



# Manuel Schneidmiller Post 154, Inc.

## Rathdrum Idaho Newsletter

Volume 8 Issue #1

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Email: [rathdrum154@gmail.com](mailto:rathdrum154@gmail.com)

Website: [Rathdrumpost154.org](http://Rathdrumpost154.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RathdrumAmericanLegion>

Mailing Address: PO Box 1116, Rathdrum ID

Meeting at: Lions Club 16114 N. Meyer Rd Rathdrum - Editor: Jean Bledsoe



### Manuel Schneidmiller 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:

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year. At this time of year, I think of New Year's Resolutions...and like most, I never quite live up to the ideal! But here are a few resolutions for our Post that I would like to put out for your consideration:

1. Look at the big picture when you think of the Post and be willing to forego personal desires for "the good of the Legion".
2. Volunteer your time, talent, and treasure to serve our veterans.
3. Abandon the idea that if the game is not played your way, you will take your ball and go home...but bring your ball to each game and give it your best effort!
4. Don't waste time on the "small stuff". Instead of crossing T's and dotting I's, make grand sentences!
5. Praise more and criticize less. We are all part of the Grand Adventure called the American Legion. All of us have the potential to make a difference. Look for the "special" in yourself and others and then put it to work for your brothers and sisters.

Also, volunteering in my opinion is a heartfelt act of kindness and there is a clear need in our community. If your passion is helping retired veterans and their families or programs involving children and youth, the American Legion Post 154 is the organization for you. For those that already go above and beyond. I can't thank you enough for all that you do but please know I appreciate you!

During our very successful 2022 year we participated in various community ceremonies, such as memorial services for veterans, Veterans Stand Down, Memorial Day, Rathdrum Days, Chamber of Commerce events, Boys State, and Veterans Recognition Day to name just a few. Thank you all for doing a fantastic job for our Legion. Please keep it up for 2023!

May God bless you and your families this New Year! – Dee Sasse, Commander

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
Yesterday, today, and tomorrow  
Through times of strife and sorrow.  
And times of pride and glory  
We were, are, and we'll be  
The United States of America!  
A land of many wonders  
Of every race and creed  
Where fate is based on choice  
And we are free to choose  
To rise above the ways  
That bind the human will  
To the chains of tyranny!  
To the bonds of Bigotry!  
To the trials of anarchy!  
*Francis Gasbarre*

## Finance Officer:

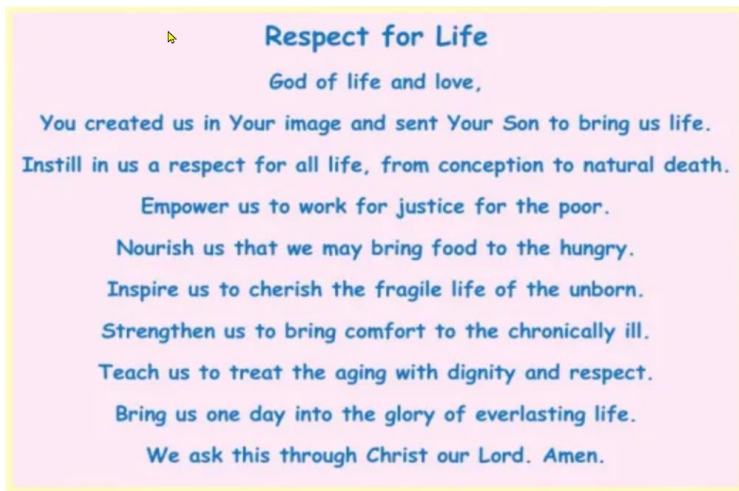
During the month of November, Post 154 received income of \$581 and had expenses of \$3,231.78. Net loss for the month of November was \$2,650.78, however this included a lot of expenses from the Veterans Recognition event, which raises the vast majority of its funds from the Community.

Income was from donations to our Honor Guard (\$200), Membership renewals (\$180); Donations to Veterans Recognition event (\$200 and interest of \$1.00).

Expenses were for membership renewals (\$112.50), Honor Guard expenses for a “parade” rifle (\$426.90) – Honor Guard also raises its own funds from donations from family members for whom Military Honors are provided at a Veteran’s funeral, and Veterans recognition event expenses (\$2,531.48).

At 10/31/22 Capital reserves totaled \$74,502.51 and included our Money Market Account, and four Certificates of Deposit. Total assets were \$86,356.18 and Liabilities, including restricted funds set aside for specific programs and un-cleared checks, were \$13,186.93. As of the close of the month of November 2022, Post 154 had a net worth of \$73,169.25. - Len Crosby, Finance Officer

## Chaplain’s Pew:



Submitted by Helen Kinder, Chaplain

## Sick Call & Taps:

- Post member Bill Tibbits passed on December 3rd, 2022. See his story on page 11 of this newsletter.
- Member Mike Warren continues to recover from his second heart valve replacement.
- Our Chaplain Helen Kinder has been struggling with a severe episode of vertigo.



## Veterans to Receive Record Pay Increase in VA Compensation

Beginning Jan. 1, 2023, Veterans and beneficiaries who receive VA compensation benefits will see an 8.7% increase in their monthly payments—the largest increase in over 30 years. [LEARN MORE](#)



### **The Corpman's Christmas Poem**

"'Twas the night before Christmas as I flew o'er  
the Marine Base,  
when I spied a young man who seemed out of  
place.

His eyes showed compassion, his hair a bit long,  
but his head was held high and his body was  
strong.

His air was confident, his uniform smart,  
but what impressed me most was the size of his  
heart.

For he embodied honor, one of this country's  
best,  
and the words U.S. NAVY showed large on his  
chest.

As I stood there in wonder and gazed into his  
eyes,  
the words that he spoke took me quite by  
surprise.

"What's wrong Santa, haven't you ever seen a  
sailor before?"

I sensed something special and longed to know  
more.

"To be honest, this field thing wasn't part of my  
plan,  
but God didn't give me a boat or tin can."

The words he spoke next surprised me all the  
more,

"But I'm as proud of my Navy as I am of the  
Corps!"

"Don't worry Santa, that I'm a sailor you see,  
for when a Marine goes down they will still call  
on me.

They'll forget I'm a sailor, they'll call in my stock.  
At the top of their lungs they'll yell, "Get me the  
doc!"

"And I'll answer that call, anytime, anywhere.  
Though I know I'm a target I really don't care.  
I'll face incoming fire as I race cross the land,  
and use my very own body to shield a downed  
man."

"Working long hours and into the night,  
my unit's battle is over, but I'm just starting to  
fight.

For the life of every Marine is sacred to me.  
I refuse to surrender them to death, and in that

I'll find victory."

"And yet I'll take the time to comfort a dying  
man,  
to sit down by his side, to reach out and hold his  
hand.

For it takes as much courage to care as to fight.  
For just as the poem says, many don't "go  
gently into that night."

"Santa, it's not any one uniform that makes you  
a man,  
but rather it's those ideals for which you choose  
to stand.

I draw my line here, it's long and it's plain.  
For pain, hurt and suffering are the things I  
disdain."

I know very well that I may lose my life,  
so that a Marine may see an unmet child and  
young wife.

So Santa, it really doesn't matter if they don't  
like my hair.

I'm a Navy Corpsman, their Doc, and I'll always  
be there."

"I follow the brave docs who have come long  
before,  
from Belleau Wood, Iwo, and Lebanon's shore.  
As history proudly shows, they all gave their  
best,  
and for those who have died, surely they're  
blessed."

"At Inchon, the gulf and times during Tet,  
our brothers have fallen, but we carry on yet.  
For we carry their honor and legacy still."  
As I held back my tears it took all of my will.

I had to leave him there for I had other plans,  
but I knew in my heart that the Corps is in good  
hands.

As I flew away I heard his laughter, it rang so  
loud and clear.

"Hey Santa, how 'bout a nice pair of boots for  
the 26 miler next year?"

HMC(FMF/SW) Mark Forsberg  
2/3 UDP, Okinawa, December 1997

Submitted by Helen Kinder, Chaplain

## **VA continues aggressive hiring push to deliver PACT Act care and benefits**

**WASHINGTON** — The Department of Veterans Affairs is hiring qualified individuals to join the benefits team as VA begins processing [PACT Act](#) claims starting in January 2023. These new VA employees will help ensure Veterans and survivors get the PACT Act-related benefits they've earned in a timely manner.

They will serve in the roles of [Veterans service representative](#), [rating Veterans service representative](#) and [legal administrative specialist](#), and they will work across 56 regional offices and 39 other special processing and call centers within the United States and Puerto Rico.

Veterans have filed more than 175,000 PACT Act-related claims since Aug. 10, when President Biden signed the act into law.

“There are millions of Veterans and survivors who are eligible for new benefits and health care as a result of the PACT Act, and we won't rest until every one of them gets what they deserve,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “That means aggressively hiring new VA team members to make sure we're able to process claims and deliver care to Veterans as quickly and effectively as possible. There's no better mission than serving Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors — and we encourage folks to apply to join our team today.”

The Veterans Health Administration is also aggressively hiring to prepare for a surge in PACT Act-related care. In FY 2022 VHA hired a record 48,500 new clinical and administrative staff, an increase of 5,000 more hires than in FY 2021. Since the start of the current fiscal year in October, VHA achieved a net increase of 1,815 more employees onboarded compared to zero last year. As VA aims for another record year, rapid and competitive hiring is a top priority for FY 2023.

The department is also actively recruiting, hiring and retaining Veterans, military spouses, survivors, caregivers and family members to support the VA mission.

Click the following links to apply for a position with VA as a [Veterans service representative](#) or [rating Veterans service representative](#).

Learn more about PACT Act and how to file a claim at [VA.gov/PACT](#). If Veterans, their families, caregivers, or survivors have questions about PACT Act and wish to speak with someone to help, they may call 800-MyVA411.

###

***For questions related to this news release, please contact the following individuals:***

Susan Carter - [Susan.carter2@va.gov](mailto:Susan.carter2@va.gov)

Randy Noller - [Randal.noller@va.gov](mailto:Randal.noller@va.gov)

Tatjana Christian - [Tatjana.christian@va.gov](mailto:Tatjana.christian@va.gov)

## **Service Officer:**

Happy New Year to you all! Now that the excitement and joy of Christmas is over, we can look forward to tax time! Yikes! But let's not go there. Let's go here for a few news items worth hearing:

The 2023 Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) has been released. This year's increase is 8.7%, which will increase Social Security and VA monetary awards. The 8.7% increase is supposed to try to offset the increase in inflation. With the COLA increase, Medicare Part B premiums for 2023 are actually decreasing. The new rate for 2023 will be \$164.90 per month, compared to the current \$170.10 per month. If a veteran or surviving spouse is receiving a VA Pension award, be aware of the COLA increase and the decrease in Medicare Part B premiums, as this may adversely impact your monthly VA Pension award. Remember, it is up to the claimant to inform the VA of any changes to assets, income, or medical expenses!

– Ruth Aresvik, Service Officer

**Editor's Note:** See Ruth submission beginning on the following page.



# CAMP LEJEUNE WATER CONTAMINATION KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



## I'm a Veteran who believes I was exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, what can VA do for me?

Since 2012, Veterans who served on active duty in the Armed Forces at Camp Lejeune for 30 days or more between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, have been eligible for hospital care and medical services for any of 15 illnesses or conditions identified in the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012, as amended (codified at 38 U.S.C. § 1710(e)(1)(F)). Veterans are also eligible to enroll in VA health care for other services they may require.

Veterans, Reservists, and National Guard members who served at least 30 days at Camp Lejeune between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, and later developed one of the following eight diseases: Adult leukemia, aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, liver cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and Parkinson's disease, are eligible for disability compensation benefits.

For more specifics about VA benefits related to Camp Lejeune contaminated water, to include how to file a claim, visit [www.VA.gov/CampLejeune](http://www.VA.gov/CampLejeune) or call 1-800-MyVA411.

## LEARN MORE

[www.VA.gov/CampLejeune](http://www.VA.gov/CampLejeune)

## LET'S TALK



Speak to a VA benefits specialist by calling  
**1-800-MyVA411**  
(1-800-698-2411)

## LET'S MEET



Schedule a virtual or in-person appointment  
[vets.force.com/VAVERA](http://vets.force.com/VAVERA)



## What impact does the PACT Act have on Veterans and families who were exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune?

On August 10, 2022, the President signed into law the Honoring our PACT Act (Public Law 117-168). Section 804 of this law is the Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2022 ("CLJA"), which allows new lawsuits for individuals exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune.

Whether Veterans and family members decide to seek relief under the CLJA is entirely their decision and will not influence VA's decision to provide them benefits or health care based upon their exposure; it also will not affect the amount of benefits or health care VA can provide them.

It is important to know, however, that if a Veteran or family member is awarded relief by the court in a lawsuit brought under the CLJA, the award must be offset by the amount of any disability award, payment, or benefit VA provided to the Veteran, family member, or their legal representative relating to exposure to water at Camp Lejeune. This would reduce the amount of the award Veterans or family members receive from the court, but it would not affect their VA benefits.



## I'm seeing a lot of commercials about benefits I may be entitled to based on my time at Camp Lejeune. Are these ads connected to VA?

Lawyers, firms, and others have engaged in extensive advertising offering to represent Veterans in CLJA actions. These entities are not connected with VA benefits or services. Be aware that these entities may charge you a fee for legal representation.



## Will seeking relief under the CLJA impact my VA benefits or health care?

Your VA compensation benefits or health care services will not be impacted if you file a lawsuit. If you are awarded relief from a CLJA lawsuit, your VA benefits will not be reduced, and your eligibility for other VA benefits or services will not be affected.



## Will my court awarded relief (from filing a lawsuit) be impacted by VA benefits and services I already receive?

Yes, potentially. If you already receive VA benefits or services (disability pay or health care services) for conditions related to the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, the court awarded relief will be offset by the amount of any disability award, payment, or other benefit VA provided to you related to your exposure at Camp Lejeune.



## What if I file for VA disability AFTER I receive an award from my lawsuit brought under CLJA, will VA reduce my benefits as a result?

No. Any action you take or award you receive under the CLJA will not influence VA's decision to provide you benefits or health care based upon your exposure or the amount of compensation you receive from VA.

# CAMP LEJEUNE WATER CONTAMINATION KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



## How can I find the status of my CLJA case?

The Department of Justice established a phone number and email address for anyone with questions regarding the status of cases filed in

# CAMP LEJEUNE WATER CONTAMINATION KNOW YOUR OPTIONS



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



## How can I find the status of my CLJA case?

The Department of Justice established a phone number and email address for anyone with questions regarding the status of cases filed in Federal court under the CLJA. The phone number is (202) 353-4426, and the email is [camplejeune.pactact@usdoj.gov](mailto:camplejeune.pactact@usdoj.gov).



## I've heard scammers are taking advantage of CLJA to commit fraud. How can I avoid these fraudsters?

Lawsuits under the CLJA are not related to VA benefits claims, and a lawsuit is not required to receive VA compensation benefits related to Camp Lejeune presumptive conditions. Veterans should be cautious of companies that advertise that VA benefits cannot be obtained without their help. VA and Veterans Service Organizations do not charge fees for assisting claimants in filing disability compensation claims. Check out organizations that provide free assistance with claims for VA benefits at [www.VA.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp](http://www.VA.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp). To report suspected fraudulent activity involving VA benefit claims, please contact [vaoghline@va.gov](mailto:vaoghline@va.gov) or call (800) 488-8244.



## My spouse served in the U.S. Marine Corps, and we lived on Camp Lejeune during the impacted times. He has since passed away. What are my options under the CLJA?

Under the CLJA, anyone who resided, worked, or was otherwise exposed (including in utero exposure) to water at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, may bring an action in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina to obtain appropriate relief for harm that was caused by exposure to the water at Camp Lejeune.

Claims under the CLJA must be filed initially with the Department of the Navy. Information on filing CLJA claims for personal injury or wrongful death can be found at: [www.jag.navy.mil/organization/code\\_15\\_Camp\\_Lejeune\\_Claims.htm](http://www.jag.navy.mil/organization/code_15_Camp_Lejeune_Claims.htm)



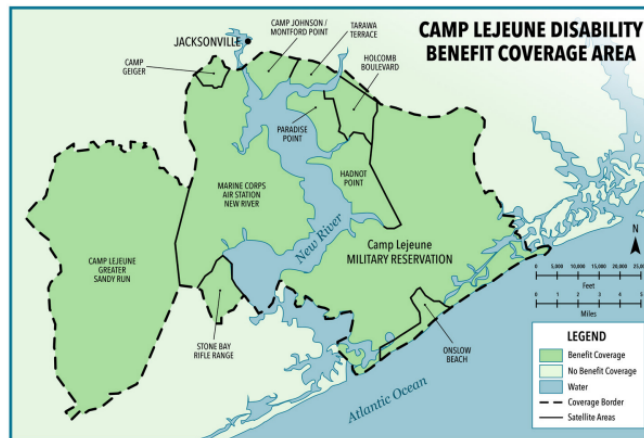
## I am a family member of a Veteran, and I believe I was exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune – what are my options?

In addition to filing a claim under the CLJA, VA may be able to provide you with benefits and health care for certain conditions. VA will provide payment or reimbursement for hospital care and medical services provided to a Camp Lejeune family member by a non-VA provider in certain situations. Contact VA to discuss your options.



## Will VA treat my Camp Lejeune contaminated water related health care conditions without a lawsuit or disability claim?

Yes, you do not need court awarded relief or a VA compensation benefits decision for VA to provide health care services needed to treat related illnesses if you meet eligibility requirements established in law. Contact VA immediately to understand the resources available to you.



## LEARN MORE [www.VA.gov/CampLejeune](http://www.VA.gov/CampLejeune)



### LET'S MEET

Schedule a virtual or in-person appointment  
[vets.force.com/VAVERA](http://vets.force.com/VAVERA)



### LET'S TALK

Speak to a VA benefits specialist by calling  
**1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411)**

## **The Congressional Budget Office is recommending some major cuts to VA disability benefits.**

The following was posted by John Wells, of the Military Veterans Advocacy Group:

During the past year Military-Veterans Advocacy (MVA) has been able to secure benefits for hundreds of thousands of veterans. As well as fighting to obtain benefits for those veterans in Panama and Okinawa, we are also monitoring legislation to ensure earned benefits are not cut.

Did you know that the Congressional Budget Office, (CBO) a supposedly non-profit organization advising Congress on budgetary issues, is urging cuts in many Veterans Programs?? The bean counters at CBO have made the following proposals:

- End VA's Individual Unemployability Payments to Disabled Veterans at the Full Retirement Age for Social Security
- Reduce VA's Disability Benefits to Veterans Who Are Older Than the Full Retirement Age for Social Security
- Narrow Eligibility for VA's Disability Compensation by Excluding Veterans With Low Disability Ratings
- Include Disability Payments From the Department of Veterans Affairs in Taxable Income

This appears to be consistent with many of the newly elected members of the Republican-controlled House of Representatives, who are suggesting similar cuts in Medicare and Social Security benefits, as important budget controls.

**Many are now proposing, as they have in the past, that we help reduce our Country's deficit spending, by cutting the benefits we provide for those who have gone in harm's way to protect our freedoms. Congress is quick to commit the men and women serving in our Armed Forces to battle, but once the fight is over, they are quick to see Veterans Benefits as an easy way to cut the budget.**

Thank you for helping us protect veterans. Please make your members aware of these proposals and ask them to contact those who represent them in Congress and tell them that this is unacceptable!

- Submitted by Len Crosby

**Editor's Note: Below is the contact information for our congressmen.**

### **Idaho Congressional Delegation**

#### **Senator Mike Crapo (R)**

239 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
Phone: (202) 224-6142  
Fax: (202) 228-1375  
[www.crapo.senate.gov](http://www.crapo.senate.gov)

#### **Senator James Risch (R)**

483 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC, 20510  
Phone: (202) 224-2752  
[www.risch.senate.gov](http://www.risch.senate.gov)

#### **Representative Russ Fulcher (R)**

Washington, DC Office  
1520 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515  
Phone: (202) 225-6611  
<https://fulcher.house.gov/>

#### **Representative Mike Simpson (R)**

2084 Rayburn Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
Phone: (202) 225-5531  
Fax: (202) 225-8216  
[www.simpson.house.gov](http://www.simpson.house.gov)



## Promising Research for treatment of Tinnitus:

I don't know how many of you suffer from Tinnitus, but I assume it is a larger percentage of our members. I have a constant ringing or hissing in my ears as a result of gunfire, explosion and other service-related exposures. It often sounds like I am sitting under a waterfall with a constant hissing in both ears. The sounds even wake me up at night.... Here is a promising article about research being done to help those of us suffering from this disability. Don't be fooled by the "come on" ads about "a simple cure for tinnitus" they are all scams!! - Len Crosby

**Tinnitus, that ringing, buzzing, hissing, whistling noise** in your ear that only you seem to be able to hear, is a condition shared by 25 million American adults, according to the American Tinnitus Association. It's one of the most common health conditions in the country and the No. 1 disability in veterans.

A new way of treating the condition has shown a "clinically meaningful" change in people experiencing tinnitus, says a new study from New Zealand. Researchers created an app that combines current standard therapies and uses them to create an individually tailored plan to treat it, with results they claim in just 6-12 weeks.

The app is currently awaiting regulatory review and isn't available to the public, but it shows remarkable promise.

Veterans suffer from tinnitus at a much higher rate than non-veterans, given the nature of their work and the equipment used in the line of duty. It is caused by loud noises, but can also appear as a result of inflammation, a side effect of medication or even a simple wax buildup in the ear. There has never been a "cure" for the condition. While researchers know some of the causes of tinnitus, the perceived sound is a symptom generated by the brain, and no one is entirely sure why. Instead, medical experts have found success in multiple forms of treatment in the past, depending on the cause.

Patients with tinnitus caused by unilateral deafness, for example, can get a cochlear implant. Other, more generalized treatments include relaxation exercises, white noise and hearing aids. Researchers at the University of Auckland in New Zealand have found using a mixture of treatments gets more enhanced results, and they've compiled them into a smartphone app. The "digital polytherapeutic" approach combined "goal-based counseling with personalized passive and active game-based sound therapy." This means users were paired with an audiologist who measured the user's experience with tinnitus on the Tinnitus Functional Index (TFI). This index is a standard scale from zero to 100, based on answers to at least 19 questions. Any change on the scale greater than 13 points is considered a clinically significant difference in tinnitus experience.

In a study for the medical journal *Frontiers in Neurology*, Auckland researchers pitted their app against White Noise Lite, a popular sound therapy application. They gathered 31 people suffering from chronic moderate or severe tinnitus to use the digital polytherapy app, while another 30 used White Noise Lite for 12 weeks.

White Noise Lite helped its users with a 10-point difference after six weeks and 10 points after 12 weeks, but the polytherapy app far outpaced it. Fifty-five percent of users showed clinically significant improvement after six weeks, and 65% after 12. The average improvement was 16.36 points on the TFI at week six and 17.83 after week 12. (cont. below)

“What this therapy does is essentially rewire the brain in a way that de-emphasizes the sound of the tinnitus to a background noise that has no meaning or relevance to the listener.” “Tinnitus is a symptom,” Dr. Caitlin Barr, an audiologist who runs Tinnitus Australia, told New Atlas. “We can’t always understand the causes clearly; there’s so many gaps in our knowledge about tinnitus, so it’s very difficult for researchers and sufferers alike to find a panacea. That’s what’s exciting about this research; a combination approach means that you’re more likely to help more people.” Researchers called the results of the experiment a “promising initial finding,” but insist there’s more work to be done. In the meantime, they are working on the regulatory issues and approval for the “polytherapeutic” app. They hope to have it clinically available within six months under the name True Silence Therapeutics



**THANK YOU**

I would thank you here or there,  
I would thank you everywhere.  
I would thank you in winds that blow,  
I would thank you in the snow.  
To our Legion Family that gave their best,  
Cooking, decorating and all the rest.  
You made our Christmas Party lots of fun,  
Thank you, Thank you to everyone!

Sharron McPhail



**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

January 1, 2023 is here!  
Please, renew your dues today.

We still have 50 members that have yet to renew for 2023. Take a look at your Legion ID card, if it says 2022 on it, you need to pay dues for 2023. Please, keep in mind that if dues were not into National by January 1, 2023, those members are considered delinquent. If still not received by February 1st, members are suspended with no privileges except that of reinstatement with payment of dues. Please take a few minutes and get your dues paid now. 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 at least 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

## **Faces of AO – Bill Tibbits**

My Forever Friend Bill – Written by Don Walker for the *Veterans' Chronicle*

In a lifetime you only get a few chances a Real Forever Friendship. The kind that brings you back to them, no matter what.

We all have some “goodtime friends” and “most of the time, buddies”....but it is rare as hell to have a good-times, bad-times, all the times buddy.

We planned to laugh and golf and watch our kids grow up and grow older.

That didn't happen...

He actually started to have serious future questions in 1968 ... before I even knew Bill. His future was cut short because he served his nation in the Viet Nam War as a teenager.

Bill didn't get killed or wounded by the enemy, but he received a fatal injury, all the same, from his exposure to Agent Orange. It took lots of years to start killing him... but as sure as a bullet, it started taking his life away.

We didn't see it until he was around 50 and then his symptoms and health issues started to take away some of his life options.

First it was circulation and respiratory issues and then full-blown Parkinson's Disease that took away his energy, balance, vision, and hope.

My Friend isn't dead. He's still the same old cantankerous, opinionated Bill, but now he is in an assisted living place. For nearly 2 years Nobody could visit him because of covid. Tough to be hopeful and happy when alone and isolated.

I will never forget my “Forever Friend” Bill.

He never, ever let me down. He often “pissed me off”, but he always did what he promised and was there when you needed him.

I wish I could be there for you now.

I wish we could share golf and kid stories and make some more....

I never heard Bill blame or complain about “whose fault it was” and if you asked him how the VA Health Care treated him...He would tell you quickly, that he felt he was treated with dignity and respect and he was cared for fantastically.

They couldn't stop the march of Parkinson's, but they did ease his suffering and did well in helping extend his life.

When Bill dies, as we all must, his name should be added to the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington DC because he truly died because of fighting for his country.

Thousands of Viet Nam Veterans are dying each year from the impacts, injuries, and illnesses because of their service to our country in the Viet Nam war.

My Brother 1<sup>st</sup> LT. Richard H. Walker's name is on that Wall He was killed in action in 1968.

Rich was a Silver Star recipient and he would have been proud to have Viet Nam Veterans like Bill listed beside him on the Wall.

None of those names will be on The Wall ...but we will continue to honor them for their ultimate sacrifices.

God Bless them All and

God Bless my Forever Friend Bill

PS – Bill Tibbits passed away December 3, 2022



Bill and I went on the Honor Flight in October of 2019 before is he was forced to a wheelchair and had to go to an assisted living facility. – Don Walker, Veterans' Help Net



### **Post 154 Honor Guard:**

Our Honor Guard is very active. They march in parades, present the colors at ceremonies, and most importantly, provide a rifle salute to honor Veterans at their funerals. However, more members are always needed to serve in this capacity.

This month the Honor Guard provided a rifle salute for one Navy Veteran. In addition, one of our Post 154 members, Hal Donahue, was the Hayden Honored Veteran of 2022 and they participated in Wreaths Across America at Pinegrove Cemetery and gave a rifle salute. These ceremonies collectively required 71 volunteer hours who logged 305 miles to accomplish their missions.

2023 brings a new year and opportunity to volunteer to serve on the Honor Guard. It is very rewarding to give our veterans a proper military send off and is most appreciated by their friends and family.

If you would like to find out more about volunteering as an Honor Guard member, please contact Todd Halvorson at [keltod11@gmail.com](mailto:keltod11@gmail.com) Bryan Bledsoe, Honor Guard Member

## Did you know...?

VA will fill prescriptions by a non-VA community provider only if you meet all these requirements.

### All of these must be true:

- You're enrolled in VA health care
- You have an assigned VA primary care provider
- You've given your VA provider your medical records from your non-VA provider
- Your VA provider agrees with the prescription



### Mark Your Calendar:

January	National Blood Donor Month
January 1 <sup>st</sup>	New Year's Day
<b>January 12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Post 154 Executive Committee Meeting @ 6 pm Lions Club</b>
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 16 <sup>th</sup>	Dr Martin Luther King Jr Day
<b>January 26<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Post 154 Membership Meeting @ 6 pm with Potluck at 5:30</b>
January 27 <sup>th</sup>	Vietnam Cease Fire (1973)



### Bits & Pieces

- Eligible Idaho Veterans can get a no-cost flu vaccine and the updated Covid-19 booster from a nearby VA clinic or from a VA community care network provider. To find a location, visit our [VA locator](#) and enter your zip code. You can choose a nearby VA facility or one of 70,000 in-network pharmacy or urgent care locations nationwide.
- Lifetime entrance pass for federal parks and recreation sites nationwide are available for:
  - **Currently active-duty U.S. military.**
  - **Dependents of a current U.S. military member.**
  - **Veterans**
  - **Gold Star family members.**

The pass, an expansion on the annual free pass for currently serving troops and their families, grants free access to about 2,000 parks and lands managed by the National Park Service; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Forest Service; Bureau of Land Management; Bureau of Reclamation; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, according to an announcement on the park service website. It also gives discounted amenity fees in some locations.



## Did You Know?

The American Legion is the largest Veterans service organization.

Working and volunteering in communities, states, and around the world, The American Legion has been dedicated to veterans, troops, national security, youth and patriotism since the founding a century ago.

More than 2.1 million wartime veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces are members of The American Legion. Joining them are nearly 1 million members of the American Legion Auxiliary, the nation's largest patriotic women's association, and more than 360,000 Sons of the American Legion, male descendants of U.S. wartime veterans. They work as one great American Legion Family of shared values, at more than 13,500 local posts worldwide, in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America and Asia. As a federally chartered organization, The American Legion upholds a sacred duty to provide free expert assistance for all who have served our country in the U.S. Armed Forces, as well as their families.

The American Legion is at work today in rural towns, urban neighborhoods, military installations and college campuses everywhere. Each local post has its own unique identity, but they are all connected by common core values. A post in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, for instance, provides care for children with cerebral palsy, Downs Syndrome and other serious diseases. The American Legion in

Wyoming coordinates the state high school rodeo championships. An American Legion post in central California operates a multi-county ambulance service. Another, in Alabama, offers after-school mentorship for students seeking direction. A post in Connecticut built, owns and operates a housing facility to help homeless veterans restart their lives. Local examples of The American Legion's highest values are found worldwide, where differences are made daily for individuals, communities, states and the nation.

The Legion's fastest growing segment is the post 9/11 generation. More than 100,000 strong and increasing, these young veterans help lead the organization in every way, alongside those who served in Desert Storm/Desert Shield, Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, Vietnam, Korea and WW II. No matter the war era, our members are indelibly connected through love of country, hope for the future, remembrance of the fallen and duty before self.

The Constitution. Law and order. Americanism. Memories of all Wars. Individual obligation. Peace, good will, prosperity, justice, freedom and devotion to mutual helpfulness.

Such values are embedded in the language of the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution. Generation after generation, one century to the next, the words have come to define a purpose as meaningful today as ever before.

(From The American Legion Website) Submitted by Bill Kinder, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander



## What are Your VA Benefits at 10% Disability Rating?

Learn about the benefits available to Veterans receiving 10% service-connected disability compensation.

[WATCH](#)

## **A Healthier You:**

### **Myths and Facts About Dementia**

What's true about dementia, and what's just a myth? Test what you know.

Myth: If an older adult has memory problems, they have dementia.

Fact: Many people have mild memory issues as they age. In some cases, medicines or illness can cause short-term cognitive problems. But memory loss along with confusion, trouble doing daily tasks, and other symptoms can point to dementia. Dementia must be diagnosed by a healthcare provider through a physical exam, tests, and other tools.

Myth: Alzheimer's disease is the same as dementia.

Find out the facts and more [HERE](#).



## **WARNING!**

**Some Veterans are going to start seeing current and backlogged VA Health Care "co-pay" bills** showing up in their mailboxes dating back to Oct 2021. Since roughly Oct 2021, co-pay bills stopped going out to Vet's with the introduction of the new Cerner VA Health Care software system...but now its fixed!!! Many Veterans terms of accepting VA Health Care at enrollment include co-pays and many of these Veterans have likely forgotten they have co-pays because of delayed billing due to the software issues

### **Action:**

1. Veterans will be encouraged to pay their bills as per their agreement to accept VA Health Care.
2. If Veterans have questions on the terms of their VA Health Care (i.e. co-pays), Vet's should call the **Spokane Eligibility and Enrolment Office @ 509-434-7009 or the national number @ 1-800-325-7940**
3. Billing disputes are **NOT** handled locally. **DO NOT CALL THE SPOKANE PATIENT ADVOCACY OFFICE, YOUR PROVIDER AND/OR YOUR LOCAL VSO.** They cannot help. The only option is to call the **VA Billing Office directly @ 1-877-881-7618**

(If the delay in billing created a hardship, and/or Veterans want appeal their bill, and/or discuss a payback schedule, etc... call VA Billing Directly)

At the KC VSO office, we have already received calls. Unfortunately, all we can do is direct the Vet to the VA Billing Office. However, the KC VSO's office can provide limited assistance with completing forms from the VA Billing Dept. when appealing, requesting a payback schedules, etc...

Respectfully,

Thomas (Tom) Freeman  
Veterans Services Officer  
Director

## 'Peeling an onion': A single tooth points to missing soldier who died on his birthday in Vietnam

By WYATT OLSON STARS AND STRIPES • December 5, 2022

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*The remains of Army Chief Warrant Officer Larry Zich, who died in a helicopter crash in South Vietnam on April 3, 1972, were identified by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency on Oct. 25, 2022. (DPAA)*

Chief Warrant Officer Larry Zich turned 24 on the last day of his life.

On his birthday, April 3, 1972, he was copiloting a Huey helicopter that crashed somewhere in South Vietnam. Searchers were unable to find the crash site, and the remains of Zich and the other three crew members were never found.

Last month, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency notified Zich's next of kin that the young soldier had been accounted for using the sole remains in its possession for more than three decades: a single wisdom tooth.

The route by which that molar made it from a Vietnam jungle to a Defense Department lab in Hawaii remains a partial mystery. But the decades-long effort to determine to whom the tooth belonged is a story of evolving technological advances, a process of elimination and forensic hunches.

Zich's last flight came in the first days of the Easter Offensive, a massive half-year attack by the North Vietnamese regular army, with troops crossing the demilitarized zone, or DMZ, into South Vietnam.

Zich, serving in the 37th Signal Battalion, 1st Signal Brigade, was tasked with flying from Danang to a base in Quang Tri province bordering the DMZ to deliver explosives to be used to destroy equipment before the area was overrun, said Chris Williamson, a Southeast Asia specialist with DPAA and lead analyst on the Zich crash.

Zich's Huey never made it to that base.

"We know from communications from other helicopters flying that morning that Zich's aircraft apparently got lost in the weather," Williamson said by phone Nov. 22. "They were flying above the clouds, and they weren't able to see the terrain below them."

The "best theory" for the cause of the crash is that the Huey was hit by either a surface-to-air missile or shoulder-launched missile, both of which the North Vietnamese army had deployed farther south than ever before, Williamson said.



*U.S. Army UH-1D Huey helicopters, similar to the one copiloted by Larry Zich when he crashed in 1972, airlift soldiers during a search-and-destroy mission in South Vietnam in 1966. (U.S. Army)*

### **Nine paper packets**

The United States withdrew all combat troops from South Vietnam in spring 1973 with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords. In April 1975, Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese.

Refugees flowed out from Vietnam, as well as Cambodia and Laos, over the following dozen years.

The first stop for many were refugee camps in Southeast Asia, where American officials vetted those headed to the U.S.

The protocol was to debrief Vietnamese refugees about any information they might have on American combat losses, burials, crash sites, “anything that would help us for when we got back into Southeast Asia and started doing this work trying to find and recover our lost soldiers,” Williamson said.

In 1988, one of those refugees ended up at a camp in Malaysia, where he presented the debriefer with nine tiny paper packets, each containing a fragment of remains such as a tooth or bone chip. The refugee told officials that he had gotten them from his uncle, who had told him some were from aircraft crash sites.

In April 1988, the remains were turned over to the Defense Intelligence Agency, which at the time was overseeing recovery and identification of missing service members from the Vietnam War. The remains ultimately ended up in the Defense Department’s forensic laboratory at what is now Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

### **‘Peeling an onion’**

It is quite possible the packets of remains the refugee possessed originated in an illicit remains trade that flourished in the two decades following the end of the war, driven by persistent rumors among the Vietnamese that the U.S. would pay a reward for them or that they could be used to grease the wheels for relocation to America, Williamson said.

Whether the remains turned over by the refugee in 1988 were part of that black market is unknown, obscured by an uncertain chain of custody.

“It’s kind of like peeling an onion,” Gregory Berg, the DPAA laboratory manager and a forensic anthropologist, said by phone Nov. 22. Below all the layers of possession is the individual who pulled the remains from the crash site.

Only rarely are remains obtained by the Defense Department in this manner found to be American service members, said Berg, stressing that the U.S. never pays for remains. He estimated 99% of such accessions come to nothing.



*A wounded airman shot down over South Vietnam during the 1972 Easter Offensive is carried to an armored personnel carrier for evacuation. (U.S. Army)*

Meanwhile, the processing, testing and analysis of bogus remains eats up resources, he said.

### **A short list of two**

Forensic analysts at the Hawaii identification lab could see that the remains in the nine packets had come from multiple individuals, but the remains were stored due to lack of any workable leads, Berg said.

As [technology and techniques advanced](#), those remains were reevaluated over the next two decades, he said.

“So, in the mid-2000s, we started relooking at this case, and around 2013, 2014, I sent it off for testing,” he said. The test identified DNA sequences for most of the remains indicating they were of Asian descent.

But one tooth yielded a non-Asian sequence, and that molar matched the dental records of multiple U.S. service members who were lost in Vietnam, Berg said.

He presented a short list of men to the lab’s dental experts, and they winnowed the list down to two individuals. One was Zich.

Further testing comparing the Y-chromosome DNA, which is passed on by father to sons, failed to eliminate either man.

“I think it’s probably Zich,” Berg recalled of his thinking at the time. “I can’t prove it, and I can’t rule out this other guy.”

After a new rotation of dental forensics staff came aboard, Berg asked them to review the case, hoping that “a different set of eyes” might glean what others had missed.

### **Inverted dimple**

Zich had a very detailed dental record and stellar X-rays, Lt. Cmdr. Ryan Takeda, the forensic dentist who conducted the review, recalled in an interview on Nov. 22.

The tooth on hand appeared to be a third molar, or wisdom tooth, which had no filling, he said. Zich’s dental X-ray, however, showed no tooth in that spot.

“The way that we exclude individuals is based on whether or not they have teeth or fillings,” Takeda said. “So, you can go from having no fillings to having fillings. You can go from having teeth to having no teeth. But the reverse is not possible. You can’t have a filling in the tooth and then later on not have a filling in the tooth.”

But there were discrepancies in the X-rays and Zich’s written dental records.

Each X-ray film has a physical dimple pressed into one corner and is used to provide proper orientation so that a viewer does not mistakenly look at a reverse image. The convex side of the dimple faces the viewer.

Takeda suspected that the dimple had been mistakenly reversed on Zich’s X-ray.



With the X-ray inverted to the correct orientation, “I was able to bring Zich back into the picture,” Takeda said.

He then took X-rays of the existing molar at multiple angles until he was able to get a perfect radiographic match to the original X-ray of that tooth.

“What made it interesting is that the tooth that we had had an anomaly,” he said. “Normally mandibular molars have two roots; this one had a third root, which you couldn't see at first on the antemortem X-ray because of the overlap based on the angle.”

Upon closer scrutiny, however, a vague outline of that third root was visible on the original X-ray, he said.

Based on the positive dental opinion and DNA results, a medical examiner declared the remains as those of Larry Zich on Oct. 25, Berg said.

### **The trail back**

The molar left a trail that can potentially be followed to find the crash site and, perhaps, the remains of the other crew members.

“We have the name and the contact information of the person that we spoke with in Malaysia,” Williamson said. He also had provided his uncle’s name and address.

“So, we're going to take that information and see if we can try and track those individuals down, see if they're still alive, see if they can provide additional information on where the remains came from,” Williamson said.

Someone knows, Berg said.

“Someone has found this crash site, right? That's the bottom line,” he said. “We know now that someone has found that crash site.”





# INLAND NORTHWEST HONOR FLIGHT

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**6:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

**Doors open at 5 p.m.**

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Centennial Ballroom  
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Spokane, WA 99201**



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**PURCHASE TICKETS: [INWHONORFLIGHT.ORG/GALA](http://INWHONORFLIGHT.ORG/GALA)** Reservations will close 2/8/2023

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