



# Manuel Schneidmiller Post 154, Inc.

## Rathdrum Idaho

### Newsletter

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Volume 7 Issue #1

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#### Post 154 Mission Statement

The American Legion Post 154 is a patriotic veterans organization devoted to mutual helpfulness to support Veterans and the Community at large. We are committed to mentoring and sponsorship of youth programs, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow service members, veterans, and their families in our communities. Our success depends entirely on active membership, participation and volunteerism. This organization belongs to the people it serves and the community in which it thrives.

**Commander:**

Happy New Year. Now that the spirit of Christmas is within us, I wish you all a great 2021. I hope we all have a better year! I also want to thank you all personally for your help and assistance in 2020 during these trying times.

I am looking forward to getting back to having in-person meetings in the next few months but until then I hope all is well with you all! I am eager for Easter and the Easter Bunny coming this year. I am wishing that the folks that have helped in the past are willing to work on that committee.

We have started the preliminary steps for putting together the Building Committee. Thanks to all that have volunteered. We will be having a Zoom meeting for the next Executive Committee on January 14th. If you would like to attend just let me know. What do you think about having a general membership meeting on Zoom? Please let Bryan Bledsoe know if you would like to attend online. For God and country - Dee Sasse, Commander



**LEGION AUDIT COMMITTEE:** At the end of each year the Members appoint an Audit Committee to review the financial books and records of the Finance Officer. This is an important function to ensure that the financial reports are an accurate reflection of the Legion's assets and liabilities. Additionally, the Finance Officer insists that this important function be carried out to double check his work. Ideally, we need three or four members with financial or accounting background. They will independently review the Legion's check book, bank and investment statements, monthly financial reports, paid invoices and other records and confirm their accuracy for the membership. This should only require one or two meetings in January to complete. The Audit Committee then issues a report to the members noting any issues of concern or confirming the accuracy of the Post's records and the Finance Officer's Reports. Please contact the Commander if you can serve on this Committee. Thank you.



Great day to kick back and watch your favorite sci-fi movie or pull up a new sci-fi book to read.

## Finance Officer:

During the month of December, the Post incurred \$280.00 in expenses. The majority of these expenses were for membership renewals sent to National. Other expenses included \$55.00 for postage.

Income totaled \$361.50. The majority of this income came from member renewals – \$270.00. We also received a \$50 dollar donation to the Honor Guard, sold two Flag Boxes for a total of \$40.00, and sold a shirt patch for \$1.50.

Our net income for the month of December was \$81.96.

The Executive Committee approved the Post Budget for 2021. Unlike prior years, when the annual budget is developed by a Committee, the Finance Officer developed the budget from prior year operations and the Executive Committee adopted the Budget at its December Zoom meeting. We WILL NEED an Audit Committee to meet in January. This is a very important Committee, and we need three members to volunteer to review the 2020 financial reports, the receipts for all expenses, the income and the financial records to confirm to the membership that the Post's financial reports provided over the past year are accurate and complete. - Len Crosby, Financial Officer



## Legislative Chairman:



**VA Expands Focus on Women Veterans:** The VA Women Veterans **Quick Start Guide** (QSG) provides clear and concise information on how to apply for benefits and access VA health care. How to schedule regular checkups, fill prescriptions and access specialists, such as cardiologists, gynecologists and mental health providers, are outlined in the latest quick start guide.

Women Veterans have their own unique health care needs, some combat related. VA has been, and continues to be, committed to making sure that Women Veterans receive the best available care for all of their specific health care needs.

The new Quick Start Guide helps female Veterans understand what documentation is needed and how to apply for VA benefits, along with a summary of health care services and resources including:

How to [apply for VA healthcare](#).

full listing of health care services.

[Center for Women Veterans](#).

VA Women Veterans Call Center **1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636)**.

Military Sexual Trauma and Combat PTSD care and resources.

**TRICARE Select Enrollment Fee to Start Jan. 1:** DOD announced that TRICARE Select Group A retirees will be required to pay an enrollment fee beginning on Jan. 1, 2021. Congress directed the Defense Health Agency in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 to implement TRICARE Select retiree enrollment fees but delayed the implementation.

Group A is comprised of retirees and their family members if the sponsor's initial enlistment or appointment occurred before Jan. 1, 2018. The enrollment fee is waived for medically retired individuals and their family members, and for survivors of active-duty deaths. (cont. below)

During [TRICARE Open Season](#), running now to Dec. 14, beneficiaries must set up an allotment with their regional contractors for the enrollment fee to begin on Jan. 1, 2021. Beneficiaries who do not set up their allotment by the deadline will be unenrolled due to nonpayment. These individuals would have previously had 90 days from the termination date to request reinstatement. However, recently the Defense Health Agency has agreed to extend the reinstatement period to 180 days.

**Survivor Benefit Plan:** Congress enacted changes to the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) that will eventually eliminate the offset for surviving spouses who are also receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The changes will take place in three phases.

**January 1, 2021** begins the first phase. In 2021, surviving spouse SBP annuity payments issued by DFAS will be reduced (offset) by no more than two-thirds of the amount of DIC (issued by the VA) rather than by the entire amount of DIC, even though eligible surviving spouses will continue to receive the full amount of DIC from the VA.

**Beginning January 1, 2022**, the second phase, surviving spouse SBP annuity payments will be reduced (offset) by no more than one-third of the amount of DIC (issued by the VA) rather than by the entire amount of DIC, even though eligible surviving spouses will continue to receive the full amount of DIC from the VA.

**On January 1, 2023**, the SBP-DIC offset will be fully eliminated. That means, beginning in 2023, SBP payments will no longer be offset by DIC. Spouses will receive full SBP (issued by DFAS) and full DIC (from the VA).

For more details and frequently asked questions, see our special SBP-DIC News webpage: <http://go.usa.gov/xGfqd>

**National Defense Authorization Act of 2020:** The National Defense Authorization Act of 2020 (NDAA) was recently passed by the House and Senate with enough votes to override the Veto by President Trump. This act has major importance, but for you the Veterans of Vietnam, none more important than the authorization of three (3) new presumptive illnesses; Parkinson life tremors, bladder cancer and hyperthyroidism. When it will take effect is to be determined, however I am asking that if you have ever filed and were denied or never filed but have been diagnosed with any of these new presumptive, please contact a qualified service officer as soon as possible.

If you have filed in the past for these illnesses, the VA will not automatically reopen your case. You will need to file a one of the following:

- VA Form 20-0995 (supplemental claim, if previously filed);
- VA Form 20-0996 (seeking reestablishing of a denied appeal);
- VA Form 21-526ez (a new claim for disability if you've never filed)



**GET YOUR DAMN FLU SHOT!! AND –**



**AS SOON AS YOU CAN, GET YOUR DAMN COVID VACCINE!! TAKE THESE ACTIONS NOW TO PROTECT YOUR LOVED ONES AND FRIENDS.**





**HAPPY NEW YEAR! January1, 2021 is here! And not any too soon! 2020 will not be a year soon forgotten. We are not out of the woods yet. Be safe! Please, send in your dues renewal today.**

We still have over 25 members that have yet to renew for 2021. Take a look at your Legion ID card, if it says 2020 on it, you need to pay for 2021. Please, keep in mind that if dues were not into National by January 1, 2021, those members are considered delinquent. If still not received by February 1, members are suspended with no privileges except that of reinstatement with payment of dues. Please take a few minutes and get your dues paid soon. Keep your continuous years of membership alive! **RENEW NOW!!!**

*I suggest you pay online as this is the fastest and easiest way to process your dues. All you need is your Legion ID number and your credit card. It takes nine days to process dues when you send them into the post. When you go to [www.legion.org/renew](http://www.legion.org/renew), you are processed within 24 hours.*

Bill Kinder, 1st Vice-Commander, Membership Chairman – [Wakinder74@gmail.com](mailto:Wakinder74@gmail.com) 208-661-6850



### Chaplain's Pew:

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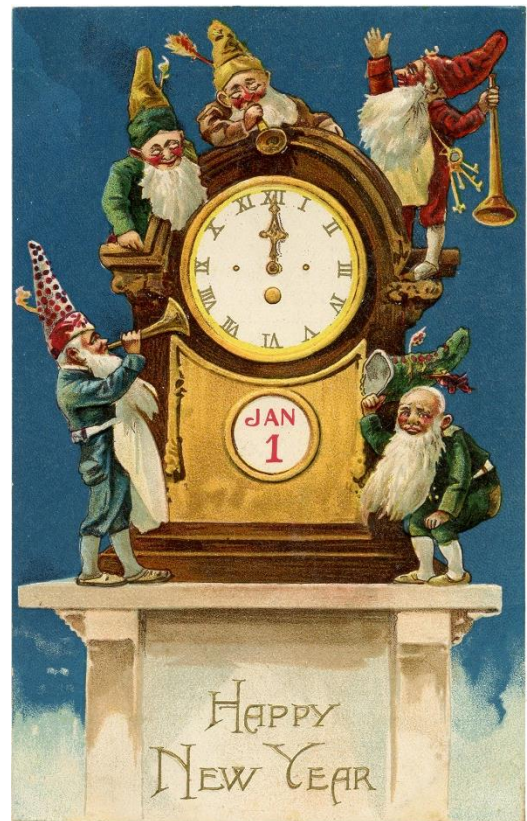
As the dawn breaks on a new year,  
let us give thanks for all we hold dear:  
our health, our family and our friends.  
Let us release our grudges, our anger  
and our pains, for these are nothing but  
binding chains. Let us live each day in  
the most loving ways, the God-conscious  
way. Let us serve all who are in need,  
regardless of race, color or creed.

Let us keep God of our own  
understanding in our hearts and  
to chant God's name each day.  
Let us lead the world from darkness  
to light, from falsehood to truth  
and from wrong to right.

Let us remember that we are  
all one, embracing all, discriminating  
against none.

May your year be filled with peace,  
prosperity and love. May God's  
blessings shower upon you and  
bestow upon each of you a bright,  
healthy and peaceful new year.”

**REV. MARCY SHEREMETTA**



## Sick Call:

The following all have or have had COVID:

Bob Kernan was hospitalized

Larry & Char Carstensen...Larry was hospitalized

Bob & Leona Flowers

Ron & Susan Kemper

Sandy Williams wife of member Tim

Thomas Barney hospitalized for 5 weeks.

Lonnie Morse also after getting over COVID had a complete shoulder replacement on Dec 18th. Doing well now. Just limited movement.

Karen Imle, wife of member Robert is undergoing 3 months of cancer therapy.

Please remember them all in your prayers. Wishing them all a return to good health and a Happy New Year. – Helen Kinder, Chaplain



## WHEN'S YOUR BIRTHDAY?

Earlier this year, I decided to send out birthday cards to our Post 154 members. These cards are sent by E-mail, through Jacquie Lawson E-Cards. This is a great site for all kinds of cards. I have the date-of-birth for 127 of our 141 listed members and have chosen birthday cards for everyone through February 2021. Please do not be afraid to open this site as it is quite reputable. I realize many of you, not knowing where the cards originated, may have had them go into your SPAM file. So sorry about that.

Now, as your birthday comes along take a look in your inbox for a card from the Rathdrum A. L. Post 154 and have a very Happy Birthday.

If you have not received any cards, it's probably because I do not have your updated email address. Please send to me so I may add you to the card list.

Bill Kinder 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander

Membership Chairman.

[wakinder74@gmail.com](mailto:wakinder74@gmail.com), 208.661.6850

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## Service Officer:

**If you're struggling** because of life situations like losing your job, having a sudden decrease in income, or having an increase in out-of-pocket family health care expenses, you can request financial hardship assistance to manage your current VA copay debt or request an exemption from future copays.

### OPTION 1:

If you can't pay your copay debt all at once, you can set up a monthly repayment plan at any time. The VA will review your proposed payment plan based on the amount of debt you owe and your ability to pay within a reasonable time. We usually require you to pay off the full debt within 3 years. To set up a repayment plan, fill out VA Form 1100 - in paragraph 1A indicate how much you can pay each month. Submit your completed form and any other needed documentation to the VA. You can send these by mail or bring them in person to the business office or health administration office at your nearest VA medical center. Once your plan is approved, begin sending your monthly payments.

### OPTION 2:

If you don't think you can pay your debt with a monthly repayment plan, you can request debt relief for all or part of your balance. You can request a waiver (asking us to stop collection action on the debt), write-off (asking us to cancel the debt), or compromise (asking us to accept a lower amount of money as full payment of the debt). If the VA grants part or all of your request, you won't have to pay the amount of the balance that the VA agrees to relieve. To request debt relief, fill out VA Form 5655 and write a letter explaining why you are requesting debt relief. The letter should describe the financial issues that make it hard for you to pay your copay debt. You also have the right to request a hearing to explain your request. The VA will send you a notice about the date, time and place where the hearing will be held. Submit your completed form and letter to the VA as in Option 1.

## Who will get a COVID-19 vaccine first?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has authorized the first COVID-19 vaccine. We have a limited amount of this vaccine to start.

We've worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners to develop a phased plan that will help us do the most good for the most people during this time. Under this phased plan, we'll first offer vaccines to Veterans in our long-term care facilities and frontline VA health care workers. Vaccinating our health care workers first helps us continue providing care for Veterans.

After these 2 groups, we'll begin to offer vaccines to more Veterans who are at high risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19. **Your VA health care team will contact you if you're eligible to get a vaccine during this time.**

We will follow CDC guidelines for determining who is considered to be at high risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19. Factors that may influence the risk of severe disease include the following:

- **Age.** The risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 increases with age.
- **Existing health problems.** People with certain health problems (like diabetes, heart disease, or obesity) have a higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19.
- **Other factors** that raise a person's risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19, such as living in a nursing home or other group living facility.

More questions answered at: [www.va.gov/covid-19-vaccine/](http://www.va.gov/covid-19-vaccine/) - Ruth Aresvik, Service Officer





## Training Officer:

What is more important than the children and youth of our country? The American Legion works to strengthen the family unit, assisting organizations to provide services to children and youth, and more. Read about it here.

### Pillar 4: Children and Youth

Today's young people face an array of societal pressures. The dissolution of the traditional American family, illegal drug use, TV shows and movies filled with obscenities and indecencies. There is an alarming increase in bullying, aided by the spread of smart phones and social media.

Gone are the care-free days when children spent their summers playing baseball on vacant lots, lounging in tree houses and riding bikes around town.

The American Legion's National Commission on Children & Youth is guided by three main objectives: to strengthen the family unit, work with quality organizations that provide services for children and provide communities with well-rounded programs that meet the needs of young people.

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation provides more than \$500,000 in grants each year to nonprofit organizations that work to improve the lives of young people. Such grants have benefited organ-donor campaigns, supported efforts to help military children cope with deployments or loss of a parent, and funded projects that increased public awareness of Huntington's disease, autism, Reyes syndrome, meningitis, spina bifida, diabetes, cancer and other debilitating conditions.

Since its founding in 1919, The American Legion has been a staunch supporter of children and youth. The National Commission on Children & Youth continues that commitment today, as it seeks to improve the well-being of all children. The key to the future of a free and prosperous country, expressed by every generation of veterans, is held by the children and youth of today. The Legion strongly supports traditional family values, assistance for at-risk children and activities that promote their healthy and wholesome development. While there is no way of knowing what issues will face our youth tomorrow, our survival may well depend on the quality of care, education and training that we, as parents and citizens, provide for the young people of today.

To read about The American Legion's Children & Youth pillar's most critical issues, go [HERE](#).

- Jean Bledsoe, Training Officer





## ARLINGTON CEMETERY

On Jeopardy the other night, the final question was "How many steps does the guard take during his walk across the tomb of the Unknowns?" All three contestants missed it!

This is really an awesome sight to watch if you've never had the chance. Fascinating.

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier:

1. How many steps does the guard take during his walk across the tomb of the Unknowns and why?

21 steps.: It alludes to the twenty-one gun salute which is the highest honor given any military or foreign dignitary.

2. How long does he hesitate after his about face to begin his return walk and why?

21 seconds. for the same reason as answer number 1.

3. Why are his gloves wet?

His gloves are moistened to prevent his losing his grip on the rifle.

4. Does he carry his rifle on the same shoulder all the time and , if not, why not?

He carries the rifle on the shoulder away from the tomb. After his march across the path, he executes an about face and moves the rifle to the outside shoulder.

5. How often are the guards changed?

Guards are changed every thirty minutes, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year.

6. What are the physical traits of the guard limited to?

For a person to apply for guard duty at the tomb, he must be between 5' 10" and 6' 2" tall and his waist size cannot exceed 30". They must commit 2 years of life to guard the tomb, live in a barracks under the tomb, and cannot drink any alcohol on or off duty for the rest of their lives. They cannot swear in public for the rest of their lives and cannot disgrace the uniform or the tomb in any way.

After two years, the guard is given a wreath pin that is worn on their lapel signifying they served as guard of the tomb. There are only 400 presently worn. The guard must obey these rules for the rest of their lives or give up the wreath pin.

The shoes are specially made with very thick soles to keep the heat and cold from their feet. There are metal heel plates that extend to the top of the shoe in order to make the loud click as they come to a halt.

There are no wrinkles, folds or lint on the uniform. Guards dress for duty in front of a full-length mirror. The first six months of duty a guard cannot talk to anyone nor watch TV.

All off duty time is spent studying the 175 notable people laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery.

A guard must memorize who they are and where they are interred. Among the notables are:

President Taft,

Joe Lewis {the boxer}

Medal of Honor winner Audie L. Murphy, the most decorated soldier of WWII and of Hollywood fame.

Every guard spends five hours a day getting his uniforms ready for guard duty.

ETERNAL REST GRANT THEM O LORD AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON THEM.

In 2003 as Hurricane Isabelle was approaching Washington, DC, our US Senate/House took 2 days off with anticipation of the storm. On the ABC evening news, it was reported that because of the dangers from the hurricane, the military members assigned the duty of guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier were given permission to suspend the assignment. They respectfully declined the offer, "No way, Sir!" Soaked to the skin, marching in the pelting rain of a tropical storm, they said that guarding the Tomb was not just an assignment, it was the highest honor that can be afforded to a service person. The tomb has been patrolled continuously, 24/7, since 1930.

God Bless and keep them. - Submitted by Paula Atwood, Post 154 Member



# Faces of AGENT ORANGE

## Sherri Wise By Jim Belshaw

When an Agent Orange diagnosis first confronted Sherri Wise's father in 2002, he denied the fact of it. "He said this is our country, that our government would not do this," she said. He went into the hospital two days before 9/11. On that fateful day, Sherri and her mother rode a hospital tram to visit him. They found themselves surrounded by veterans. "We saw these men who were disfigured, emotionally distraught, physically incapable of fighting," she said. "But the minute that first plane hit, you could see the wheels turning in their heads. When the second plane hit, we were surrounded by men who said they would protect us. We were never in danger, but it was the most touching thing. Read the full story [HERE](#).



*Sherri's mom and dad: Vietnam veteran Ronald Steve Harrison with his wife, Reba Harrison*



*Sherri, with daughter Andrea, and Grandpa Harrison*




Donate Blood  
 Donate Plasma  
 Volunteer  
 Save Lives

National Blood Donor Month      January      NATIONAL DAY  
 www.NationalDayCalendar.com      #NationalBloodDonationMonth      CALIFORNIA

### Post 154 Honor Guard:

For those of you not aware, our Post has an Honor Guard. They march in parades, present the colors at ceremonies, and most importantly, provide a rifle salute to honor Veterans at their funerals. Starting this month there will be an account of the honors and hours given by the men and women in our Honor Guard. However, more members are always needed to serve in this capacity. If you are interested in participating in this very fulfilling activity, contact Harold Markiewitz at 208-691-3039. In December, the Post 154 Honor Guard presented Colors for Wreaths Across American at Pinegrove Cemetery in Rathdrum. They also honored 2 Veterans at their funeral services.

## Did you know...?

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today, the formal launch of 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411), a single access point to all VA contact centers.

The number is available 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year to serve Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors.

When dialing 1-800-MyVA411, callers have the option of pressing 0 to be immediately connected with a customer service agent to answer questions or provide a warm-handoff to the appropriate VA expert.

**LIVE ASSISTANCE**  
General information, directory assistance and technical support for VA.gov

**VA HEALTH CARE**  
Eligibility, enrollment, locations and COVID-19

**COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE**  
MISSION Act eligibility, copayments

**NATIONAL CEMETERIES**  
Burial benefits, interment scheduling and headstone/ Veteran marker

**VETERANS CRISIS LINE**  
Immediate connection to caring, qualified responders

**DEBT MANAGEMENT**  
Debt details, payment options and debtor rights

**FACILITY LOCATOR**  
Locations of medical centers, benefits offices or cemeteries

**BENEFITS ASSISTANCE**  
Information about a variety of VA benefits

**HOMELESS VETERANS LINE**  
Information and support for homeless and at-risk callers

**COVID-19 INFORMATION**  
Frequently asked questions and live assistance for COVID-related questions



### Bits & Pieces

- Many 100% disabled vets are not aware of free Champva for their spouse. As long as a provider accepts Medicare, they will accept Champva, also free mail order prescriptions. Do not take my word (please) Google Champva. – Bryan Bledsoe, Adjutant
- Your VA Profile: [Learn how to sync your info across all VA systems with a single update.](#)
- [From the National Archives Virtual Program series, take a virtual look at the JFK Presidential Library.](#)
- VA to Restart Debt Collections After Nine-month Pause. [Read More...](#)
- Congress Passes Sweeping End-of-year Bill Impacting 'Every Corner' of the Veteran Community [Read More...](#)
- Also, please remember to send your volunteer hours to Len Crosby so he can compile them. These include hours devoted to Veterans, Youth, Honor Guard and Community. His email is: [crosbylenmary@frontier.com](mailto:crosbylenmary@frontier.com)

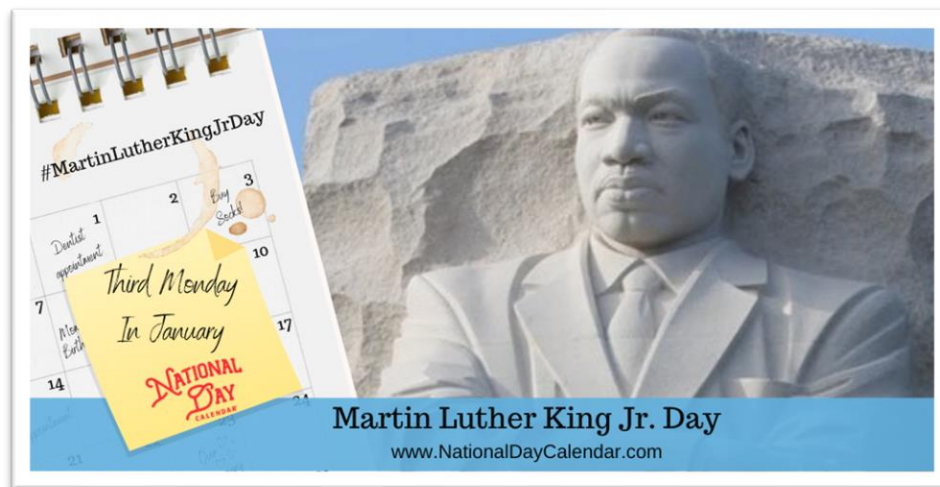
## A Healthier You:

- This is the shortest, most concise infomercial I have seen regarding the Corona virus – how to know if you have it or not (compared to colds, allergies, etc.). Well worth the few minutes to watch. Double click on the icon below. A dialog box will open asking if you want to open this file. Just choose "Open". – Don Walker, Post 154 Member



Covid Home Test.mp4

Follow up Note: remember not all Covid cases symptomize the same and the sore throat symptoms are not always present as described in here. - Don



## Mark Your Calendar:

January	National Blood Donor Month
January 1 <sup>st</sup>	New Year's Day
January 6 <sup>th</sup>	National Cuddle Up Day
January 9 <sup>th</sup>	National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day
January 14 <sup>th</sup>	Executive Committee meeting via Zoom 5:30 PM
January 14 <sup>th</sup>	RATIFICATION DAY recognizes the act the officially ended the American Revolution. This day is in commemoration of the ratification of the Treaty of Paris
January 17 <sup>th</sup>	World Religion Day
January 18 <sup>th</sup>	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
January 20 <sup>th</sup>	National Cheese Lovers Day
January 27 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">Vietnam Cease-Fire (1973)</a>
January 27 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust</a>
January 28 <sup>th</sup>	Potential General Membership meeting via Zoom – let Dee know if you'd like to participate in a Zoom meeting.





National Spouses Day on January 26th each year celebrates the bond between two people and sets aside time for couples to show each other gratitude.

Dedicated to recognizing spouses everywhere, the observance reminds us to take time for our mate. From being thankful for the fulfillment and security of a long-term relationship to the boost of morale and well-being provided by spouses, there are many reasons to celebrate. This day is a time to show your spouse that you care and appreciate all of the things that he or she does for you and the home.



### **Ya learn something new every single day.**

Len Crosby noted in his legislative article [December 2020] information about the newly opened Native American Memorial in Washington D.C.

“New National Native American Veterans Memorial Opened: On Veterans Day, the new National Native American Veterans Memorial to honor the military service of Native Americans opened on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The memorial, Warriors’ Circle of Honor, consists of an elevated stainless-steel circle balanced on an intricately carved stone drum. The artist who designed the memorial, Harvey Pratt of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, served in Vietnam from 1962 to 1965.”

I went to the website to ‘see’ what this new war memorial looked like and read information pertaining to the design and meanings behind the project. I got a bit more information than I planned on learning. And not just about Native American veterans.

On the official design application, the main feature was to be a stainless-steel wheel over the top of a drum-shaped stone. Around the stone was to be seals of the five U.S. military services (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines and Navy). Sounds like a really fine design.

However, almost immediately a flaw in the design was pointed out and herein is the ‘new’ insight I learned about our American military family of veterans.

The terms of military, armed forces and uniformed services are used very loosely. And most Americans lump all members of these services into one and the same category. But it turns out to be false. The U.S. has four (4) military services (AF, Army, Navy, Marines). It also has five (5) armed forces (those four already mentioned plus the Coast Guard). In addition, the U.S. has seven (7)...yes, SEVEN uniformed services. All of the above...plus the federal uniformed services of USPHS commissioned Corps (part of the Dept of Health with a mission to safeguard national health) and NOAA Commissioned Corps (charged with protecting the environment and climate).

That's a lot of different areas of service to the United States. And while I recognize the acronym of NOAA (because my husband has been reporting to the National Weather Service for 40 years), I had no idea that these two branches of service even existed in the context of a military veteran. And they are not usually represented in any way that we recognize the other trained forces (represented with flags at meetings, seen in parades, honored with public recognition).

Did you know that officers of both USPHS and NOAA are commissioned (just like their military counterparts) and cannot resign until they have finished their terms of enlistment; they do wear uniforms but don't carry weapons (unless the President chooses to militarize them i.e., President Truman during WWII and Korean Conflict); they care for wounded, they conduct land surveys, assist in natural disasters and forecast weather for military operations. They have been in every war or conflict our country has participated in since 1898. They have been on battlefields saving lives and U.S. law classifies both the USPHS and NOAA Corp members as veterans (entitled to VA services and benefits and carry VA ID cards). That's a whole lot of information that is eye-opening for me. Now I have to wonder if USPHS and NOAA veterans are eligible for American Legion membership?

I looked in the Flag & Emblem catalog to see if any item was available for these two veteran groups...nothing. Now I ask...why not? If in fact they are full card-carrying veterans, why do they not have flags and t-shirts and badges available? (Yes, they do have official emblems...see below.)



With all this said, the Native American Veterans' Memorial is not going to be changed to include the two extra emblems...even though Native Americans have served in all seven branches of the military/armed forces/uniformed services. The 1994 Native American Veterans' Memorial Establishment Act which originally authorized the memorial is written/refers only to the 'armed forces of the U.S.' And, as it was pointed out that since they do not carry weapons and are not trained in arms, they were not going to be included.

An estimated 800 Native Americans currently serve in USPHS Commissioned Corps; NOAA Commissioned Corps was unable to furnish any specific ethnic numbers.

My humble observation is this; a veteran is a veteran. Whether you serve one day or 20 years. Whether you are in one branch or another. No matter sex, religion, color, creed, job title or nationality. Whether you carry a firearm or not. Each one of us signed on the dotted line to serve this country, were commissioned and trained to a specific job. We were all deployed when/where/for how long our country needed us. We wore uniforms of our branch of service. We were all governed by the same military laws of conduct. We were all paid by the same federal government for work performed - all duty-bound to fulfill our enlistment/ terms of service, and all of us end up with a federally recognized 'label' of veteran with certain rights and benefits.

Where is the USPHS and NOAA in our American Legion?

Submitted by Paula Atwood, American Legion Post 154, Rathdrum ID

Dec 4, 2020