



Officer's Call

Newsletter No. 6, August 2008

Annual Membership Meeting: October 19, 2008, 1800 at the Bend Elks

FROM THE OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN'S AFFAIRS: [VETS NEWS for September-October 2008](#) is now available online.

Director's Message - Governor's Task Force Holds Town Hall Meetings Statewide

As this issue of the *VETS NEWS* goes to press, the Governor's Task Force on Veterans Services will have completed town hall meetings in 24 Oregon communities and toured thirteen facilities throughout Oregon.

Scholarship Named for Late Advisory Chair, Dick Lucht

In memory of Richard P. "Dick" Lucht, the Yamhill County Disabled American Veterans (DAV) will soon be establishing a Scholarship Program. The new scholarship will be open to graduating sons and daughters of service-connected disabled veterans attending McMinnville High School.

New GI Bill Expands Benefits

WASHINGTON DC - The Congress has passed and President George W. Bush has signed legislation enacting the Post 9/11 GI Bill, also known as the GI Bill for the 21st Century. The most comprehensive education benefits package since the original GI Bill of 1944, the new GI Bill significantly expands a veteran's education benefits.

Oregon Celebrates 60 Years of Desegregation of the Military - By Mike Allegre

Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence that: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." Abraham Lincoln said in his Gettysburg Address that we live in "a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Enrolled Veterans Gain Access to AAFES

SAINT LOUIS - Veterans enrolled in the VA health system now can sign up to access the Army Air Force Exchange System (AAFES) online. AAFES has established a partnership with the Veterans' Canteen Service (VCS), the store routinely found in VA Medical Facilities throughout the country. Through this partnership, any veteran with a VA medical card (Veterans Identification Card - VIC) may register.

Oregon is Leader in Comp, Pension Claims

WASHINGTON, DC - According to the VA, Oregon is ranked number three in pension claims with an average award of \$751 per month, and number six in compensation claims averaging \$937 per award. Oregon is one of only three states ranked in the top 10 in both categories, along with Oklahoma and Nebraska.

More Veterans May Be Eligible for Special Compensation

WASHINGTON - About 20,000 veterans forced out of the military early by a combat-related injury could be eligible for hundreds of dollars in special compensation pay under new rules outlined by the services this month.

6th Annual Troop and Veteran Appreciation Day

McMinnville - Throughout history our military has stood ready to serve and guard our freedom. Come and join us on Saturday, Sept. 13 to honor our National Guard and Reserves, Active Duty, and Veterans.

Vietnam War PBR Featured at Albany Veterans Day Parade

Attention all Brown Water Sailors, Army River Raiders, and Navy Seawolves. The Northwest Chapter, Gamewardens of Vietnam will bring their Patrol Boat River (PBR) to Albany for display on November 10 and as a participant in the annual Veterans Day Parade on November 11.

Tri-State Women Veterans' Conference Inspires Memorial Quilt

Inspired by a single empty place setting during the banquet at the recent Tri-State Women Veterans' Conference in Pendleton, Donna Birtwistle, of Moro, OR. spearheaded the efforts of over 25 women in creating a unique memorial quilt recognizing the women who have died in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Outward Bound Program Offered for OEF/OIF Veterans

Outward Bound, an international non-profit outdoor education program, is offering fully funded outdoor adventure excursions to all OEF/OIF veterans. It doesn't matter what your current military status is (active, inactive, discharged, retired) - you're eligible to attend as long as you deployed in support of OEF/OIF combat operations while in the military.

Tinnitus Education Group To Meet in Portland

PORTLAND - Meeting since 1999, the Tinnitus Education Group provides up-to-date information about Tinnitus - the ringing in the ears caused by acoustic trauma, medication, and other means. The Group will be meeting at the Portland VA Medical Center Building 103 (across the street from the main hospital) at level P-5 October 7 and October 21 at 5:30 p.m.

Lincoln City to Honor Veterans on September 24-28

LINCOLN CITY - Lincoln City will hold a four-day Celebration of Honor to recognize veterans and their families Sept. 24-28 and events will include the return of the traveling Vietnam Wall.

McChord to Host "Case Lot" Sale

The McChord Air Force Base Commissary will host a "case lot" sale at the Oregon Army National Guard's Jackson Armory in Portland, Sept. 12-14. The sale runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is open to anyone with a valid active duty, National Guard, Reserve, or retired military ID card.

Female Writers Sought for Mid-Valley Veterans' Writing Group

Award-winning Oregon writer and founder of the Mid-Valley Veteran's Writing Group, Marilyn Johnston, is interested in starting a writing group for

Women Vets in the Mid-Willamette Valley. The group is open to female veterans with either considerable or with little creative writing experience, and appropriate for all genre of writing (poetry, essays, short stories, etc.).

Milwaukie H.S. Holds 13th Annual Living History Day

MILWAUKIE - Milwaukie High School will hold its 13th annual Living History Day on Monday, November 3. This all-day event begins with continental breakfast at 8 a.m. and will be highlighted by an Assembly of Honor at 12:45 p.m. in the high school gymnasium.

Vets' Home Resident Gets Jet Flight - By Mike Allegre

When Donald "Don" R. McIntee grew up on a North Dakota farm near the Canadian border, he didn't imagine that at age 19 he would enlist into the U.S. Army Air Corps and be a crewmember aboard a B-17 bomber.

Veterans' Home Wins Quality Award

THE DALLEES - Demonstrating an extraordinary commitment to quality care for the nation's frail, elderly and disabled, the Oregon Veterans' Home has received a Step II award for quality achievement from the American Health Care Association (AHCA) and the National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL).

Willamette National Cemetery Opens Columbarium Niches

Willamette National Cemetery announces the opening of the first terrace of cremation niches in the new Columbaria built as a part of the final development of its existing acreage. Cemetery Director George A. Allen secured the immediate availability of the initial 2,104 niches because of exceptional public interest and demand.

From MOAA:

Top Five Benefits Questions

We know military benefits are confusing. Okay, really confusing. Hundreds of members contact our experts each month asking questions on topics ranging from TRICARE to overseas birth certificates. Check out the five most frequently asked questions — and answers — here!

- [1. Employer-provided Health Care and Medicare](#)
- [2. Combat-Related Special Compensation \(CRSC\)](#)
- [3. Survivor Benefit Plan \(SBP\) and Social Security](#)
- [4. Retired Pay and Social Security](#)
- [5. DD-214](#)

1. I'm approaching age 65, currently employed with employer-provided health care coverage, and also receive military retired pay. I plan on working for a few more years — what do I need to do about Medicare? What about my spouse who is only

62?

If you are employed past age 65 and have employer-provided health care you can wait to enroll in [Medicare Part B](#) and will not be penalized a late enrollment fee as long as you enroll within eight months of your group health plan coverage ending. As a TRICARE beneficiary, you are required to enroll in Medicare when eligible in order to retain your TRICARE coverage. This means that you have two options; wait to enroll in Medicare and lose your TRICARE coverage until enrolled, or enroll in Medicare when you first become eligible and retain your TRICARE coverage without interruption.

If you choose to enroll in Medicare, most employer-provided health coverage will continue to be the primary payer with Medicare as your secondary and [TRICARE For Life \(TFL\)](#) as your tertiary.

Should you choose to *delay* your Medicare enrollment, you will lose your TRICARE coverage upon turning age 65 and will have your employer-provided health insurance as a sole payer. Your TFL coverage will be reinstated upon your enrollment in Medicare. For further Medicare enrollment information visit www.ssa.gov.

Your spouse's TRICARE eligibility and coverage are **not affected** by your decision. He/she ages into Medicare and TFL at his/her age 65.

Related [MOAA Info Exchange®](#) publications:

[Aging into Medicare](#)

[TRICARE For Life Checklist](#)

2. I retired from the military and also have a disability rating from the VA. What is CRSC and who is eligible?

Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) is a tax-free compensation awarded to retired servicemembers with combat or combat-related disabilities determined by their parent service. Retirees must be in receipt of retired pay and VA compensation with a VA-rated disability of 10 percent or greater in order to be eligible. The FY2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) eliminated the minimum 20 years of service requirement and now includes retirees with less than 20 years of service.

To apply, submit a completed DD Form 2860 to your service and applicable supporting documentation. You must be able to link the VA-rated disability or illness to a **specific combat or combat-related event.**

Army: www.crsc.army.mil

Air Force: www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/library/combat.asp

Navy/Marine Corps: www.donhq.navy.mil/corb/crscb/crscmainpage.htm

Coast Guard: www.uscg.mil/adm1/crsc.asp

U.S. Public Health Service Pay Center: (800) 638-8744

DoD CRSC Information: www.defenselink.mil/prhome/mppcrsc.html

3. How can I estimate what benefits my spouse can expect to receive from SBP and Social Security upon my death?

Your spouse will be entitled to 55 percent of your elected Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity base amount upon your passing. Both the annuity base amount and the 55 percent amount are listed on your retiree account statement. Retiree account statements are issued annually by the Department of Finance Accounting Service (DFAS) for Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps, or the Coast Guard Pay Center for Coast Guard and NOAA.

In addition, your spouse will collect your Social Security benefits **or** his/her own — whichever is greater. For specific information regarding the amount your spouse will receive in Social Security upon your passing, contact the Social Security Administration by calling (800) 772-1213.

Related [MOAA Info Exchange®](#) publications:

[Survivor Benefit Plan: Security for Your Survivors](#)

[Help Your Survivors Now: A Guide to Planning Ahead](#)

4. What effect does Social Security have on my military retired pay? Is my military retired pay affected if I elect benefits early?

The bottom line is: Your military retired pay will not be affected when you begin collecting Social Security benefits. The two payments are separate and have no effect on each other.

The age at which you qualify for full Social Security retirement is determined by your year of birth. You can choose to collect Social Security retirement as young as age 62, but your benefits will be reduced. For more information regarding Social Security retirement benefits and reductions, please see [this Social Security Administration Web page](#).

5. How can I obtain a copy of my military personnel records to include my DD-214?

You may request a copy of your military personnel records and a replacement DD-214 by submitting a Standard Form 180 (SF 180: Request Pertaining to Military Records) to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, Mo. The quickest way is to [submit the request on their Web site](#).

If you'd prefer to mail the form, print a Standard Form 180 from the NPRC's Web

site: www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/standard-form-180.html.

The contact information for the NPRC is:

National Personnel Records Center

9700 Page Ave

St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

Phone number: (314) 801-0800 (Monday - Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 3:45 p.m., CST)

E-mail: MPR.center@nara.gov

Web site: www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/index.html

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