



# VETS NEWS

September / October 2011

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Jim Willis, Director

## VETERANS FORUM SAVES ROSEBURG VA HOSPITAL



### VA: Roseburg Will Remain a Full Capacity Level II Hospital

By Nicole Hoeft

ROSEBURG — Whoever said the little guy never comes out on top obviously never met Jim Little and the 11 other members of the Douglas County Veteran Forum (DCVF). Their group has made it their mission to “Save our Roseburg VA Hospital” and to draw attention to the recommendations made by the Maryland-based consulting firm ‘Booz/Allen/Hamilton’ to downgrade the Roseburg hospital’s services.

About a year ago, veterans learned that the Roseburg VA Health Care System (VA RHCS) planned to eliminate its Emergency Room and downsize the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) to a Telemetry Unit. The plan was to send veterans needing these services to local hospitals, such as

Mercy Medical in Roseburg and Sacred Heart in Eugene.

After learning of the plans, the Douglas County group quickly jumped into action. Joining the veterans in their opposition were U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, and U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio.

Their efforts worked.

On July 26, after careful consideration and input from veterans, lawmakers and the community, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced that VA RHCS will remain open and operational, retaining the current level of medical and surgical services. This includes a 24/7 Emergency Department, medical

Members of the Douglas County Forum gathered outside the State Capitol during a Veterans Muster held in February.

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Director’s Message ..... Page 2
- Inmates Organize Vet Group ..... Page 3
- From Soldier to Distiller..... Page 5
- Last Vietnam Draftee Retires ..... Page 6
- Veteran Stars in Nike Ad ..... Page 7
- Guard Gate Named For Gov..... Page 9
- Veterans’ Service Officers ..... Page 11

SEE ROSEBURG ON PAGE 4



## COMING TOGETHER, WORKING TOGETHER, HELPING ANOTHER AND SAYING GOODBYE TO OUR BROTHERS

### Director's Message

*Jim Willis, Director,  
Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs*

**O**n September 23rd to the 25th, Oregon will host the 65th Annual Training Conference of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) at the Chinook Winds Convention Center in Lincoln City. We are proud to host this important conference and are grateful to our staff, volunteers and many others who have given generously of their time to make this conference a success.

Jobs and the economy seem to be all that we hear about at both the national and state levels. Jobs are especially important to our returning service members when completing their service and returning to civilian life. If you know of a job, part-time, temporary or full time, you are asked to contact your local employment office or you may contact SFC (Ret) Craig Snitker at 503-584-2393, CTAP Program Manager, Oregon Reintegration Team. In addition and in Central Oregon, you can contact USAF, Kandice Newton, CTAP, 503-421-7448. They will help connect one of our veterans with much needed employment.

On Friday, September 16th we will observe the National POW/MIA Recognition Day. This is not a federal public holiday in the United States but it is a national observance. Many Oregonians will pause to remember the sacrifices and service of those who were prisoners of war (POW), as well as those who are missing in action (MIA), and their families.

In news concerning the Lebanon Veterans Home, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued on July 29th asking for Architectural, Engineering, Consulting and Planning Services for the construction of the Lebanon Veterans Home. At this writing, the responses to the RFP are being reviewed to determine the firm that will be selected to complete this important work.

As always, I want to thank everyone who continues to contribute their time and donations to our Veterans Home in The Dallas. You are truly making a difference in the quality of life enjoyed by the veterans and their spouses who are residence of our home.

In closing let me say that sadly just last month Oregon buried two of our finest from the war in Afghanistan. PFC Brice M. Scott of Eugene was killed in action on July 31st and Hospital Corpsman Riley Gallinger-Long was killed in action on August 11th. Our condolences go out to their families, friends and those who served with them. May they rest in peace.

Jim Willis, Director

## DOD RE-EVALUATING RETIREMENT DETERMINATIONS FOR SOME VETERANS

The Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR) is re-evaluating Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) and Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) disability ratings for some veterans medically separated between December 31, 2009 and September 11, 2001, to ensure correct disability retirement determinations were made.

Veterans who received a combined disability rating of 20 percent or less and were not found eligible for retirement can apply to have their MEB/PEB disability rating reviewed for fairness, consistency, and accuracy. Former reserve members with greater than 20 years of total federal military service but fewer than 20 years of active

duty, who meet the above criteria, are also eligible to apply.

The PDBR uses medical information provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the military department. Once a review is complete, the PDBR forwards a recommendation to the secretary of the respective branch of the armed services. It is up to the individual service branch to make the final determination on whether to change the original disability determination.

Questions about PDBR can be emailed to [PDBRPA@afncr.af.mil](mailto:PDBRPA@afncr.af.mil).

**Save the dates!**  
**March 30-31, 2012**

**Oregon Women Veterans Conference 2012**  
Salem Conference Center | Reserve beginning January

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**Input for the next issue must be received by October 1.**

# INMATES ORGANIZE VETERANS GROUP IN ONTARIO

ONTARIO – Steve Farrow has one of the most stressful jobs in Oregon. As a corrections officer at the Snake River Correctional Institution (SRCI), Farrow spends his days with convicts who have committed crimes ranging from property crimes to murder.

The Vietnam veteran has spent nearly 14 years patrolling the grounds of SRCI, and in that time, he knew that there was one thing missing: An Incarcerated Veterans Association.

As a veteran, Farrow understood the need of veterans to be around other veterans and advocated for a way for incarcerated veterans to interact. SCRI Superintendent Mark Nooth agreed and tasked Farrow to organize the group.

“I was happy to take on this project, but the members would have to meet certain criteria,” Farrow explained. “All veterans applying for membership had to be honorably discharged and prove it by providing a DD-214. As of August, membership is at 63 veterans and we expect more as the word gets around as to what the group is about.” Farrow said.

The goal of the Snake River Veterans Association (SRVA) is to bring incarcerated veterans together to help one another. Farrow also has encouraged the veterans to work on projects that benefit veterans and their families outside the prison walls. An artist within the group drew a sketch of a proposed veterans monument in Ontario. That sketch was later displayed in public to show what the monument would look like.

This past Memorial Day, Farrow laid a wreath

at the base of the now completed monument on behalf of the inmates. “They asked me to do it because they wanted to do something to honor fallen veterans, so I was proud to make the presentation for them.”

SRVA members also signed a large drawing of a Yellow Ribbon that was taken to Walter Reed Hospital as part of the Wounded Warrior program as a way of reaching out to fellow veterans. “The association just wants to be involved with providing support for veterans and their families as a way of giving back to the community,” Farrow said. “They feel left behind and they want to matter.”

The Association also works to help its members. Milton McCarthy joined the group early on. The 100 percent service-connected disabled Vietnam War veteran had previously worked for 19 years with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs before being incarcerated. He uses his VA expertise behind the wall in Ontario to help his fellow veterans with their veteran’s issues.



**Corrections Officer Steve Farrow places a wreath on behalf of incarcerated Snake River Correctional Institution veterans at a veteran’s monument in Ontario on Memorial Day.**

While many may think SRVA is full of older Vietnam veterans, Farrow says there is a definite increase of young incarcerated Iraq and Afghanistan veterans at Snake River. “These new veterans often respond to civilian situations with their combat training and are having a hard time reintegrating after their combat tours and end up here.”

Veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) do get help from a local counselor who visits the prison weekly to talk with the inmates. However, VA medical and mental health services remain unavailable to incarcerated veterans and VA financial benefits are significantly reduced for veterans incarcerated for more than 61 days.

While nearly 10 percent of Oregon’s population is veterans, the veteran inmate population may be less, according to prison officials. However, Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs (ODVA) Salem Claims and Counseling Manager Mitch Sparks said the Oregon State Prisons and Oregon State Correctional Institute (OSCI) have thriving in-house veteran associations to support these inmates. Farrow agrees that his association will only grow in the future.

ODVA and County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO) routinely do outreach to incarcerated veterans.

“We want our incarcerated veterans to know they are not a forgotten group,” said Tom Mann, administrator of ODVA’s Veterans’ Services Division. “It’s important that we help these veterans and their families while they are incarcerated and even more important that we help them when they are released.”

With the reduction of VA benefits after more than 61 days in jail, some of those benefits may be transferrable to family members on the outside. The veteran does not lose the benefit; the benefits are just on hold during the incarceration. When a veteran is scheduled to be released, ODVA and the CVSOs work with these veterans to re-establish their veteran benefits.

“We are very happy to see veteran associations within the jails,” Mann said. “It is important that they support each other while incarcerated and work with us as they plan their re-entry into society. We hope all the facilities encourage their

## VETS WITH WAR WOUNDS LIVE LONGER THAN UNSCATHED

By Associated Press

In the 60 years since he was wounded at war, Ruben Campos has lived a healthy life in Tucson, AZ. Now, the Department of Veterans Affairs wants to know why.

The VA is taking a closer look at veterans like the 81-year-old Campos after recent medical research showed a link between war wounds and increased longevity.

VA researchers tracked more than 10,000 veterans of World War II and Korea from the late 1990s until 2008, cross-referencing their death rates and medals data.

At the end of the study period, VA officials said “those with Purple Heart citations had half the mortality rate of those without” and the results held true regardless of whether the veterans had post-traumatic stress disorder.

If further research can figure out why, VA officials said it could help later generations of war veterans.

“War-wounded veterans who survive into later life, especially those who do not develop PTSD, may provide valuable clues as to the factors that lead to resilience to combat stress,” according to a news release from the VA.

The Tucson area is home to hundreds of combat-wounded veterans.

About 200 of them, including Campos, belong to the local chapter of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, where members range in age from their 20s to their 90s.

Campos, a former Army paratrooper wounded by mortar fire in Korea in 1951, is mystified by the VA findings.

“It seems odd,” he told The Arizona Daily Star, adding that his own secrets to good living are pretty simple.

Campos and wife Rose have three kids and three grandchildren. He gets medical care from the VA in Tucson, goes to church and spends some of his time helping others, for example, by assisting with food deliveries to the needy.

The former maintenance worker with Tucson Unified School District said he’s been relatively healthy all his life.

David Alegria, who leads the local Purple Heart chapter, also was puzzled by the VA study. He wonders if increased longevity might be due to wounded veterans’ paying closer attention to their health as they age.

Whatever the reason, if Purple Heart veterans are living longer, Alegria said “it’s good news.”

# PATRIOT DAY FIELD OF FLAGS HONORS VETERANS

SALEM – This September Riverfront Park in Salem will look like a sea of waving red, white and blue in honor of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11. More than 5,000 flags and banners will fly from September 7-11 at the 2011 Patriot Day Field of Flags.

The Northwest Military Field will honor soldiers who have given their lives since the attack with a plaque at the base of a flag and a pot of red, white and blue flowers.

The remainder of Riverfront Park will feature 3,000 9/11 banners in eight separate fields. The fields represent the two towers, the Pentagon, each aircraft used in the attack and a special field honoring those who died while trying to save others.

There will also be two fields of flags for Oregon Public Safety Officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

More than 30,000 visitors attended the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary event in 2006. Sale of the flags and banners raised more than \$75,000 for local charities that benefit deployed military members and their families. The Patriot Day Field of Flags Steering Committee hopes to double the amount raised this year.

To donate or for more information visit [www.patriotsdaymemorial.com](http://www.patriotsdaymemorial.com).



**A young girl wraps herself up in one of the banners displayed during the 2006 Field of Flags display. This year's 10-year anniversary display will be even bigger, with more events planned.**

# COVO RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

At the National Coalition of Homeless Veterans (NCHV) annual conference in Washington, D.C., Central Oregon Veterans Outreach, Inc. (COVO) received the 2011 Outstanding Partnership Award. VA Secretary Shinseki and HUD Secretary made presentations at the ceremony.

COVO Executive Director Chuck Hemingway accepted the award on behalf of COVO on June 7, at the NCHV awards banquet. COVO was nominated for the award by COVO volunteer Ruth Clark, an Air Force veteran who writes a blog focusing on Central Oregon veterans issues.

“This is a recognition of the excellent work COVO has done over the past years to forge effective partnerships with local community and veterans organizations and state, local, and federal agencies,” said COVO Board President Roger Riolo.

NCHV is comprised of more than 3,000 community organizations and agencies throughout the United States that focus on issues veterans experiencing homelessness face.

## ROSEBURG FROM PAGE 1

and surgical inpatient services, extensive primary care, mental health, and residential programs. Specialty care services, including cardiology and ophthalmology, will be enhanced.

One service that will not be immediately reinstated is the ICU which was closed in October of 2009.

Wyden, Merkley and DeFazio issued a joint statement on the same day as the VA announcement.

“This is obviously not the decision we were hoping for,” said the joint statement. “Keeping the Intensive Care Unit closed will force veterans to travel further and, potentially, pay more for care that they should be receiving from the VA.”

The announcement was not all bad news, though. Along with leaving most inpatient services intact, the VA currently has more than \$55 million in capital investment projects in progress or scheduled to begin including a new dental clinic, a new mental health substance abuse residential rehab treatment program building and a medical-surgical renovation.

“We are in a celebratory mood,” said Little, a 30-year Navy and Vietnam veteran, of the announcement. “All elected officials have stood by us, from the city to the national level.”

In fact, during Oregon’s 2011 Regular Legislative Session, Representative Bruce Hanna introduced House Joint Memorial 26 that encouraged Congress to maintain the Roseburg VA Hospital as a full-capacity Level II hospital. Both the House and Senate unanimously passed the bill.

With Carol Bodedain stepping in as the new Roseburg VA Hospital Director and the recent announcement to keep the hospital open, Little and the DCVF are encouraged.

“We are very proud of our county and what we have accomplished for all the veterans of Southern Oregon,” Little said. “We were in a 100 round bare-knuckled fight and while we did not get a knock out, we got a decision.”

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*Eileen Roach Kesti, WASP*

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*All proceeds from the sale of the book go to support the Oregon Veterans' Home.*

# FROM SOLDIER TO DISTILLER, VETERAN HONORS COMRADES AND OTHER FALLEN

By Nicole Hoeff

One of the great truths about being a combat veteran is that war changes the course of the lives of those who experience it.

When Dawson Officer opened the doors to 4 Spirits Distillery, he knew he was taking on a huge risk, but for this Iraq veteran, this is what he was trained to do.

As a member of the Oregon Army National Guard's now infamous 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Brigade, Officer learned under extreme circumstances that he had to face his fears of living and of dying. "After that, everything became trivial," said Officer. "What in the world could happen to me that would closely compare to prematurely accepting death?"

It was in this acceptance that he realized what he wanted to do with his life, and the distillery was born. "I was at home drinking whisky thinking I'd like to make this but with some changes. That was the first idea and then it just grew from there," recalled Officer.

To get 4 Spirits up and running, Officer enlisted the help of his family and friends and he received plenty of it. His father, a Vietnam veteran, and his brother, also a veteran, helped build and construct. His friends helped weld signs together, build the website and design the graphics for the bottles of his first two products, Slap-Tail and WebFoot Vodka.

But it was the naming of his company that he sought input from the other men of Delta Company. Officer wanted to dedicate the distillery to the memory of their four friends who were killed while serving in Iraq: Lt. Erik McCrae, Sgt. Justin Eyerly, Sgt. Justin

Linden, and Sgt. David Roustum. "We were combat soldiers who fought side by side with each other. They were hard working guys, dedicated, funny, knowledgeable and respected," he said. "There isn't a day that goes by that I don't see their faces and think about their loss."

4 Spirits Distillery was a name that Officer thought would honor them. Early on he actually scrapped the name, fearing what people would think of his intentions but, he finally decided the guys from his platoon would know best. Their feedback would decide if he would use the name or not.

"My concern was the guys I served with. If they had a problem with it then it was out," said Officer. "I was happy when they all saw the message that I was trying to send and got an overwhelming level of support. They thought it was a great way to honor our friends and the fallen."

The journey from soldier to distiller has not always been easy. After a certain amount of pain and anguish while learning the trade, Officer now has his products on the shelves of many retail liquor stores. "My vodka is small batch, it's not volume based. When you make it in small batches you get to care for it a bit more. I distill very slowly and I filter it slowly, but in an unconventional way, as far as I know," said Officer.

The result has produced a smooth, martini grade vodka with a little nose on the back end. He has distilled a winner.

Through the extremes of war and entrepreneurship, Officer has kept life in perspective. "There are four guys who didn't get the chance to move on with life. I better start making it mean something for all of us."



**Dawson Officer pictured with his first two brands of distilled spirits, Webfoot and SlapTail Vodkas. His company, 4 Spirits Distillery, is dedicated to his fellow Guardsmen who died while serving in Iraq.**

4 Spirits Distillery's tasting room is located in the old Air Force Communications building in Adair Village (formerly Camp Adair).

Visit [www.4spiritsdistillery.com](http://www.4spiritsdistillery.com) for more information.

## MILITARY CONVENTIONS, REUNIONS AND EVENTS

**Employer Training Outreach and Veterans Career Fair** at Camp Rilea, near Warrenton, Sept. 9, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Employers and WorkSource Oregon representatives available. Current programs available to assist a veteran's job search.

*RSVP to: Gary Barber, 503-325-4821 ext. 247, or Patrick Preston, 1-800-643-5707*

**North Coast Veterans Stand Down** at Camp Rilea, near Warrenton, Sept. 10, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Meet with VA counselors, claims experts, connect with resources and organizations.

*RSVP to: Gary Barber, 503-325-4821 ext. 247, or Patrick Preston, 1-800-643-5707*

**Free Public BBQ Fundraiser** for Wounded Warrior Program at VFW Post 1643, 1503 N.E. 4th St., Bend, Sept. 10, 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. All donations will go to support the program.

*For information: Diane MacBean, 541-389-0775*

**Honor Flight of Eastern Oregon Veterans Picnic Fundraiser** at Vince Genna Stadium, Bend, 12 p.m., Sept. 12. All are invited to help raise money to enable WWII veterans to go to Washington D.C. to visit the memorials. Cost: \$10 plate.

*For information: Mike Genna, 541-554-5666*

**Farragut Naval Training Station** will hold their 25th reunion Sept. 10, in Athol, ID. All WWII veterans and their families are invited to the Memorial Plaza at Farragut State Park.

*For information: Erin Blair, 208-683-2425, ext. 32, or Dennis Woolford, ext. 234*

**Salem Community Stand-Down** for all veterans and their families, Sept. 16-17, at 1st Free Methodist Church, 4455 Silverton Rd., N.E., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Available services will include: Benefit registration, medical and dental, rousing resources, job search, clothes for women and children, legal aid, women's assistance, bike repair, veterinarians, Friendship Cafe, and more.

*For information: Wayne Crowder, 503-363-4238*

**Veterans Stand Down and Free Job Fair** at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Sept. 20, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. More than 70 employers and social service agencies will be available to assist veterans with employment and other needs. Free lunch, haircuts, basic health checks, and other services will be offered.

*For information: Melissa Ransink, 503-226-7387 or [www.portlandstanddown.org](http://www.portlandstanddown.org)*

**Operation Welcome Home** for Oregon's 116th CAV is a free public celebration for all soldiers and their families, Oct. 7, Baker City Armory, 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Plenty of food available for everyone, and a free concert. Children will be supervised by Young Life volunteers.

*For information: Stacy Dinger, 541-403-0977*

**USNR Midshipmen's School** will hold their reunion Sept. 25-30, in Los Angeles, CA.

*For information: Ken Boyd, 405-570-6421, or [ynnek7301@gmail.com](mailto:ynnek7301@gmail.com)*

**Military Officers Association of America**, Oregon State Council will hold their biennial convention Oct. 7-9, at the Oregon Garden Resort, 859 W. Main St., Silverton. For room reservations call, 1-800-966-6490.

*For information: John Stensland, 503-362-8715*

**USS Clinton APA-144** will hold their 18th annual reunion Oct. 10-14, in Orlando, FL.

*For information: Duncan Atkinson, 409-945-6148*

**125th and 138th Combat Engineers' World War II reunion** will be Oct. 10-13, in Charleston, SC.

*For information: Allan Kahn, 503-363-1196*

**The 39th, 40th and 41st Pursuit/Fighter Squadrons and 31st and 35th Fighter Groups** will hold their 70th reunion Oct. 12-16, in Bellingham, WA.

*For information: Ms. Linne Haddock, 719-687-6425, or [lhaddock@mac.com](mailto:lhaddock@mac.com)*

**Honor Flight of Eastern Oregon Harvest Ball Dinner Fundraiser** at Carey Foster Hall on Lynn Blvd., Oct. 15, 5 p.m., in Prineville. Cost: \$8 per plate, Children under 12, \$4. Dance begins at 7 p.m. Dance admission by donation.

*For information: Bob Ervin, 541-447-5451*

SEE MORE EVENTS ON PAGE 8

# LAST VIETNAM-ERA DRAFTEE AND OREGONIAN RETIRES FROM ACTIVE SERVICE

by Kimberly Hefling, Associated Press

FORT BELVOIR, Va. - A homemade wind chime with the word "Whining" under a red slash is made from metal parts put in his leg after a parachute accident. Every Sunday he trims his crew cut. He didn't join the Army willingly, but as Command Sgt. Maj. Jeff Mellinger prepares to retire, he's grateful he found his calling.

Mellinger was drafted to fight in the Vietnam War, and the Army believes he's the last draftee to retire, after 39 years. Most did their two years and left. But Mellinger had found home.

"I think I'm pretty good at it, but I like it. That's the bottom line. I love being a soldier and I love being around soldiers," he said.

Mellinger's motto is simple: No whining - as the wind chime attests.

When the draft notice arrived in the mail in 1972 at his home in Eugene, tens of thousands of troops had been killed. Anti-war protests were rampant. Draft cards were being burned and returning soldiers were treated as part of the problem. The military wasn't a popular job.

The return address on the letter was the White House. Just 19, he was impressed that President Richard Nixon would write to him.

"I opened it up and it said, 'Greetings from the president of the United States.' I said, 'Wow, how's he know me?'" Mellinger said, laughing. "It was a form letter that said my friends and neighbors had selected me to represent them in the Armed Forces and I was hereby ordered to report for induction."

Mellinger told the draft board there was a mistake.

"I ... told them I don't need to go into the Army, I've got a job," said Mellinger, who hung drywall for a living. "They just kind of laughed."

Once the path was set, he said, he didn't consider trying to find a way out.

He heard so many war stories in training that he was fired up about going, and was disappointed he was instead assigned to be an office clerk in Germany.

In Germany, Mellinger immediately stood out with his positive attitude, short haircut and mastery of physical fitness skills, said Bob Myers, 64, of Pleasant Hill, Iowa, then his company commander who now runs a chain of convenience stores. He replaced a soldier in trouble for illegal drug use, Myers said.

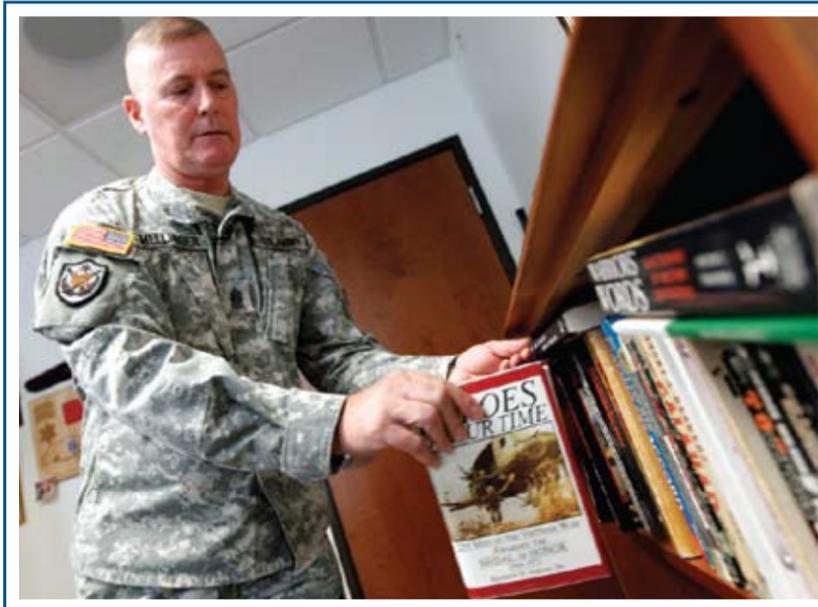
"He wasn't a part of that culture and everyone knew that," said Myers, who was instrumental in getting Mellinger to enlist when his draft term was over.

Mellinger wasn't long for clerking. He earned a spot in the Army Rangers, and would go on to do more than 3,700 parachute jumps. And despite the 1991 parachute accident that gave him the material for the wind chime, breaking his leg in several places, he went on to run nine marathons. He was made a command sergeant major in 1992.

Nearly a decade later, he was sent to ground zero in New York right after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks as part of an advance party from the First Army. Then came his time in Iraq as the top enlisted soldier of the multi-national forces in Iraq, where he says he survived 27 roadside bombings during his deployment of nearly three years straight.

Mellinger, 58, says his stories of being in the Army during the tumultuous 1970s as the Army struggled with issues of drugs, race and the role of women are so foreign to young troops that they look at him like he's a dinosaur when he shares them.

A recruiting poster hanging today on Mellinger's



**Army Command Sgt. Major Jeff Mellinger, 58, a Vietnam War draftee in 1972, is believed by the Army to be the last conscripted soldier to have served continuously. He is set to retire this summer after nearly 40 years.**

office door at Fort Belvoir, where he's the command sergeant major for the Army Material Command, that encourages female troops to try out for female engagement teams that work in war zones with Special Forces troops shows just how much things have changed since Mellinger was drafted.

Until 1978, female troops were in the Women's Army Corps separate from the regular Army. Mellinger said he recalls when most female troops weren't allowed to carry weapons and were taken out of the field at night to sleep in a separate barracks away from the men.

"There were some stymied leaders. What do we do with all these females?" he said. "A lot of those things together caused a lot of turmoil, caused a lot of difficulty and problems and a huge leadership challenge because the military was being torn apart like the country was."

Mellinger understands well the tragic side of soldiering. He knows 40 to 50 people buried at Arlington National Cemetery and goes to Walter Reed Army Medical Center to visit wounded troops and their families most weekends he's in town.

It was in a hospital room in 2009 that Jill Stephenson met Mellinger, who was standing near the bedside of her son, Cpl. Benjamin Kopp, 21. Mellinger had heard that Kopp, a fellow Ranger, had been shot in Afghanistan and he went to see him. Mellinger immediately embraced Stephenson, she said.

"It was the most compassionate, caring hug around me that I ever have received from a stranger.

It was very comforting," said Stephenson, 44, of Rosemount, Minn.

Kopp died soon after. Stephenson has since stayed with Mellinger and his wife, Kim, on multiple occasions while in Washington to attend ceremonies at Arlington cemetery, where her son is buried.

Several soldiers who served directly under Mellinger in Iraq have reached out to him to talk about their combat-related mental health issues. One was a soldier who rang his doorbell and said he was haunted by the memory of helping to collect the remains of a fallen Marine, and he was bothered that he didn't know the Marine's name.

"I told him his name and we sat and talked for several hours," Mellinger said.

Mellinger said he has a roster with the names of the 2,614 troops killed, the 19,304 wounded, and two missing in action from his time in Iraq. He wears a metal bracelet with those numbers sketched in it in their honor.

Mellinger's happy with the set-up of today's all-volunteer force, but he does think the contributions of draftees have been forgotten, particularly since there's such a romantic notion that after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in World War II, everyone "ran down to the recruiting station." In reality, thousands were drafted in that war and many others, he said.

"Draftees are pretty maligned over time," he said, "but the fact is they are part of every branch of service up to 1973, and when you look at what those military branches accomplished over time, I'll let the record speak for itself."

## NAVY CONTACTING EX-LEJEUNE RESIDENTS

From Armed Forces News

Veterans who lived in military housing at Camp Lejeune, N.C., between 1957 and 1987 should expect to receive a notification from the Navy Department about possible health repercussions related to contaminated drinking water.

Pollutants from both on- and off-base sources that permeated Lejeune's water supply may have caused some veterans or family members to contract any of several types of cancer, spina bifida, cleft lip, or cleft palate, according to a 2005 toxicity study conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Former service members who lived on Lejeune and believe they are now sick as a result of water-contamination exposure should contact the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Veterans contacted by the Navy can get more information at [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/index.html](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/index.html) or [www.marines.mil/clsurvey/index.html](http://www.marines.mil/clsurvey/index.html). Information is also available by calling 877-261-9782 or by emailing [clwater@usmc.mil](mailto:clwater@usmc.mil).

Veterans who served at Lejeune during those years should also register online for the Marine Corps' official water study at <https://clnr.hqi.usmc.mil/>.

# OREGON WOUNDED WARRIOR STARS IN NIKE VIDEO

Reprinted with permission from  
Kathy Aney, East Oregonian

What limits?

That is the tagline in a Nike-sponsored commercial starring a Hermiston soldier who lost his leg in Iraq. The slogan describes Luke Wilson to a T.

Wilson lost his left leg in a rocket-propelled grenade attack in 2004. The Oregon Army National Guard soldier was patrolling a bridge near Bagdad when he heard a loud boom and saw an insurgent clad in black and pointing and RPG his way. As Wilson drew a bead, he saw a flash and everything went pure white. The blast nearly tore his leg off, but Wilson kept firing.

That's Like Wilson.

Since his injury, Wilson has mastered his prosthetic leg. He hunts, fishes, kayaks, cycles, snowboards and, well, anything else he wants to do.

"The only limits I encounter are the limits other people try to place on me," he said.

The video featuring Wilson promotes the Wild Canyon Games, sponsored by Nike. The annual team challenge event combines running, swimming, biking, geocoaching, climbing, ziplining and blobbing. The competition took place in early June at a 66,000-acre ranch near Antelope.

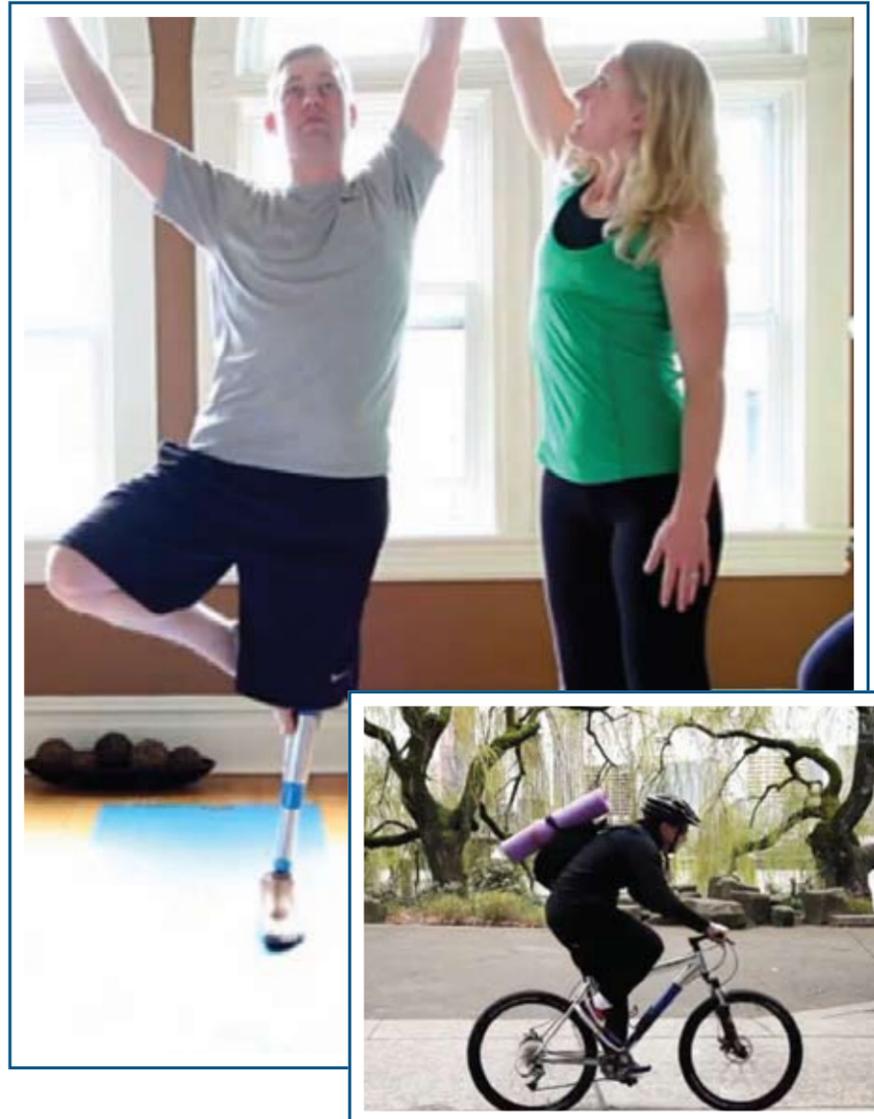
Wilson spent two days in Portland filming the one minute, 42-second video. The segment opens with dawn breaking over a Portland neighborhood. Inside a house, a sleepy-eyed Wilson stretches, does his push-ups, blends a smoothie, laces his Nike shoes, gets a wet good-bye kiss from his dog

and hops on his mountain bike. Yoga mat strapped to his back, he cruises along Portland streets, crosses a bridge or two, speeds past the iconic Portlandia statue and rides up Marquam Hill past the VA Medical Center. Finally, he stops at a two-story brick building, hefts the bike to his shoulder and climbs creaky wooden stairs to his yoga class.

There, the instructor guides the class through a series of yoga moves. The camera zooms in on the Ranger tattoo inked on Wilson's arm. So far, the viewer has no idea that Wilson has only one leg. His prosthetic limb has been covered by black sweats, socks and his Nike shoes.

In the last moments, the camera pans back to show Wilson balancing on his mechanical leg with his flesh and blood leg stuck out to the side in a classic tree pose.

The screen fades to black, except for the words "What Limits."



To view the Nike video featuring Luke Wilson, go to <http://wild-canyongames.org/wild-canyon-games/>.

## I Got Mine!

Military service graphic license plates are available for your vehicle.

A Technical Analyst at ODVA, Brent Koester (US Navy), has worked in service to veterans since 2001.

*"I chose to use a Veterans plate because I have pride in my nation and my time in service. Serving in the military was one of the best experiences of my life and led to many more experiences."*

*"I still have friends from my time in service that I keep in touch with on a regular basis and they will be close friends for the rest of my life. I chose the license plate displaying the South West Asia medal as this is the Medal for Desert Storm which is the war I served in."*

The new graphic plates also support the Oregon Veterans' Home. Just visit your local DMV office and ask how you can get one of the new veteran license plates for your automobile.

Contact ODVA for more information: 1-800-828-8801

[www.oregon.gov/odva](http://www.oregon.gov/odva)

## W.V. HOSPICE: LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD VETERANS

SALEM – Recognizing that 25 percent of those who pass away each year are veterans, Willamette Valley Hospice (WVH) knew it had to do something to help its own veteran clients during their final battle. Following a national model, WVH has begun a veteran volunteer network, pairing veterans with their dying comrades to help these patients have a more peaceful end of life experience.

"Willamette Valley Hospice has become a national partner of We Honor Veterans," explained Melissa Lindley, WVH community outreach coordinator. The program was developed by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs, to provide camaraderie for veteran patients at the end of life.

As a We Honor Veterans partner WVH focuses on respectful inquiry, compassionate listening and grateful acknowledgement, coupled with veteran-centric education of hospice staff. Staff can assist patients and families in situations where there might be some specific needs related to the veteran's military service, combat experience or other traumatic events.

If you are interested in volunteering to work with veteran hospice patients, please contact the Volunteer Services Department at Willamette Valley Hospice at 503-588-3600, or visit the website at [www.wvh.org/volunteer.html](http://www.wvh.org/volunteer.html).



# THANK YOU!

- |                                 |                                 |                                     |
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*Donations to the Oregon Veterans' Home Trust Fund are deeply appreciated. The generosity of the ever-growing number of Friends of the Home continue to provide life enriching experiences to the veterans who call the Veterans' Home home. To become a Friend of the Home, use the gift form below. Your donation is tax deductible. Thank you again to those who contributed during the months of June and July 2011.*



## OREGON VETERANS' HOME GIFT FORM

When you gift \$35-\$64 receive an Oregon Veterans' Home Remembrance Pin.

Gift \$65-\$99 and receive two pins.

Gift \$100 or more and receive a listing on the Wall of Gratitude and two pins.

Please make checks payable to the Oregon Veterans' Home.

Send donations to:  
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700 Summer St. NE  
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*Thank you for supporting the place where honor lives!*

**East Multnomah County Veterans' Stand-Down** on Oct. 15, at "The Chapel," 27132 S.E. Stark St., Troutdale, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Veterans can obtain information about services and assistance, clothing, health screening, and hygiene supplies. Lunch will be provided to veterans and volunteers.

*For information: Don Weber, 503-957-6866*

**Massing of the Colors** - Service of Remembrance at Portland's Kliever Armory, 10000 N.E. 33<sup>rd</sup> Dr., on Oct. 30, 2 p.m. All military (Active, Reserve, Guard) service organizations and the public are invited to participate and carry their Colors into the armory. The 234th Army Band will perform. No uniforms required.

*For information: Kathy Page, 503-502-9072 or kpageusa@aol.com*

**Oregon Women Veterans** meet the 1st Thursday each month, 6 p.m., for a potluck gathering. All women veterans welcome at the Heeran Center Building, 2222 Coburg Rd., Eugene.

*For information: Sonja Fry, 541-607-7428*

**American Legion Post 75** in Sheridan meets for a Fundraiser Breakfast the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month, 7 a.m. - 12 p.m., at the Post, 125 N. Bridge St.

*For information: Jim Gordon, 503-843-3773*

**Vietnam Veteran 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division & 1<sup>st</sup> Air CAV veterans** meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month, Superking Buffet, 5105 SE 82<sup>nd</sup> Ave., Portland. All veterans are welcome to meet for lunch and conversation.

*For information: Gary Hartt, 503-632-6955*

**Veterans of Underage Military Service** meet the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday monthly, at Farm House Restaurant, 3612 SE 82<sup>nd</sup> Ave., Portland, at 10:30 a.m.

*For information: Willie Paradise, 503-665-1739*

# VETERANS DAY EVENT INFO NEEDED BY OCTOBER 7

Every November thousands of veterans read the Vets News seeking information about events that are going on in their area in celebration of Veterans Day.

Community event organizers statewide are encouraged to submit event information to ODVA for inclusion in the paper by October 7.

Event announcements will be compiled into a list of 2011 Veterans Day Activities that will not only be published in the November/December issue of Vets News, but will also be placed on ODVA's website, Facebook page and be distributed to the media throughout Oregon.

Organizers may submit their community event at [www.oregon.gov/ODVA/VeteransDay.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/ODVA/VeteransDay.shtml) or email a brief description to [vetsnews@odva.state.or.us](mailto:vetsnews@odva.state.or.us) with the following information:

- Date and time
- Organization hosting or sponsoring the event
- Event location and address
- A short description of the event
- Name and phone number of contact person

# READINESS CENTER GATE DEDICATED TO KULONGOSKI

## Former governor recognized for his support of the Oregon National Guard while in office

CLACKAMAS – When troops, families and visitors alike drive into the new Oregon National Guard Armed Forces Reserve Readiness Center at Camp Withycombe, they will be reminded of a former governor's support and love of his troops. Former Gov. Ted Kulongoski was honored by the National Guard on July 5 when the entry gate to the newly constructed Armed Forces Reserve Center was dedicated in his name.

The Kulongoski Gate is named in honor of the former governor for his support of the Oregon National Guard during his two terms in office. Kulongoski is the third governor in Oregon's history to be associated with the facility, and to have a location at Camp Withycombe named in their honor. The original 234-acre parcel of land was first named Camp Benson after Gov. Frank W. Benson, but was later renamed Camp Withycombe during World War I for Gov. James Withycombe.

The center, which will be officially dedicated September 17, is nearly 250,000 square feet and will be home to more than 1,300 Oregon Army National Guard soldiers and the United States Army Reserve.

It is dedicated to the memory of the 41st Infantry Division and its soldiers – a unit which gained recognition for sacrifice and service during WW II.



**Former Gov. Ted Kulongoski (far right), his wife, Mary Oberst, along with current Gov. John Kitzhaber and Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, Oregon's Adjutant General, unveil the "Kulongoski Gate" sign during a dedication ceremony, July 5, at Camp Withycombe in Clackamas.**

## KEN JERNSTEDT:

### Oregon's first fighter ace volunteered to fly for China and tallied 10.5 kills

By Mike Allegre, ODVA

In 1941, before the United States was aware of how much havoc and pain Japan would inflict upon the nation, Ken Jernstedt was a 24-year-old U.S. Marine Air Corps fighter pilot who resigned his officer's commission to become a Flying Tiger on the other side of the world. The mission was to fight the Japanese for the Chinese.

"They offered us three times the money and an opportunity to travel to a part of the world I'd never seen," Jernstedt recalled of joining the American Volunteer Group (AVG).

The AVG was a 100 aircraft private air force formed with the covert approval of President Roosevelt and then hired by Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek.

He was assigned to the AVG's 3rd Squadron, "Hells Angels." For three months, their commander, Brig. Gen. Claire Chennault, put his Tigers through intense training to learn to fly and fight with their P-40 Tomahawks. The P-40 sported a familiar snarling tiger-like teeth emblem painted around the engine cowling. It was hard to start and had barely been proved worthy in air combat in Europe. With a top speed of nearly 360 miles per hour, it was faster than the more maneuverable Japanese fighters.

Chennault taught his pilots to dive on bombers, shoot and then leave quickly. "It was hit and run and it was a sound tactic," Jernstedt said.

Jernstedt felt there was plenty of luck in flying a mission, like the day he spotted 15 enemy bombers. He decided to "make a run at them by myself." During one pass, a bullet broke the windshield, whizzed by his head and slammed into the armor plate behind him. With glass in his left eye, Jernstedt said he was "lucky enough to land the plane."

As the Tigers shot down raiding bombers and destroyed aircraft on Japanese airfields, their paychecks reflected their work.

During one memorable mission Jernstedt recalled that he and another 3rd Squadron pilot, Bill Read, flew to Mulmein near Mataban Bay. The early morning sunlight revealed enemy planes lined up and parked wing tip to wing tip.

"We made six strafing passes and destroyed 15 airplanes. Bill and I split the \$7,500 payment between us. We made between \$550 to \$750 per month and received \$500 for every enemy plane we shot down."

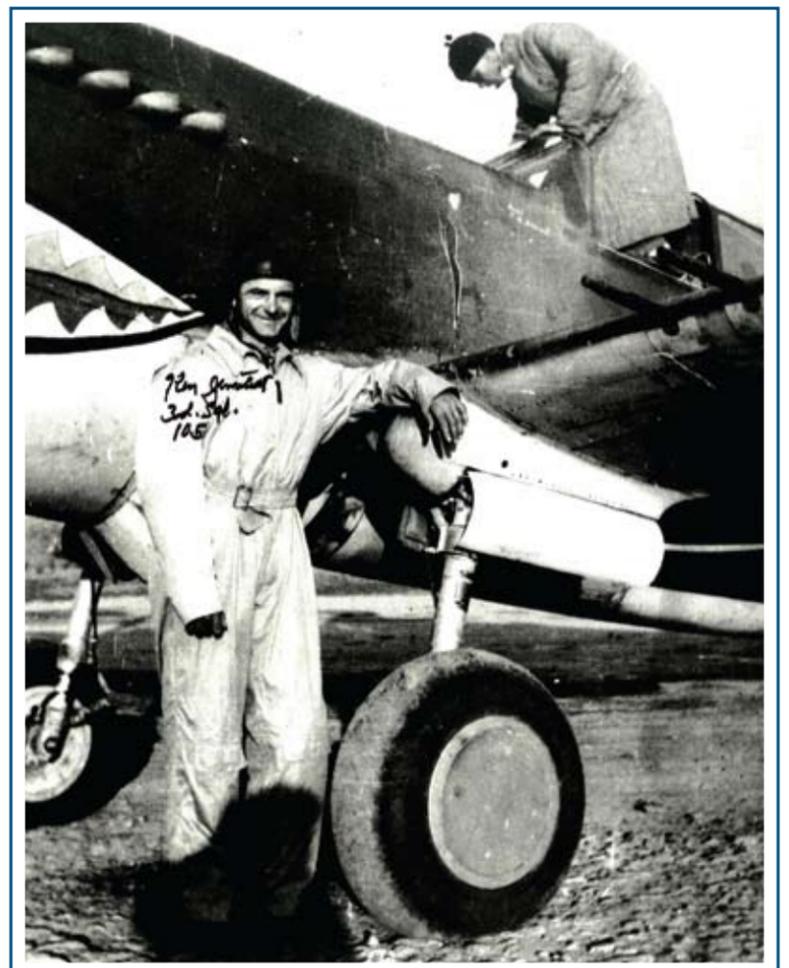
By the time the group had been officially disbanded on July 4, 1942, they had destroyed 286 planes and lost only 23. Jernstedt had 10.5 aerial kills and became Oregon's first air war ace.

No longer a Flying Tiger, Jernstedt returned to Oregon that summer. He was soon heavily recruited by the Army Air Corps, Navy and Marines to return to flying. Soon, Jernstedt's friend and former Flying Tiger, Parker DuPuoy, told his pal he should look into becoming a test pilot for Republic Aviation in Long Island, New York where DuPuoy worked. Jernstedt checked into it and took the job.

During his two years as a test pilot, Jernstedt flew nearly every fighter plane of that era, including his favorite, the rugged P-47. While at Grumman Aviation in N.J., he met Charles A. Lindbergh. Jernstedt was first in line to test fly the Navy's new Hellcat, but he insisted that Lindbergh go first.

"When he returned, his landing gear wouldn't come down. Lindy put her into a steep dive and pulled up quickly so the force of gravity could drop the gear into place," Jernstedt recalled. "On his third try, the gear came down and he landed. When I approached him as he got out of the plane I joked with him and said, 'Hey Lindy, thanks for checking that one out for me.' He was a real gentleman."

Eventually Jernstedt, now 94, settled in Hood River. He ran a successful Coca-Cola bottling plant and began a political career that lasted 40 years. He was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives



**Ken Jernstedt leans on his P-40 Tomahawk fighter plane while flying for the Chinese in 1941. Behind him, a Chinese ground crewman cleans the plane's windshield.**

in 1966 and then served five terms in the Oregon Senate.

Hood River elected Jernstedt to two mayoral terms and in 1991 he retired from politics. The fort of Hood River named the local airfield after him in 2001.

Said Jernstedt, "I've had such an exciting and fun life. It's been a ball."

**Read more stories like Ken's in the new ODVA book, 150 Years of Oregon Veterans. See ad on page 4.**

# VA LAUNCHES WOMEN VET CALL CENTER AND CHILDCARE PILOT

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has embarked on two major initiatives to reach out to women veterans. A free childcare service pilot program has been established at three VA medical centers, and a call center has been established to solicit women veterans input on ways to enhance VA health care services for women.

The childcare centers were announced in July at the Fifth National Summit on Women Veterans' Issues in Washington, D.C. The centers, including one in Tacoma, Wash., are part of VA's continuing effort to improve access to healthcare for eligible veterans, particularly the growing number of women veterans.

The congressionally established initiative is part of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health

Services Act of 2010. The other two centers are located in Buffalo and Northport, N.Y.

On June 1, representatives at VA's Health Resource Center (HRC) began placing "friendly, conversational calls" to women veterans nationwide who have enrolled, but have not begun using VA services. The HRC is asking them to share their experiences and to suggest potential enhancements that will further VA's dedication to providing excellent healthcare to women.

"We are taking a proactive approach to enhancing VA healthcare for women veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We are seeking the input of women veterans so that VA can continue to provide high quality healthcare to the growing numbers of women veterans. And we also want these

veterans to have access to high-quality healthcare. These childcare centers will make it easier for veteran caregivers to visit the VA."

Female veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the veteran population. Of the 22.7 million living veterans, more than 1.8 million are women. They comprise nearly 8 percent of the total veteran population and 6 percent of all veterans who use VA health care services.

The VA estimates that by 2020, women veterans will constitute 10 percent of the veteran population and 9.5 percent of VA patients.

For more information about VA programs and services for female veterans, visit: [www.va.gov/womenvet](http://www.va.gov/womenvet).

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**Lt. Philip S. Menagh served in the Quang Nam Province of Vietnam in 1968. Four years later he was promoted to Captain. His son, Philip J. Menagh, was pinned with the same bars given to his father 39 years**

## CAPTAIN PINNED WITH FATHER'S BARS

For 39 years Nancy Menagh of Lake Oswego saved the Captain's bars that her late husband, Philip S. Menagh, was pinned with after his service in Vietnam.

In 1968, Lt. Menagh was deployed to the Quang Nam Province in Vietnam with the 1st Marine Division, Echo Company (E Co.), 2/7 USMC. In November of that same year, E Co. took 10 minutes of heavy fire that killed five men and wounded 23. The company quickly realized that many of their dead and wounded were on the opposite side of the river that separated E 2/7 from the enemy and that its leadership was among those hit. Menagh took command of the company and re-crossed the river under enemy fire with his Marines to recover the dead and wounded. His action earned him the Silver Star.

Four years later Menagh was promoted to captain.

In 2011, Menagh's son, Philip J. Menagh, who joined the U.S. Air Force and is currently stationed at Eglin AFB in Florida, was promoted to captain and was pinned with the very same captain's bars that his mother had saved from his father's military service.

"It is a very emotional moment for me to have my son pinned on with those same bars," Nancy said. "My son was born one month after his father was killed, so they never met – except in spirit."

## MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS

Thanks to the generosity of donors to the Magazine Subscription Program, residents at the Oregon Veterans' Home enjoy reading current magazines while relaxing at the Home.

The individuals listed below have recently joined dozens of previous donors to support this meaningful program. Their generosity is greatly appreciated by our veteran residents.

**Edward & Harriet Kelly**  
**Ron Lake**  
**Mary J. McDonald**  
**Dick & Judy Wiley**

For information concerning the Magazine Subscription Program, contact Linda Adams at the Oregon Veterans' Home by calling 1-800-846-8460 or 541-296-7152 or e-mail inquiries to: [adamsl@odva.state.or.us](mailto:adamsl@odva.state.or.us).

## VETERANS' SERVICE OFFICERS

County	Telephone Number	Service Officer
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Benton .....	541-758-1595	Don Johnson
Clackamas .....	503-650-5631	Janice Harlan-Raisl
.....	503-650-5768	Rick Rutherford
Clatsop .....	866-325-2429	Kenneth H. Rislow
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Crook.....	541-447-5304	Angela Gilley
Curry .....	866-298-0404	Frank Van Meter
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Gilliam .....	541-384-6712	Bryan Hunt
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Disabled American Veterans	503-412-4750	Robert Lougee
Military Order of the Purple Heart	503-412-4770	Jennifer Burt
Paralyzed Veterans of America	503-412-4762	Ken Fink
Veterans of Foreign Wars..	503-412-4757	Jack Zule

State Offices-ODVA .....	Telephone Number	Service Officer
Salem .....	1-800-692-9666	Gus Bedwell
.....	or 503-373-2085	Jessica Garcelon
.....	.....	Leah Rickert
.....	.....	Mitch Sparks
.....	.....	Gina Thomas
.....	.....	Jerry Wilson
.....	.....	Doug Yerke
Portland .....	503-412-4777	Deanna Erhardt
.....	.....	Donna Hunt
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<b>Charles E. Schmidt</b> PO Box 1394 Hines, OR 97738 541-573-3130		

Quarterly meetings of the Advisory Committee are held in the Oregon Veterans' Building, 700 Summer Street NE, Salem, Oregon. Special needs will be met for those who have a disability. For arrangements and meeting dates, please call 503-373-2383.

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Jim Willis, Director

September / October 2011

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Jim Willis, Director

# VETERANS FORUM SAVES ROSEBURG VA HOSPITAL



## VA: Roseburg Will Remain a Full Capacity Level II Hospital

By Nicole Hoelt

ROSEBURG — Whoever said the little guy never comes out on top obviously never met Jim Little and the 11 other members of the Douglas County Veteran Forum (DCVF). Their group has made it their mission to “Save our Roseburg VA Hospital” and to draw attention to the recommendations made by the Maryland-based consulting firm ‘Booz/Allen/Hamilton’ to downgrade the Roseburg hospital’s services.

About a year ago, veterans learned that the Roseburg VA Health Care System (VA RHCS) planned to eliminate its Emergency Room and downsize the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) to a Telemetry Unit. The plan was to send veterans needing these services to local hospitals, such as

Mercy Medical in Roseburg and Sacred Heart in Eugene.

After learning of the plans, the Douglas County group quickly jumped into action. Joining the veterans in their opposition were U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, and U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio.

Their efforts worked.

On July 26, after careful consideration and input from veterans, lawmakers and the community, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced that VA RHCS will remain open and operational, retaining the current level of medical and surgical services. This includes a 24/7 Emergency Department, medical

SEE ROSEBURG ON PAGE 4

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Director's Message ..... Page 2
- Inmates Organize Vet Group ..... Page 3
- From Soldier to Distiller ..... Page 5
- Last Vietnam Draftree Retires ..... Page 6
- Veteran Stars in Nike Ad ..... Page 7
- Women's Center Pilot Program .. Page 10
- Veterans' Service Officers ..... Page 11