

SOUND OFF!



VOL. IV, NO 22

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

10 JULY 2009

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

HISTORY BOTH WARNS & TEACHES: WE MUST HEED & LEARN

Michael is dead, and his fans celebrate his legacy. They will sing and dance to his music for decades and they will always attribute it to him. Elvis went before, and Jerry, and Frank, and Bing, and we remember their music to this day.

No one will be standing up tomorrow and saying that all that great music and showmanship now belongs to some John Doe, not yet recognized. No one will give someone else credit or blame for the product of their terms as "greatest living (pop) singer". No one will say of them, "He is gone now so the credit/blame belongs to this new guy."

We have to remember that when we contemplate the passing of Robert Strange McNamara. Although he left office after only 30,000 Americans had been killed, he remains responsible for all the American service-members and others who died there.

His passing makes me hope that I am wrong and that there is an afterlife, and that all 58,261 Americans, the 521 Australians and 39 New Zealanders; the 9 Philippine Army, 351 Thais, and 4,900 South Koreans; the Canadians who fought in our forces; the two million or more Vietnamese, the Montagnards, and all of their grieving families and friends are sitting in that big stadium in the sky and waiting for him to cross over. Beside him in the arena will be Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon (gained partial ownership by not ending it for seven more years), and an empty chair waiting for Kissinger.

Bob Dylan wrote these lines for them, didn't he?
**"...how many deaths will it take till he knows
That too many people have died?"**

The lesson is that if you start it, it is yours – all yours. We must remember that lesson now. These wars

and the irreversible damage that they do to us and to the people and nations of the world are ours. We share that responsibility with Rumsfeld, Bush and their cohorts: with all those of both parties who were too terrified to vote against war-by-choice.

They weren't terrified of Al Q'aida. They didn't believe that, "We have to defeat them over there so that we don't have to defend ourselves here." They didn't think (despite their speeches at the time) that Osama bin Laden and his ilk were going to march victoriously down the streets of Chicago, Memphis or Keokuk.

They were terrified for their political futures. They were and are cowards, so we reserve the second row of seats in the center of the stadium for them; they can fill them as they follow old McNamara across the divide. Already sitting there are those cowardly Congresspersons who never voted against the Vietnam war, and who never put a stop to it when they could, until the toll got so high that they were terrified not to stop it.

Because the responsibility and the debt are ours, we need to pay for our actions. We need to step up. We cannot afford cowardice any longer, and we cannot blame those who let it happen if we are unwilling to stand up and do something about it ourselves.

We either wanted these wars or we let them happen, and now we cringe and rage: we have "tea parties" because someone just might tax us to pay for what we let happen. Instead we should be telling our representatives that we want something real to be done. We don't want rhetoric – we want action. We want our national name cleared for history's sake, and for the sake of those who have died and those whom we have damaged.

There is only one way to build a lasting monument to those who have died for us and because of us. We have to pay for the damage we have done, and we have to commit to building a better tomorrow.

Our nation's goal cannot be just to fight and win every war for the next 10,000 years. Our goal has to be to find out how to stop wars – all wars.

That is the legacy they deserve.

We have badly damaged Iraq and virtually destroyed what the Russians left of Afghanistan. The damage has to be repaired. Rebuilding buildings and paving roads isn't enough. We have to get them on their feet and we mustn't argue about how much it will cost. We didn't argue much about the cost of destroying them, did we?

This is where we need to do some hard work. This is where our Congresspersons need to start earning their pay. This is where we have an opportunity to demonstrate the greatness of America, instead of just reveling in its power.

We have to fix the damage done at home also, and the place to start, of course, is with our own veterans. I have a sneaking suspicion that if you granted every claim made against the VA it would probably cost less than it costs today to deny so many of them.

For the life of me I cannot think of a "cost-effectiveness" criterion that can apply to these claims. Cost-effectiveness is a McNamara legacy, isn't it? Did old Bob come back and write the rules for the DVA?

How many veterans die waiting to be served? Shouldn't these be added to the rolls of war casualties? How many of our brothers and sisters die because of incompetence and neglect such as has recently been the case at the Miami, Murfreesboro, and Augusta VA Hospitals, and was formerly the case at Walter Reed and at Fort Stewart, where our Reserves and National Guard were treated so shamefully? Certainly they all should sit in the stands in our heavenly stadium. The sentence for old Bob and his friends should be just to sit there for eternity and look them all in the eye..

I propose that Congress get some *cojones* and tell the President that it is over and that rebuilding must begin now. It is up to him to wind down the wars – and we understand that that will take time – we surely don't want Congress in the tactics business. They do however belong in the strategy and futures business.

Next they need to consider what it will cost to repair what we have done on all fronts and all accounts

and start figuring out how much that will take in taxes. Then they need to vote in the taxes.

While they're at it, they can calculate what it will cost to undo the damage that we have done to our schools and our industrial base (strategic elements according to old Bob McNamara); what about the damage to our environment and our healthcare system because of the opportunity cost of these wars, and put that on the tab also.

Then you and I have to willingly stand up and pay those taxes. Taxes are the price of citizenship, and only slackers and cowards avoid them. I'll pay more gladly if they will just begin to do their job, and if they will ensure that the additional money will go to repair all the damage done to our dear nation, but not to build another Teapot Museum in North Carolina, or another failing school in Arkansas or California named after another failing Congressperson.

And don't forget those veterans' claims! There are about 1,000,000 sitting out there today. If you can't get ashamed over that, then you have no shame at all.

More than one writer in the last several days has implied that McNamara paid part of his debt when he admitted to mistakes in his 1995 book, "Retrospect". He said that the decision to Americanize the war in Vietnam was "wrong, terribly wrong."

Hey Bob! That was no revelation! We had all figured that out long before. Breast-beating is not debt-paying – our representatives should remember that.

Our debt to all and sundry because of these wars cannot be measured just in dollars. Bob McNamara did not pay any of his debt, but we must pay all of ours – debts of all kinds. We cannot leave it to our children or those debts will be unpayable.

It is the American thing to do.

"As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is, to use it as sparingly as possible; avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering also that timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it; avoiding likewise the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burthen which we ourselves ought to bear."

George Washington

REVELLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two websites: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm. United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims “Public List of Practitioners” are members of the court’s bar www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/. Also this site for west coasters <http://www.chapman.edu/law/programs/clinics/amvets.asp>.

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

Membership is open, free, and very worthwhile! Get your fellow veterans, and veterans’ family members to join VUFT! We are beginning to be heard, and we need you to help us get the message out. If each of us would bring in one new member every month, what an impact we could have!

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

Class Action Suit: The appeal was filed in December and now the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has ordered us to an Assessment Conference to determine if the case should be included in the court’s Mediation Program. Our appeal goes on, even though we hope that the new administration will address the focus of our case directly and with vigor.

Case Progress to Date:

7/23/2007 Suit filed w/Federal District Court

9/25/2007 Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss

2/11/2008 Motion for Preliminary Injunction

2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing

4/21/2008 Trial

6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

7/25/2008 Appeal notice filed w/9th Circuit Court of Appeals

12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed

12/15/2008 *Swords to Plowshares* and *Vietnam Veterans of America* file amicus briefs

12/22/2008 *Military Spouses for Change* and *United Spinal Association* file amicus briefs

3/4/2009 Appeal will not be subject to Mediation

4/6/2009 Requested an extension to reply to the DVA response to our brief

4/22/09 Extension granted to 1 May 2009

5/1/09 Appellants’ Reply Brief filed

6/11/09 Oral Arguments Scheduled for 12 August 2009

Here is a link to the legal [documents](#) on the lawsuit.

BE A MEMBER If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to [our website](#) and join. Membership is free. The more our numbers grow, the greater voice we have. It shouldn’t be that way, but it is, so join us and help us take the fight to Congress and the state legislatures. Please encourage your friends who either are veterans, are related to veterans, or who support veterans’ causes to [join VUFT, Inc.](#)

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on [our website](#) “[Donate](#)” page. Every little bit helps. We are a 501(c)(3): your donations are deductible on your federal taxes. You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method. If you wish to volunteer your services to the organization, please contact the Chair at bhandy@vuft.org or the Vice Chair at scook@vuft.org. Watch for details at www.vuft.org.

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS [SOME EDITED FOR LENGTH]

A VETERAN AND MEDICARE

I served in the Korean War caring for injured Marines as a navy corpsman and met my great wife while attending college on the GI Bill. We have been married for 52 years. For the past seven, I have served as her home caregiver because she has Alzheimer’s disease. I hire an aide about three hours a day; the remaining 21 are mine. Despite incontinence and confusion, we get along and are happier than most. Margaret is neither angry nor afraid.

I have two comments about pending healthcare legislation. (1) Any revision should provide for a public plan to compete with existing private plans. (2) Any revision should also provide for long term care, especially at-home care. Home healthcare is far better and costs only a fraction of institutional care.

We pay for my wife's care by withdrawing from traditional IRA's and thus incur substantial taxes. Our government spends hundreds of billions annually on institutional care where seniors are drugged and strapped into wheelchairs. Yet we receive precisely nothing to offset the costs of keeping my wife at home. Does this seem fair or make sense?

Our prescription costs are high and my wife is now in the doughnut hole. Our AARP prescription plan recently quoted a "discounted" doughnut hole price of \$406 for 90 generic Plavix pills. I purchased 100 identical generic pills from NorthWestPharmacy.com in Winnipeg for \$80, and this company is also in business to make a profit. The pills were shipped postage paid from Switzerland. I can furnish a copy of the receipt. Medicare is prohibited by law from negotiating with pharmaceutical companies, yet this is common practice at the Veterans' Administration. Part D of Medicare is badly flawed. I believe the above aptly demonstrates why I support a sensible public health insurance alternative to compete with our current "free market" tragedy.

Delton Lee Johnson - Former Hm1, USN

ANOTHER VETERAN AND VA HEALTHCARE

A partial quote from a VA Letter dated 2 July 2009

"This is in response to your inquiry concerning Mr. Thomas Bowen's Department of veterans (VA) benefits. On October 9, 2008 Mr. Bowen submitted a Notice of Disagreement with our decision denying him entitlement to compensation benefits for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In support of Mr. Bowen's BOD, on April 11, 2009 we requested his complete service record from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). We are waiting for a reply from the NPRC."

And you wonder why the VA has such a backlog? How many times are they going to request my personnel military file? They must have twenty copies of it by now and with the electronic age of fax machines, e-mail, face-book, & twitter it should be at their finger-tips with the snap of their fingers. Additionally, I tried repeatedly to have my VA rep forward a copy with my previous submissions, correspondence and responses, but he felt it wasn't necessary; boy was he surprised. Can't hardly beat them at their game, but come Monday I'm forwarding my copy via certified mail. You may want to alert all the veterans in the newsletter about forwarding a copy of their military personnel file with each claim submission they make.

Tom Bowen

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

S. 407: VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2009

Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2009 ~ A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for an increase, effective December 1, 2009, in the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, to codify increases in the rates of such compensation that were effective as of December 1, 2008, and for other purposes.

<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=s111-407>

HR 2254 - LAST CHANCE FOR "BLUE WATER SAILORS"

Take Action! - [http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=13699591&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=13699591&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

Agent Orange Equity Act of 2009

This legislation would expand the legal presumption of exposure to Agent Orange for veterans who served in the vicinity of Viet Nam. Before 2002, it didn't matter where a veteran served in the Vietnam War. If disabled due to the exposure to the terrible poisons in the air and waterways, VA would pay disability compensation. In February 2002, Congress decided to 'save our taxpayers money' and ordered VA to implement a 'foot on the ground' policy. After this policy revision, only service members who actually set foot on the ground in Vietnam could get compensated for medical conditions caused by Agent Orange and other herbicides that were routinely sprayed. The soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines serving in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos and the China Sea were exempt from payment even though they were contaminated by these toxins just like their brothers in arms who served on the ground, in Vietnam itself.

H.R.2990

The House passed H.R. 2990, the *Disabled Military Retiree Relief Act*, on June 24, 2009. This legislation provides special pays and allowances to certain members of the armed forces, expands concurrent receipt of military retirement and VA

disability benefits to disabled military retirees, and for other purposes.

<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?c111:1:./temp/~c111tEi2Dm:e21706>:

US CONGRESS DEBATES DETAINEE POLICY, MILITARY COMMISSIONS

Dan Robinson – Washington - 09 July 2009

Committees of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives heard testimony this week about the nation's detainee policy and proposals to revise the controversial military commissions system. Legal experts, current and former military officials, and representatives of civil liberties organizations discussed whether trials should take place in civilian courts, and lawmakers questioned Obama administration officials about detainees still held at the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba detention facility.

<More at: www.voanews.com/english/2009-07-09-voa3.cfm>

RETREAT – NEWS

AFGHANS: TALIBAN HAVE ESCAPED HELMAND AND MARINES

Nancy A. Youssef - McClatchy Newspapers - July 07, 2009

KABUL, Afghanistan — Taliban fighters and their commanders have escaped the Marines' big offensive in Afghanistan's Helmand province and moved into areas to the west and north, prompting fears that the U.S. effort has just moved the Taliban problem elsewhere, Afghan defense officials have told McClatchy.

The movement of the Taliban into those areas has prompted complaints from German and Italian commanders, whose troops operate there, and have prompted questions about whether the United States has enough troops to pursue the Taliban while at the same time carrying out Army Gen. Stanley McChrystal's plan to "clear, hold and build" in areas wrested from Taliban control. <More at: www.mcclatchydc.com/251/v-print/story/71432.html>

DEPLOYED ARMY RETIREES DOWNSIZED, DISAPPOINTED

Shaun Waterman - The Washington Times - June 30, 2009

The U.S. Army is ending a program that has allowed military retirees to volunteer for missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, disappointing many former service members who have embraced a second chance to serve their country. Lt. Col. George Wright, 55, an Army spokesman -- himself a program participant who signed up to return to service in 2007 after nine years of retirement -- said the program is being terminated because the Army had to reduce personnel to reach a congressionally mandated limit on the total number of soldiers.

<More at: www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/30/deployed-army-retirees-downsized-disappointed/>

70-YEAR-OLD GRANDFATHER DEPLOYED TO IRAQ

Concord, N.C - June 26, 2009

A 70-year-old veteran from our area is leaving for his fifth tour of duty overseas.

Colonel Hector Henry is a doctor at CMC Northeast in Concord and at the VA hospital in Salisbury. Turns out doctors are in short supply in Iraq, so when the Army Reserve called on Colonel Henry, he started packing his gear.

<More at: www.wcnc.com/news/topstories/stories/wcnc-062609-al-iraq_grandfather.d0c7af5.html>

"There is a lot of money to pay for this that doesn't have to be US taxpayer money, and it starts with the assets of the Iraqi people. we are talking about a country that can really finance its own reconstruction and relatively soon."

Paul Wolfowitz, March 27, 2003

1ST IRAQI OIL AUCTION IN 30 YEARS NETS 1 DEAL OOPS!

Sinan Salaheddin - ASSOCIATED PRESS - July 1, 2009

BAGHDAD ~ Iraq's hopes for an oil-revenue-fueled postwar recovery suffered a sharp blow Tuesday as the foreign oil companies it counted on to help develop its vast reserves responded to the country's first oil auction in more than 30 years with grumbles and just one deal.

Roughly a year in the making, the foreign licensing round was touted by Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani as a key step to boosting Iraq's oil output to 4 million barrels per day and raking in cash the government desperately needs after years of sanctions and the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 left its economy in shambles. <More at: www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jul/01/dry-hole/>

HOW BRIBERY BECAME A WAY OF LIFE IN IRAQ MESSY INDEED!

Patrick Cockburn - 28 June 2009

"I paid \$800 to get my job," says Ahmed Abdul, a technician working for Karada municipality in Baghdad. "People know this is wrong, but there is no way round it." In Iraq corruption is pervasive at every level.

"Corruption exists all over the world but is at its worst here," laments Ateej Saleh Midhat, a 26-year-old employee of the state-owned Rafidain Bank. "In 2008 and 2009 it was difficult for any graduate to have a job without paying \$500 [£300] to \$1,500 according to what kind of job it was. But what about the people who cannot afford to pay?"

Iraq is the world's premier kleptomaniac state. According to Transparency International, the only countries deemed more crooked than Iraq are Somalia and Burma, while Haiti and Afghanistan rank just behind. In contrast to Iraq, which enjoys significant oil revenues, none of these countries has much money to steal.

Iraqis resent paying a bribe for almost everything, but do not see what they can do about it. Nor will they believe that the government is serious in its claim to be clamping down on corruption until senior officials are punished. The first sign that this might be beginning to happen came last month when the former minister of trade, Abdul Falah al-Sudani, was arrested after the plane on which he was travelling to Dubai was dramatically turned round in mid-air and ordered to return to Baghdad. The trade ministry is known to Iraqis as "the ministry of corruption" because it runs the \$6bn food rationing system, which gives endless opportunities for profiting by taking bribes from suppliers or sending tainted goods to the shops. The trade ministry scandal had already become very public when Mr Sudani's guards shot it out at the ministry headquarters with police come to arrest 10 officials, who were able to escape through a back entrance during the gun battle. A video circulated from phone to phone in Baghdad shows trade ministry officials cavorting with prostitutes at a party.

<More at: www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/how-bribery-became-a-way-of-life-in-iraq-1722466.html>

MISSING GI REPORTEDLY SOLD TO MILITANT CLAN

UPI - July 02, 2009

KABUL, Afghanistan -- A missing U.S. Soldier thought to have been captured in southeastern Afghanistan has been sold to a militant clan, a U.S. military official said Thursday. The unidentified senior military official told CNN the Soldier, whose name was not released, was captured along with three Afghan Soldiers and then sold to a militant group led by warlord Siraj Haqqani. <More at: www.military.com/news/article/missing-gi-reportedly-sold-to-afghan-clan.html>

ARMY TO OVERHAUL MODERNIZATION STRATEGY BY THE FALL

Bob Brewin 07/01/09

Top Army officials on Wednesday said they were concerned they will not get adequate support from lawmakers and Pentagon leaders as they retool the service's battlefield modernization program.

The Army has requested \$2.9 billion in funding for its modernization program in fiscal 2010, but during a press conference, Lt. Gen. Stephen Speakes, Army's deputy chief of staff (G-8), said he was "very concerned" about sustaining support for the program in Congress. ... The service has made five modernization attempts during the past 20 years

<More at: www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20090701_1525.php>

TO THE COLORS - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
7/9-7/12		Wheeler Park, Flagstaff., AZ	Wall that Heals	The Legion Riders	
7/22	1100-1400	Radisson Martinique 49 W 32ND St, New York, NY	Career Fair		Register
7/24-7/27		Ventura, CA	Stand Down	Claire L. Hope	805-987-3118
7/27-8/2		Galt House Hotel, 140 N Fourth St Louisville, KY 40202	Vietnam Veterans of America Biennial Convention	VVA	
7/30-8/3		Angela Center Santa Rosa, CA	Retreat for OIF/OEF Veterans and their families	Coming Home Project	Free of charge Apply
8/12	0930	The James r. Browning Courthouse 95 7th street, San Francisco, CA	Oral Arguments Appeal VUFT suit vs. VA	VUFT	Get Directions

We are a non-partisan organization. We will advertise all legitimate veterans' events, regardless of purpose or affiliation.

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

SCREW THE WAR ON DRUGS! LET'S HAVE A WAR ON CHEMICALS! THAT'S ONE WE MIGHT JUST BE ABLE TO WIN

LAWSUIT FILED OVER CANCER-CAUSING CONTAMINATION AT CAMP LEJEUNE

Tim King - Salem-News.com - Jul-08-2009

The lawsuit alleges that the government knowingly exposed hundreds of thousands of Marines, sailors, their family members, and civilian employees to highly contaminated drinking water on the base at Camp Lejeune.

(SALEM, Ore.) - A lawsuit has been filed by a Marine wife over exposure to toxic chemicals in the water at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The suit was filed jointly by two law firms from Washington D.C. and Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Former Marine wife Laura Jones' husband was stationed at Camp Lejeune; her legal team says the federal government knew that hundreds of thousands of Marines drank contaminated drinking water. Lawyers say 45-year-old Laura Jones has lymphoma and now lives in Iowa.

Chemicals in Camp Lejeune's water are believed to have caused different types of cancers, lower intestinal disorders, reproductive disorders, birth defects and stillborn births. Problems with TCE/PCE contact can also be hereditary.

(see: [Marine Who Lost Child From Contamination at Camp Lejeune will Appear in Washington - Tim King Salem-News.com](#))

<More at: www.salem-news.com/articles/july082009/lejeune_suit_6-7-09.php>

SALEM-NEWS.COM HAS REPORTED EXTENSIVELY ON THE CONTAMINATION AT CAMP LEJEUNE. MARINE SPOUSE BATTLES NAVY OVER CONTAMINATION AT NAVAL BASE IN JAPAN

Robert O'Dowd Salem - News.com - Jul-04-2009

Shelly Parulis, wife of a retired Marine Master Sergeant, is engaged in a running battle with the Navy over dioxin and other toxins at NAF Atsugi, Japan.

(ATSUGI, Japan) - No one assigned to Naval Air Facility (NAF) Atsugi, the home of Carrier Air Wing 5, would have suspected that duty in Japan could exposed them to toxic chemicals, including deadly dioxin, the carcinogen famously associated with Agent Orange.

In fact, prior to the closure of Atsugi's privately owned Envirotech (formerly Shinkampo) incinerators in 2001, that is exactly what happened to military, dependents, and civilian workers stationed at NAF Atsugi during the period 1985 to 2001. Your browser may not support display of this image. <More at: www.salem-news.com/articles/july042009/atsugi_naf_ro_7-4-09.php>

MORE VETS REPORT CANCER

William R. Levesque - Times Staff Writer - July 3, 2009

Scientists studying drinking water contamination at Camp Lejeune were startled when 11 men with breast cancer and ties to the North Carolina base were identified over the last two years. Six more have been found in one week.

Five additional men with breast cancer and a sixth who had a double mastectomy after doctors found precancerous tumors contacted the *St. Petersburg Times* last week after reading a story about the 11 men with the rare disease.

"This male breast cancer cluster is a smoking gun," breast cancer survivor Mike Partain said on Friday. "You just can't ignore it. You don't need science to tell you something is wrong. It's common sense. It begs to be studied."

<More at: www.tampabay.com/news/military/veterans/article1015699.ece

INCIDENTALLY, IF YOU HAVE A LEJEUNE CLAIM, GO TO

www.jag.navy.mil/documents/CampLejeuneClaimsPacket.pdf

LAW FIRM PURSUING EL TORO INJURIES AND DEATHS

Robert O'Dowd - Salem-News.com - Jul-09-2009

A Long Beach law firm is investigating injuries and deaths connected with former MCAS El Toro.

(LONG BEACH, Calif.) - A Camp Lejeune lawsuit filed this week for injuries from exposure to trichloroethylene (TCE) and other organic solvents and a growing list of injuries linked to organic exposure from Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) El Toro, California have one Long Beach law firm actively pursuing clients injured at El Toro.

Michael Gates, attorney with Carroll, Kelly, Trotter, Franzen & McKenna, 111 W. Ocean Boulevard, Long Beach, California, said his firm "has been actively investigating [El Toro] for a few months and are eager to hear from injured parties. We want everyone and anyone with serious injuries to contact us."

The law firm's interests includes El Toro Marine veterans, dependents, civilian workers and anyone who may have been injured by the organic solvents on the base and those living or working nearby.

Michael Gates can be contacted on email at megates@cktfmlaw.com or by phone at: (562) 432-5855. Facsimile: (562) 432-8785. <More at: http://salem-news.com/articles/july092009/el_toro_gates_ro_7-9-09.php>

DID A DANGEROUS CHEMICAL AT IRAQI PLANT CAUSE DEATH AND ILLNESS OF SOLDIERS?

Sharon Cohen - AP National Writer - June 27, 2009

Larry Roberta's every breath is a painful reminder of his time in Iraq. He can't walk a block without gasping for air. His chest hurts, his migraines sometimes persist for days and he needs pills to help him sleep.

James Gentry came home with rashes, ear troubles and a shortness of breath. Later, things got much worse: He developed lung cancer, which spread to his spine, ribs and one of his thighs; he uses a cane, and no longer rides his beloved Harley.

David Moore's postwar life turned into a harrowing medical mystery: nosebleeds and labored breathing that made it impossible to work, much less speak. His desperate search for answers ended last year when he died of lung disease at 42.

What these three men — one sick, one dying, one dead — had in common is they were National Guard soldiers on the same stretch of wind-swept desert in Iraq during the early months of the war in 2003.

<More at: www.baltimoresun.com/news/sns-ap-us-toxic-legacy-of-war_0.6628583.story>

THIS REPORT IS FROM 18 MONTHS AGO

PESTICIDES AND TOXIC CHEMICALS RELEASES BY CALIFORNIA COMPANIES - 2007 REPORT

The top facilities in California for total on-site and off-site releases of PBT chemicals are:

6. USMC MCB Camp Pendleton (Camp Pendleton, San Diego County) with 123,000 pounds.
7. USMC Chocolate Mountain Gunnery Range (Niland, Imperial County) with 81,000 pounds.
8. USMC Twenty Nine Palms Air Ground Combat Center (Twenty Nine Palms, San Bernardino County) with 75,000 pounds.
10. U.S. Army Fort Irwin National Training Center (Fort Irwin, San Bernardino County) with 66 thousand pounds.

<More at: <http://www.californiagreensolutions.com/cgi-bin/qt/tpl.h.content=1762>>

AGENT ORANGE RESOURCE WEB SITES [THANKS TO COL. DAN]

www.fernwoodpublishing.ca/website_pdfs/blowback.pdf (Covers AO use in Canada, but has other valuable history)

www.rdecom.army.mil/pages/fact_sheets/complete_rdecom_history.pdf

www.thenation.com/doc/20011015/johnson

www.safe2use.com/ca-ipm/02-03-08.htm

A really good short film on the subject of agent orange: www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EaqwRtjVEM

SOLDIERS RETURN FROM THE FRONTLINES TO FACE WAR WITH VA

Sheldon Traver - WillametteLive, Section News - Jun 30, 2009

This year marks a milestone for the Oregon Army National Guard. More than 3,000 soldiers have already left or are preparing for deployment to Iraq in 2009. It will be the largest deployment for the Oregon Army National Guard since World War II.

However, questions have recently been raised about the care veterans receive upon their return from war. Some Oregon weekend warriors are finding a Department of Veterans Affairs that is unwilling or unable to care for the long-term physical and mental disabilities they are now facing.

With little outside help, some have given up the fight and others continue to struggle for the benefits they say they deserve.

<More at: http://willamettelive.com/story/Soldiers_return_from_the_frontlines_to_face_war_with_VA121.html>

One of the subjects of the above article is Tim Weir. If you are a masochist, read Tim's correspondence file at <http://willamettelive.com/images/jul09/vadocs.pdf>. I have and it will make you weep with frustration.

FROM ONE OF OUR CORRESPONDING SUBSCRIBERS

VA CLAIMS ALL PTSD VETS FRAUDS: 2000 NOW INVESTIGATED - FACE PRISON

Gordon Duff - VETERANS TODAY NEWS NETWORK - July 07, 2009

Va Police Group Hacks Medical Files Seeks Jail Time For PTSD Vets

2000 disabled veterans are being prosecuted for filing PTSD claims. Some are jailed now, some facing trial, some under review by mysterious VA "police group." Assisting the VA is the American Enterprise Institute, a "neocon" think tank working with regional directors, "Bush holdovers" who subscribe to Dr. Sally Satel's "Voodoo medicine" theory that all vets are fakers. Even veterans with long histories of inpatient program treatment, 100% disability and well documented trauma face prison. Patient medical files, legally secure thru the [HIPAA Act of 1996](#) are being "hacked" and VA doctors being intimidated by VA "inspectors" to release confidential information to investigators, all against federal law.

Doctors, themselves, face license suspension and civil action for criminal and ethics violations for submitting to inquiries by "unsworn" and improperly trained political police within the VA.

<More at: www.veteranstoday.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=7839>

GENERAL DENIES CLEMENCY FOR MASS. MARINE WITH PTSD

Associated Press - Tuesday, June 30, 2009 -

JACKSONVILLE, N.C. — The Marine Corps has denied clemency to a Marine who pleaded guilty in the death of an Iraqi policeman but is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder despite pleas from his Navy doctor to release him because confinement is aggravating his mental condition.

Pvt. Jonathan A. Phillips pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter in the shooting death of the policeman in Saqlawiyah, Iraq, in 2007. Before the shooting, Phillips was sent for psychiatric evaluations three times. Each time, he was proclaimed fit for duty and returned to his unit. <More at: www.bostonherald.com/news/regional/view.bg?articleid=1182257>

MILITARY CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS ON THE RISE

July 09, 2009

Among the most overlooked victims of the nation's dual wars have been the children of military personnel, who it turns out are more than ever in need of mental health services. Statistics compiled by the Defense Department reveal that the number of military children seeking outpatient mental health care has doubled since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, from 1 million to 2 million. Even more alarming is the 20% jump in one year, from 2007 to 2008, in the number of military kids hospitalized for psychological problems. Overall, inpatient visits among military children have increased 50% since 2003.

<More at: www.allgov.com/ViewNews/Military_Childrens_Mental_Health_Problems_on_the_Rise_90709>

MORE FEMALE VETERANS ARE WINDING UP HOMELESS

Bryan Bender - Globe Staff - July 6, 2009

WASHINGTON - The number of female service members who have become homeless after leaving the military has jumped dramatically in recent years, according to new government estimates, presenting the Veterans Administration with a challenge as it struggles to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. As more women serve in combat zones, the share of female veterans who end up homeless, while still relatively small at an estimated 6,500, has nearly doubled over the last decade, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. For younger veterans, it is even more pronounced: One out of every 10 homeless vets under the age of 45 is now a woman, the statistics show.

<More at: www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2009/07/06/more_female_veterans_are_winding_up_homeless/>

COLLEGES FOCUS ON VETERANS AS GI BILL UPS NUMBERS

Kypost.com - 7/01/2009

Fort Campbell, Ky. (AP) - With a fattened GI Bill covering full tuition and more, the number of veterans attending college this fall is expected to jump 30 percent from last year to nearly half a million. That's left many universities looking for ways to ease the transition from combat to the classroom.

Vets already in school have run into problems including campus bureaucracy, crowds that can trigger alarm instincts honed by war and fellow students who don't understand their battlefield experiences.

In response, colleges across the country are offering veterans-only classes, adding counselors and streamlining the application and financial aid process.

Under the new GI Bill expanded by Congress last year, the number of military veterans either starting or continuing their studies this fall is expected to top 460,000, up from 354,000 last autumn, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Many of them will encounter a classroom culture shock that can leave them agitated.

<More at: www.kypost.com/content/news/commonwealth/story/Colleges-Focus-On-Veterans-As-GI-Bill-Ups-Numbers/xjFd8RcT3EmxJU5txpdKng.csp>

VETS: CHOOSE YOUR GI BILL CAREFULLY

Bob Brewin - 07/02/09

In many cases, the new GI bill, called the 2008 Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act, offers a better deal than its predecessor, the Montgomery GI bill. But not always.

Post 9/11 vets attending school full time who need tuition and housing assistance will probably reap richer benefits under the new bill, especially if the school they attend provides extra financial assistance under the Veterans Affairs Department's Yellow Ribbon program.

But post 9/11 vets still on active duty attending school at night or taking correspondence courses at non-Yellow Ribbon program schools could make out better under the Montgomery bill.

That's what an Iraq war vet buddy of mine still on active duty discovered to his horror this week. He signed up for the post 9/11 bill, only to learn later that he would receive about half of the \$1,300-a-month payment he would have received under the Montgomery bill. <More at: http://whatsbrewin.nextgov.com/2009/07/vets_choose_your_gi_bill_caref.php>

NEW GI BENEFITS VARY WIDELY BY STATE

Associated Press - July 6, 2009

Veterans attending college could get a full ride or very little help

When the new GI Bill kicks in Aug. 1, the government's best-known education program for veterans will get the biggest boost since its World War II-era creation. But the benefit is hardly the "Government Issue," one-size-fits-all standard the name implies. In fact, depending on where service members and veterans decide to attend college, they could receive a full ride, or very little. An Associated Press review of state-by-state benefits under the new bill shows huge discrepancies in the amount veterans can receive. <More at: www.msnbc.msn.com/id/31765771/ns/us_news-military/>

CALIFORNIA VETS' PLANS THWARTED BY SEMANTIC GLITCH

Gale Holland - June 13, 2009

Scott Lowe enlisted in the infantry -- the "dirtiest job there is" in the Army, he says -- completing two Iraqi tours in which he dug up weapons caches, found improvised explosive devices and rounded up insurgents.

"No better way to serve your country," said Lowe, 27. "Most of us lost friends over there, had close calls. . . . Now it's time to catch up." Lowe will graduate from USC with an accounting degree later this year, and was hoping to seek an MBA at the university financed by the new Post- 9/11 GI Bill, which promises free or reduced college tuition for veterans who have served since the terrorist attacks.

But in what some officials call an anomaly and critics describe as a classic bureaucratic snafu, the Department of Veterans Affairs has designated the bill's tuition benefit in California as \$0.

<More at: www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-gi-college13-2009jun13.3.461086.story>

MILITARY UPDATE: GI BILL TRANSFERABILITY HAS SOME QUIRKS

Tom Philpott - Special to Stars and Stripes European edition - June 27, 2009

Users of one of the most popular features of the Post-9/11 GI Bill -- the option to transfer benefits to family members -- will find a few quirks in how Congress designed the transfer provisions as they take effect in August.

For example, spouses of active duty members who hope to use transferred benefits to attend private colleges will be delighted at the value of the benefit for them. It will cover full tuition and fees, with no ceiling, and therefore will be worth far more than benefits transferable to college-bound children or even benefits available to veterans using the full plan themselves.

On the other hand, active duty spouses who use transferred benefits to attend public colleges or universities will have a more modest education package than other GI Bill users including eligible children. That's because active duty spouses will not qualify for the GI Bill's monthly living allowance or annual stipend for books and supplies.

<More at: www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=63475>

THANKS FOR YOUR SERVICE. NOW PAY UP!

BETTENDORF WOMAN SAYS STATE WANTS LATE VETERAN'S ASSETS

Barb Ickes - Davenport IA Quad-City Times - July 5, 2009

2 tours in Vietnam ~ 1 Purple Heart ~ A welding accident ~ A wheelchair ~ Death at 61 ~ A bill for \$277,186.96

Two months after Roger Lennon died, the woman who took care of him for more than a dozen years [got a bill in the mail](#). The state of Iowa said the Bettendorf veteran owes almost \$300,000 for the medical care he received in the state-run veterans home.

"I called them and said, 'Is this a joke?'" Sarah Miller said. "Who has that kind of money? And I was with Roger every time he was signed into the Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown. They never said anything about billing him after he passed."

The spokesman for the Iowa Department of Human Services, which runs Medicaid for the state, said Lennon should have known the state would pursue any remaining assets after his death.

"Everybody who gets Medicaid is told this is a government program for which we will be expecting repayment," DHS spokesman Roger Munns said. "It's not fair for taxpayers - you and me - to pay if there are assets."

<More at: www.qctimes.com/news/local/article_421e3cf6-6900-11de-b675-001cc4c002e0.htm>

VET'S NEW BATTLE: UNEMPLOYMENT

Julie Lynem Jul. 04, 2009

Hector Torres spent two decades of his life serving his country as a soldier in the Army National Guard.

In fall 2006, after working at Camp San Luis Obispo as a course manager and training instructor, he was deployed to Afghanistan, where he saw combat.

But when he returned from the war nearly two years later, he found himself without a full-time job.

"It's been hard," said Torres, 48. "I've even asked for minimum-wage jobs like landscaping. Once they see my resume, they say I'm over-qualified." <More at: www.sanluisobispo.com>

YET ANOTHER RECRUITING HORROR STORY

CASE OF AUTISTIC MARINE BRINGS RECRUITING PROBLEMS TO THE FOREFRONT

Tony Perry - July 6, 2009

Faced with quotas, a few recruiters are taking shortcuts that allow those unfit for service into the military.

Reporting from San Diego -- A few days after he arrived at boot camp here, Joshua Fry no longer wanted to be a Marine.

He was confused by the orders drill instructors shouted at him. He was caught stealing peanut butter from the chow hall. He urinated in his canteen. He talked back to the drill instructors. He refused to shave.

Finally, he set out toward the main gate as if to head home. He was blocked, but now he had the chance to tell his superiors a secret: He was autistic. Fry figured this admission would persuade the Marines to let him return to the group home in Irvine for disturbed young adults where he was living when he enlisted.

Instead, he was sent back to Platoon 1021, Company B. The drill instructors became more helpful, and in April 2008 he finished the grueling 11-week regimen and was sent to Camp Pendleton for infantry training.

<More at: www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-marine-autism6-2009jul06.0.7706948.story>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF JULY 7, 2009

This week the Army, Navy and Air Force announced increases in activated reservists, while the Marine Corps and Coast Guard announced decreases. The net collective result is 503 more reservists activated than last week. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 110,505; Navy Reserve, 6,409; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 16,172; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,602; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 691. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 142,379, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all NG and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found at www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2009/d20090707ngr.pdf.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE FRIDAY 10 JULY 2009

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (2,304 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,322
WOUNDED US [7/4/09]	31,430
OTHER US CASUALTIES [7/4/09]	≥37,613
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [7/4/09]	191
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [7/4/09]	≥ 100,971 - 668,051
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [11/9/08]	≥ 400K – 1.374M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,833 DAYS)

KILLED US	731
WOUNDED US [7/4/09]	3,162
OTHER CASUALTIES US [7/4/09]	8,068
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [7/4/09]	33
KILLED COALITION	498
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY [7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (7/4/2009)	≥ 7,589
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	46,322
AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$685,601,879,304
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$191,778,828,342

NOTE: SOME NUMBERS DO NOT CHANGE BETWEEN ISSUES BECAUSE UPDATED FIGURES ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME

* This entry has been changed to "Non-mortal casualties" which includes wounded, non-hostile casualties, and diseased where medical air transport was required. To see detailed demographic data on the casualties go to

<http://siadapp.dior.whs.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>

** Includes 280 additional contractor casualties reported in international press but not in US official figures

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

DEMONSTRATING VETERANS AT VA FACILITY HARASSED

Andres Chavez - Sun Staff Writer - 01 July 2009

Sixty seven Sundays of demonstrations by veterans against the VA's land use policies seems to have finally struck someone's nerve at the West L. A. Veterans campus. The last two Sundays the demonstrating Veterans have had run ins with the VA police. In a different aspect of the struggle between the veterans and the VA, Valley Congressman Brad Sherman (D, 27th) told a group of veterans Sunday afternoon at his town hall meeting in Reseda that he has done as much as he can in opposing the construction at the Sepulveda VA Campus.

The continuing demonstrations at the West L.A. VA facility have drawn strong support from Valley veterans. Many of them are in their 60s and 70s but they make the trek through the Sepulveda pass each Sunday because they see that the policies at work at the West L.A. campus are beginning to be implemented at the Sepulveda VA. So to them, West L.A. and Sepulveda are different "theaters of operation" in the same struggle.

<More at: www.sanfernandosun.com/sanfernand_sun/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3818&Itemid=0>

HEALTH OFFICIALS TO MILITARY: BAN SMOKING

Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer - Jun 30, 2009

Medical experts say they have a solution for the military's increasing smoking rates:

Ban it.

And not just in basic training — stop selling cigarettes and chewing tobacco on post, stop with the discounts at the PX, don't allow it in hospitals, and come up with a deadline when everyone should be smoke-free.

Why? It cost the Veterans Affairs Department \$5 billion to treat smoking-related emphysema in 2008, and in 2006, the Military Health System spent about \$564 million on tobacco-related costs.

That's almost as much as the \$611 million worth of tobacco military stores sold in 2005.<More at:

http://www.navytimes.com/news/2009/06/military_smoking_063009w/>

DOGS HELPING INJURED SOLDIERS UNDER GOV'T PROGRAM

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS - June 28, 2009

FORT CARSON, Colo. (AP) -- Army Specialist Cameron Briggs washes down a cocktail of prescription drugs every day for post-traumatic stress disorder and a brain injury he suffered when four roadside bombs rocked his Humvee in Iraq.

Tramadol for pain. Midrin for debilitating headaches. Minipress to suppress nightmares. Klonopin to control anger and anxiety.

His next dose of treatment will come from an unlikely source: a purebred Golden Retriever.

A new Veterans Administration program adopts dogs from animal shelters, trains them and matches them with wounded warriors home from Iraq and Afghanistan to help with their recovery.

For Briggs, his dog will be trained to help him find his wallet, cell phone and keys, which he habitually loses because of cognitive memory loss. The dog also will brace Briggs, who has an ankle injury, so he doesn't have to use a cane or walker in public.

"I call him my little battle buddy," the 24-year-old Briggs said as he strapped his old camouflage assault vest onto Harper. It's modified to store biscuits and toys instead of ammunition. "I most definitely think he'll help me transfer back to civilian life." <More at: http://www.seattlepi.com/national/1110ap_us_wounded_warriors_dogs.html>

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

A BREAK FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Kimberly Lankford - Kiplinger's Personal Finance magazine - August 2009

Military service members who are forced to sell their homes at a loss may get a bailout.

An obscure provision tucked into the economic-stimulus legislation in the spring can help military families who have to sell their home at a loss. The law provides an extra \$555 million to expand the Department of Defense's Homeowners Assistance Program. The program already helps families who lose money if they're forced to sell because of a base closing. Now it applies to wounded service members, surviving spouses of service members who die while deployed and members of the military who have to move more than 50 miles because they receive permanent change-of-station orders.

The law states that the home must be the service member's principal residence and must have been purchased before July 1, 2006. The reassignment must be ordered between February 1, 2006, and September 30, 2012, and the home must be sold between July 1, 2006, and September 30, 2012 (although the Department of Defense could change some of these dates). <More at:

http://www.kiplinger.com/magazine/archives/2009/08/housing_break_for_military_families.html>

OBAMA THANKS MILITARY FAMILIES WITH INDEPENDENCE DAY BASH

Elaine Sanchez - American Forces Press Service - July 6, 2009

WASHINGTON (July 5, 2009) -- As Americans celebrated Independence Day in homes throughout the nation, President Barack Obama invited about 1,200 military families to his home for a July Fourth bash yesterday to personally thank them for their service and sacrifice.

"Michelle and I are honored and proud to have you here on the Fourth," said Obama, addressing the audience from a balcony overlooking the White House's South Lawn, which had been transformed into a sea of red, white and blue for the event. "It is, after all, your service -- the service of generations of Soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen -- that makes our annual celebration of this day possible," he said.

<More at: www.army.mil/news/2009/07/06/23898-obama-thanks-military-families-with-independence-day-bash/>

TIGER WOODS HONORS TROOPS

Master Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo - Jul 2, 2009

BETHESDA, Md. (July 1, 2009) -- World-class golfer Tiger Woods honored U.S. military servicemembers by hosting the Earl Woods Memorial Pro-Am golf tournament at the Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Md., during the Fourth of July weekend.

In addition to discounts on the course and 30,000 complimentary tickets for military servicemembers and their dependents, a care package tent was set up to encourage spectators to visit and build care packages that will be sent to deployed troops overseas. AT&T is expecting to send out about 5,000 care packages.

<More at: www.army.mil/news/2009/07/02/23804-tiger-woods-honors-troops/>

NOTICE

If at any time you cannot open a link in this newsletter to an article or web page that interests you, please let me know at scook@vuft; I keep a copy of most of the full articles, or can research an alternative route to the information. [Ed.]

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EDITOR'S NOTE: I have been asked what guides my selection of articles. In general, I try to stick with articles that deal exclusively with our target group: serving military, veterans, retirees, and their families. I also favor articles that deal with the effect of Legislative or Executive inaction or bad actions that adversely affect our target group. I try not to pick those articles that have already been beaten to death in the regular press, but rather try to bring the reader articles that he or she might not run across in another medium. While we are non-partisan, I do not believe articles critical of government actions to be partisan as long as they are accurate and fair. Criticism, like dissent, is fair. Finally, I screen hundreds of articles for inclusions and for every article I include, I throw five or six away – good articles, but not as important as the ones selected.

I always appreciate contributions, whether it is opinion in Letter-to-the-Editor form, or articles that the reader believes would be good for our readership. Since I get a chance to vent once in awhile in these newsletters, I will certainly consider Op-Ed copy for inclusion. I always welcome reader comment or complaint. [Sandy Cook](#), Editor

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