Liquidity Needs With Your Advisors

"Be proactive when interest rates change," says Singsank. "Consider reviewing your wealth plan and related credit and liquidity needs with your

banker, advisor, your CPA and even an estate-planning specialist."

Singsank recommends starting those conversations by sharing your answers to these basic questions:

1. How much in assets would you be willing to liquidate and why?
2. Are you debt-averse?
3. Would you consider alternatives to using your current cash reserves in order to meet your financial needs?
4. Based on your balance-sheet leverage, what is your exposure to rising interest rates?
5. Are you comfortable with the amount you're paying, or may have to pay, to service your variable-rate interest payments in a rising-rate environment?
6. As part of working toward your financial goals, do you anticipate upcoming borrowing or liquidity needs?

"Once you've answered these questions," says Singsank, "you should better understand whether you need to make changes to your wealth plan, including liquidity and other borrowing strategies, to help meet your financial goals." **FRA**

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