



# OZAUKEE COUNTY VETERANS NEWS



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**VOLUME 00**

**ISSUE 01**

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## WELCOME TO THE NEW YEAR!!

Notice I DID NOT say the New Millennium. I will reserve that, for the sake of the purists, until we roll over to the year 2001.

I trust that this finds all of you in good health and better spirits. Hopefully no one gained too much weight from the holiday feasting. I don't believe that I gained a pound, no matter what my wife and daughter think!

I also trust that no one went too overboard in their preparations for the rolling of the calendar. The Y2K bug was apparently a 'No-Show'. This is quite possibly the greatest non-event in the history of man! There have been some interesting news pieces done in the past few days about some who went a bit too far, spending tens of thousands of dollars to prepare. I hope they like all those leftovers!

As we enter the new year, there are a number of challenges before us, or as one of my old C.O.'s used to say "opportunities to excel".

The first item for me, as you will notice, is a change in the format and frequency of these newsletters. I will be shifting to a quarterly newsletter, with "special releases" as warranted. The reason for

this shift has more to do with the time it takes to produce a quality newsletter than anything else. I will be attempting to include many more "articles of interest" with each of the newsletters. As always, if there is a particular item that you would like to see included, please let me know and I can highlight that topic for the next newsletter.



## BURIAL HONORS PROGRAM

During the past legislative session at the federal level, the Congress required that the DOD provide for burial honors at the funerals of ALL veterans that requested this. The DOD has set up a toll free hotline to help coordinate this program. Sounds great right? Well there are a number of "bugs" in the system to get worked out. The concept has been that the funeral directors can call this number and the DOD representative will make arrangements to have a minimum of two active duty or reserve members of the armed forces present at the funeral to, if nothing else, fold the flag, and play a recording of taps. One of these individuals MUST represent the service that the veteran served in.

Most of our county's posts handle the funerals for members of their respective posts, and some will respond to the request for any veteran's family. That is the way it has been for a number of years in most areas of the state. Since the new cemetery opened in Union Grove, there has been a good deal of difficulty in getting units to provide honors at all funerals. This has to do with the large volume of burials taking place at this location. The addition of the newest veteran's cemetery up near Rice Lake will further compound this problem. Because of this, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, together with some members of the state Senate and Assembly are working on a bill. This bill will authorize the WDVA to hire two full time "coordinators" at the state level, who the funeral directors will call. Then the WDVA will coordinate with DOD for the burial honors. The need is seen as growing in the coming years, because, let's face it, no one is getting any younger, and look at who is typically performing the honors, some of our oldest vets.

I was given the opportunity to speak at both the Assembly and Senate Committee hearings on this program. While our state association, of County Veterans Service Officers, fully supports the concept,

we disagree with the funding for the program. Current plans are for the two new hires and any fees charged by participants to come from the Veterans Trust Fund.

While everyone is making a big "to-do" about this "benefit" to honor our veterans, the current funding has other veterans paying for this benefit. (The Trust Fund is made up of the proceeds from the WDVA loan programs that are given to veterans).

Secretary Boland has gotten rather miffed with our state association for questioning his plans, and has stated that no one worries more about the Trust Fund than he does. We disagree, someone from the "outside" needs to be keeping an eye on the long-term health of the Trust fund. At least that is our position. We also feel, that if this program is meant to honor the service of our state's veterans, why are we making the veterans themselves, via the Trust Fund, pay for this honor? Why not use some "good old tax dollars", that's GPR in legislative terms, to pay for this?

The bills in question are:

AB 582

SB288

Consider contacting your elected representatives to express your opinions on these bills.

**Sen. Mary Panzer**

335-5350 or

800-662-1227.

**Rep. Michael Lehman**

673-7979

**Rep. Glenn Grothman**

338-8061

**Rep Tim Hoven**

284-2011

I have attached a letter that Secretary Boland sent out to all of the CVSOs for your information.



### **BENEFITS**

You will find attached a letter that was sent by one of our area eye-care specialists, that offers you discounts for eye-care at a reduced price, as a benefit of your membership in the American Legion and/or Veterans Of Foreign Wars. I was unaware of this benefit until one of our



Veterans Service Commissioners brought it to my attention. Thank-You Jerry Dries!

The WDVA has increase the rate of reimbursement for education, as part of the latest budget approved by the governor. The rate of reimbursement has increased from 50% to 65% of tuition and fees. Sorry, they still won't help pay for books. Remember that there are two programs: Tuition Fee Reimbursement, which is for full-time students, who have been out of service for less than 10 years.

Part-Time Study Grant, which is for part-time

students (less than 11 credit hours). There is no cutoff date for this program. I know of at least one gent in his 70's who is still using this program!

Both programs have an income limit of \$47,500 + \$500 for each dependent child. (This is COMBINED FAMILY INCOME vet and spouse.) See Attached.

VA Healthcare is still open to ALL veterans. Many of our county's veterans have come forward to get enrolled in this benefit. A common misconception is that you have to give up your "private" doctor in order to use the program. **THIS IS ENTIRELY FALSE!!!!** You can maintain the care you currently have and ADD the VA to your mix. This has proven particularly beneficial to those who take a significant number of medications on a monthly basis. Your prescriptions from the VA are \$2 for each 30 day supply. This is a MAJOR cost savings, even if you are over the income and asset caps set by the VA, causing you to make a co-pay of \$50 to see a VA doctor, which you normally only have to do once or twice a year. REMEMBER...you CANNOT bring a prescription from a private doctor to the VA to have it filled at the VA pharmacy. A VA doctor must write the prescription for you at the VA Hospital or one of the "satellite clinics". Please read the attached article that talks about changes that are coming because of federal legislation



BENEFITS (cont.)

passed during the waning days of the last session of congress. One note.. the article talks about emergency care, this will be available at local hospitals to qualifying veterans, ONLY if you are enrolled in the VA Healthcare system! Enrollment forms and advice available in my office.

You will find attached a news release from the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs regarding the recent increase in disability compensation and Death Indemnity Compensation payments. These new rates went into effect on Dec 1, 1999. This increase represents a 2.4% across the board increase, the same as for Social Security.

Recent hikes in the lending rates charged by banks for home loans has been matched by increase in the lending rates charged by WDVA for their Home Loan Programs. Current rate for a 30 year fixed mortgage from WDVA stands at 7.85%. The WDVA Home Improvement Loan rate is at 8.15%.



The rates that WDVA charges are set by the Board of Veterans Affairs. This board is comprised of members appointed by the governor. Politics gets into everything! The board is advised by WDVA of what the cost of a bond issue is

going to be and the rate is then set by this cost. Once again proving, there is no such thing as “free money”!

SOCIAL SECURITY



UPDATES

I’m not going to pretend to be an expert on this subject. However you will find attached a copy of the latest TROA legislative update that outlines some of the most recent changes in the law that affect Social Security, not all change is bad!

The article also address a change in the “Dual Compensation” Law, which affect military retirees only. Talk about a convoluted mess! It really is far too complicated to try to address here, there are just too many whereas and wherefors involved! I can provide specifics to those who may qualify, which is basically only those with 20 years or greater military service who were rated at 70% SC or greater within 4 years of leaving active duty.

Please read the attached information sheet regarding the status of veterans as of 1999. You will really see how none of us is getting any younger!



POW/MIA UPDATE

You will find enclosed an Associated Press article that describes the recovery of 11 sets of remains from the Vietnam War.

Progress on the Korean front has ground to a screeching halt. In the latest round of discussions with the North Koreans, they have decided that they will only talk about searches for remains of missing soldiers, if the US guarantees a certain level of “humanitarian aid”. Translation, another overt attempt at blackmail, and further proof that you can not deal with a snake!

I have enclosed a recent article that was on the internet describing a rally held in North Korea that praises their “advancements” and talks of spreading this “good news” all



over the world. Read the whole article, it goes on to talk about the fact that they can’t feed their own people without outside aid, but continue to spend billions on their military. Another fine example of how the current administration’s policy of appeasement has failed miserably!

**NEWS FROM  
AROUND THE  
COUNTY**

The American Legion will be sponsoring this year's Youth Government Day on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000. The date was moved up from previous years at the request of the County Board Chair, Leroy Bley. Leroy will be stepping down from his duties not only as Board Chair, but also as a County Supervisor. We will all miss Leroy's support on the County Board!

The annual Salute to the Legislature will be held in Madison on February 9<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 PM at the Manona Terrace. This is an opportunity to come rub elbows with some of the legislatures, and bend their ears, if you have a mind to do that sort of thing! Everyone is invited, there is usually a small cover charge collected at the door. Finger food and a cash bar follow the "official" portion of the program.

The Grafton Legion Post will be holding its annual Las Vegas Night. The evening features Las Vegas style games and multiple raffles with great prizes. The event will be held on Saturday February 26<sup>th</sup>, and is open to all.



**A SPECIAL  
THANKS**

I don't get the opportunity very often, or maybe I just don't take the opportunity, to thank three of our own, who really are

**STILL SERVING!**

**Eugene Pierron  
Rudy Manke  
Donald Lohuis**

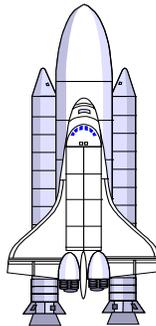
I would like to recognize their endless efforts and their dedication, on behalf of their fellow veterans.



These three gents provide transportation to and from medical appointments for our county's veterans who would otherwise be in a bad way trying to find other means of transportation.

They're always ready to help!

Maybe I can get you a pay raise next year!



**TAPS**

This part of the newsletter always makes me stop and think. Below are listed the names of our fellow veterans who passed away just since the last newsletter.

- Arthur Erdmann, Jr. 11/03/99
- Warren Roos 11/05/99
- Gerald Burkel 11/05/99
- Donald MacLachlan 11/14/99
- Harold Davidoff
- Willard Ewig 11/20/99
- John Dwer 11/21/99
- Loren Miller 11/20/99
- Henry Wellenstein 11/03/99
- Richard Evertsen 11/24/99
- Gerald Schmidt 11/26/99
- Marvin White 12/12/99
- Edward Pierringer 12/19/99
- Lawrence Yanko 12/22/99
- George Croat 12/21/99
- Kenneth Bares 12/30/99

These represent the ones our office was informed of. If we missed anyone, it means no disrespect, merely that we were not informed of the veteran's passing.

Until next time....

Ken