



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
 HEADQUARTERS 914TH AIRLIFT WING
 2720 KIRKBRIDGE DRIVE
 NIAGARA FALLS ARS, NEW YORK 14304-5000**



**MILITARY RETIREE NEWSLETTER (MAY – JULY 2016)
 “STILL SERVING”**

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FROM THE DIRECTOR’S DESK:

Happy Spring! Welcome home snowbirds, and for the rest of us...it wasn't a bad Winter...but long! Since the last issue, we have moved our office; we are now in Bldg #314 (the old Falcon Club, room 121, the old coat room). Our hours are remaining the same (see above), stop in and see us.

In the last issue, I told of a LOW-key exercise class that I had hoped to have us participate in. No one showed any interest and it was canceled. Mike Williams had his personal trainer and physiologist certified for senior exercises and I appreciate their efforts! If there is no interest in any activities, I will not plan for them. Any interest in any kind of activities or classes, please call (716) 236-2389.

Kelly Bortles, the present Marketing Manager is leaving for a similar job in Texas. Thank you Kelly for your efforts and successes, we appreciate the support. As always, please contact us with any ideas for activities (e.g. trips, outlet shopping trips, wine tours, or any other fun things), and we can relate them to the new Marketing Manager (TBA); their office has many perks and rewards just for you, including but not limited to: discounted tickets to Theme Parks (Disney World, Legoland, Marineland, Busch Gardens), and Armed Forces Vacation Club reservations. I have personally utilized this benefit and would encourage you to explore the opportunity, at ~\$349/week for a two bedroom condo, with kitchen, living room it's hard to pass up. You can contact the Marketing Office at (716) 236-3090/3061. Good luck Kelly and thank you again for your efforts here at Niagara!

LOCAL INTEREST ITEMS:

Next year may prove to be a very interesting one for anyone who uses the Space-A program. Our C130s will be going to other bases in the near future and the 914th AW will become an Air Refueling Wing operating the KC135 (Stratotanker). They will be conducting refueling missions worldwide. This is going to allow qualified retirees and dependents to go along with them on their missions. Some previous missions included Hawaii, Europe, Great Britain, Alaska, Australia and other major countries and cities. Passports will be needed for OCONUS missions. The forecast is for the 914th to receive two KC135s next year about this time and eventually receive a total of eight. It could be a busy year. The flights are free for qualified retirees.

For those who have not flown in a C130, this may be one of the last times you will have the opportunity. The C130 and the KC135 are some of the safest and reliable airplanes made.

For those who will attend the Retiree Appreciation Day at Niagara on September 17, 2016, we will have two short "orientation" flights in the C130 for your participation. Make sure you have a valid military ID (blue for retirees and beige for dependents). The flights will be in the morning and last about one half hour. If your card is not valid, you may not be allowed on base or on a flight. If it is not valid, go to the Visitor Center, before the Main Gate, to get access to the base in order to receive a new card. (Bldg 314). You may call them at (716) 236-2281. Customer Service at (716) 236-2197. Any questions you may call us at 236-2389.

With the advent of a 'new' airplane and a 'new' Wing Commander, we hope to bring in some new activities. Colonel Brian Bowman has indicated his commitment to the members of the 914th (including the retirees of all services), as well as the local community, that he will do the best he can to make Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station the best in the nation. He has already shown his support for the Retiree Activities Office and other personnel, by including everyone in the operation of the unit. He invites any and all comments and suggestions. If you, as a retiree, have comments, pass them on to us and we will let him be aware of your remarks. His administrative assistant, Kelly Nowasell, has shown her willingness to help. She has gone out of her way to help me carry out my duties. New guys need that!

Space Available flying seems to be a great benefit that we are allowed to use. Prior to 2003, service members could not take dependents with them on these flights. The rules were changed and now, dependents are authorized to accompany the retiree. The rules allow dependents and retirees to fly OCONUS (out of the US), and CONUS (within the US, Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico and US possessions). Any retiree with a 100% VA disability, not retired, may not use this benefit at this time. A few years ago, there was a bill in Congress to amend the law, but it died in committee. Go figure!

This year, due to upcoming commitments and deployments, the Space A schedule will be very slim. Some aircraft and crews will be deployed and there will be only a skeleton crew and a few maintenance people at Niagara. Next year, with the KC 135s, there will be a lot of really interesting missions to travel with our great crews/and return! Get ready. Ask us.

You can still call the recorded message (716) 236-2360 or call us (716) 236-2389 to get current information. If you feel the need to "go somewhere", try McGuire AFB, Stewart ANGB near West Point or Pittsburg ANGB/Reserve base. There is also a Reserve base (C130) near Youngstown Ohio. If more info is needed, call us!

WE NEED YOU!

Volunteers are needed in our office! Very similar to some of the nation's veterans' organizations, we are aging. It seems most of the members of both groups are mostly WWII, Korea, and Vietnam veterans. In order to continue our goal to assist veterans and retirees, we will eventually need younger people. There is no pay, just the satisfaction of helping our brothers and sister in arms to continue to receive the benefits they've earned. If you are interested in learning more about your benefits while helping others, call us (716) 236-2389. If you can afford to give four hours a week (two naps) to help continue these services, we will be glad to train you. It's easier than you think.

We have a great staff of veterans who will assist. We have periodic staff meetings and luncheons and solve world problems. Joke. We also need people for UTA Saturdays, once per month for four hours. They are usually the first full weekend of the month. Please consider joining our ranks. We need your expertise and experience. We encourage any female veteran to join our ranks!

GENERAL INTEREST ITEMS:

VETERANS' GROUPS CRITICIZE SECRET PROPOSAL TO END VA HEALTHCARE

Several of the largest veterans' service organizations in the US are criticizing discussions, in secret, to shut down veterans' hospitals and clinics and go to the private sector. The 34 page proposal would privatize veterans' health care and completely close VA health care facilities over the next 20 years. The Commission on Care was created to study how VA will provide health care for the next couple of decades.¹

There is also a new law (2016 National Defense Authorization Act) provision that will allow you to transfer of SBP to new wife if previous wife passes before you. Contact your Congressman or Senator for more information for all of the above items.

VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION

You now have the opportunity to access your personal Health Record (PHR). "My HealtheVet" program allows you to access your personal health record on the internet. For more information, go to www.myhealth.VA and then "MyHealtheVet". If no computer, call 1-877-327-0022 for more info.

The VA also has environmental exposure programs for certain veterans, please see the listing on page 7.

¹ story by Bryant Jordan at "bryant.jordan @military.com"

ATOMIC VETERAN

Congress is considering a bill that would create a special "atomic veteran" designation for the men and women who worked to clean up nuclear waste from a South Pacific atoll (Enewetak) nearly 40 years ago. The bill, H.R. 3870, is for veterans, if diagnosed with one of the several specific cancers or malignant conditions, can be entitled to compensation or free medical care through the VA. In communication with 340 known surviving veterans, there is a 35% cancer rate.

VETERAN TREATMENT COURTS

In 2008, Judge Robert Russell, of Buffalo, N, created an alternate court system for veterans. It was based on a drug treatment court model. The court focused on problem-solving or collaborative ways for veterans and focused on rehabilitation during the course of treatment. The defendants connected with representatives from Veteran Affairs, Department of Labor, State Departments of Veterans Affairs, vet centers, veterans service organizations and volunteer veteran mentors. If participants successfully complete and graduate from the course, their charges can be dismissed and records wiped clean, depending on the charge and agreements made with the defense, prosecution and the court judge. As of June 2014, there were 220 veteran treatment courts, with more planned. There is a court in Buffalo, NY and also one in Niagara County.

Buffalo Veterans' Court information can be accessed by calling Jack O'Connor at (716) 858-7345, or occonnorj@erie.gov.

Niagara County Veterans' Court information can be acquired by calling Jim Germain at (716) 451-0620, or james.germain.2@gmail.com.

The program is in need of mentors as well. If interested, call the appropriate contact person. If you live outside of these two counties, they may be able to refer you to the appropriate venue. Do not be embarrassed to ask for help! Everyone needs help at some time. If you can mentor someone, their lives can change for the better.

The following subject matter discussion can be found on "www.military.com"

MOAA TO LOBBY LAWMAKERS TO PROTECT SURVIVOR BENEFIT

MOAA urge lawmakers to protect Survivor Benefit Plan – some survivors qualify for dependancy and indemnity compensation (DIC). Due to a decades-old law, that bars survivors from receiving both payments, the SBP is reduced dollar-for-dollar that bars survivors from receiving both payments, the SBP is reduced dollar-for-dollar by the amount of DIC, known as "widows tax". A temporary measure passed by Congress, set to expire in 2017, allows survivors to receive a partial rebate to make up for that loss. MOAA is lobbying to repeal the law completely.

SURVIVOR BENEFIT PLAN OPEN PERIOD

The 2016 National Defense Authorization Act has changed an interpretation of some rules. Retirees who once elected former spouse coverage and discontinued it due to the death of the former spouse, have been contacted by direct mail and told of the change. If you think it may apply to you, contact them at www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/about/aboutus/customer-service.html. You will need

- Former spouse's death certificate
- Current marriage certificate
- Current spouse's birth certificate
- Written notification that you want to cover current spouse under SBP

TRICARE NURSE ADVICE LINE OPENS

TRICARE beneficiaries can call TRICARE's nurse at 1-800-TRICARE (874-2273) and select option 1; 24hrs a day, seven days a week for access to care. The team of **REGISTERED NURSES** will give you advice and help you find a doctor. If there is a military hospital or clinic near you, they can schedule a visit. Most area medical insurance programs have their own "advice line". Check with yours, if you have another supplemental insurance provider.

QUICK HITS:

Hopefully, this newsletter will be delivered before, but I want to wish all the Mothers a very Happy Mother's Day. Thank you for what you do throughout the year!

And for the guys, here are some ideas to show your appreciation:

- Flowers (can't miss), jewelry, spa/massage appointment, clothing & accessories, home decor; can't miss with dinner and a movie (most restaurants and movie theater even give discounts)

Whatever you do...get her something. My wife does not accept the excuse that "you're not my mother!". For those of us whose mother is not with us, you can thank her in your own way.

DID YOU KNOW:

Yogi-ism

"Baseball is ninety percent mental and the other half is physical."

- Lawrence Peter "Yogi" Berra

(one of the best and most colorful baseball catchers to ever play the game)

Buying the Farm

This is synonymous with dying. During WWI, soldiers were given life insurance policies worth \$5,000. This was about the price of an average farm. So if you died, you "bought the farm" for your survivors.

Bet ya didn't know

Early politicians required feedback from the public to determine what the people considered important. Since there were no phones, TVs or radios, the politicians sent their assistants to local taverns, pubs and bars. They were told to go sip some Ale and listen to peoples' conversations and concerns. Many assistants were dipatched at different times. "You go sip here" and you "go sip there". The two words "go sip" were eventually combined when referring to the local opinion and, thus we have "gossip".

Please vote your knowledge, not someone elses "go sip".

MEMORIAL DAY HISTORY:

Three years after the Civil War ended, on May 5, 1868, the organization of Union veterans (Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), established Decoration Day as a time for the nation to decorate the graves of the war dead with flowers. Major General John A. Logan declared that Decoration Day be observed on May 30. (Probably because flowers would be in bloom all over the country.) It was not until after WWI that the day was expanded to honor all these who died in all American wars. In 1971, it was declared a national holiday by an act of congress. It was then placed on the last Monday in May. It is still sometimes called Decoration Day. Some states have Confederate observances. Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Louisiana and Tennessee. Texas celebrates Confederate Heroes Day in January and Virginia calls the last Monday in May Confederate Memorial Day.

To ensure that the sacrifices of America's fallen heroes are never forgotten, the US Congress passed and was signed into law, "The National Moment of Remembrance Act, in 2000." It encourages all Americans to pause wherever they are at 3 pm local time on Memorial Day for a minute of silence to remember and honor those who have died in service to our country.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!

DISCLAIMER:

The retiree Activities Office Newsletter is published by the Retiree Activities Office to inform retirees and their families of matters affecting their military rights, benefits, activities, and obligations. While every effort is made to verify information in the newsletter, neither the editor nor the RAO staff can guarantee the accuracy of information received from outside sources. The editor reserves the right to reduce the length of the material to fit the space available.

Joseph T. Reece (1sg USA Retired) - Director/Editor

VA's health registry programs provide focused evaluations for certain environmental exposures during military service. If you do not feel your situation falls under the following categories, be sure to visit your health care provider to discuss your exposure concerns.

AGENT ORANGE

Agent Orange was a mixture of herbicides used by the U.S. military from 1962 to 1975 to remove leaves from trees that provided cover for enemy forces during the Vietnam conflict. Agent Orange was also used, tested, or stored at some military bases in the United States and other foreign locations.

AIRBORNE HAZARDS AND OPEN BURN PITS

Veterans who deployed to countries including Iraq, Afghanistan, and Djibouti since 1990 may have been exposed to airborne hazards, including smoke from open burn pits (trash fires), oil-well fires, dust, and pollution.

DEPLETED URANIUM (DU)

DU is a byproduct of the uranium enrichment process used by the U.S. military in projectiles and tank armor during the Gulf War in 1990. It is most hazardous when internalized through shrapnel, contaminated wounds, or inhalation.

GULF WAR

Gulf War-related exposures from 1990 and on include a variety of potentially harmful substances: pesticides; pyridostigmine bromide (anti-nerve agent);

infectious diseases; chemical and biological warfare agents; vaccinations (including anthrax and botulinum toxoid); oil-well fires, smoke, and petroleum; and depleted uranium.

IONIZING RADIATION

Since 1941, some Veterans have been exposed to ionizing radiation from a variety of sources, including nuclear weapons testing or other activities during service.

TOXIC EMBEDDED FRAGMENTS

Some Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans were exposed to a blast or similar traumatic incident, which resulted in embedded fragments (also called "shrapnel") that remained in their bodies. The "toxic" refers to fragments made from potentially harmful materials used in improvised explosive devices (IEDs), bombs, mines, and shells.

SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH REGISTRY EVALUATION PROGRAMS

VA's Environmental Health Registries gather information about the health of Veterans exposed to certain environmental hazards during military service. Some Veterans may qualify for more than one registry. Use the chart to the right to help determine your eligibility. If you have any health concerns, talk to your health care provider. For more information about any of the registries, go to www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures.

MILITARY EXPOSURES CLASSIFICATIONS

PERIOD OF MILITARY SERVICE	AGENT ORANGE	AIRBORNE HAZARDS AND OPEN BURN PIT	DEPLETED URANIUM FOLLOW-UP	GULF WAR	IONIZING RADIATION	TOXIC EMBEDDED FRAGMENT
1940s-1950s					●	
1960s	●					
1970s	●					
1990s		●	●	●		
2000s-Present		●	●	●		●

A health registry evaluation is not a claim for VA benefits and may not confirm exposure to environmental hazard during military service. Veterans who want to be considered for disability compensation for exposure-related health problems must file a claim. More information is available at www.benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/types-disability.asp.

To schedule a registry evaluation, contact an Environmental Health Coordinator at any VA medical facility. A list of Coordinators is available online at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp.

For the Toxic Embedded Fragments registry, contact an OEF/OIF/OND Clinical Coordinator at your nearest

914th AIRLIFT WING/CVR
 2720 KIRKBRIDGE DRIVE
 NIAGARA FALLS, NY 14304-5001

**OFFICIAL BUSINESS
 FIRST CLASS**



Airman & Family Readiness (716) 236-2097
 Base Exchange (716) 236-2100
 Base Billeting (716) 236-2014
 Base Gym (Fitness Center) (716) 236-2101
 Casualty Assistance 877-353-6807
 Pittsburgh Office 800-235-7780
 Chapel (716) 236-2395
 Credit Union (716) 236-2085
 Customer Service ID (716) 236-2197
 DEERS 800-538-9552
 DELTA Dental 888-838-8737
 DFAS (Cleveland) 800-321-1080
 Equipment Rental (716) 236-3511/2101
 Express Scripts Pharmacy 877-363-1303
 Falcon Club Café (716) 236-2027
 Family Support Center (716) 236-2097
 Ft. Drum SB 800-772-6900
 Ft. Drum Pharmacy 800-354-9280

IRS 800-829-1040
 IT&T Services (tickets) (716) 236-3367
 Legal Aid (716) 236-2133
 Medicare 800-442-8430
 Pass & ID Security (716) 236-2281
 PAX Terminal (Niagara) (716) 236-2360
 Retired Activities Office (716) 236-2389
 RAO Fax (716) 236-3173
 Recreation Center (716) 236-2450
 Social Security 800-772-1213
 Space-A Travel (716) 236-2389
 TRICARE 877-874-2273
 TRICARE for LIFE 866-773-0404
 VA Affairs 800-827-1000
 VA Affairs 888-VETS-NYS
 VA Hospitals 800-532-8387
 VA Hospital (Buffalo) (716) 834-9200
 Veterans One-Step Center (716) 898-0110

