



VETS NEWS

January | February 2012

www.oregon.gov/odva

www.facebook.com/lodvavet

Jim Willis, Director

NEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER PRESENTED SILVER STAR



Governor Appoints Al Herrera to Oregon Veterans' Affairs Advisory Committee

SALEM – On a hillside in what is now Vietnam's Binh Phuoc Province, near the Cambodian border, First Sergeant Al Herrera knew what he did that day. And so did his men. That's why 42 years later they made sure he received the acknowledgement he deserved – the Silver Star for gallantry.

The Silver Star—the military's third highest honor—was finally presented to Herrera during a ceremony at the State Capitol in Gov. John Kitzhaber's ceremonial office on Nov. 28.

On that same day, Herrera, 78, was also appointed to the Governor's Advisory Committee to the Director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA).

Herrera earned the medal for his heroic actions on Aug. 2, 1969 while a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army's

1st Infantry Division, also known as the Big Red 1.

But it wasn't until he was submitted for the medal by his former commanding officer, Phil Greenwell, that the stories behind Herrera's brave actions that day were made known to the military.

At age 22, Greenwell was the new Charlie Company commander, so having an experienced, capable first sergeant like Herrera was a huge asset. On that day in August, Greenwell and Herrera were part of a procession of armored vehicles. When the lead element suddenly ran into intense enemy fire, Greenwell's element tried to draw away some of the attacking fire by driving their element up a hilltop.

They were soon in for the battle of their lives. Greenwell told the *Oregonian* newspaper that Herrera was hit, but he was able to move his men

Vietnam combat veteran Al Herrera is presented the Silver Star by Brig. Gen. Bruce W. Prunk during a ceremony in the governor's ceremonial office on Nov. 28.

-PHOTO BY BETH NAKAMURA / OREGONIAN

IN THIS ISSUE

- Director's Message Page 2
- Women Veterans To Meet Page 3
- Reaching Out To Rural Vets Page 4
- Vietnam Veterans Reunited Page 6
- Home at Last: Returning Vet Pages 7
- Hire Heroes Act..... Page 8
- Iraq Veteran Recalls Ambush Page 9

SEE SILVER STAR ON PAGE 2



NEW YEAR CALLS FOR CAUTION AND OPTIMISM

Director's Message

Jim Willis,
Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

As we move into 2012, there is reason for both optimism and caution.

OPTIMISM because the Federal VA's budget for fiscal year 2012 represents a 3.6 percent increase in its discretionary funding. The \$58.5 billion plan is about \$300 million less than what the White House requested, but the increase is still more than many agencies received.

Learning a hard lesson from the Vietnam War, nearly \$3 billion of that money is earmarked for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. The department estimates that they'll supply some assistance to more than 530,000 of those vets in the coming year, more than double the number they reached in 2008.

Another \$4.9 billion will be set aside for programs to help homeless veterans, an increase of nearly \$600 million from fiscal 2011. It is hoped that these funds will continue to support Secretary Shinseki's goal of ending veteran homelessness within five years.

In other parts of the budget, nearly \$600 million is set aside for medical and prosthetic research with some \$200 million dedicated to the implementation of the new Caregiver's Benefits Program, which provides training and stipends for the families of injured veterans.

The budget also provides \$63.8 billion in mandatory funding for veterans programs and \$52.5 billion in advance appropriations for the VA in fiscal year 2013 to ensure that medical operations remain funded in care of future budget fights.

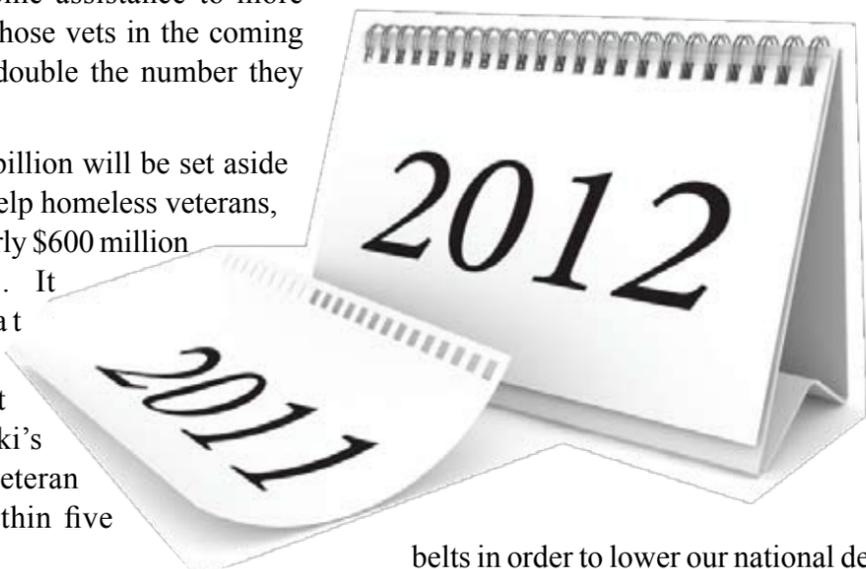
I raised the issue of CAUTION because in a recent Harvard University study, estimates have indicated that from 2010, providing disability payments to Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans could range from \$355 billion to \$534 billion over the next

40 years; and on top of that, costs to the VA's medical system could range from \$201 billion to \$348 billion to treat veterans of the current wars.

Some sources estimate that the VA is getting about 10,000 new Iraq and Afghanistan claims and patients per month.

This does not include the veterans from other periods of service who have already been enrolled in VA healthcare and/or are receiving disability compensation.

All of these potential increases are occurring as we attempt to tighten our



belts in order to lower our national debt and in some cases, reducing the size of government in general. Additional concern is being raised by retired personnel about reductions to Medicare and TRICARE.

We here at ODVA will continue to monitor the funding of the critical programs within VA, and any proposed steps to reduce or eliminate them without an alternative that continues to honor their service to our nation.

I hope all of you had a joyful holiday season and I would like to wish each of you a productive and successful new year.

Jim Willis, Director

into fighting positions. "I saw we had a bunch of wounded guys we had to get off that hill," Greenwell said, who then ordered Herrera to get it done.

With a shrapnel wound under his right arm, Herrera ordered the medic to tape his thumb into the wound so he could still lead the troops and be able to apply pressure to slow the bleeding. He would lose a lot of blood, but succeeded in getting the troops down while fighting through two ambushes before reaching a landing zone where the wounded could be airlifted to safety. Soon Herrera lost consciousness and was placed on a helicopter.

During the last two decades, a group of Charlie Company soldiers, the Bandido Charlie Association, have banded together. Both Herrera and Greenwell are members. The war's operations tempo had kept Greenwell from recognizing Herrera's actions. Yet after three years, he finally assembled the documentation and endorsements needed for the Army to issue the medal. Herrera's ceremony is but a precursor to a larger military ceremony that will recognize other company members at Fort Riley, Kan., this winter.

At the presentation, Oregon National Guard Brig. Gen. Bruce W. Prunk, Assistant Adjutant General for Air, officially pinned the medal on Herrera as Command Sgt. Major Brunk Conley read the citation.

"It is the first sergeant who must be a professional soldier, ready to plan, ready to lead and ready to take the risks necessary to win the day," said ODVA Director Jim Willis, also a Vietnam veteran. "Al Herrera is such a man. The fact that the members of his company banded together to ensure that he received this long overdue award is a testament to what he meant to them then, and what he means to them now." Herrera acknowledged that people have said his Silver Star was long overdue, "but I didn't think so. This was the time for this award. Thank you for being here. I appreciate all of you very much."

From 1955 to 1976, Herrera served in three foreign countries and at several stateside posts. He rose to the highest non-commissioned officers rank of command sergeant major while serving with the U.S. 6th Army at the Presidio in San Francisco.

Herrera, from Beaverton, will serve in the appointed position with ODVA through Dec. 7, 2015.

The nine-member committee was formed by statute in 1945. Committee members play an active role in the effective administration of the department. They advise the department's director and actively engage in ensuring the agency is meeting its mission of service to veterans.



VETS NEWS

700 Summer St., NE
Salem, OR 97301-1285
Phone: 503-373-2386
Fax: 503-373-2362
www.oregon.gov/odva
vetsnews@odva.state.or.us

Nicole Hoefft, Managing Editor
Mike Allegre, Associate Editor / Staff Writer
Dan Long, Production / Staff Writer
Robin Steckley, Staff Writer

SUBSCRIBE / CHANGE OF ADDRESS

By mail: Send your current name and address to ODVA, Attention Public Information, 700 Summer Street, NE, Salem, OR 97301-1285.

By email: vetsnews@odva.state.or.us

Online: www.oregon.gov/odva/INFO/VetsNews.shtml

Published every other month for Oregon veterans and others interested in news affecting veterans and their families.

When credit is given to the source, VETS NEWS articles may be reprinted. Reunions printed upon space availability.

Input for the next issue must be received by February 1.

OREGON WOMEN VETERANS TO MEET AT 2012 CONFERENCE HELD IN SALEM

SALEM -- All women who have ever served in the military are invited to participate in the 2012 Oregon Women Veterans Conference. The conference is scheduled for March 30-31 in Salem at the downtown Conference Center.

Every even numbered year this free event offers women veterans an opportunity to connect with other women veterans and learn about the benefits that they have earned as a result of their honorable service.

The conference will offer workshops on topics which include women veterans health, military sexual trauma, VA benefits (federal and state), employment and stress reduction.

"I continue to be amazed at how many women who have served in the Armed Forces of this nation do not realize that they are a veteran in every sense of the word. It does not matter when a woman served (wartime or peacetime), it only matters that she served honorably and faithfully," said Val Conley, Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs deputy director and president of the National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators.

"This conference is a unique opportunity for Oregon to honor its more than 25,000 women veterans and thank them for their service," she said.

At the conference an award for Oregon Outstanding Woman Veteran will be presented. This award recognizes a female veteran who has compiled a record of exemplary service as a military service member, as a veteran and as an outstanding member of and contributor to her community.

More information on this award as well

as nomination forms can be found on the Oregon Women Veterans Conference website. Nominations for this award should be submitted by Feb. 24, 2012.

The deadline to register for the conference is March 10, 2012.

For more conference information, including hotel arrangements, and to register, please visit the Women Veteran Conference web page at ODVA's website: www.oregon.gov/odva/wvc.shtml.



Above: World War II veteran, Pearl Day (front), who at 95 years old, was celebrated as the oldest woman veteran at the 2010 Women Veteran Conference, traveled from a retirement home in Roseburg with two fellow female veterans to attend the event. Left: A proud veteran salutes the flag at the opening ceremonies of the 2010 conference.

2012 OREGON
Women Veterans
CONFERENCE
 THE GRAND HOTEL IN SALEM
SALEM CONFERENCE CENTER

**March
30-31**

**REGISTRATION
REQUIRED**

**REGISTER, DONATE,
BECOME A VENDOR
AND FIND MORE
INFORMATION
ONLINE AT**
www.oregon.gov/odva/wvc.shtml



OPEN TO ALL WOMEN WHO
SERVED IN THE MILITARY

NO COST FOR PARTICIPATION

JOIN US FOR
TWO FULL DAYS
OF EDUCATION,
ENTERTAINMENT,
CAMARADERIE,
SHOPPING AND
MORE WITH YOUR
FELLOW WOMEN
VETERANS.

FOR MORE
INFORMATION
PLEASE CALL

800 692 9666
 LORIANN @ EXT 2264
 TAMI @ EXT 2199

HOTEL
RESERVATIONS
AT THE
GRAND HOTEL
IN SALEM

877 540 7800
 GROUP ROOM RATES
BEGINNING AT \$99

VA REACHING OUT TO RURAL VETS WITH TELEHEALTH

Kenneth Winn, 48, suffered a head injury while deployed in Operation Desert Storm. Since then, he's experienced his fair share of challenges in life. He's been looking for a job now for two years.

"I want to work," he said. "But if I tell (a potential employer) I have a head injury, they don't hire me. It's been hell trying to find a job. I enjoyed being a helicopter mechanic when I was in the Army... I knew that job backwards and forwards."

Winn said he finds it comforting to share his thoughts and feelings with his mental health provider at the Roseburg VA Health Care System. Fortunately, in order to see her, he doesn't have to drive over 150 miles (three hours) from his home in Crescent City, in northern California, to Roseburg. Because of a technological marvel known as Telehealth, all he needs to do is drive to his VA clinic in town, where he's quickly connected with his counselor at VA Roseburg.

"Crescent City is No Man's Land," Winn said. "With Telehealth, it makes it where I can talk to my doctor without having to travel very far. It helps to talk to her when I'm down. She's keeping tabs on my medications and stuff like that. She makes sure I receive what I need to receive."

Patricia Ryan, associate chief consultant for the VA Office of Telehealth, said more than 200,000 veterans -- like Kenneth Winn -- have now used its clinic-based Telehealth services. She said another 51,000 patients nationwide are enrolled in VA's Home Telehealth program.

"With Telehealth, our veterans can connect with VA specialists in mental health, cardiology, dermatology, gastroenterology, rheumatology and urology," Ryan said. "This is important, because a large percentage of our rural veterans are advancing in age. They have chronic health conditions that require constant monitoring. If it wasn't for Telehealth, we'd be hard pressed to deliver the kind of day-to-day observation they require."

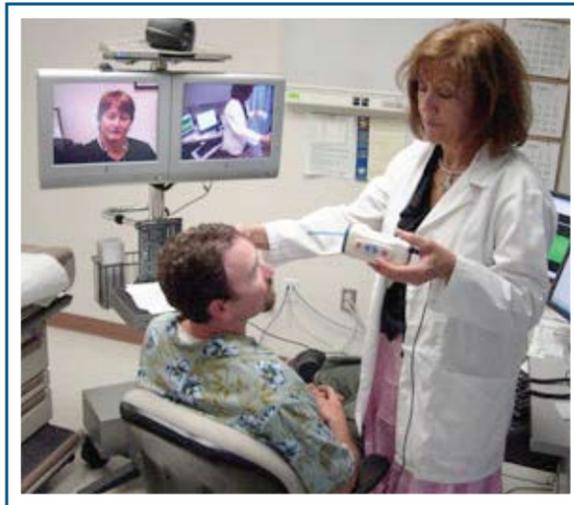
"Not everyone has a cardiologist nearby," she added. "With Telehealth, they do."

Cassandra Donlon, a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner at VA Roseburg, described what happens when veterans like Winn arrive at the clinic.

"A staff member escorts you to a private office, makes sure you're comfortable, and ensures the (Telehealth) equipment is working," Donlon explained. "Once you and I are 'connected,' the staff member leaves the room and shuts the door. You're in Crescent City; I'm 150 miles away in Roseburg, but we're now engaged in a private, confidential, mental health appointment."

"It's like I'm in the same room with you," she continued. "We see and hear each other over our computer monitors and speakers. I can assess, evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medications for you, or provide supportive counseling. I can order or review your lab work results."

Dr. Tracy Weistreich, the Associate Director for Patient Care Services at VA Roseburg, said Telehealth is rapidly becoming an indispensable tool for meeting the health care needs of hundreds of rural veterans served by the Roseburg VA Healthcare System.



A patient consults a doctor via VA's Telehealth Program, which allows remote patient monitoring.

"We live in God's Country here," Weistreich said. "Some people call it No Man's Land, but I like to call it God's Country. You can travel for miles and miles and not come to a town or a community. It's remote, and getting to your nearest VA Medical Center can take hours. But with Telehealth, we can bring the doctor right into your home. You and your health care provider can discuss symptoms early and make appropriate adjustments to your treatment to help you avoid hospitalization."

You really don't want to go to the hospital if you can help it," she added.

And there's another big benefit as well. "Our Telehealth program here at Roseburg saves veterans an estimated 62,000 miles of driving each year," Weistreich said.

In addition to Crescent City, Calif., VA Roseburg has three clinics in Oregon with Telehealth capability -- in North Bend, Brookings, and Eugene.

Kathy Andersen, an RN Care Coordinator for Roseburg's Home Telehealth Department, manages patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes, congestive heart failure, chronic lung disease, and hypertension. There are 303 patients in Roseburg's Home Telehealth Program; Andersen personally manages 81 of them.

"I have patients who live 150 miles away," she said. "I even have patients who live 175 miles away, on the Oregon coast. If we didn't have Telehealth, it would be impossible to monitor them as closely as we do."

Andersen said VA issues each Telehealth patient a computer that allows them to send in their data every day...things like their weight, blood pressure, blood sugar (if they're diabetic), or oxygen saturation level.

"I look at their data, and if their readings are off, I call them and ask them some questions," she explained. "For example, if you're my heart failure patient and you've gained two or three pounds overnight, I'll ask you what you've been eating, or whether you're taking all your medications. By monitoring you every day, I can catch little things early, before they develop into big things. I can tell you if you're eating something that's not good for you, or I can have you adjust one of your medications."

"My goal is to keep you out of the hospital... keep you home, and keep you healthy," she added.

Make the Connection: ONLINE SHARED EXPERIENCES AND SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

WASHINGTON -- *Make the Connection*, a new campaign launched by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), is creating ways for veterans and their family members to connect with the experiences of other veterans—and ultimately to connect with information and resources to help them confront the challenges of transitioning from service, face health issues, or navigate the complexities of daily life as a civilian.

"I have seen over and over again how important it can be for a veteran to hear a message from another veteran. This type of communication will be especially useful in helping to break down the stigma associated with mental health issues and treatment," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "VA is leveraging this powerful connection using an approachable online resource that links veterans to personal stories from their peers, to VA resources and support, and to reliable information about mental health and resilience."

The campaign's central focus is a website, www.MakeTheConnection.net, featuring numerous veterans who have shared their experiences, challenges, and triumphs. It offers a place where veterans and their families can view the candid, personal testimonials of other veterans who have dealt with and are working through a variety of common life experiences, day-to-day symptoms, and mental health conditions. The website also connects veterans and their family members with services and resources that may help them live more fulfilling lives.

"VA is heartened by the tremendous commitment of veterans of all service eras, genders and backgrounds who are stepping up to share their stories," said Shinseki. "Just as they would never leave a fellow service member behind on the field of battle, they are once again reaching out to support their fellow veterans with their compelling examples of successful treatment and recovery."

Veterans and their family members can explore information on mental health issues and treatment—and easily access support—in comfort and privacy, anywhere, anytime. Visitors to the website can customize and filter their online experience, directly connecting with content that is the most relevant to their own lives and situations.

TAX PREPARATION ASSISTANCE

The IRS may owe you money. Moderate income Oregonians can find out by having income tax returns prepared for free by trained volunteers. Even people who earn very little may get a refund.

The tax credits you may qualify for are the Federal and Oregon Earned Income Tax Credit, the Federal Child Tax Credit, and the Oregon Working Family Child Care Credit.

Free tax preparation sites are available statewide. For more information or to find a location near you call Cash Oregon at 503-243-7765, or visit www.cashoregon.org.

GUIDON PASSED TO CURRENT CURRAHEES

By Philip Grey, *The Leaf Chronicle, Ky.*
(Reprinted with permission)

Bill Wingett, of Salem, Ore., one of only 32 surviving members of the original “Band of Brothers,” had held on to the piece of blue cloth long enough.

After 66 years, he felt it was time to pass it on.

On Nov. 10, he stood in the 4th Brigade Combat Team area of Fort Campbell, Ky., proud and erect. In his right hand he held a military staff bearing the World War II-era guidon of Easy Company, 2nd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment “Currahees,” one of the most famous units of the United States Army.

Nearby, the soldiers of today’s Easy Company fell into ranks, waiting.

The man standing in front of them was a veteran of some of the most historic moments in U.S. Army history. Wingett, 89, had jumped behind enemy lines into Normandy on D-Day, well before the landing craft hit the beaches miles away. He had fought in the Netherlands during the ill-fated Operation Market Garden, during which the 101st Airborne Division was mauled but left unbowed and unbeaten for another fight another day.

He then fought in the Battle of the Bulge, where the Currahees and the rest of the Screaming Eagles took Hitler’s last best punch before sending the Nazis reeling into oblivion.

A few months later, as the Third Reich was kicked into the ash-heap of history, Hitler’s “Eagle’s Nest” became the home of a new group of Eagles, and Wingett and his guidon were there as well.

The current commander of Easy Company, Capt. Henry V. Hansen, told his first sergeant to bring the troops to attention. A few moments later, Hansen accepted the historic guidon from the hands of the former private first class, who had held it all the long years since the Second World War.

Hansen then called the troops out of ranks to fall in around Wingett.

As the soldiers stared intently at the living history before them, Wingett spoke to them, telling them



PHOTO REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION / THE LEAF CHRONICLE, KY.

Original 506th PIR, E Company member Bill Wingett answers questions from current company soldiers on Nov. 9 at Ft. Campbell, Ky. after a ceremony where he presented the original company guidon from World War II back to the unit.

that he was proud of the way they had carried on the Easy Company legacy.

“Thank you,” he said, “from every one of us, and from everyone else in the country. I’m very, very happy that I had that guidon lying around and that I could finally bring it back where it belongs.”

Giving a respectful nod to the combat service of the troops who stood around him, Wingett told them, “There are very few questions you could ask me that you couldn’t answer yourselves.”

He then spoke briefly about his own service, proudly stating that he was among the first soldiers to train at Camp Toccoa, Ga., in 1942 at the birth of the Currahee Regiment.

Lastly, he spoke of serving with the legendary Maj. Dick Winters.

“Maj. Winters was a good officer,” Wingett said, with obvious great respect undimmed through nearly 70 years. “When he took over our platoon, I wrote my mother and said, ‘we have a man now that we can follow into hell.’”

He paused for several heartbeats and then added, “and we did.”

Upon returning home, Wingett told the *VETS NEWS* that the event was almost overwhelming and perhaps “one of the deepest emotional feelings I’ve ever had in my life. Returning that guidon topped about anything I’ve ever done,” he said.

“When I spoke with those soldiers, I saw myself way back then. I spent every minute I could with the current troops. Every one of those young fellas smiled when they shook my hand and looked back at me. There’s no way for me to say what that really means.”

STATE GIVES VET TRANSPORT VANS TO VA MED CENTER

PORTLAND—What started as a recommendation from a Veterans’ Transportation Task Force turned to reality Nov. 10, when the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) delivered eight used handicapped-accessible vans to the Portland VA Medical Center to transport non-ambulatory veterans to and from VA medical appointments.

Continuing the work started by the Governor’s Task Force on Veterans’ Services, the 2009 Oregon Legislature appointed a second task force to examine veterans’ medical transportation needs throughout the state. The task force quickly learned that non-ambulatory veterans had extremely limited access to transportation.

Focusing on that need, task force chair and ODOT Administrator of Public Transportation, Michael Ward championed the idea of providing used state vehicles to the VA for this purpose.

“It seemed like such an easy solution,” Ward said. “We had the surplus vehicles that were in excellent condition and VA had the need. We just



had to put the two together,” he said. However, rarely is anything as simple as it seems.

The U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs (USDVA) had an internal policy that it would not accept used vehicles into its fleet. Ward helped arrange a meeting that included decision makers from USDVA and all agreed that VA could, indeed, accept used vehicles. Portland VA Medical Center

Director John Patrick immediately began working with Ward to draft a Memorandum of Agreement to accept the transferred vehicles.

“All of us are obligated to show our thanks to our veterans in ways large and small, individually and collectively, and to reflect on what their service means,” said ODOT Director Matt Garrett. “This joint effort is just a small way to honor our veterans.”

Now that the transfer has been completed, Ward believes he can do more.

“I’m going to work on providing more used vehicles to other VA facilities so that non-ambulatory veterans can use their VA health care,” he said. “These accessible vans will help veterans who cannot currently use the statewide Disabled American Veterans transportation system.”

“This is a win for veterans,” Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs Director Jim Willis said. “When we focus on the veteran and his or her needs, there is a lot we can get done if we work together.”

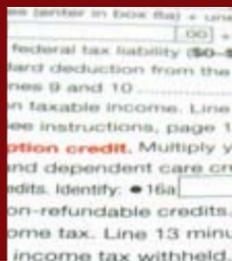


2011

Charitable Checkoff

Donate to the Oregon Veterans' Home while filing your Oregon Taxes

Enter Code 12



On your Oregon Tax Form 40:

Lines 68a and 69a will allow you to donate a portion of your refund to the Oregon Veterans' Home.

Just enter code 12 on one of those lines and indicate the amount you would like to have donated.

Thank you for your support!

NEW VETERANS' HOME COMMUNITY CENTER OPENS

THE DALLES – The Oregon Veterans' Home hosted a dedication ceremony on Dec. 2, to commemorate the new Stan and Jean Adams Veterans' Community Center located at the Home.

More than 100 residents and employees of the Home joined the celebration where they were addressed by State Rep. John Huffman, The Dalles Mayor Jim Wilcox, Wasco County Commissioner Rod Runyon, Westcare Management Senior Vice President Van Moore and ODVA Director Jim Willis. Congressman Greg Walden addressed the crowd by recorded video to commemorate the center's opening.

The new center is named for a former resident of the Home, Stanley T. Adams and his wife Jean. Adams was a World War II enlisted soldier who received the military's highest decoration, the Medal of Honor, for his heroic actions in the Korean War.

Jean Adams, also a World War II veteran, volunteered her time to the Home, both while her husband resided there, and after his death in 1999. After her passing in 2008, Jean donated Stan's Medal of Honor to the Home and left a generous contribution from their estate. The Medal of Honor is proudly displayed in the Home's main lobby area.

After the dedication, attendees enjoyed a concert performance by the singing trio, Two Sisters and a Mister.

The community center was a much needed addition to the Home. Developed by the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA), the \$3 million, 9,300 square foot center will provide a space for resident activities including group events, computer use, widescreen television viewing, theater and musical entertainment. Funds for the community center were made possible through a grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in coordination with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Construction Grant program. Veterans' Home residents Leo "Bud" Hammel and John Sullivan donated the money necessary to purchase the furnishings in the lounge and library areas. All the furniture was purchased through Hampton Furniture in The Dalles.

Opened in the fall of 1997, the Home can care for as many as 151 residents who need long-term skilled nursing, Alzheimer's and memory-related care. This care is available to veterans, their spouses and parents whose children died while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

VIETNAM VETS, BROTHERS IN ARMS REUNITED

KEIZER — It was a chance meeting. Fate if you really think about - two men, one war and 42 years in between.

Melvin McKinnon and William Pyle both grew up in Oregon. As teens they were practically neighbors—Pyle in Sweet Home and McKinnon in Lebanon. They met for the first time, not in Oregon, but in Vietnam. Then they met for a second time this past Nov. 9 when they both agreed to participate in McNary High School's Living History Day celebration event.

For the event, McKinnon had brought an enlarged picture of a group of guys that fought together in Vietnam. Pyle noticed a familiar face in the photograph: his own.

"I looked at that picture and saw myself and Mel. And then I spotted him across the room. I said, 'Mel is that you?'" Pyle said.

McKinnon and Pyle were fighting in the jungles of Vietnam, Pyle with the U.S. Army and McKinnon with the Marines.

"In less than 90 minutes of landing in Vietnam in 1969, I was already in a firefight. We got there and the Army immediately put us into helicopters and flew us into a fight," Pyle said.

Pyle's small unit took on the enemy for about eight hours. They called in helicopters but none were available so they called in Mel's unit. "More than 50 Marines came in and helped us pull out of a mission. We were in a deep, deadly firefight with some North Vietnamese regulars," Pyle said.

McKinnon said he knew his unit would be helping soldiers who were heavily outnumbered. On this mission it was reported there were approximately 150 North Vietnamese troops, and only 12 American soldiers.

After the fight, the units went separate ways. So did McKinnon and Pyle.

Serving over 30 years in the Army and the Army

- PHOTO COURTESY OF ELEEZIAA HOWARD, McNARY HIGH SCHOOL



Melvin McKinnon (left) and William Pyle served together in Vietnam in 1969. The two were unexpectedly reunited at McNary High School's Living History Day on Nov. 9, 2011.

Reserves, retired Sgt. First Class Pyle was awarded 15 medals, including two Meritorious Service medals and medals for service in Vietnam, Desert Storm and Kuwait.

When McKinnon returned home, he got on with his life, raising a family on a farm near Lebanon. "When I got back from Vietnam, I never looked back. There was too much sadness."

After talking for several hours before and after the presentation at the school, the men parted ways. Throughout the war the two were unable to keep in touch with each other. "We didn't know where each other lived, but we will be staying in touch," Pyle said.

The organizer of the event, teacher and student activities adviser Jason Heimerdinger, had no idea the two men had known each other before Living History Day. "This was astounding for two guys who hadn't seen each other in over 40 years," he said.

An article originally written by Tyler Kehrer, Editor-in-Chief of McNary High School's newspaper, The Piper helped contribute to this story.

HOME AT LAST FOR RETURNING VETERANS

By John Kirkland, Special Writer, *The Oregonian*
(Reprinted with permission)

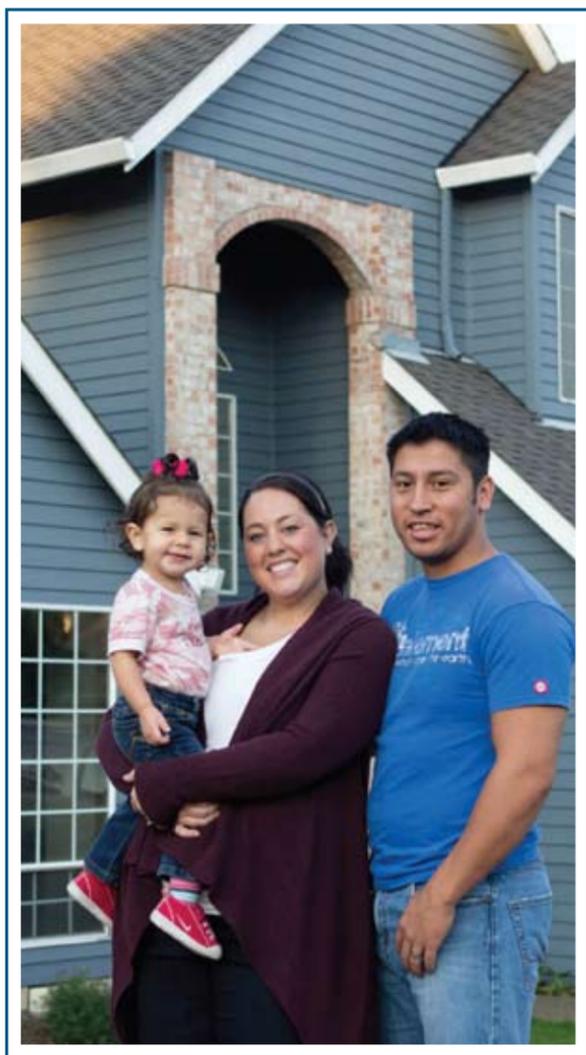
Portland Metropolitan Association of Realtors (PMAR) has recently come out with a home-buying resource for the many U.S. servicemen and women coming home from overseas and settling into domestic life. It's a new section just for vets on the organization's Homeownership Opportunities Website Northwest, www.hownw.com.

The new "military resources" tab on the website provides basic information on several Veterans Administration loans, one home loan specifically for Oregon vets, and a little-known program called the Dream Makers Program.

Only a handful of Dream Makers grants are issued every year throughout the country, mostly because the organization that issues them, the PenFed Foundation in Alexandria, Va., doesn't do much advertising and relies on charitable donations to fund the grants, according to PenFed program specialist Dan Schenk.

But if you're a veteran buying your first home, and you're lucky enough to stumble onto the information, it can be a good deal.

Such was the case with Israel and Chelsea Aguirre, who closed on their first home in October. Israel served two tours in Iraq with the U.S. Marine Corps. He came home nearly two years ago, and went to Clackamas Community College to become a welder. During the summer, he got a job as a welding inspector. He and Chelsea have a 21-month-old daughter.



The couple had been working with Realtor, Gayle Clopton to buy a home and to research various programs that would help them cover the costs. One night before meeting with the couple, Clopton saw a small mention of the Dream Makers Program in Realtor magazine. She looked into it, the couple followed the necessary steps, and as a result they saved \$5,000 on the down payment of their new three-bedroom home in Milwaukie.



Above: Iraq war veteran Aguirre, his wife Chelsea, and their daughter in the kitchen of their new home. Below left: Israel Aguirre of Portland moved his family into their first home in Oct. 2011.

"It's great. We just got the keys last Tuesday, and we're all moved in," Israel Aguirre said in late October.

The Dream Makers grant is a three-to-one match for home down payments, up to a maximum of \$5,000. So, if you're able to provide \$1,000 toward your down payment, the grant will kick in an additional \$3,000. The amount needed for the \$5,000 maximum is \$1,667. The least you can put down is \$500, and there's no maximum. You can put down \$10,000 of your own money, for example, but the maximum from the Dream Makers grant remains \$5,000.

To be eligible for the Dream Makers grant, applicants must:

- Have served in the military (active duty, reserve, National Guard or veteran); or be an employee of the Department of Defense or the Department of Homeland Security.
- Be a first-time home buyer; not have owned a home for the last three years; or lost a home through divorce or natural disaster.
- Have a gross household income, including allowances, of no more than \$55,000 a year, or a maximum of 80 percent of your community's median income. Allowances are military payments to active-duty personnel to help pay for cost-of-living expenses such as housing. The median family income is determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). (The median income for a family of four in Multnomah County is \$72,000, 80 percent of which would be \$57,600.)
- Have a down payment — the amount of money you put down plus the Dream Makers grant — of at least 3 percent of the total mortgage.

The Aguirres actually put down 20 percent for their home, made up of years of savings during his time in Iraq, plus the \$5,000 Dream Makers grant.

There's an easy online application on the PenFed Foundation's site that you can fill out and

submit even if you haven't picked out a home or begun working with a mortgage company.

The only other requirement is that you attend a home-buying education seminar. The Aguirres took theirs at the Portland Housing Center, which offers a number of resources to learn about home buying and personal finance.

The Center's primary class is "Homebuying 101," an eight-hour HUD-certified seminar that shows students what to expect in the home-buying process. It covers shopping for a loan; special programs for first-time buyers; the home search process; inspecting and insuring your home; and maintaining and protecting your investment.

"We could do everything online except take the eight-hour class," said Chelsea Aguirre.

The class is held in two locations: in Portland at 3233 N.E. Sandy Blvd., and in Beaverton at the Village Baptist Church, 330 S.W. Murray Blvd. Pre-registration is required.

In addition to the Dream Makers grant, the Aguirres got a home loan through the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs. That loan is another of the programs listed on the Homeownership Opportunities Website Northwest.

Clicking on any of the military programs listed on the Homeownership Opportunities site allows you to connect with realtor specialists who have expertise in those programs, according to Daryl Winand, government affairs specialist with PMAR.

Homeownership programs are not the only resources on the site. It also has renovation programs, financial links, and general links that apply to veterans, including a foreclosure avoidance fact sheet put out by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

"It's one place for vets to go instead of hunting around to different places," said PMAR spokesperson Elizabeth Coffey.

With President Obama's announcement that U.S. military service members will be coming home from Iraq by the end of the year, the timing of the new web link couldn't be better.



THANK YOU!

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Al Drenkhahn | Gerald Williamson | Myrle Smith |
| American Legion Dept. of Oregon | Harold Busby | Norma Peterson |
| American Legion Post #20 | Harriet Kelly | Norman Evans |
| American Legion Post 2 | Harry Macnab | Oregon County Veterans Service Officers Association |
| American Legion Sheridan Family | In Country Vets Motorcycle Club | Oregon Paralyzed Veterans of America |
| Andy Gibson | James and Jo Robb | Oregon Veterans Home Gift Shop |
| Anne Laraia | James and Marion Crews | Patty Embree |
| Armed Forces E -9 Association | Janet and Gary Miller | Paul E. Burger |
| Beverly Hagan | Janet Klosterman | Rebecca Gilardi |
| Calvin Church | Janice Cole | Robert Morris |
| Clarence Pressel | Jeff and Susan Ford | Rodolph Chevalier |
| Connie Walton | JD Arendt | Ron Meisner |
| CW04 Charles Lewis | Jerry Gyllenskog | Rosemary and Dale Griffiths |
| Dannet Wheelhouse | Jill Dunlap | Rosemary Bell |
| Darrell and Winifred Mitchell | John McCulley | Rouge Valley Detachment 386 |
| David and Carol Boyles | John Nugent | Samuel and Dorothy Dalesky |
| David and Norma French | Kathleen Blome | Stephen and Earleine Allen |
| David Childs | Keith and Jane Masterson | Stephen Gracon |
| Dennis Williams | Lani Holgate | Thomas and Virginia Hake |
| Donna Arnold | Lester Cochenour | United Way of Columbia Willamette |
| Dorothy Jurgenson | Let 'er Buck Auxiliary 922 | VFW Ladies Auxiliary Post #4108 |
| Ed Sather | Lillian Granby | VFW Lee Ray Auxiliary |
| Edith Hickam | Louis C. Wampler | VFW Post # 2624 |
| Edwin Sather | Marcine Nicoll & Dennis Grabner | VFW Post 4750 |
| Elizabeth and LaRoy Rowland | Mark and Kay Fortin | VFW Post 5638 |
| Elizabeth Myers | Mary Butsch | Virginia Wood |
| Edna Tully | Mary Gifford | Warren Dines |
| Frank Hotchkiss | Mary Watts | William and Donna Magnuson |
| Gary and Janet Miller | Melvin and Norma Peterson | William Bates |
| Gary and Rene Eckert | Military Order of the Cooties Auxilliary. Post #8 | |
| Geoffrey Smith | MOC / MOCA Post # 8 | |
| George Winslow | Muffy Grabner | |
| Georgia Miller | | |

TAX CREDITS, NEW BENEFITS FOR UNEMPLOYED VETERANS

Several programs have been enacted to help veterans find work. The VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 was signed into law by President Obama in November.

In a message to the nation's businesses, Obama said, "If you are hiring, hire a veteran. It's the right thing to do for you, it's the right thing to do for them and it's the right thing to do for our economy."

Businesses will receive tax credits of up to \$5,600 for hiring veterans, and a credit of up to \$9,600 for hiring veterans with service-connected disabilities who have been looking for a job for more than six months.

One program hopes to boost employment by expanding opportunities for military medics to become physician's assistants by providing more grant money to universities to help train veterans in this career field.

Obama also wants community health centers to hire 8,000 military medics over the next three years and will ask the centers to begin reporting on the numbers of veterans they employ.

The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) and the Department of Labor (DoL) are working together to roll out a new program on July 1, that will provide retraining for veterans hardest hit by current economic conditions. Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) offers 12 months of training assistance for unemployed veterans.

To learn more about this program visit: www.gibill.va.gov/documents/factsheets/VOW_FAQ.pdf.

HEROES RUN RAISES \$10K FOR VETS HOME

LEBANON — Samaritan Health planned for half as many runners and walkers as those who actually showed up for a fundraiser that benefited veterans. A week before Veterans Day, more than 300 people took part in the 5K SamFit Heroes Run, generating a \$10,000 donation for the Oregon Veterans' Home.

"When the Department of Veterans' Affairs announced that Lebanon had been selected as the site for a new veterans home, we pledged our support," said Larry Mullins, president and CEO of Samaritan Health Services. "Today, we are showing our love and respect for our veterans."

Construction of the more than \$30 million home on 10 acres next to the Samaritan Health Sciences Campus is scheduled to begin in 2012. Oregon's second veterans' home will offer 150-beds for long-term care as well as rehabilitation services and Alzheimer's and dementia care. Oregon's existing veterans' home is located in The Dalles.

ODVA Director Jim Willis attended the fundraising event and accepted the check on behalf of the Oregon Veterans' Home.

"This is going to be a wonderful facility for our veterans," Willis said. "We thank you all very much."

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. Physical items including magazine subscriptions are also welcomed and encouraged. Your donation is tax deductible. Thank you again to those who contributed during the months of October and November 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:
Oregon Veterans' Home
c/o ODVA
700 Summer St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

I would like to donate \$ _____ to the Oregon Veterans' Home

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone (optional): _____

I would like to make a donation using: Personal Check Visa MasterCard

Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Cardholder's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Thank you for supporting the place where honor lives!

PROFILE: BRIAN KLOPP

Convoy Ambush on Mission Return

September 11, 2003 started out like any other day. Like many times before, our main mission was to convoy to the water treatment plant on a water run. As the convoy crew dressed in gear to leave camp, PMCS (Preventive Maintenance Checks and Service) was completed on the four vehicles we were taking outside the fence.

After the trucks were lined up, the crew got a briefing so everyone knew the route.

Outside camp, the convoy got to the treatment plant with no problems. Two of the water trucks got in line with the rest of the Iraqi trucks to respect their process and make a good impression. The other two vehicles took up perimeter positions for security. Once both trucks were full we lined back up to head back to camp.

Shortly after the convoy left the water point and we were just getting into the city limits, our convoy came under attack. We heard four loud booms to the right of us, coming from the hilltop above the road. Four more explosions followed to

Each vehicle was fired at with a RPG and luckily all were overshot. I was in the trail vehicle, which was a five-ton truck for rear security. SSG Lee Carrar and I immediately backed up to a tree line to get out of the kill zone.

The lead vehicle and the two water trucks forged forward since that was their best option, but once they passed a row of houses, they were engaged by automatic weapons firing on them. As the firing kept going we started to lose sight of the third vehicle.

Carrar and I crept our truck forward, trying to figure out where the firing was coming from. We then noticed the second water truck had been disabled and jack knifed.

Once we got closer we saw SPC Christopher Jones and SPC Joseph Lillibridge taking cover from gunfire coming from the alley, on the driver side of the truck. We pulled up behind them where we were out of the sight of the alley. I dismounted and made contact with the two. I found they were able to move so I covered them as they ran and got into the back of the five-ton.

After I was sure they made it, I got myself back, too. I kept my eyes forward and covered us as we quickly backed out of there.

We remembered seeing an infantry unit camped at a hotel building by the river, so we headed down a gravel road toward the Tigris River.

Once we were out of sight I hopped in the back to start administrating first aid. After initially checking out SPC Jones, he appeared to be unharmed. SPC Lillibridge on the other hand had been shot in the butt. There was no blood so I just reassured him that everything was going to be fine.

We rolled to the compound and the Infantry Platoon was on alert because they had heard the ambush.

Once we were inside the compound a SSG hopped in back with me to go over SPC Lillibridge and remove his flak vest and the top part of his pants. This is so we could get a better view of the shot while we waited for the medic. Meanwhile SSG Carrar was talking a second look at SPC Jones and noticed there was shrapnel in his Kevlar. An ambulance transported the two to the hotel, and SPC Lillibridge was medic evacuated to the hospital.

SSG Carrar and I stayed down at the compound and took a breather inside their building. We didn't know what had happened to the other part of the convoy; we just knew they made it out of the ambush.

Later, we were escorted up to the hotel where the rest of our convoy was waiting for us. Once there we found out that SGT Brian Dooley had also been shot. After SGT Dooley and SPC Lillibridge were in stable condition they were eventually airlifted back to the States.

The rest of us went back to our camp. The battalion was putting together a team for the recovery mission to get the two water trucks back to camp.

Find this story and others like it in 150 Years of Oregon Veterans, a coffee table style book with more than 200 stories. See ad below to order one for yourself or others today.

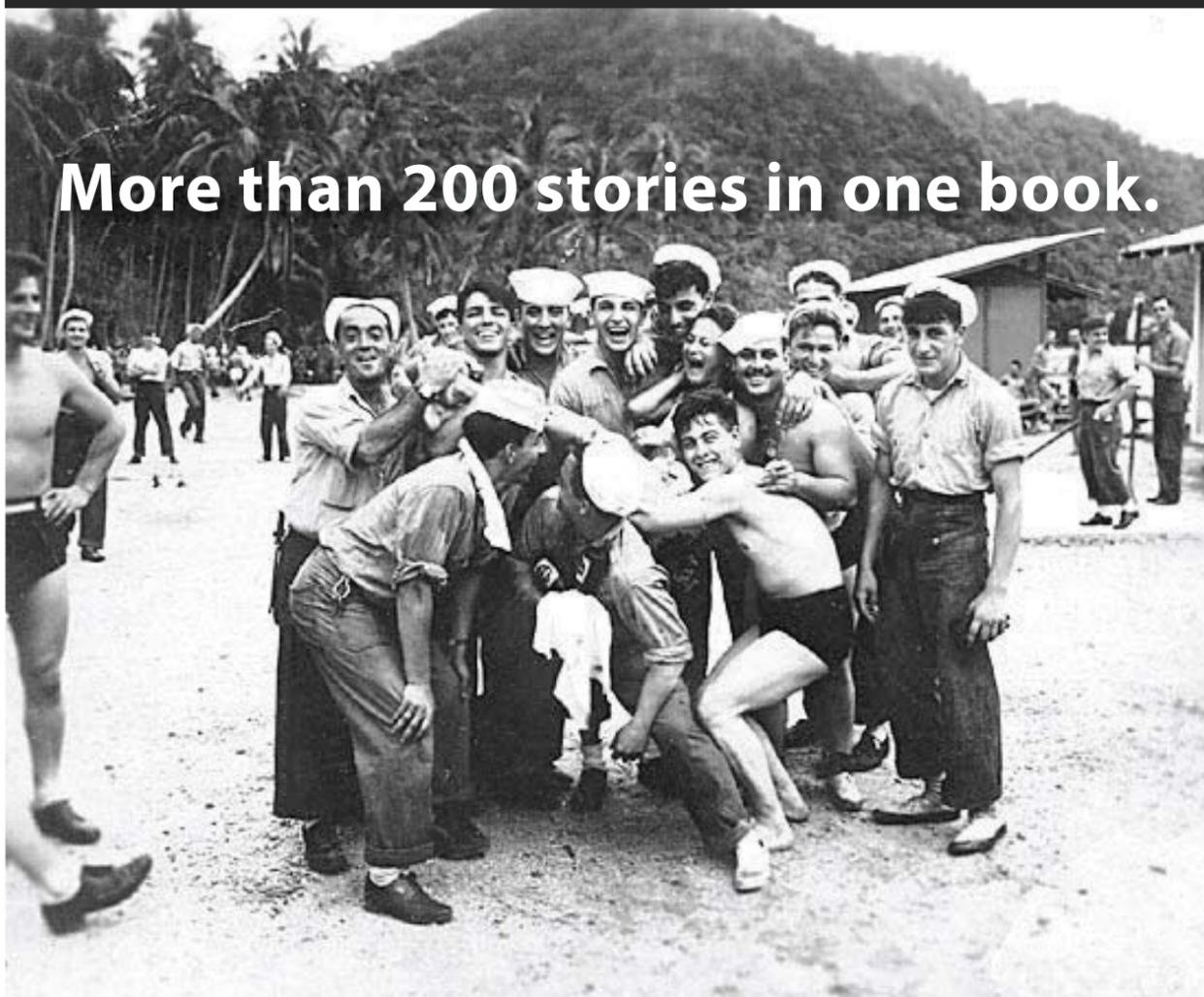


Above: After Klopp's convoy left the water point, they came under attack. This photo was taken when the unit went to retrieve the water trucks.

Left: Brian Klopp near the Tigris River, Iraq.

150 Years of Oregon Veterans. Quantities limited. Get yours today.

More than 200 stories in one book.



To order your book call

503-373-2384

PREVIEW 150 YEARS OF OREGON VETERANS ONLINE AT
www.oregon.gov/odva/veterans_book.shtml

\$39.95
including shipping.

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

World War II Memorial Donation Form

Yes, I would like to donate toward the construction of Oregon's WWII Memorial.

Please make out your check to: WWII Memorial Foundation, 805 Skyline Crest Road, Portland, OR 97229.

Amount donated: \$ _____

Please mail my receipt and a certificate to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip Code: _____

(This section is optional)

My donation is made in honor of the following WWII veteran.

Name: _____ Branch: _____

Rank: _____

Home loans exclusively for veterans.



New low rate!

30-Year Term

3.65%

 fixed*

1.375% Origination Fee
*3.714% APR

Up to \$417,000
Single Family Residence
Owner Occupied

*APR based on \$165,000
30-year loan with 20% down
Effective date 11-11-11.
Rates are subject to change.



A product of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

Now a lifetime benefit.

To apply for a home loan or to find out more about your eligibility, call the Home Loan Department at Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs.

503-373-2051 | www.oregon.gov/odva/homeloans

Toll free in Oregon 888-673-8387 | 700 Summer Street NE, Salem OR 97301

ODVA EMPLOYEES GIVE MORE THAN JUST 8 TO 5

For Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs staff, helping veterans and their families goes beyond the normal work day. For some, it is a lifestyle.

For decades, ODVA has reached out to local veterans' families in need during the Christmas holiday season, and 2011 was no exception. Volunteers have been at the heart of keeping the spirit of giving alive and they work year-round to raise enough money to support veteran families in need. Money derived from year-round fundraising activities contributes to the needy family fund.

Since the 1980s, Tami Leest has been one of those employees who have happily helped coordinate events and fundraisers.

"We used to do Christmas gifts and food for up to 10 families," said Leest. "Usually we'd learn about needy veterans from our counselors or other agencies. With fewer employees now, we can't raise as much money as we once did and are only able to support about four families annually."

This year however, ODVA volunteers spent about \$500 each on two veteran's families. One family had special dietary needs and the other had two older children. She said the first thing they purchase is the traditional turkey dinner—the turkey, potatoes, vegetables, rolls and all the fixings.

"For the kids we get a toy or gift from Santa which also includes clothing. The rest of the money is spent to purchase miscellaneous food items. After we go shopping and bring things back to the office, we all help wrap it," Leest said.

She and others shop together for groceries and then make a special delivery the week before Christmas. The volunteers are careful to work with the families to reduce any possible embarrassment. "Pride is a big thing for some of the veterans that we've helped, so we work discreetly with them to give in a fashion that suits them."

"They may be a little apprehensive," Tami said. "Sometimes they're overwhelmed with how much they get because we don't just give them a food box. We bring them a lot more and they're always very thankful and happy."



Tami Leest loads a truck with groceries that will be delivered to a veteran family as part of ODVA's annual holiday giving.

VETERANS' SERVICE OFFICERS

County	Phone	Service Officer
Baker	541-523-8223	Jane Chandler
Benton	541-758-1595	Don Johnson
Clackamas	503-650-5631	Janice Harlan-Raisl
.....	503-650-5768	Rick Rutherford
Clatsop	503-440-8310	Philip Simmons
Columbia	503-366-6580	Vacant
Coos	541-396-3121, Ext. 362	Mary Ann Sackett
Crook.....	541-447-5304	Angela Gilley
Curry	866-298-0404	Kimberly O'Neal
Deschutes	541-385-3214	Keith Macnamara
Douglas	541-440-4219	Mary Newman
Gilliam	541-384-6712	Bryan Hunt
Grant	541-575-1631	Bob Muenchausen
Harney.....	541-573-1342	Guy McKay
Hood River	541-386-1080	Lester Logsdon
Jackson	541-774-8214	Renee Burgdorf
Jefferson	541-475-5228	Patricia White
Josephine.....	541-474-5454	Lisa Shipley
Klamath	541-883-4274	Kathy Pierce
Lake	541-947-6043	G. Don Boone
Lane	541-682-4191	Joseph Reiley
Lincoln	541-574-6955	John Reed
Linn	800-319-3882	Kim Grooms
Malheur	541-889-6649	Connie Tanaka
Marion.....	503-373-2085	ODVA
Morrow	541-922-6420	Linda Skendzel
Multnomah	503-988-3620, Ext. 25005	Katie Pereault
Polk.....	503-373-2085	ODVA
Sherman	541-565-3408	Bryan Hunt
Tillamook	503-842-4358	Bill Hatton
Umatilla	541-278-5482	Peggy Raines
Union	541-962-8802	Byron Whipple
Wallowa	541-426-3155, Ext. 241	Linda McIntyre
Wasco	888-804-1817	Lester Logsdon
Washington	503-846-3060	Eric Belt
Wheeler.....	800-982-1172	Bryan Hunt
Yamhill	503-434-7503	Debbie Gill

Service Organizations	Phone	Service Officer
American Legion	503-412-4771	Greg Demarais
Blinded Veterans Association	541-265-9087	Frank Armstrong
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	Phone	Service Officer
Salem	503-373-2085	Gus Bedwell
.....	or 1-800-692-9666	Jessica Garcelon
.....		Leah Rickert
.....		Mitch Sparks
.....		Gina Thomas
.....		Jerry Wilson
.....		Doug Yerke
Portland	503-412-4777	Deanna Erhardt
.....		Donna Hunt
.....		Ron Kincaid
.....		Linda McMillan
.....		Ed Van Dyke

VETERANS' AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

David Fairclo
20751 Amber Way
Bend, OR 97701-8510
541-382-8281

Irv Fletcher
1272 Mayanna Drive
Woodburn, OR 97071
503-981-4356

Al Herrera
22625 SW Riggs Rd.
Beaverton, OR 97007
503-591-8638

J. Ryan Howell
1780 NW Valley View Drive
Albany, OR 97321
541-990-4176

Eugene J. LaBonte
8825 Hebo Rd.
Grand Ronde, OR 97347
503-879-5342

Gerard F. Lorang, Chair
3914 SW Hewett Blvd.
Portland, OR 97221-3103
971-404-5154

Mary J. Mayer
2520 NE 58th Ave.
Portland, OR 97213
310-897-1902

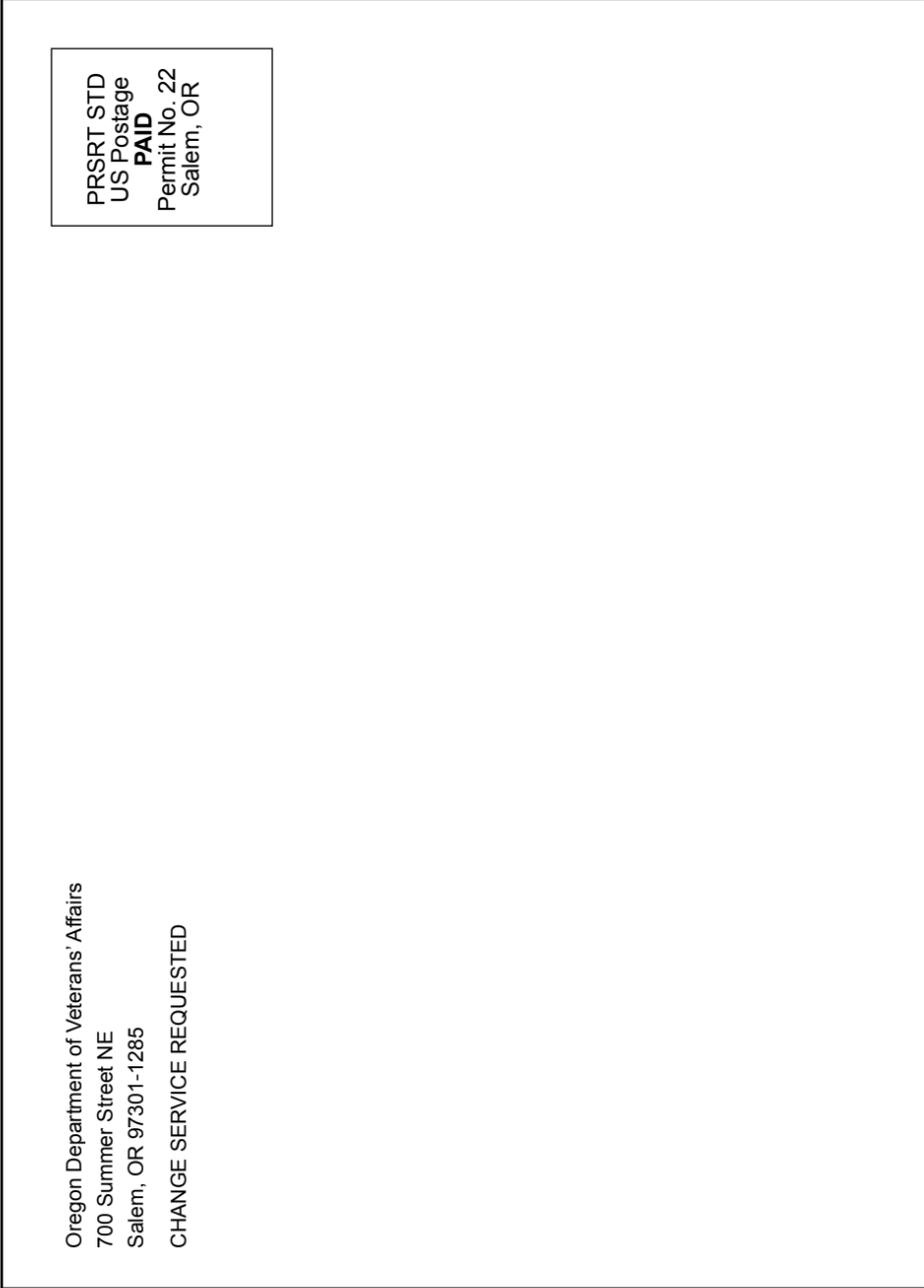
Kevin J. Owens
2249 Commercial St.
North Bend, OR 97459
541-756-2390

Charles E. Schmidt
PO Box 1394
Hines, OR 97738
541-573-3130

Meetings of the Advisory Committee are held quarterly. For meeting dates and locations, please call 503-373-2383. (Special needs will be met for those who have a disability.)

Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs
 700 Summer Street NE
 Salem, OR 97301-1285
 CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

PRSR STD
 US Postage
PAID
 Permit No. 22
 Salem, OR



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS... WHERE EVERYDAY IS VETERANS DAY

VETS NEWS

www.oregon.gov/odva www.facebook.com/odvavet Jim Willis, Director

January / February 2012

HIPAA Statement

ODVA complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA provides that no qualified person with a disability shall be kept from participation in, or be denied a benefit of the services, programs, or activities of ODVA because of that disability. This publication is available in alternate formats. For this service, or concerns regarding ADA, contact the ADA Coordinator at 503-373-2380.

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) complies with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, known as HIPAA. You may obtain a copy of the ODVA Notice of Privacy Practices anytime. Visit ODVA's website at www.oregon.gov/odva, or call 1-800-828-8801 ext. 2141 or 503-373-2141. Write to ODVA's Privacy Officer to have a copy mailed to you; or ask for a copy the next time you visit ODVA.

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

WHERE EVERY DAY IS VETERANS DAY



VETS NEWS

January / February 2012
 Jim Willis, Director

www.oregon.gov/odva www.facebook.com/odvavet

NEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER PRESENTED SILVER STAR



Governor Appoints Al Herrera to Oregon Veterans' Affairs Advisory Committee

SALEM — On a hillside in what is now Vietnam's Binh Phuoc Province, near the Cambodian border, First Sergeant Al Herrera knew what he did that day. And so did his men. That's why 42 years later they made sure he received the acknowledgement he deserved — the Silver Star for gallantry.

The Silver Star—the military's third highest honor—was finally presented to Herrera during a ceremony at the State Capitol in Gov. John Kitzhaber's ceremonial office on Nov. 28.

On that same day, Herrera, 78, was also appointed to the Governor's Advisory Committee to the Director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA).

Herrera earned the medal for his heroic actions on Aug. 2, 1969 while a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army's

1st Infantry Division, also known as the Big Red 1. But it wasn't until he was submitted for the medal by his former commanding officer, Phil Greenwell, that the stories behind Herrera's brave actions that day were made known to the military.

At age 22, Greenwell was the new Charlie Company commander, so having an experienced, capable first sergeant like Herrera was a huge asset. On that day in August, Greenwell and Herrera were part of a procession of armored vehicles. When the lead element suddenly ran into intense enemy fire, Greenwell's element tried to draw away some of the attacking fire by driving their element up a hilltop. They were soon in for the battle of their lives.

Greenwell told the *Oregonian* newspaper that Herrera was hit, but he was able to move his men

Vietnam combat veteran Al Herrera is presented the Silver Star by Brig. Gen. Bruce W. Prunk during a ceremony in the governor's ceremonial office on Nov. 28.
 PHOTO BY BETH NAKAMURA / OREGONIAN

IN THIS ISSUE

- Director's Message..... Page 2
- Women Veterans To Meet..... Page 3
- Reaching Out To Rural Vets..... Page 4
- Vietnam Veterans Reunited..... Page 6
- Home at Last: Returning Vet..... Page 7
- Hire Heroes Act..... Page 8
- Iraq Veteran Recalls Ambush..... Page 9

SEE SILVER STAR ON PAGE 2