



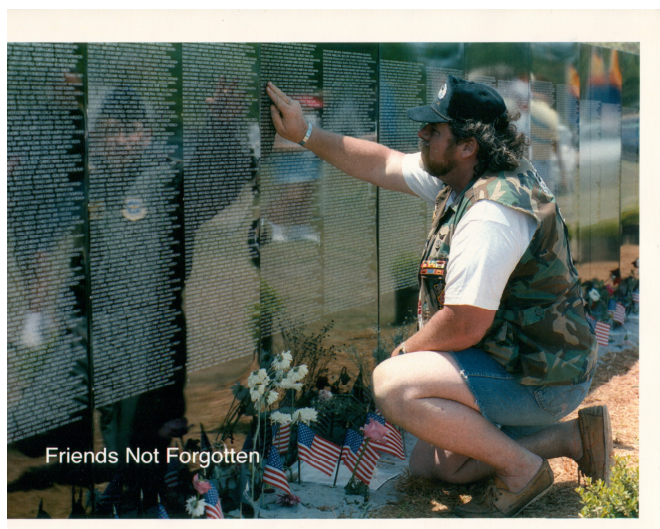
FLORIDA DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION



Rotor and Scalpel

WINTER/SPRING NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2013



DON "HOSS" CALDWELL
1947-2012

As most of you are aware, our founding father, Hoss, passed away this past August. Hoss had a way of touching lives all around him. The past few years his health had been failing and he struggled quite a bit. Most of us all have very fond memories of the big guy, may be it at the reunion, phone conversations or e-mails. When I think of Hoss, I picture him sitting in his chair at the campground, talking with everyone, in his maroon dustoff jacket and his dustoff cap – laughing and having a great time, mug in his hand, or "bombing" the 101st with water balloons.

The past few years the biggest thing Hoss looked forward to was our Annual Reunion and the National Dustoff Reunion – he wanted to be with his brothers more than *anything*. Being with his brothers and the camaraderie made him happiest.

Dustoff is dedicating this year's reunion to Hoss. Chris Hamrick has been working diligently on preparations. He has purchased and donated a 10 x 10 enclosed canopy and this will be set up all weekend to honor Hoss. It will contain a static display with items being brought by Art and photos. Chris would like this display manned 24/7 so he is asking for volunteers to take shifts. A memorial is planned for Friday night after dinner. If anyone would like a few minutes to speak, share your thoughts or fond memories – this would be the perfect forum to do so. At the time of this mailing, the Hamrick family is mourning the loss of Chris' ex-wife Terri, mother of his children and making arrangements, so if you have any thoughts, would like to volunteer to man the display or would like to make a suggestion, please contact Bob Neitzel at 386-424-1989.

Hoss had his demons – he was haunted by the memory of the crew of Dustoff 90. He carried a burden as large as he was - guilt all these years as he should have been on this flight and changed places. On the evening of February 12, 1968, Aircraft Commander 1LT Jerry Lee Roe, call sign Dustoff 90, and his crew: WO2 Alan Gunn, pilot, Sp/5 Wade L. Groth, Crew chief and their Medic, Sp/5 Harry W. Brown departed Ban Me Thuot in their UH1H for an Urgent Medevac at the Gia Nghai Special Forces Camp. They were part of the 50th Medical Detachment (HA), normally stationed at Tuy Hoa, and were on standby at Ban Me Thuot in support of Special Forces Operations in the area. At approximately 2019 hours, Dustoff 90's blip disappeared from the USAF Tac Control Radar Screen never to be recovered or heard from again.

So I would like to say – Hoss you can rest easy and I know the feeling of guilt you carried all these years has been lifted – I know that you are looking down smiling at all of us and you are as young, pain free, happy and laughing as you were back on February 11, 1968. The burden has been lifted as you have been reunited with Jerry, Alan, Wade and Harry your brothers and comrades – We love you and miss you and we will celebrate your long awaited reunion with the Crew of Dustoff 90.

FROM THE VP

I hope all have been well and preparations are already in motion for the Reunion. I am hoping that as many members of Dustoff will be attending so we can all say our final farewell to Hoss. I would ask you that forget any issues you have had in the past with other members and come together as a family once again for Hoss. Chris Hamrick has done a great job making arrangements to honor our founding father and I would like to thank him for all his efforts and on behalf of Dustoff extend our condolences to the Hamrick family for their recent loss.

Before I continue, due to a very sad reality that we all have to face, we will be voting to amend one section of our by-laws at the Reunion. Currently, as Hoss wished and insisted, the only members of Dustoff that are able to hold the office of President and Vice President are those whose MOS/Unit was Dustoff or Medevac. If not mistaken, there are only three of us in the unit at this time. In trying to keep with Hoss' wishes, the executive board is proposing the following change to this section of the by-laws:

“Only those members of Florida Dustoff Association whose MOS/Unit was Dustoff, Medevac or Combat Medic, are a member in good standing and have been honorably discharged may hold the office of President or Vice President of the organization. You MUST provide a copy of your DD-214 to substantiate this information prior to you taking office.”

A discussion will be held prior to the vote. If you were Dustoff, Medevac, or Combat Medic (this does include corpsmen), and you may consider holding one of these offices, please bring a **copy** of your DD-214 to the Reunion. Make sure it is a copy as it will be retained in our files in case there may be any questions down the road.

Our new trailer has been purchased and sold the old one to Semper Fidelis America. We would like to thank all that made donations to the purchase of the trailer, especially Doc Custer who made a very **LARGE** donation that *almost* covered the entire cost. With the monies raised and the monies from the sale of the old trailer, we were able to purchase a spare tire (very necessary) and all of the wood and hardware for the interior. The interior of the trailer has been set up with shelving and includes specific spots for the grill, Dustoff cooler, flight suits, wreath, etc. There are even storage areas for the poles (pieces) for the two canopies (one on each side). The only items in the center isle will be the coolers and tables. The organization of the inside of the trailer should make locating items, unloading and loading it back up much easier. On behalf of Dustoff, I would like to thank Skip and Francesca Abers for their time and hard work on making this possibly. Art saw the trailer in January and was pleased with the set-up of the interior. The graphics have not been done, but we are torn between having it painted or vinyl graphics (if it is painted and scratched – then we have problems.) We will discuss this at the meeting.

I would like to Congratulate to all recipients of awards last year: Member of the Year – Steve Doan. Certificate of Appreciation for Service to Dustoff – Harry Newman, Adele Chambers, LaPlaya Resorts, Ron “Doc” Custer, Jon Riggs, Patches, Bob Gallagher, Fineline Printing, Skip and Francesca Abers, Ken Wakefield, Al Diaz, Bobbi Jo Dino, Michelle Wakefield and Rose Fantaccione as well as the USA River Rats Honor Guard. In addition, I was brought to tears with the presentation of a past presidents award to myself.

We traveled to Gatlinburg this August with Ralph and Jacque Earrusso and were going to surprise Michael J Martin with a visit and a care package. Unfortunately, Michael was not feeling well at the time and did not want any visitors, so Jacque and Bert packed up everything and shipped it to Michael and his wife. Dustoff, The VVB and the USA River Rats all made contributions to the package (T shirts, hats, etc...). Some of the items that Dustoff contributed were a POW/MIA tankard, a Dustoff challenge coin, a POW/MIA bracelet/key chain and Bert had bought Michael a commemorative 25th anniversary dog tag from last year's reunion. We know he received it and appreciated knowing that we were thinking of him.

On behalf of Dustoff, several packages were sent to our troops for the Holidays. The packages consisted of Holiday candies and treats, holiday decorations; personal hygiene items (body wash, shaving cream, razors, wet wipes, hand sanitizer, etc.)

Bert and I, on behalf of Dustoff and The Vietnam and All Veterans State Coalition, participated in Wreaths Across America at the local cemetery in Edgewater again this year. We had the pleasure of seeing our Florida Senator Dorothy Hukill and meeting at that time, our congressmen elect Ron Desantis (for our district here on the coast.) The ceremony was a fitting tribute and took place at the same time that other similar events took place all over the country. Wreaths presented at the main ceremony represented every branch of the service, including Coast Guard and Merchant Marines. I had the honor of presenting the POW/MIA wreath at this years' ceremony again. After the main ceremony, everyone in attendance walked the cemetery and laid a fresh cut wreath on a soldier's grave. However, I guess due to hard economic times, donations to this program were down and instead of having approx. 160 wreaths to place at the gravesites like last year, there were only about 65 to place. A thought would be if possible Florida Dustoff Association could make a small donation, possibly \$45.00 to this program this year – this would cover the cost of three additional wreaths. For more information, the web address is <http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org> – this year's ceremony takes place December 14, 2013. Also, if you would like to attend one of these ceremonies that take place throughout the country, you can access the list of cemeteries' that participate.

Dustoff hosted The Vietnam and All Veterans State Coalition Meeting an Annual Banquet again this past January and will most probably be hosting the meeting again next year. Dustoff was presented with a plaque and a Certificate. Greg Welsh was bestowed the honor of Veteran of the Year (for the second time), the VVB Reunion Committee is the Organization of the Year, Fineline Printing is the Business of the Year and Roberta and Maureen Welsh both received awards as the Coalitions' Member(s) of the Year. A special award was presented to Tony Cartlidge for his dedication to the welfare of veterans. Congrats to All!! When the location and dates are scheduled, we will let you know. This years, held at LaPlaya Resort and Hotel in Daytona Beach was a wonderful weekend. A lot of information was received and reviewed in the meeting and the Banquet was received well by all. It was nice to see Art Smith there and I am sure he can attest as to the large amount of information we reviewed. Our new addition to the POW/MIA Committee (in conjunction with Tony Cartlidge) and Health Issues Committee (AO/DU/Suicide Rate) Bill Sauerwine is a welcomed addition and has provided very valuable information at the last meeting or two. We also had a wonderful organization called Americas VetDogs attend and gave us information on their program (more info below.) The officers were sworn in by State Senator Dorothy Hukill. I suggest if given the opportunity to attend the meetings, especially the Annual, one should do so.

Bert was extremely sick the week of the meeting with and missed several days of work at the beginning of that week – she was having a very hard time breathing when she exerted herself – she could not catch her breath. A BIG and special thanks goes out to Jacque Earrusso, Rose Fantaccione, Michelle Wakefield, Bobbi Jo Dino, Francesca Abers and Hjordis Sauerwine (I hope I did not forget anyone) – they helped cook, set up, clean and pack everything up for the hospitality suite, meeting and banquet. Bert could not have done it on her own. In addition, Hjordis baked for two days making cookies cakes and treats that were served in the hospitality suite and at the meeting on Saturday. Gourmet cupcakes were provided by Patticakes Cupcakery Saturday evening. Thanks Patti!!!

To remind all everyone should contribute and bring two 12 packs (beer, soda, water, etc.) to donate to the coolers at reunion. It has worked out great for the past few years and I for one did not hear any complaints.

Now for the part of our newsletter nobody likes to read. It takes money to run an organization and I know things are rather tough for a lot of people these days. Many people attending continually make monetary and food donations to keep the organization going. However, if you are an annual member, PLEASE PAY YOUR DUES. As you must be a member in good standing to vote, please make sure that the dues are paid **prior to the start of our annual meeting**. If you would like to pay them now, please forward your payment in the amount of \$20.00 payable to Florida Dustoff Association to 2304 Woodland Drive, Edgewater, FL 32141. **Please note – there are only two types of memberships:** Annual and Lifetime – that is it. If you join us for the meeting and are not one of these membership types or have not paid your dues, you are not eligible to vote.

Please remember, our general membership meeting will be held 1 hour after the close of opening ceremonies at the campsite on the 24th and we will have our auction at that time. The auction is extremely important to our bottom line as the reunion is really our only source of fundraising and in order to keep this organization afloat, we need to have as many members present for this event and bidding on the items.

I look forward to seeing you all at the reunion.

DUSTOFF FOREVER
Bob (Doc) Neitzel

FROM THE EDITOR

As for most I am sure it has been a very busy year, and now the reunion is just around the corner. If you received this by snail mail and have an e-mail address please e-mail it to me at Hdwizrd8@aol.com and PLEASE indicate Dustoff in the subject line.

We will have a quick general membership meeting on Saturday approximately an hour after the end of the massing of the colors. **If you plan on attending the reunion this year, please contact Bob Neitzel at (386) 424-1989 or by e-mail (Hdwizrd7@aol.com). I will need to know if you need a campsite and how many people will be attending with you.** At this point in time, I believe the people requiring wet sites are Patches/Bob, Brett/Elizabeth, and Doc Custer. If I am mistaken, please advise me ASAP so I will be able to let others know if a wet camp site is available. It is quite difficult to plan a dinner (as usual, Friday and Saturday nights) without having an idea of a head count. The reunion dates are April 25th-28th at Wickham Park. The VVB already has most of the reunion info posted at www.vietnamandallveteransofbrevard.com.

The parks department has made some changes to the camp ground – the overflow area behind us is now referred to as campsite “C”. All campsites in A, B and C have water, electric and **SEWER**. We have heard that there is a problem with the placement of the sewer connections though – they are kind of placed haphazardly. **IT IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED THAT IF YOU ARE GOING TO CONNECT TO THE SEWER TO USE OLD CHRISTMAS LIGHTS OR ROPE LIGHTS TO WRAP AROUND THE GRAY WATER HOSE** so that someone does not trip and fall over the hose and pull it out – we certainly do not want raw sewage in the campground. If this happens, we will be evacuated off the campsite.

In addition, we have been advised that they are enforcing some rules – no more than one motorhome/trailer or tent per site and no more than four adults and two children per site (**remember this if a ranger should come up and ask !!!!**) This does not mean that people cannot come and go as they please into the site, but this is the maximum amount of people “camping” per site!! We will discuss all the changes by the parks department and all the problems with VVB is having with the parks department at the meeting on Saturday.

If you can also attend the week prior, you may also wish participate in the Vietnam And All Veterans Reunion Memorial Walls Motorcycle Escort on Sunday April 21st, 2013 at Brevard Community College 1519 Clearlake Road, Cocoa, FL. Bob and I had the honor and privilege of leading the escort from BCC to the park last year with Ralph Earrusso.

Line-up is at 9:00 am and they will leave 10:00 am. Arrive at Wickham Park, Melbourne, About 11:00 am. For those who want to help set up the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall Other Memorials and Displays. It is well worth the experience if you are able to do so, ask Doc Custer, he has done it for the past two years.

Please take a look at the reunion website page at VVOF.ORG and there is a link to the reunion home page, or go right to the source at the VVB website.

I have been given the tentative schedule of events for the reunion already and have attached a copy for all of you. FYI – Pocket Change will be coming back to perform again and they will be playing back to back on Friday and Saturday with VIVA Rock. Should be awesome!!! I look forwarding to seeing all at the Reunion!!!

Roberta Neitzel

MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD

We are now accepting nominations for Member of the year. It is up to you, the general membership (in good standing) to nominate someone for the award (they also must be in good standing.) Nominations must be in writing – either e-mail to Hdwizrd7@aol.com (Bob) or bbrookinsretired@gmail.com (Brett Brookins) and indicate DUSTOFF NOMINATION in the subject line or send a snail mail to the Dustoff mailing address. **Just simply indicate the nominees’ name, a few words why you feel they deserve it and you must include your name on the form.** Once the nominations are received, the Executive board will select the recipient. **NOMINATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN March 15, 2013!!**

Menus for the dinners are currently being decided on – hope they are as good as last year!!! Friday and Saturday night’s dinners will be at a cost of \$5.00 and \$6.00 respectively. I am not sure at this time if breakfast and lunch will be available. We would like to thank Harry and Adele for giving Elizabeth and Bert a break last year. It sure is nice when someone steps up to help out!!!!

We will be presenting colors at the opening ceremonies again and if anyone is interested in participating, please contact Bob Neitzel at hdwizrd7@aol.com or by phone to let him know in advance. As the flight suits we have are rather “slim” in nature, we would like at least one or two to present in the flight suits and all others to be in BDU’s, and would like all to be in boots.

We will be having our raffle and auction as well as a 50/50 and if anyone would like to donate any items please see Doc Neitzel, Bert, Elizabeth or Brett at the campsite.

America’s VetDogs® – The Veteran’s K-9 Corps®

“To help those who have served our country honorably live with dignity and independence.”

As mentioned earlier, America’s VetDogs has a representative and a retired service dog at the January Coalition meeting. We were given information pertaining to their primary programs – Service Dogs and Military Therapy Dogs. Please read the synopsis of their programs below.

America’s VetDogs® – The Veteran’s K-9 Corps® is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization founded by the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind and serves the needs of disabled veterans and active duty personnel. Since 1946, the Guide Dog Foundation has provided guide dogs and training at no cost to people who are blind or visually impaired, including veterans.

In 2003, the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind recognized the need for an overall assistance dog program for veterans that would incorporate guide dogs, service dogs, and state-of-the-art mobility devices – especially as our nation’s veterans age and as our country’s wounded warriors return home from active conflicts aboard.

America’s VetDogs was created and incorporated to give veterans easy access to the best services possible to improve their lives.

We have worked hard to build cooperative relationships with the military and the Department of Veterans Affairs, and today, we are the premier organization providing assistance dogs and training to disabled veterans and active servicemembers. We set the standard by which the military and the VA measure assistance dog schools. We continually strive to increase the options and services for veterans to ensure that they receive all the tools they need to once again be self-reliant.

Our dogs have touched thousands of lives – from disabled veterans, to servicemembers deployed overseas, to their families. We have been honored with the Secretary of the Army Public Service Award, the second-highest level award given to civilians “for exceptional service that makes a substantial contribution to the accomplishment of the Army’s missions.”

America’s VetDogs is our way of honoring the sacrifice made by our men and women in uniform, and our dedication to America’s veterans is stronger today than ever before. We will do our part to see that a guide or service dog will help a veteran live independently again.

All of our services are provided at no cost to veterans, the military or active duty personnel. America's VetDogs relies on voluntary public contributions to fund its efforts.

SERVICE DOGS

In recent years, we have come to recognize that as our nation's veterans age, and as our wounded soldiers return home from the global war on terrorism, there would be a greater need for guide dogs and other specialized service animals. The VetDogs program was created so that America's veterans would have their own K-9 corps and the chance to live with dignity and self-reliance once again. In addition to guide dogs, VetDogs will train and supply service dogs for veterans who have disabilities other than visual impairment.

An integral part of the Foundation's program services, training for staff and volunteers now incorporates skills needed for other service dogs.

For a dog to become a Capable Canine or service dog, it must meet the health, safety, and training standards of our special needs program, and must be trained for and matched with to meet the needs of a person with disabilities other than blindness. For example, one of our first VetDogs placements was for a young soldier who lost his arm in Iraq and sustained other muscle injuries. His dog has been trained to provide balance, fetch and retrieve items, and carry a backpack when he attends college classes.

Veterans will be evaluated to determine their particular needs so that the dog may be trained to meet those needs. Students receive the service dog, necessary equipment, personalized instruction with a comprehensive training program, and aftercare services free of charge. The Guide Dog Foundation plans to be the standard by which the military and the Veterans Administration measure assistance dog providers. We have worked hard over the past three years to build cooperative relationships with the military, the VA, and other strategic partners to provide the best services we can to disabled veterans and the facilities and programs that serve them.

For veterans enrolled through the VetDogs program, training is available at a variety of locations across the U.S., including Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and the veteran's home area. Our training team will assess your needs and work with you to determine where your needs will be best served while trying to accommodate your preferences. If you're attending class in Smithtown, you should be aware that both veterans and nonveterans may be in attendance.

Upon graduation, handler and service dog return home to start their new life together. At this point, they have begun to master all of the techniques they need to be a successful team, a partnership for independence.

MILITARY THERAPY DOGS

A Military Therapy Dog refers to a dog trained to provide physical, occupational, or emotional therapy to wounded soldiers and active duty personnel in military installations, military and VA medical centers, and VA nursing homes.

Combat Stress Control Dogs

These specially trained canines are deployed in theater for active military personnel. They offer emotional support for servicemen and women dealing with combat stress, homefront issues, and sleep disorders. Working with combat stress control units, the dogs provide a nonjudgmental presence. The dogs' handlers have reported that soldiers have talked longer, and more meaningfully, to mental health professionals when the dogs were present.

Physical and Occupational Therapy Dogs

These dogs are important members of physical and occupational therapy rehabilitation teams at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. They can be trained to retrieve, to brace soldiers when they transfer from bed to chair, to help them get up if they fall. Through innovative "tug of war" exercises, the dogs can, with assisted tugging or resisted pulling, help soldiers as they adapt and work with their new prosthetic limbs.

Emotional Therapy Dogs

These dogs work with mental health professionals at VA and military medical centers to facilitate veterans' recovery from mental or social issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

I would like Florida Dustoff to make an annual donation of \$100.00 to this program (*I am hoping someone will make a motion at our meeting*) and would encourage each of you to consider this wonderful program to donate to as well. Please note that one of their leading contributors is the Wounded Warrior Program – as Hoss would have said "Enuf said."

Important Information to Pass On

We try to forward as much information as possible throughout the year that we received which we deem important. Some though, do not have a computer, therefore are not receiving a lot of information. I would like to note here several items that I felt were worth sharing again: They are:

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CLARIFIES REGULATIONS FOR HANDICAPPED PARKING FOR DV LICENSE PLATES

There has been some confusion regarding the Disabled Veteran Tag and the entitlement to park in handicapped parking. As we know, there are two types of tags – DV and DV with a wheelchair. There had been recent amendments to our State Law which now only permits the holder of a DV Tag with a wheelchair to park in handicapped parking. This holds true unless the holder of the regular DV Tag also has a handicapped placard for their vehicle. The laws pertaining to the change in the DV tag are below:

Amendments to clarify that a "DV" plate without the wheelchair emblem does not entitle the veteran to disabled parking privileges pursuant to s. 320.0848.

320.0848 (2)(b):

(b) License plates issued under ss. ~~320.084~~, 320.0842, 320.0843, and 320.0845 are valid for the same parking privilege and other privileges provided under ss. 316.1955, 316.1964, and 526.141(5)(a).

320.0848(2)(f):

(f) A person who qualifies for a disabled parking permit under this section may be issued an international wheelchair user symbol license plate under s. 320.0843 in lieu of the disabled parking permit; ~~or, if the person qualifies for a "DV" license plate under s. 320.084, such a license plate may be issued to him or her in lieu of a disabled parking permit.~~

316.1955(1):

(1) It is unlawful for any person to stop, stand, or park a vehicle within, or to obstruct, any such specially designated and marked parking space provided in accordance with s. 553.5041, unless the vehicle displays a disabled parking permit issued under s. 316.1958 or s. 320.0848 or a license plate issued under ~~s. 320.084~~, s. 320.0842, s. 320.0843, or s. 320.0845, and the vehicle is transporting the person to whom the displayed permit is issued. The violation may not be dismissed for failure of the marking on the parking space to comply with s. 553.5041 if the space is in general compliance and is clearly distinguishable as a designated accessible parking space for people who have disabilities. Only a warning may be issued for unlawfully parking in a space designated for persons with disabilities if there is no above-grade sign as provided in s. 553.5041.

553.5041(3):

(3) Designated accessible spaces shall be designed and marked for the exclusive use of individuals who have a severe physical disability and have permanent or temporary mobility

problems that substantially impair their ability to ambulate and who have been issued a disabled parking permit under s. 316.1958 or s. 320.0848 or a license plate under s. 320.0842, s. 320.0843, or s. 320.0845.

VA Mental Health Care Update

Veterans who have trouble getting timely mental health care from Veterans Affairs hospitals and clinics should also have access to thousands of health care providers who care for military personnel and their families, says the Republican chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs. The proposal by Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL) borrows from the playbook of Republican Mitt Romney, who raised the idea of tapping into the military's Tricare network of doctors during the course of the presidential campaign. "We can double overnight the number of providers for those who are in need," Miller said in an interview. "Eighteen veterans a day commit suicide in this country. Nobody thinks that is acceptable." The VA has beefed up its mental health staff over the years to try to keep up with the needs of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, but a critical inspector general's report last year found that about half of those seeking care for the first time waited about 50 days before getting a full evaluation. The VA had been reporting that the vast majority of those patients were getting care within 14 days.

Shortly before that report was released, the VA announced it would be adding 1,900 mental health professionals to its staff. VA officials said the department has made good progress on the hires, but they couldn't provide specific numbers yet. Miller says tapping into Tricare's network of psychologists and psychiatrists would allow many veterans to get care closer to home, particularly those who live in rural communities. He doesn't have an estimated price tag yet, but says that whatever it is, that's part of the cost of war. His proposed expansion would only apply to mental health care. Still, even a modest increase in spending could make Miller's proposal a tough sell at a time when Congress is focused on cutting the federal debt and dealing with the threat of across-the-board spending cuts to defense and discretionary programs. Asked about Miller's proposal, VA spokesman Josh Taylor said the department is "committed to providing high-quality, comprehensive care directly to veterans, instead of leaving veterans to navigate complex, unconnected providers who might not be experts in veterans' unique healthcare needs."

Miller acknowledged that veterans groups are traditionally wary of relying on health professionals outside the VA system because they view it as the first step to tearing it down. The congressman said he agrees veterans get excellent care from the VA — when they can access it. "We simply want to expand a very capable system," Miller said. In some instances, the VA already contracts with local doctors in rural settings to treat VA patients, but that represents a tiny fraction of the patient visits that occur each year. The number of veterans getting mental health treatment from the VA has been steadily rising: from 927,052 in 2006 to more than 1.3 million in the fiscal year that ended 30 SEP. Nearly 22 million veterans live in the United States, but fewer than half are enrolled in the VA system. It's generally reserved for those who have a disability or illness stemming from their service. Also, all returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are eligible for VA care during their first five years back from deployment.

The Tricare program serves those currently in the military, their families and those who retire from the military. The two health systems are quite different. The doctors at VA-run facilities are government employees paid a fixed salary for the work they do. Doctors in Tricare agree to participate in a managed care program and are reimbursed at a rate set by the insurer. Under Miller's proposal, the VA would pay that rate without additional costs to the veteran.

Days after Romney proposed giving veterans access to Tricare for mental health treatment, President Barack Obama issued an executive order that requires the VA to set up a minimum of 15 pilot projects

focused on contracting with local providers to meet the mental health needs of veterans. Miller's proposal is more sweeping. Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent and the new chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, said he's open to the idea. "While we must do everything that we can to greatly expand the VA's mental health capabilities, I am open to exploring options outside of the VA for contracting services with public and private mental health providers, including Tricare," Sanders said.

Veterans groups are noncommittal at this early stage. They traditionally prefer beefing up the VA's capacity rather than going outside the system. "It's a fantastic system," Joe Davis, a spokesman for Veterans for Foreign Wars, said of the VA. "For contracted-out care, we will only concede to that for extremely rural areas, or for specialized care, when that type of care is not readily available at the VA." With that caveat, Davis said the suggestion is worth a look. Dr. James Tuorila, a clinical psychologist in St. Cloud, Minn., who also advises the VFW on mental health issues, said he's afraid many of the doctors who see Tricare patients still don't have the specialized training the VA offers its psychiatrists and psychologists for treating such illnesses as post-traumatic stress disorder. "Being a veteran myself, there was an affinity to working with other veterans. The VA needs to step up on training and on offering internships so it can hire more of these professional veterans in the mental health area," Tuorila said. [Source: Associated Press article 29 Jan 2013 ++]

VA Blue Button Program

Blue Button is the personal health record inside the My HealtheVet self-service platform and through My HealtheVet, VA Blue Button enables Veterans to download an electronic file that contains their personal health information. VA released an enhanced VA Blue Button, adding several new categories of information from the VA Electronic Health Record. "We are excited to introduce these new features of VA Blue Button, advancing the quality health care we give Veterans daily. The paradigm of patient-centered care means fully engaging patients in their health and care," said Undersecretary for Health Robert A. Petzel, M.D. "Enabling patients to have better access to their health information is an important step in supporting them as active partners." Previously, Veterans with a premium My HealtheVet account could access appointments, allergies and adverse reactions, chemistry/hematology laboratory results, immunizations and wellness reminders. Improvements include:

- Vet access to the VA Continuity of Care Document (VA CCD), which contains a summary of the Veteran's essential health and medical care information. The document can be exchanged between providers and read by a growing number of computer applications. The VA CCD uses recognized standards that support the exchange of information between health care systems and providers for effective continued care of the patient.
- Vet access to VA OpenNotes, which 'opens' clinical notes, allowing Veterans to read their health care team's notes from appointments and hospital stays. VA OpenNotes provides Veterans the ability to read and discuss notes with their health care teams, family and caregivers, offering them greater control over their health care.
- Vet access to demographics, problem list, admissions and discharges (including discharge summaries), laboratory results (microbiology), pathology reports (surgical pathology, cytology and electron microscopy), vitals and readings, radiology reports, and a listing of Electrocardiogram (EKG) reports.
- In addition, self-reported food and activity journals are now also available for inclusion in the VA Blue Button.

These improvements showcase VA's continued efforts to expand the types of information available to Veterans who have an upgraded or

Premium My HealthVet account, which is easily obtained at no cost through the website at: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>. [Source: VA News Release 29 Jan 2013 ++]

Gulf War Syndrome Update

Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan may be suffering from the 20-year-old set of symptoms known as Gulf War Illness, according to a new report released 23 JAN by the federal Institute of Medicine. "Preliminary data suggest that (chronic multisymptom illness) is occurring in veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars as well," the report says. This may be the first time that the symptoms suffered by veterans of the 1991 Gulf War have been linked to veterans of the current wars, which started in 2001 and 2003, said Paul Rieckhoff, CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. It also means the Department of Veterans Affairs' definition of who qualifies for Gulf War veterans' benefits should include those who served in Afghanistan, said Paul Sullivan, a 1991 Gulf War veteran and founder of Veterans for Common Sense. Because Wednesday's report associates the symptoms with deployment, Sullivan said, the VA "should expand the geographical definition of the current Gulf War to include the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan."

The researchers were to investigate treatments for Gulf War illness, including any existing research, to see what worked for veterans. Their research included traumatic brain injury, which is caused by blunt force to the head or proximity to an explosion; post-traumatic stress disorder, which must involve exposure to trauma; respiratory problems, fibromyalgia and chronic pain. Chronic multisymptom illness was formerly called Gulf War Syndrome, the Institute of Medicine report said. It includes symptoms in at least two of six categories: fatigue, mood and cognition issues, musculoskeletal problems, gastrointestinal problems, respiratory difficulties and neurologic issues that last for at least six months. About one-third of Gulf War veterans — or 175,000 to 250,000 people — have Gulf War illness. The symptoms are too broad for any one treatment, the report said. "Based on the voluminous evidence we reviewed, our committee cannot recommend using one universal therapy to manage the health of veterans with chronic multisymptom illness, and we reject a 'one size fits all' treatment approach," said committee chair Bernard M. Rosof, chairman of the board of directors at Huntington Hospital in Huntington, N.Y., in a statement. "Instead, we endorse individualized health care management plans as the best approach for treating this very real, highly diverse condition."

Researchers also said there may be no specific cause for the illness. "Despite considerable efforts by researchers in the United States and elsewhere, there is no consensus among physicians, researchers and others as to the cause of CMI," the report states. "There is a growing belief that no specific causal factor or agent will be identified." Anthony Hardie, a Gulf War veteran and advocate, disagreed. "They've lumped together so many ill people that it's impossible to come up with one treatment," Hardie said. Other recent research has shown possible causes for some of the symptoms suffered by Gulf War illness. A large-scale study done by Robert Haley, chief of epidemiology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, showed veterans have damage to their autonomic nervous system caused by exposure to nerve agents after the U.S. Air Force bombed a chemical factory. Beatrice Golomb of the medical school at the University of California-San Diego tested the value of giving doses of the coenzyme Q10 to Gulf War veterans and found that "every single" veteran found improvement from 20 symptoms.

For current war veterans, scientists have connected chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder and bronchiolitis to exposures in Iraq and Afghanistan, including to garbage pits that burned as much as 240 tons of waste in an open pit a day, as well as to dust proved to be laden with bacteria and heavy metals. Denise Nichols, also a Gulf War veteran and advocate, said she fears the report will add to Americans' belief that the symptoms are "all in our heads" — even after numerous reports have

come out saying the disease is physical and real. "We need true treatment modalities," Nichols said, "that address the physical brain damage and other body organ damage from the exposures we endured." [Source: USA Today | Kelly Kennedy | 23 Jan 2013 ++]

VA Compensation & Pensions Update

Inspectors say the most stubborn, chronic mistake made by Veterans Affairs claims examiners while trying to dig their way out of a growing backlog of cases is overcompensating some veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs overpaid 12,800 veterans \$943 million from 1993 to 2009, according to projections by the VA's Office of Inspector General. And if the error isn't corrected, inspector general auditors said another \$1.1 billion could be wasted by 2016. The VA says the projections are significantly overstated, but is fixing the problem. The House Veterans Affairs Committee plans to hold a hearing on the issue in February. The mistakes occur in a narrow batch of cases where veterans temporarily receive a 100% disability rating while undergoing surgery or debilitating treatments and convalescing. Claims examiners have repeatedly failed — often in two out of three sampled cases — to seek a follow-up medical exam to determine if the veteran's condition has improved and the temporary 100% disability rating should be reduced accordingly, inspectors said. The results are veterans who improve or recover, but receive hundreds of thousands of dollars in compensation over years for a level of disability they no longer have, inspectors said. "That (rating) will run forever until somebody like us stumbles upon it," said Brent Arronte, a director of inspections.

The 100% rating legally bars the VA from recouping overpayments that inspectors say have occurred, the department said. A common error involves cancer treatment where the disease stabilizes or goes into remission, according to inspector general reports. In one case, a veteran who improved after being treated for non-Hodgkin lymphoma was overpaid \$237,000 over 7 1/2 years until the mistake at a Cleveland VA office was caught by inspectors, according to a September report. Inspectors said that claims examiners either fail to schedule follow-up exams when the disability rating is put in place, or fail to act when alerted that one is necessary. "We're a little frustrated," Sondra McCauley, deputy assistant inspector general for audits and evaluations, said of the overpayments. "It's a human error thing." Inspectors say one challenge is growing workloads for claims examiners. "People have told us there is some pressure for them to meet their production goals," Arronte said.

The VA said fixes were put in place last July to help ensure follow-up exams are scheduled. In addition, the claims process is to become fully automated this year and claims examiners will automatically be alerted that exams may be necessary, said Lois Mittelstaedt, VA benefits administration chief of staff. "We don't want any more (payments) slipping through the cracks that we find 10 years later we should have stopped," said Thomas Murphy, VA compensation service director. "There's a lot of taxpayer dollars at risk here and we want to make sure we get the process right." A January 2011 inspector general audit first projected more than \$1 billion would be lost over five years if the temporary disability problem was not fixed, and all 42 regional office inspections since then still show errors. VA claims examiners handled 1.1 million compensation requests last year and took an average of 260 days to complete cases. The VA pays out about \$40 billion a year in compensation to veterans for service-connected disabilities. "When you're projecting \$1.1 billion over the next five years could be spent on inaccurate benefits," said Linda Halliday, assistant inspector general for audits and evaluations, "That's a lot of money ... (that) could potentially be used to serve other veterans' benefits." [Source: USA Today | Gregg Zoroya | 23 Jan 2013 ++]

CONTINUED SUPPORT NEEDED TO H. RES 111

In representing the POW/MIA issue by wearing the POW/MIA patch brings a responsibility to do something about it. We want them returned

from captivity; we want the government authorized to seriously negotiate and get them back.

House Resolution 111 (H. Res. 111) is the way to do that. This investigative committee will open POW/MIA documents previously hidden and make the recommendations to congress for a law to do what is necessary for their return.

You and I have to get congressmen/women to cosponsor H. Res. 111 now so that we can meet the objective of getting this Congressional Resolution to the House Floor for a vote to get the committee formed, functioning to accomplish. We have to start by getting the cosponsors. Let's get started on this right away.

If you haven't called call this next week, if they haven't signed on as a cosponsor call next week. That is what it takes to get them to take you seriously. You are the leaders in the POW/MIA issue in having the unreturned represented when others passively wait or expect government to do its job; we have to authorize them to get it done. The Defense POW/MIA Office and others only have to do what they have been doing because there is no law requiring them to seek out and bring back our POW/MIAs.

If you congressman/woman hasn't signed on yet call their office and tell them to do so. Here it the current list of cosponsors:

Florida – Rivera (R), Illinois – Manzulo(R), Kentucky – Guthrie (R), Kansas – Jenkins(D), Massachusetts - Keating, Neal (D), Maryland (D), Minnesota – Bachman (R), Cravaak (R), Paulsen (R), Peterson (D), North Carolina – Foxx(R), New Jersey – Holt(D), Rothman (D), Payne (D), Lance (R), New York – Towns (D), Pennsylvania – Altmire (D), Tennessee Roe, Black (R)

BITS AND PIECES

We wish the best to, and keep in our prayers the following members of Dustoff who have been ill and are still recovering: Rick Moore and Doc Smith. Also, for those who may not be aware, Michael J Martin is doing much better and is cancer free at this time, but still has a long road ahead of him.

We also have lost Leon Combs who passed away less than one month after Hoss.

Dustoff now has another active duty member in its ranks – PFC Christopher Voisey graduated BCT at Fort Jackson on February 14th with his mom, dad and daughter Ruari present. He is currently at Ft Eustis, VA for his AIT (or as Art would say – Fort Useless). His MOS is 15 U - CH47 Helicopter Repairer. It is expected that he will be there until June. Needless to say that both Mom and Dad are very proud!!

Please take a look at the Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida State Coalition Website (VVOF.ORG). There is a tremendous amount of information and links to other sites.

If you need to express yourself, or have something worth sharing, please e-mail Roberta at Hdwizrd8@aol.com, or call me at 386-424-1989.

CAMPSITE FEES FOR 2013-prices remain the same

WET SITES: \$40.00 per night per motor home, camper or tent

DRY SITES: \$30.00 per night per motor home, camper or tent

Friday Dinner \$5.00 per person

Saturday Dinner \$6.00 per person

THE DUSTOFF PRAYER

Penned by Chaplin Connie Walker

Kind and Merciful Heavenly Father, thank You for "calling" and "sending" DUSTOFF Teams on missions of mercy, under the most hostile conditions, in a deeply Dedicated and Unhesitating Service To Our Fighting Forces of all ages and ranks. Lord, history has us standing on the shoulders of the faithful and courageous DUSTOFF Teams who have gone before. Bless them forever. We follow their stalwart leadership steps. Lord, may each of us hear afresh Your Summons, "Follow Me." Heroic cries like "When I have your wounded..." captivate and ring in our ears, hearts and prayers, even today as we fly on missions of mercy to Life for Life and Hope. Heavenly Father, we trust in Your saving and sustaining Grace, now and forever. In the Name of our Great God, Redeemer and Holy Spirit. Amen!

ELECTED OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

Brett Brookins	President	Bbrookinsretired@gmail.com
Robert (Doc) Neitzel	Vice-President	Hdwizrd7@aol.com
Roberta Voisey-Neitzel	Treasurer	Hdwizrd8@aol.com
Elizabeth Brookins	Secretary	Ebrookins@gmail.com
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John Combs	Chaplin	Jodoco@centurylink.com
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Ron (Doc) Smith	Board Member	Bigdocs@aol.com
Ed (Gunny) Ryan	Board Member	GunnyRyan@aol.com

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All inquiries, questions or comments may be directed to the President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer. All articles printed in our newsletters are strictly the opinion of the author and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Dustoff Organization.
Updated September 17, 2006

FLORIDA DUSTOFF MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NEW _____ RENEWAL _____ LIFETIME _____ ANNUAL _____
NAME: _____ DOB: _____ AGE: _____
SPOUSE: _____ DOB: _____ AGE: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____
PHONE: () _____ E-mail: _____
CELL: () _____
BRANCH OF SERVICE _____ RANK _____ DATE OF ASSIGNMENT (FROM/TO) _____
ATTACHMENTS: _____

If Dustoff and/or Medevac what capacity did you serve? Pilot ___ Crew Chief ___ Medic ___ Maintenance ___
Supply ___ Door Gunner ___ Flight Ops ___ Clerk ___ Commo ___ Cook ___ (check one or more)

If this is a renewal is this a change of address/information ? _____

_____ I know a former Dustoff/Medic/Corpsman/Pilot/Nurse or other potential member and have listed their name, address and telephone number below.

Enclosed is \$20.00, my membership dues for one year () initial

Enclosed is my Lifetime membership dues as follows Age 55 and Below \$100.00 () Age 56-75 \$75.00 () Age 76 and above \$50.00 ()

Mail application and payment to: Florida Dustoff Association
c/o Roberta Neitzel
2304 Woodland Drive
Edgewater, FL 32141

For Information Call Robert or Roberta Neitzel (386) 424-1989

***Checks should be made payable to Florida Dustoff Association
Please make sure to include a copy of your DD-214***