

Veterans Affairs Office of Lexington County



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VET NEWS

December 2008

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DECEMBER Dates To Remember

- 7th** National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- 8th** War Declared on Japan (1941)
- 10th** Germany and Italy Declared War on U.S. (1941)
- 21st** Winter Begins
- 22nd** First Day of Hanukkah—
(begins sunset Dec. 21st; ends sunset Dec. 19th)
- 25th** Christmas Day- **County Offices Closed**
- 26th** **County Offices Closed**
- 26th** Kwanzaa Begins—(ends Jan. 1st)
- 31st** Official End of WWII (1946)



**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW
YEAR FROM OUR STAFF:**

Gary, Barbara, Jennifer and Debbie

*****PLEASE NOTE***
OUR OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED
ON DEC. 25TH AND 26TH**

MILITARY SUPPORT MINISTRY CHRISTMAS CARD PARTY

On **December 6th at 4pm**, join us at 702 OAKMEADE COURT LEXINGTON, SC 29072. Military Support Ministry will be making cards to send overseas to let our troops in harm's way know that we are thinking about them over the holidays. We will also make cards to send to Germany to encourage injured soldiers who must remain in Germany during the holiday season.

Please come and help. If you are unable to attend, cards can still be sent to our soldiers via the address given above. We will forward signed cards to our troops.



Janet Parsons—Military Support Ministry

24-HOUR HOTLINE: HELP AVAILABLE FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Veterans going through an emotional crisis during the holidays can turn to the 24-hour hotline for help.

The TOLL-FREE # is 1-800-273-8255.

It is staffed with mental health professionals, as provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.



**GENERAL
ULYSSES S.
GRANT**

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"Experience proves that the man who obstructs a war in which his nation is engaged, no matter whether right or wrong, occupies no enviable place in life or history. Better for him, individually, to advocate 'war, pestilence, and famine,' than to act as obstructionist to a war already begun." (Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant)

LEXINGTON COUNTY COMBAT VETERANS TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON

On October 30, 2008, a group of 8 combat veterans and wives traveled by Amtrak to Washington, D.C., for a long-awaited trip. Once they arrived in our nation's Capitol, they set their weekend itinerary .

Awaking to a beautiful day on Friday, they were off to revisit the past, to ride on the Metro and see many memorials that some had never seen, while paying tribute to fallen comrades.



Pictured at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall are (l-r): Josh Williams, Edwin Murray, Mike Egan, John Kirkland, Donald Seyfer and Otis Wingard

Their first stop was the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Wall. Many of the group spent time in Vietnam, and it was a great comfort for them to have each other for emotional support at this viewing. "It was an enlightening experience to say the least," said Mike Egan.

Next, they visited the Korean War and World War II Memorials. Although none of them were involved in these wars, they still honored the soldiers who gave their lives to protect our country's freedoms.

On Friday evening, while sharing a meal at a local restaurant, the group reflected on the day, and how the events affected them all.



Saturday brought another ride on the Metro, traveling to Arlington National Cemetery, where they viewed the Changing of the Guard and the laying of a wreath. Other sites visited were: The Tomb of the Unknowns, The Eternal Flame at the grave of John F. Kennedy, gravesites of Jacqueline

Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy, The Robert E. Lee Mansion and grounds. In addition, the group toured Union Station, the Pentagon Mall, and surrounding areas.



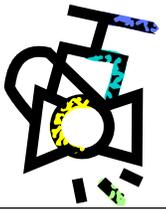
Another evening of reflection over dinner, then the group retired to prepare for the return trip to South Carolina. On that trip, they reminisced about the many wonderful experiences, agreeing that they would always remember the expressions of thanks and acknowledgements received from others who were visiting the Capitol that weekend, many of whom were not even citizens of the U.S. Some feel this acknowledgment was lacking upon their return from Vietnam. In short, these sentiments are long overdue, but greatly appreciated.



Looking to the future, this group is planning another trip for Fall 2009. If any combat veteran is interested in participating, you may contact our office for more information.

Note: The Columbia Vet Center provides group and individual counseling sessions on Mondays and Tuesdays. The meetings are held in the auditorium of our facility at 605 West Main Street in Lexington. Call 785-8400 or 765-9944.





SPOTLIGHT ON OUR VOLUNTEER VAN DRIVERS

PART SIX IN THIS SERIES OF INTERVIEWS

CRAIG BRANDT

[Mr. Brandt has been a Lexington County DAV van driver since 2007.]

Q: Where are you from originally?

A: I was raised in San Clemente, California.

Q: If not a native, what brought you to Lexington County and how long have you lived here?

A: I married a South Carolina girl at my first duty station, Shaw AFB. After my discharge from the Air Force in 1973, we returned to South Carolina.

Q: Tell us about your family.

A: My parents, originally from Iowa, are deceased. We have 2 sons, 1 daughter, and 4 grandchildren. Our oldest son, a Master Sergeant in the Georgia Air National Guard, works for a telecommunications company in Orlando. He has 4 children, ages 4 to 16. Our daughter works for Lexington Medical Center as a physical therapy assistant. Our youngest son is an art teacher for Rock Hill High School.

Q: Are you a Veteran?

A: I served in the Air Force January 1968 to August 1973 at Shaw AFB, in Vietnam (Dong Ha and Da Nang), and Germany (Birkenfeld and Hof). After the Vietnam War, when the National Guard lost so many people, I was recruited by the Air National Guard in Savannah, Georgia where I served from July 1975 to May 1990.

Q: What is your current or former occupation, if retired?

A: I became an accountant after my active Air Force duty, receiving my CPA in 1976. I held positions of auditor, controller and accounting manager until my last employer, Ducane, was sold to Lennox in 2002, leaving me unemployed. I have not sought employment subsequent to that.

Q: What are your hobbies and interests?

A: I spend a good bit of time tending my rental properties in Helen, Georgia, Litchfield Beach and Columbia. I also volunteer at Lowman Home, assisting the chaplain there, and volunteer at my church- Union Methodist in Irmo. We also travel to Europe once a year and plan a US trip once a year as well.



Q: Please share something our readers might be surprised to know about you:

A: I have been a square dancer for about 13 years now, and was on the 56th National Square Dance Convention Board in 2007. We filled the downtown Charlotte hotel rooms, and packed the Lowe's Motor Speedway RV park, providing 4 days of dancing and educational activities for over 8,000 dancers from around the world.

Favorite Historical Quote?

"We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give." - Sir Winston Churchill

Favorite Military Quote?

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity from a cross of iron." - President Dwight D. Eisenhower, April 16, 1953

We Appreciate Our DRIVERS!

Attack on Pearl Harbor - December 7, 1941

[Information taken from Department of the Navy website]



The December 7, 1941 Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor was one of the great defining moments in history. A single carefully-planned and well-executed stroke removed the United States Navy's battleship force as a possible threat to the Japanese Empire's southward expansion. America, unprepared and now considerably weakened, was abruptly brought into the Second World War as a full combatant.

Eighteen months earlier, **President Franklin D. Roosevelt** had transferred the United States Fleet to Pearl Harbor as a presumed deterrent to Japanese aggression. The Japanese military, deeply engaged in the seemingly endless war it had started against China in mid-1937, badly needed oil and other raw materials. Commercial access to these was gradually curtailed as the conquests continued. In July 1941 the Western powers effectively halted trade with Japan. From then on, as the desperate Japanese schemed to seize the oil and mineral-rich East Indies and Southeast Asia, a Pacific war was virtually inevitable.

By late November 1941, with peace negotiations clearly approaching an end, informed U.S. officials (and they were well-informed, they believed, through an ability to read Japan's diplomatic codes) fully expected a Japanese attack into the Indies, Malaya and probably the Philippines. Completely unanticipated was the prospect that Japan would attack east, as well.

The U.S. Fleet's Pearl Harbor base was reachable by an aircraft carrier force, and the Japanese Navy secretly sent one across the Pacific with greater aerial striking power than had ever been seen on the World's oceans. Its planes hit just before 8AM on 7 December. Within a short time five of eight battleships at Pearl Harbor were sunk or sinking, with the rest damaged. Several other ships and most Hawaii-based combat planes were also knocked out and over 2400 Americans were dead. Soon after, Japanese planes eliminated much of the American air force in the Philippines, and a Japanese Army was ashore in Malaya.

These great Japanese successes, achieved without prior diplomatic formalities, shocked and enraged the previously divided American people into a level of purposeful unity hardly seen before or since. For the next five months, until the Battle of the Coral Sea in early May, Japan's far-reaching offensives proceeded untroubled by fruitful opposition. American and Allied morale suffered accordingly. Under normal political circumstances, an accommodation might have been considered.

However, the memory of the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor fueled a determination to fight on. Once the Battle of Midway in early June 1942 had eliminated much of Japan's striking power, that same memory stoked a relentless war to reverse her conquests and remove her, and her German and Italian allies, as future threats to world peace.



DONATION MADE FOR PATIENT COMFORT ITEMS AT DORN VA MEDICAL CENTER

Dorn VA Medical Center has an ongoing need for donations to their comfort items account. This account provides welcome kits for all new patient admissions at Dorn and supplies necessary comfort items to the medical wards there. These items include: **razors, shave cream, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, body lotion combs and brushes.** Shower caps and other items are also supplied for female patients. Hospital funds *cannot* provide these items, so they must rely on donations to help our veterans while they are patients at Dorn.

Recently a \$250 donation from the Ladies Auxiliary, Military Order of the Purple Heart (LAMOPH), Gamecock Unit 402 was presented by **Rhunette Haywood** to **Priscilla Creamer**, the Chief Voluntary Service/ Public Affairs Officer at Dorn VAMC.

To donate, you may drop off the comfort items listed above at our office and we will send them on to Dorn, or contact one of a number of volunteer service organizations in our area .



HONOR FLIGHT OF THE MIDLANDS INAUGURAL TRIP



About **90 World War II veterans** were part of the first Honor Flight of the Midlands, a trip to the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. The November 15, 2008 sendoff received by the veterans as they left Columbia was nothing like the way they went to war more than 60 years ago.

Bill Dukes, head of the Midlands chapter of Honor Flight SC said “They haven’t been treated like this in their entire life.” When the vets first left for war, there was no music, fanfare or even smiles to say goodbye to them. This trip is an effort to honor the sacrifices of those veterans. On the flight, first class extended to the back of the plane. The veterans watched out their windows as a water cannon salute ensued in honor of their trip.

Once they arrived in Washington, D.C., the veterans were treated to a hero’s welcome, where even the youngest Americans thanked veterans like **Solomon Bright** for their freedom. The whirlwind of activity turned solemn as they reached the World War II Memorial, where the calm waters inside seemed to help ease the painful memories of war.

Bill Donahue was in the Navy when he left for war. “Things that we lived through, you wouldn’t believe...”, Donahue said. He attended the event with his buddy, **K.C. Moore**, a D-Day veteran.

“After that length of time, you get real close to a lot of people. I lost a lot of good friends over there,” Moore said.

Others met family members, like Solomon Bright and David Hubbard. Karen Morris came from Texas to visit her father, David, who made the trip from South Carolina. “To experience this with him and the other guys of this generation is a learning experience and it is so precious to spend this time with him.”

More flights are planned for the Spring of 2009. If you would like to participate in honoring our World War II veterans in this way, please go to the website www.honorflightsc.com.

Gilbert Middle School Raises \$8,000 for Honor Flight Trip

GILBERT, SC (WIS) - This coming Saturday, the first Honor Flight of three will take 90 South Carolina World War II veterans to visit their memorial in Washington, D.C.

On Tuesday, Gilbert Middle School pitched in some money to make sure more veterans get to make the emotion filled trip.

Principal Benji Ricard said, "I'm so proud of the work they have done, going out into the community, into their homes, talking about what our project has been, and that was to raise money to send these vets to the war memorial."

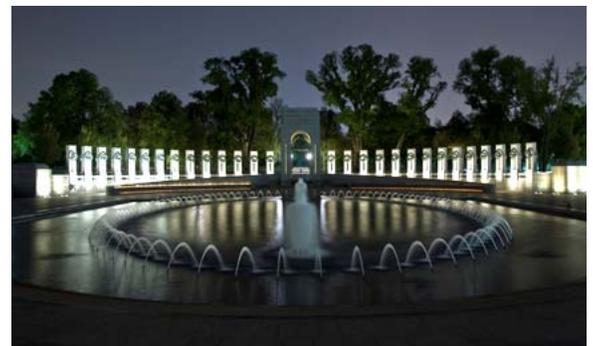
The school originally set out to raise \$2,500, enough to send five veterans and one guardian, but \$8,000 later, the group of students and the community that surrounds them shattered all expectations.

"We were able to reach that goal very quickly," said Principal Ricard.

The Honor Flight chairs, Bill Dukes and Mark Price, were so moved, they had to fight back tears at what the students had accomplished.

"They are the ones that fought and gave their lives and sacrificed their lives to protect our country and our freedom," said Jessica Carter.

[from WISTV.com, posted November 11, 2008]



LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS PARADE 2008

The Lexington Veterans Parade, held on Sunday, November 9th, 2008, featured the Vietnam Veterans as Grand Marshalls for the event. Several flyovers occurred during the height of the parade, and parade onlookers were wowed by the sights and sounds. The events ended with a solemn ceremony at the Lexington County Monument..

Our staff would like to say **THANK YOU** to Sharon Willis for her coordination of the event again this year, and to ALL who participated and ALL who were there to VIEW the parade. This parade is one way to say "THANK YOU" to our brave servicemen and women and remember that the freedoms we take for granted come at a great price.

[Photos Courtesy of Sally Taylor, The Lexington County Chronicle.] For reprints, go to their website www.lexingtonchronicle.com.



Grand Marshalls — Vietnam Veterans



Ladies Auxiliary, Military Order of the Purple Heart



Lexington County Veterans Affairs County Service Officer **Mr. Gary Baker** waves to the crowd

UNVEILING OF MEDALLIONS AND FLAGS OF HONOR—THE STONE VETERANS PAVILION



Gene Wilbur and Rowland Brower, pose with the Marine Corps Medallion

On Wednesday, November 19th, a dedication ceremony was held to unveil flags of honor and medallions placed at the Stone Veterans Pavilion on Harden Street in downtown Columbia.

After a presentation by VFW Post 641 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Joe Pinner dedicated the seals and flags. Members of each branch of the Armed Services then unveiled medallions representing the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Mer-

chant Marines, Air Force and Marines.

The keynote address was delivered by Colonel Tammy Miracle, Special Assistant to the Commanding

General at Fort Jackson. The ceremony ended with the singing of “God Bless America”, performed by Tiana and

Tierra Kindred, daughters of SFC Nisha Dowdell.

The C. M. Tucker, Jr. Nursing Care Center Stone Pavilion is located at 2200 Harden Street in Columbia.



WHY VETERANS SHOULD BE HONORED

by Victoria Donofrio, Gilbert Middle School student—age 12

I KNOW veterans should be honored because my Pop is a Vietnam veteran. He flew night missions in a plane called an OV-1 Mohawk. When he came home, he was not honored. Many of the Vietnam veterans, like my uncle, were even treated badly. Some were just ignored, and have been for many years. Some of the veterans coming home from Iraq are ignored too.

I wish that other people could see that veterans should be honored, not ignored. Last year my family made some cards that said: *Thank you for making the sacrifices that preserve our freedoms.* We hand them out to veterans or military men and women when we see them.

I know that veterans should be honored because they stood up for our country and would have died for it too. That means that they would die for you. We need to support them also by showing our support to the current troops—veterans like to see us support the troops. We should send them stuff like blankets, shoes, pillows and bottled water; really anything that we need, they need more. Our troops are on the other side of the world right now fighting for freedom. We need to honor the troops, and the veterans, because that is something that makes them feel good on the inside. Like, for me, feeling good on the inside is eating a big bowl of ice cream or chocolate; but for them it’s just the words “thank you” that matter. So if you see a veteran, then stop and take a moment to say the words “thank you.”

I know veterans should be honored because they have worked more than any regular job. When Americans were sleeping peacefully in our beds, they were up fighting for us so that we could sleep peacefully in our beds, and when Americans were up at school or at work they were staying up all night still fighting for our freedoms. You know what I was talking about earlier— that you should say “thank you” to them? Well don’t say that, “thank you for fighting for our freedom, God bless and may He be with you.”



I know veterans should be honored because my Pop Pop is a Vietnam veteran, and he is not honored enough.

LUNCHEON FOR COMBAT VETERANS AND WIVES / SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

The Combat Veterans Support Group and Wives/ Significant Others Group will share a meal together. On **December 16th at noon**, members of these groups will meet at our office location (in the auditorium) for a catered meal and time of fellowship. Cost of the meal will be **\$10.00** per person and should be paid by December 2nd. For more information on this event, group members may attend the meeting on December 2nd or call our office at 785-8400 with questions.



**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**
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**DECEMBER OUTREACH
PROGRAM DATES**

Dec. 2nd: 9-12 Batesburg-Leesville
Dec. 9th: 9-12 Chapin

TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Lexington Main Office: 785-8400
From Batesburg/Leesville: 332-8400
From Chapin: 941-0231

Military Specialty License Plate Available

Columbia, SC (AP) - South Carolina officials say a new specialty license plate for family members of soldiers killed in combat is now available.

The Department of Motor Vehicles recently announced the availability of the Gold Star Family license plate. Motorists must provide military documentation of their family member's death in order to receive the plate.

DMV director Marcia Adams says the plates serve as a memorial for slain service men and women. She says several other states offer similar plates. Motorists who qualify for the plates must pay \$30 every two years along with the regular registration fee.

For more information, go to the website www.scdmvonline.com for further information, or contact your local SC DMV office.



HIRE A HERO



Businesses, public officials, civic and fraternal organization across the country are encouraged to "hire a hero" (veteran)

when they have available employment opportunities.

To honor those who have served with a rewarding career at your organization, register today www.hireahero.org or pass this on to someone within your organization who can help!

- ⇒ **Career Seeker:** Register and reach members of our community. The more people you notify of your credentials, the better your chances of finding the right job.
- ⇒ **Employers:** Tap into an excellent pool of resources. This is a win-win situation, as you get excellent employees and service members are rewarded for their service.
- ⇒ **Volunteers:** By your participation in this effort, you can make a difference in the lives of those who have served our country