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Current procedures at the Washington State Veterans Cemetery

The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake is open and will continue to provide interments for Veterans and eligible individuals. However, WDVA is continuing to adjust its services to follow best practices urged by the CDC in response to the COVID-19 epidemic.

As of Monday, March 30, 2020, WDVA has only been able to conduct committal services for groups of 10 or fewer immediate family members in accordance with state directives. Larger groups will be asked to reduce their numbers or be refused service. We appreciate your continued support in communicating and reinforcing this direction.

In an effort to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and to protect the health and safety of our employees conducting interments, the cemetery will not accept floral arrangements with interments. Families that wish to place a floral



LIBBY KAMROWSKI/THE S-R

Flags are seen planted at graves after a Memorial Day Remembrance ceremony at the State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake, Wash., on May 27, 2019.

arrangement(s) (limit 2) may do so after 4:30 p.m. on the day of the interment or any time thereafter. This change will be in effect until further notice.

As of March 19, 2020, as a matter of public health and safety, the rendering of military funeral honors, whether by military personnel or volunteer organizations, will not be conducted until further notice at the State Veterans Cemetery.

The cemetery remains open to visitors, but we urge all guests to adhere

to social distancing guidelines and avoid unnecessary travel. Visitors should expect that certain portions of a cemetery typically open to the public may be closed (for example, public information center). Preneed or At-Need interment applications may be mailed, emailed or faxed. For Burial Assistance or for additional information, please contact the cemetery at cemetery@dwa.wa.gov, (509) 299-6280, or (509) 299-6286 (fax).

Unfortunately, the cemetery was unable to host an annual Memorial Day program on Monday May 25, 2020. We sincerely apologize for the inability to host this remembrance event. The cemetery produced a tribute video that can be viewed at facebook.com/WAVeteransCemetery/videos/.

For additional information on state and federal responses to COVID-19, please visit coronavirus.gov and governor.wa.gov.

WE BELIEVE IN VA FINANCING



The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers home loans to active military members, reservists, and retirees, as a benefit of service in our nation's Armed Forces.

Many service members are not aware this earned benefit is available to them; many sellers are not aware of the advantages to VA loans in the transaction process.

We encourage all Spokane realtors - to become familiar with this loan type so that we can all join in saying "We believe in VA financing!"

Visit www.spokaneopen.com to view VA qualified homes in your preferred area

Veteran organizations work to rename highway

The Eastern Washington Veterans Task Force have initiated a proposal to rename State Route 902 from mile marker 0 to 12 the Gold Star Memorial Highway. This is the primary roadway leading to the Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake, Wash.

The term Gold Star is used to identify a service member who lost their life in service to their country,

the ultimate sacrifice. The designation honors the service member while acknowledging their family's loss, grief, and continued healing.

There is a large population of Gold Star families in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho who have experienced that loss.

This proposal recognizes their sacrifices. Several state elected officials from Eastern Washington has

endorsed this request in writing. This proposal also has the support of civic and veteran organizations.

A formal proposal has been submitted to the Washington State Transportation Commission, which is expected to reconvene as COVID-19 restrictions allow.

Public comments are welcome and can be sent to sr902naming

VETERANS CHRONICLE

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Veterans Chronicle

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

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Veterans Help Net partners with The Spokesman-Review to publish Veterans Chronicle on the third Friday of every month to increase awareness about veteran issues and to help veterans find hope and help.

To share a veteran story or information about resources for veterans, please contact info@veteranshelpnet.com or visit www.VeteransHelpNet.com.

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Hey veterans, did you know ...

...Up to 60,000 veterans live in Spokane County?

Take a moment to reflect on the following statistics about those who have served our county, and consider how you can support those in our community.

U.S. Service Members

- Over 18 million veterans live in the U.S.
- 1.6 million veterans are women
- 9.2 million are age 65 and older
- 1.6 million are younger than 35

Veteran caregivers

- 88% report increased stress/anxiety
- 77% suffer sleep deprivation
- 30% provide care for 10 years or more. (Family Caregiver Alliance 2016; Bob Woodruff Foundation, CBS This Morning, Oct. 31, 2016)

Post-9/11 Veterans

- 2.8-plus million deployed to Afghanistan/Iraq since 9/11
- 90% survive their injuries
- 1 in 50 sustained physical combat injury
- 1 in 5 are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury or depression
- Over 25% of homeless men are war veterans. Many young veterans, both men and women, who served in Iraq and Afghanistan have debilitating injuries and have no place to go.
- The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan led to physical injuries for more than 50,000 service members.
- An estimated 400,000 battle combat-related stress, major depression, and PTSD. The greatest casualty is being forgotten. There is a heavy cost for freedom – and the service men and women are freedom providers. (Wounded Warrior Project, 2013, www.woundedwarriorproject.org)

...You may need to schedule a Compensation & Pension Exam?

When you file a claim with the VA, you will likely be required to take a Compensation & Pension (C&P) Exam. The VA hires third-party examiners to conduct these examinations. The three main providers in the Spokane and North Idaho area are QTC Medical, VES (Veteran Evaluation Services) and VetFed Health Solutions.

When you submit a disability claim to the VA, the VA will have one of these contractors contact you directly. When they call, they may not clearly identify themselves as a VA contractor or mention a C&P exam. They may simply say that they are calling about an exam scheduled on your behalf. This can be



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vietnam veteran Thomas Nienalt, wearing a protective face mask as a precaution against the coronavirus, salutes at the Vietnam War Memorial, in Philadelphia, on Memorial Day, Monday, May 25, 2020.

confusing to many veterans!

It can take weeks or even months to get an appointment after submitting a disability claim. Typically these examiners will make only two attempts to contact you by phone and maybe once by mail.

It is imperative that you answer your phone when you are expecting this call. Some veterans assume these calls are scams; they are NOT!

Ignoring or not responding to an exam request, it may result in a claim denial or a lower disability percentage. If due to an unforeseen, justifiable circumstances you are unable to attend your scheduled exam, you can request the VA and/or contractor to have your exam rescheduled, if notified very promptly, though this may cause a delay in your processing time.

If you have any questions, contact Thomas (Tom) Freeman, Veterans Services Officer and Director of Kootenai County Veteran Services Office, at (208) 446-1090.

...COVID-19 symptoms may appear up to 14 days after exposure?

People with COVID-19 can have a wide range of symptoms that can range from mild to severe.

Symptoms may include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches

- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms, and some people who do not have any symptoms may still be able to spread the virus. Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing serious complications from COVID-19 illness.

The CDC advises that best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. They recommend frequently hand washing, avoiding close contact with sick individuals and anyone outside your home, covering your mouth and nose with a cloth face covering in public spaces, frequent cleaning and disinfecting, and monitoring your health.

For more information, visit cdc.gov/coronavirus or contact your VA health care provider.

...Blue Water Navy veterans qualify for disability benefits?

Veterans who served on a Blue Water Navy vessel offshore of the Republic of Vietnam, or on another U.S. Navy or Coast Guard ship operating in the coastal waterways of Vietnam, between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, may have had contact with Agent Orange, an herbicide used to clear trees and plants during the war. Due to this presumption of contact, veterans who have been diagnosed with an Agent Orange-related illness qualifies these veterans for disability compensation that they may have been previously denied, as a result of Public Law 116-23, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019.

A veteran may be eligible if the following is true:

- A veteran has a presumptive disease presumed to be caused or aggravated by Agent Orange and
- Between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, a veteran:
 - Was aboard a U.S. military vessel that operated in the inland waterways of Vietnam, or
 - Served on a vessel not more than 12 nautical miles seaward from the demarcation line of the waters of Vietnam and Cambodia.

Qualified dependents may also be eligible for benefits through this program.

If this sounds like you or someone you know, contact a Veteran Service Officer. Contact information can be found on page 5.

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WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR VA HEALTH CARE?

You may be able to get VA health care benefits if you served in the active military, naval, or air service and did not receive a dishonorable discharge.

You may be eligible if ...

- You enlisted after Sept. 7, 1980, or entered active duty after Oct. 16, 1981, and you served 24 continuous months or the full period for which you were called to active duty, unless any of the descriptions below are true:
- You were discharged for a disability that was caused – or made worse – by your active-duty service

- You were discharged for a hardship or "early out"
- You served prior to Sept. 7, 1980
- You're a current or former member of the Reserves or National Guard and you have been called to active duty by a federal order and completed the full period for which you were called or ordered to active duty, you may be eligible for VA health care benefits. (If you had or have active-duty status for training purposes only, you do not qualify for VA health care.)

Learn more about eligibility requirements at va.gov/health-care/eligibility/.

PTSD COACH APP HELPS VETERANS MANAGE STRESS



PTSD Coach is a digital app provided by the National Center for PTSD aimed at helping veterans learn about and manage their symptoms of PTSD. Through PTSD Coach, veterans can use the built-in coping tools when feeling upset or stressed; they can also create a support network. You can also track your progress to see if symptoms are improving over time.

A recent upgrade to the app included new features that allow for a more customized and personal experience. Veterans can make music playlists and upload photos.

PTSD Coach is free to download and available in the Apple App Store and Google Play. Learn more at mobile.va.gov/app/ptsd-coach.

If you do not have a smartphone, PTSD Coach Online can be accessed with a computer and internet

connection at ptsd.va.gov/apps/ptsdcoachonline.



HOW CAN I GET HELP?

Every county and state has a Veteran Affairs office to answer questions about benefits and provide assistance. There are also other useful resources for veterans in the Inland Northwest.

**GO ONLINE****VA.gov**

The Department of Veterans Affairs website has resources on every topic relevant to veterans.

VA.gov/welcome-kit

The VA Welcome Guide covers all types of benefits and services available for veterans, new recruits, active service members and their families.

DAV9.com

Based in Post Falls, Disabled American Veterans Chapter 9 Fort Sherman shares links and information to both local and national help organizations for veterans.

Explore.VA.gov/benefits-navigator

Explore VA benefits and discover which ones you and your family may be eligible to receive.

**IN PERSON****Spokane County Regional Veteran Service**

1117 N. Evergreen Rd.,
Spokane Valley, WA
(509) 477-3690

Apply for emergency services, or have any benefits or service questions answered by 5 Veteran Service Officers (VSO) and staff.

North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

120 E. Railroad Ave., Post Falls,
ID (208) 446-1092

Meet with a VSO or staff for help with VA benefits enrollment, claims or other veteran needs.

Goodwill Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

130 E. Third Ave., Spokane, WA
(509) 828-2449
SSVF helps homeless veterans and their families find housing and connects veterans with other support organizations.

**BY PHONE****Spokane County Regional Veteran Service**

(509) 477-3690

North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

(208) 446-1092

Veteran Crisis Line

1 (800) 273-8255, press 1

North Idaho Crisis Center

(208) 625-4884

Washington or Idaho 2-1-1

Dial "2-1-1" for health and human resources referrals.

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In Person or Phone
504 E. Second Ave.,
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FACES OF AGENT ORANGE: SHERRI WISE

By Jim Belshaw

VETERANS CHRONICLE

When an Agent Orange diagnosis first confronted Sherri Wise's father in 2002, he denied the fact of it.

"He said this is our country, that our government would not do this," Sherri said.

He went into the hospital two days before 9/11. On that fateful day, Sherri and her mother rode a hospital tram to visit him. They found themselves surrounded by veterans.

"We saw these men who were disfigured, emotionally distraught, physically incapable of fighting," she said. "But the minute that first plane hit, you could see the wheels turning in their heads. When the second plane hit, we were surrounded by men who said they would protect us. We were never in danger, but it was the most touching thing. The whole time we were there, everywhere we walked, there was a man trying to reassure us that everything would be OK."

Soon the fact of her father's condition became too much for him to deny – heart attack, stroke, diabetes, eyesight failing, kidney failure ...

"It was one thing after another," she said. "The VA doctors said they could relate everything he had to Agent Orange."

His main reaction was to worry about the family. His first question was: 'Could I pass any of this on to my kids?' We were all born after his exposure."

He served in Vietnam with the 82nd Airborne in 1966-67.

"He had such faith that our country's government would make it right," she said. "I'm angry. We're all angry. But he kept saying: 'They'll make it right. I did what I had to do in Vietnam. I'd do it all over again.' That amazes me."

Sherri has undergone 13 back surgeries. Diagnosed with degenerative back discs at 20 years old, her doctors expressed disbelief that it could happen to someone so young.

"I have fibromyalgia, neuropathy, Type 2 Diabetes, arthritis, and depression," she said. "I'm 35 years old. The doctors said there is no reason for me to have degenerative discs at this age. I was born with a leg out of socket, as well."

Her older brother has been diagnosed with degenerative discs and severe depression; her younger sister suffers from depression. Sherri's youngest child was born with a congenital heart defect; her oldest is bipolar. There is no family history of these conditions.

"I look at them, and I wonder if I passed this on," she said. "Deep down, I know I did, and it just breaks my heart. Any time any little thing comes up with them, I'm really hit by the fact that I did this to them. I know logically I didn't, but it makes no difference. The VA won't do anything. They either don't know how or don't care."

Sherri praises one doctor the family has met throughout the years, the first doctor to diagnose her father. She said he was an older man who was straightforward about Agent Orange and the fact that so little research has been done to determine its effects on the children and grandchildren of Vietnam veterans.

"That man sat with us and talked to us about it, and I think he was the most honest man we met."

In May 2008, Sherri's father entered the VA hospital for the last time. He died as a result of an allergic reaction to a drug. His last 11 days were spent in confusion, unable to respond to those around him, unable to eat.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHERRI WISE

Sherri Wise's parents, Vietnam veteran Ronald Steve Harrison and Reba Harrison.



Sherri, left, with her daughter Andrea and her father Ronald.

"It was very difficult," she said. "But he never stopped saying, 'They'll take care of it. They'll make it right.' Until the day he died, he believed that our government would take care of it."

She said she was consumed with anger when he died and that her anger did not find a release until she became involved with Agent Orange Legacy, an Internet support program for the families of Vietnam veterans. She began meeting and talking with other family members whose experience tracked with hers.

"It was strange talking to other people who had gone through it, and I started realizing all the things that correlated,"

she said. "These people were going through the exact same things and experiencing the exact same things with their loved ones."

She stresses the importance now of spreading information about Agent Orange. Like so many others, she is adamant that the VA must research the question of links between the veterans' Agent Orange diseases and health issues arising in their children.

"It needs to be talked about," she said. "Somebody has to talk about it. The biggest thing to tell the government is: You did this. Now help us. Honor these veterans."

VETERANS CHRONICLE

'THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE WERE NEVER THERE'

Combat veteran Nicole shares the challenges she experienced during and after deployment

Provided by
MakeTheConnection.net

Nicole was never afraid to deploy – to get on that plane, knowing that dangerous moments may lie ahead. But this feeling was something new.

When Nicole deployed to Korea, her youngest daughter was just 6 months old. When she returned a half year later, her daughter didn't recognize her. "I understood," Nicole says, "but it was gut-wrenching."

Nicole's story illustrates some of the challenges that military families can face. The missed moments. The sleepless nights. The effort to reconnect.

"I don't know if I can even put it into words," Nicole says of serving abroad, away from her children. "It's just – there are things about them that I simply do not know. There are stories that they have that they can laugh about with my mom, that I just – I don't have that firsthand knowledge of."

Before one of Nicole's deployments, her mother moved in with them to help out at home. Through it all, her mother was a "rock," Nicole says. She was there for her grandchildren, giving them someone to turn to. But still, there were naturally some tougher times.

"I didn't realize at the time some of the impacts that were happening with my children," Nicole says. "And not understanding that they did worry, that they did have an imagination about what kinds of things could be happening to us while we were away."

There were periods when her

oldest daughter began to withdraw, or her son acted out. "What they tell me now is that they just felt like I was never there. And at that time, they didn't understand why we were never there."

Her daughter had night terrors, and both Nicole and her husband – who served as a combat engineer – struggled to sleep. "Our whole family is up in the middle of the night most of the time," she says.

After an 18-month deployment, Nicole's husband faced PTSD and survivor's guilt. He was haunted by memories of the day his convoy came under attack. He chose to ride in a different vehicle that day, and the seat he usually occupied was "obliterated."

Upon returning, he was quieter than usual and withdrew. Initially, Nicole says, her kids felt like they had lost their friend. "He used to do so much with them."

After she deployed, Nicole says, "the biggest challenge for me was just the new perspective that you have. Once you've gone once, subsequently you know that the same person is not going to come back. But the people you leave behind, they don't know that. They don't realize that. And they expect to be able to pick up right where you left off. And that's not the case."

For Nicole, the time away – the things she saw – manifested themselves in obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Serving as a medic, she had found that the best way to get her job done was to detach herself from her work, like



COURTESY MAKE THE CONNECTION

Nicole is a U.S. Army and Air Force Reserve / National Guard Desert Era combat veteran.

More information

MakeTheConnection.net is an online resource designed to connect veterans, their family members and friends, and other supporters with information, resources, and solutions to issues affecting their lives.

treating a young lieutenant who stepped on a homemade mine.

"Just react," she says. "And just be there, and just not think. Just go straight to step one, step two, step three, step four. And then you think about it afterwards."

When Nicole returned home, she found herself needing to do everything the same way, every time. She wouldn't turn left in her car without a traffic light. At the grocery store, she had to pack groceries onto the conveyor belt a certain way. Even for housework, like cleaning and washing the dishes,

there were specific ways she had to do it all.

"Drove my family nuts," she says.

Nicole eventually found support through VA. Medication relieved the OCD symptoms, and counseling helped the family begin to repair and reinforce its bonds.

"I think the biggest thing for me was not listening," she says. "When I actually sat down and started listening to the people who loved me tell me, 'You know, this is what you're doing. This is how this is coming out. This is what I think.' I was like,

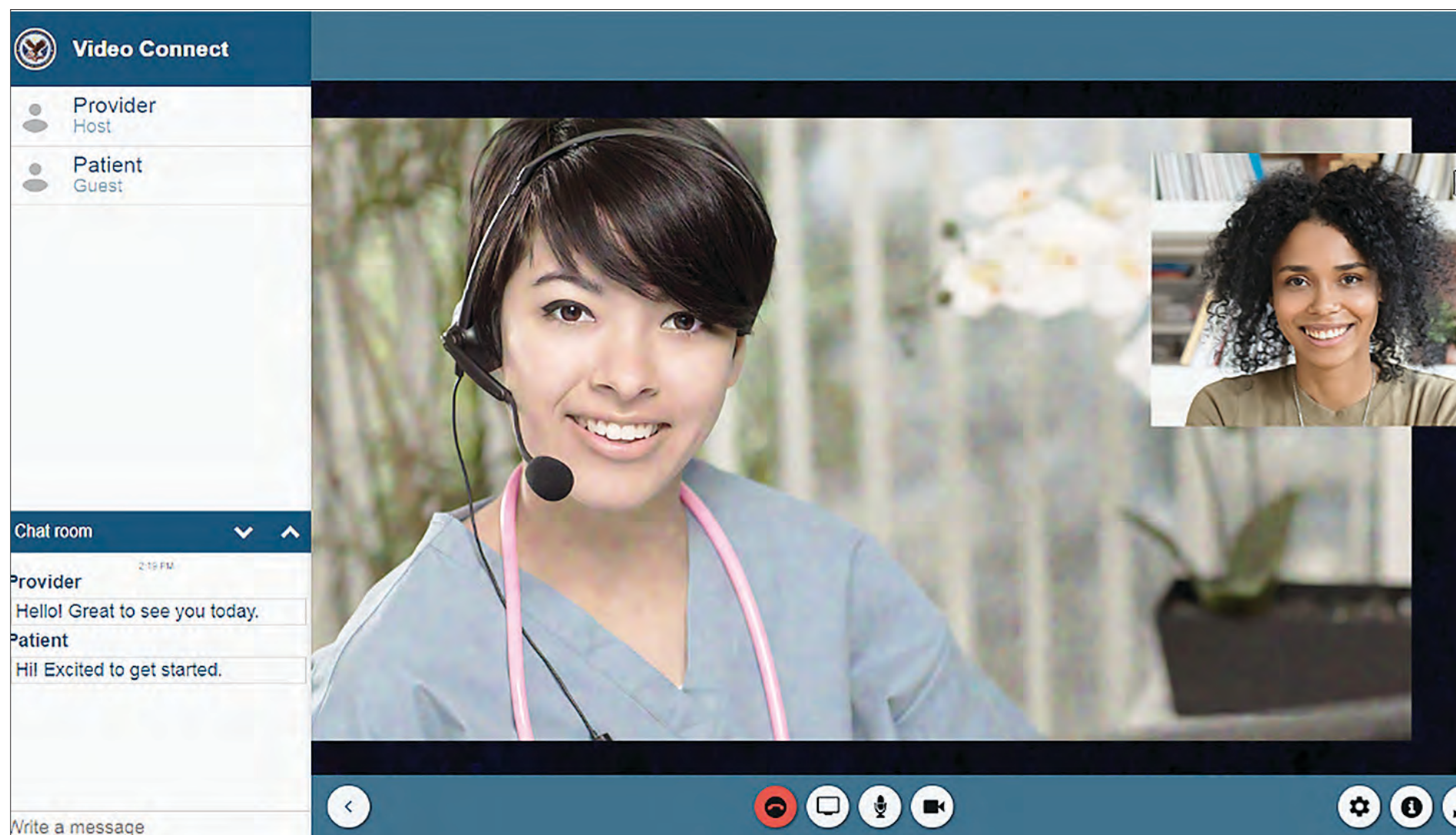
OK. When you listen to those voices that you're affecting, that you love, then you don't have any choice but to at least go find out: Is there a problem that can be rectified?"

Another lesson that she's taken with her: You don't have to face these challenges alone.

"Isolation ... breeds fear. It breeds sadness," Nicole says. "But if you take the opportunity to surround yourself with love, with understanding, with the people who really care about you or people who relate to what is it that you are feeling, then only good can come from that."

"No one can do this alone. We went where we went as a team, as a platoon, as a squad, and we did it together. So the only way to overcome what we did together is to continue to work together to do that."

VETERANS CHRONICLE



COURTESY OF VA VIDEO CONNECT

VIDEO VISIT SUCCESS

Get the most out of a VA Video Connect health care call

During the COVID-19 pandemic, secure video visits are the safest way to connect with your health care team for non-urgent care. With preparation, patients and providers should expect the

same results from a virtual visit as a face-to-face one. With practice, we hope you'll have a great session and finish it with the same satisfaction as a regular office visit.

Prepare your room and technology

A video visit with a provider may use the same technology as a family video chat, but it's different. Just like a face-to-face office visit, you need to prepare yourself, as well as your "home studio." You can follow this

checklist:

- Use headphones or ear buds, if possible.
- Clean the device's camera lens.
- Find a well-lit, private space that is free of distractions (pets, children).
- Turn off music, TVs or radios to avoid competing noise.
- Avoid holding your device in your hand; position it so it's close to eye level when seated, maybe on a stack of books at a table, or on a bookshelf.
- Sit near your WiFi router,

or near a window if using a cellular connection.

- When entering the VA Video Connect visit, make sure the video icon is selected and the device's sound is turned up.

Best medical practices for you

In-person office visits include confidential information from you as well as from your provider; if you are normally accompanied by a spouse, partner, or family member, be sure the provider knows you're not alone.

Coming prepared for a virtual visit helps you get the best care possible. Review health records and medication lists (or prescription bottles) before the appointment to refresh your

mind and spark questions. If your provider asks your location, it's only so they can help you if there's an emergency.

After you have successfully completed a virtual visit, you can view doctor's notes and instructions in My HealthVet at myhealth.va.gov. If you have questions, follow up with your health care team using Secure Messaging (sign in required), you will receive a response within three business days. Understand that a virtual visit shouldn't be used in cases of emergency. If you need immediate assistance, call 911 or go to the closest Emergency Department.

Visit www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect to download VA Video Connect for your

VETERANS CHRONICLE



GETTY IMAGES

Several types of disability compensation for veterans

Provided by Military.com

Veterans with a service-related disability and an "other than dishonorable" discharge can qualify for a monthly tax-free VA Disability Compensation benefit ranging from \$133 to over \$3,400 every month.

You could be paid more if:

- You have very severe disabilities or loss of limb(s)
- You have a spouse, child(ren), or dependent parent(s)
- You have a seriously disabled spouse
- You are considered unemployable due to your disability

In certain circumstances, you can apply for benefits before being discharged from the military.

For the fastest service, you can apply online through VA.gov; you should submit supporting

documents with your claim for benefits. You should send the VA copies of medical evidence (both military and civilian), your discharge paperwork, and anything else you may think is necessary. Remember, you can never provide the VA too much information!

Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) is paid in addition to the regular VA Disability Compensation. It is normally limited to veterans who suffered the loss or loss of use of certain organs or extremities.

The VA may also pay travel reimbursement to certain veterans who have to travel to medical appointments. Reimbursement for mileage or public transportation can be paid to:

- Service-connected veterans with 30% or greater disability

- Veterans traveling for treatment of a service-connected condition

- VA pension recipients

- Veterans traveling for scheduled compensation or pension exams

- Certain low-income veterans

Mileage will be reimbursed at 41.5 cents per mile. There is a deductible of \$3.00 one way and \$6.00 per round trip. The deductible is also subject to a monthly cap of \$18.00, when you reach \$18.00 in travel payments in a month, the remainder of that month will be free of the deductible. The deductible can be waived in certain cases.

If you have questions, contact the VA benefits hotline at 800-827-1000 or MyVA311 at 844-698-2311. For local support, see "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5.



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In the Spotlight: Vietnam War veteran health issues

It's important to understand the health care needs of Vietnam War veterans because of the long-term effects of military service during the Vietnam War era. If you served during the Vietnam War, you may be at risk of certain health conditions. Understanding these needs will allow you to receive better care. Learn about these conditions and what to do next to take care of your health.

Health risks related to Vietnam War

Diseases related to Agent Orange: A toxic chemical used to clear trees and plants that can cause long-term health

effects.

Hepatitis C: A disease that can harm your liver.

Hearing problems caused by noise: Harmful sounds from guns, explosives, rockets, heavy weapons, jets and aircraft, and machinery that can cause or add to hearing loss and ringing in the ears.

Illnesses or injuries caused by job-related hazards: Chemicals, paints, radiation, and other hazards you may have come across.

What you can do now

Talk to your primary health care provider or



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vietnam veteran Ron Silver Eagle D'Andre, left, listens during a town hall meeting at American Legion Post 1 on Monday, June 9, 2014, in Phoenix concerning health care issues at the Phoenix VA facilities.

your local VA environmental health

coordinator about other health concerns related to

your military service. Remember, you can use Secure Messaging (login required) to send a private note to your doctor if you have any questions or worries.

Ask your local VA environmental health coordinator about getting a free Agent Orange Registry health exam.

Find out if you can get benefits from any illness or injury caused, or made worse, by your active-duty service, such as illness-related to agent orange or contact with hazardous materials.

Be sure your doctor knows if you have a history of Agent Orange exposure.

Because of the possibility of increased cancer risk, your doctor may suggest cancer screening tests and to report any symptoms as soon as they appear.

Veterans are at risk for many types of cancer just like everyone else, even if they haven't been exposed to Agent Orange. You can lower your risk of cancer and other diseases by quitting smoking, staying at a healthy weight, getting regular physical activity, and eating a healthy diet.

If you need help connecting with a VA health care provider or accessing your benefit information, see "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5.

Physical and occupational therapy offered by VA

By Jean Bledsoe

I am a retired RN and knew a little about both physical therapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT), but I really didn't understand the full scope of what they could do to improve my life.

I was referred to a physical therapist, and as she watched me painfully walk down the hall, she immediately gave me a new rolling walker with a seat and basket. She evaluated my spinal condition, came up with a plan, gave me some simple exercises along with some equipment, and said I needed OT in addition to PT and ordered it immediately.

The occupational

therapist evaluated my condition and concentrated on specific, simple tasks that I had difficulty performing with my hands, like holding silverware, picking up small items, buttoning my clothes, tying my shoes, using a knife, all because of the loss of strength, feeling and flexibility in my hands. I was treated with ultrasound and paraffin wax.

Each week I would see both therapists. They reevaluated my progress and gave me additional exercises to help with my rehabilitation and make my life easier. Eventually, they determined that I would need to see the hand surgeon at the VA and they set all of that in

motion.

I talked with the OT team, who told me about helping stroke patients and amputees, and patients with chronic illnesses, like diabetes and heart disease. Therapists assess their needs and home environment, and provide the devices, equipment, and education to enable them to lead safer, more independent lives.

They also spoke of the work OTs do with clients with PTSD and other mental health issues.

Both Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center in Spokane and North Idaho CBOC in Coeur d'Alene offer these therapies.

What do you need? If you haven't already, begin exploring your VA benefits



GETTY IMAGES

with the help of a Veteran Service Officer (see "How

Do I Get Help?" on page 5). If you are already enrolled,

ask your primary provider for a referral.

VETERANS CHRONICLE

THE HISTORY OF TAPS

By Larry Connelly
UNITED STATES NAVY MASTER
CHIEF, RET. (1955-1975)

The military bugle call used in 1835 was changed from Scotts Tattoo, (Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott – General-in-chief of the United States Army) to Butterfield’s Lullaby (Brig. Gen. Daniel A. Butterfield, 3rd Brigade Union Army Corps.) with bugler Oliver W. Norton playing the notes until the general was satisfied.

The 24-note call has been played as Butterfield’s Lullaby for the past 157 years since July of 1862 at nearly every military funeral.

The Confederate Army adopted the call as played in 1863. Scotts Tattoo was

thought to be harsh and too quick. It was used to call the troops to evening muster and for lights out. It was not a funeral call at that time.

Taps was first played at a military funeral in July of 1863 near Richmond, Va., for an unknown Union cannoner. The call did not become official until 1891. The first known soldier buried at Arlington National Cemetery was Pvt. William Christman of the Pennsylvania Infantry; Taps was played for his burial on May 13, 1864.

Taps was not played when the square stone marker with the number 5232 chiseled on top was placed above the grave box containing the legs of three different Union soldiers.

Why they were buried is unknown to this day. One of the former leg owners died in 1917, records of another were lost, and the third man was buried one half mile away from his leg two weeks later when he died, the only man in Arlington National buried in two graves. Taps was played at his funeral.

Today when a veteran is buried, Taps may be played on an old bugle by a bugler, or it’s notes may come from the old bugle through an electronic speaker. Dependents may request the real thing if they so choose.

At the Tomb of the Unknowns, Taps is played by a member of the Old Guard Company at every changing of the guard on

the hour or half hour depending on the season of the year.

At Arlington, Taps is played on an average of twenty times a day as veterans are placed with their brothers and sisters in-arms, forever below a stone cross or in the columbarium walls that have space for forty thousand cremated remains. The symbols on the gravestones may represent any one of twelve or thirteen different religious beliefs.

Taps played over my grave when I was buried with other Vietnam river boat sailors in May of 1971 after a canal ambush that sunk our boat. When I woke up, I was still in Vietnam and basically



AP

A soldier with the 3rd Infantry Regiment, also known as the Old Guard, plays Taps on Monday, Aug. 6, 2018, during the burial service of retired Army Col. Roger Brown, of Arlington, Va.

uninjured and ready to go out again with my Vietnamese crew. Those sad notes of Taps at that time (in my mind) have been a part of my minor PTSD memories for over forty-eight years.

Larry Connelly was a RAID Advisor with the

Vietnamese Patrol Boat River Unit #51, 1970-1972, Cat Lai and Nha Be. Larry lives in Liberty Lake and has written many articles and short stories. He is the author of “A River Boat Advisor’s Story,” which chronicled his action and activities on a Patrol River Boat in Vietnam.



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