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Editors Note: To all of my Women Veterans and readers, I just want to say how much I have enjoyed developing and publishing the Women Veterans Newsletter. Every issue was written with love and in hopes that in some small way it touched the lives of my Women Veterans. With my decision to retire Sep 2010, this will be my last issue. However Missouri is dedicated to its Women Veterans; the Women Veterans Program and this newsletter will continue to be a quarterly newsletter for all of you. It is my hope that our new coordinator will introduce new ideas; expand the program; and improve and develop more outreach events for all of you. What an awesome journey the past 11 years with the commission have been for me and especially the last 6 as your state coordinator. It is true I am leaving a job that I love, but I am ready to begin a carefree life of a retiree, with travel plans and spending more time with my family. I take with me so many good memories of so many of you. I will be around until September 1, so drop me a note if you'd like to. And if you see us driving down the highway, I'll wave to you as my husband and I start a new chapter in our lives.

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH WOMEN VETERANS CURRENTLY?

I attended the National Association of State Women Veteran Coordinators (NASWVC) meeting in Portland Oregon held on May 24-27. This was the 11th Annual meeting of NASWVC and this year 22 State Coordinators (including Hawaii's Coordinator) were able to attend this most informative conference. These conferences are geared towards getting the most current and up to date information about Women Veterans out to each Woman Veteran State Coordinator. They in turn can take back information and creative ideas from networking with other state coordinators to their prospective states and implement what they have learned.

The VA Health care is currently working on expanding services for Women Veterans that also include increasing recognition. Women deserve to be recognized as the Veteran -- not just assumed that we are the spouse of a Veteran when we go for our appointments. Women must have privacy, respect, dignity and a sense of security. Every level within the health care system needs to be engaged in enhancement of services for Women Veterans. VA Medical Center's priorities are to: 1) Expand access and enrollment 2) Improve outreach and advocacy and 3) To engage the women to become partners in their own health care. Between 2008-2009, there was a 15% increase of women using the VAMC. The VA is also working on ensuring that primary care is not fragmented and working on a one-stop shop for all health care needs.

Under the benefits side of VA- Since 2002 Women Veterans have been granted 15% of all service connected disability claims. Most of the claims granted are for the same disabilities that men are claiming. The VA highly encourages Veterans to file for benefits while still on active duty under the Benefits Delivery on Discharge (BDD) program as it helps eliminates the need for a nexus (a link) between the disability and service. If they are still on active duty chances are nothing else could have caused the disability or injury. In 2002, it was difficult to prove PTSD due to Military Sexual Trauma (MST) because often there were no stressors or documentation of the assault. The VA has now reduced the evidence standard, so if you have filed a claim for MST and it was previously denied, I would suggest you contact a Veteran Service Officer to find out your options. Some examples of stressors for establishing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are poor work performance; records from clerical/pastor; request for transfers; and buddy statements. If you filed a DD Form 2910 (Victim Reporting Preference Statement) while on active duty that would be evidence enough to establish your claim. The VA is expecting a 37% increase in claims because of these relaxed MST standards and also due to the new prospective disabilities due to exposure to Agent Orange. Additionally, all VA Regional Offices are implementing telephone development where if your claim is over 60 days old, the VARO will call the claimant. The purpose of the call is to let the client know what is needed, ask if you have it, if you can provide it and ask if you can send it in. The Secretary of the VA set an accuracy goal of 98% for all claims filed and the VA is working diligently to meet that goal. The top three issues Secretary Shinseki is asking about are 1) The back log of claims 2) Women Veteran Issues and 3) The GI Bill.

So you can see Women Veteran issues are among the top three.



Women in Uniform PAST

Wydia Dawaliby Habeeb



I was collecting pennies for the Army in front of the United Dept. Store where I worked, when I decided that I wanted to do more to serve my country. My two brothers and sister were serving in the military so when I decided to join, my mother had 4 star flags hanging in her window. After my initial basic training at Des Moines IA, I was shipped to Ft. Campbell, KY. My jobs in the military varied from dispersing ammunition to recruiting for the Army to finally working in the discharge processing unit as a Chief Clerk. While recruiting, I traveled with a Sgt. and another female soldier named Jackie Trunko who was my traveling companion. We traveled together as a team all through the southern US. We were always welcome wherever we went and got into many events free. I made rank fairly quickly and was a TSgt. when I was discharged. I was in Louisville, KY when the war with Japan ended, but wanted to stay and serve out my whole term of enlistment. Serving in the military creates bonds with people that cannot be broken. In fact I am still in contact after all these years with Jackie. For being 93 years old, I am doing pretty well yet, still am able to live on my own. My advice for young women today would be to serve your country only if your heart is filled with love and admiration for the Army and our flag and America, because today you would have to be willing to serve under fire. I love my God, my country and am so proud to have served in the US Army!



Mary Ogborn Kientzy



I was 21 when my dad told me that I no longer had to stay at home to financially help our family of 12. I prayed about it and decided that the military would offer me the most opportunities, but was disappointed when I was told that there was a 6 month waiting list for joining the Navy like my mom had done when she was younger. As most of you know, when you make up your mind to go into the military you don't want to wait 6 months to really THINK about it. When my dad saw how discouraged I was he said "Why don't you join the Marine Corps?" I'll never forget saying "Dad, I don't want to be a man!" He laughed and told me that even when he was in the Marines, they had women in the ranks. That was one of the best decisions of my life. I became the first Woman Marine ever with formal training as a Military Policeman. I also earned a bachelor's degree in management, worked as a Lt. for Guard Services at McDonnell Douglas, an Assistant Director of Security at St. Louis University, and eight years as a Substitute Teacher. Even at age 56, because of my experience and education through the military, I was hired this past October as a Veteran Service Officer for the Missouri Veterans Commission and loving every minute of it. I'm very thankful for the Marine Corps, my husband Jim (also a former Marine), and our three great kids.



Melanie Gregory



I grew up in an Army home and always knew I wanted to join the Army. So in 1979, I walked down to the recruiting station where my father had once been stationed and signed up. At the time, I wanted to become an MP, but one of the guys at the recruiting station who had worked with my father told me that was not an option. I told him that you really don't want me to call my dad! And that was that. I was one of the first women to attend coed basic training, men and women trained side by side for all activities. I completed both MP and mechanic training programs, ultimately spending my 21 year career in the mechanical field. In Germany, I was the only woman in motor pool. During the early 1980s, I was an NCO and a working mother. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, I was honored by winning the award of Top Recruiter while recruiting for the Army in WV. For most of my career I worked in motor pools, maintenance battalions, chemical companies, and supply companies in positions with increasing responsibility. I began as a TAMMS Clerk and worked my way up into supervisory roles, managing soldiers and millions of dollars of equipment. I witnessed many of the Army's efforts to computerize and network systems. I was part of the efforts to implement these new systems. I retired as a SFC in 2000. Since completing my bachelor's degree in 2006, I have worked with the Social Security Administration. I loved my time in the Army. I liked my job. I liked being an NCO. I loved the camaraderie. I loved the structure. There's nothing else like it.



Angelina Riggs



"The Prayer of a WAVE", pictures, a yearbook, my blue tie, and newspaper clippings are some of the mementos I saved from WWII. I was on duty from November 1944 until January 1946. I was doing hosiery repair for the May Company in my hometown of Cleveland, OH when I decided to join the Navy. I left for initial training at Hunter College in NY and was then sent to the Naval Repair Base in San Diego for my work assignment. At San Diego, I was a Seaman First Class working in supply. I played an active role in the requisition process for the much-needed parts for ships, airplanes, and submarines. There were lots of amenities and activities on the base, even a beauty shop. There were dances and entertainers. I saw Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra. I traveled around with three other WAVES and we had a ball. We even crossed the border into Tijuana to see races and bullfights. I was enjoying my Navy experience, but the best was yet to come. I became a showgirl! I still have the [Naval Repair Base News](#) article that spotlighted "Ankles Aweigh", a base show sponsored and produced by Welfare and Recreation. It was directed by Joe Hays. It involved a lot of hard work and practice. I loved dancing. I can't dance now, but I made the best of it while I could. I worked, I had fun, I enjoyed friendships, I danced. If I could sum it up it would be the camaraderie, the taking care of one another, I loved it.





Ask Karen



Q. I used the VA medical care a few years back and was not impressed with them at all as far as the care available to women. However I have heard recently that the VA hospitals are more women friendly. What do I need to do to give them another try?

A. You are absolutely right that the VA is making improvements when it comes to VA Health Care for Women. Undoubtedly, the VA health care was built and designed for men and little thought was given to the health care needs of Women Veterans. Thanks to courageous women coming forward and voicing their needs to receive care equal and on par with their male counterparts, the VA has taken several steps for improving their facilities to accommodate us. Also by more women signing up for the benefits, it validates the need to expedite the improvements. These include but not limited to; approving full time women veteran program managers at every VA hospital; establishing Women Veteran clinics in many of our VA facilities to include our Community Based Outreach Clinics (CBOC's); ensuring women have in-patient private showers and restroom facilities; striving to have a one-stop shop for our health care needs to include mammograms and pap smears; exam rooms that have the exam table facing away from the door during GYN exams; and initiating sensitive training for employees. As far as getting back into the system, if you are not in their records, you will need to complete VA Form 10-10EZ. If you are still in their records you may need to complete a 10-10EZR. Either of these forms can be obtained from a Veteran Service Officer (VSO) or you can get them directly from the hospital. I would recommend using a VSO as they can discuss any other benefits you may be entitled to that you may not be aware of. The fact that you have heard about improvements is a great testimony to the VA. They are hearing us! I am a current VA health care user and although the VA still has a long way to go, I think you will be pleased with the difference in care just a few years makes. To contact your nearest VSO call 866-VET-INFO.

If you would like to submit a question for Karen, please contact her at Karen.Etzler@mvc.dps.mo.gov, (816)387-2841, or Missouri Veterans Commission, Women Veteran Coordinator, 525 Jules, Room 320, St. Joseph, MO 64501

Did You Know?

- That Missouri has a blind pension that was established in 1921 and currently pays \$651 to eligible residents, which includes veterans. Blind pension benefits are not countable income for VA benefit purposes. To see if you are eligible contact the Dept. of Social Services at 573-751-4249 or go to <http://www.dss.mo.gov/fsd/blindp.htm>

- That on Aug 28, 2009 Missouri established - Missouri Revised Statutes, Chapter 578, Miscellaneous Offenses Section 578.501 and it states that "It shall be unlawful for any person to engage in picketing or other protest activities in front of or about any location at which a funeral is held, within one hour prior to the commencement of any funeral, and until one hour following the cessation of any funeral. Each day on which a violation occurs shall constitute a separate offense. Violation of this section is a class B misdemeanor, unless committed by a person who has previously pled guilty to or been found guilty of a violation of this section, in which case the violation is a class A misdemeanor" This is known as the Spc. Edward Lee Myers' Law.

- That Missouri has a Heroes Way Interchange Program from Legislation passed during the 2009 session. This program allows for interstate interchanges to be designated for Missouri residents who was in the armed forces and had been killed in action on or after Sept. 11, 2001 in either Afghanistan or Iraq while serving in the military. The memorial signs will be installed within the interchange on the right side of the highway, one sign per each travel direction. The current fee for two signs is \$2,200.00 due with the submission of the application. Contact 888-ASK-MODOT or go to <http://www.modot.mo.gov/services/HighwayNaming.htm>.

- That in 2007 the Dept. of Revenue revised the policy to the existing Missouri State Statues for disabled license plates. Veterans receiving compensation for service connected (S/C) disabilities can now get a set of Disabled Veteran License plates from the Dept. of Revenue at **no cost** to the veteran. It previously read that you had to be **100%** S/C. The application to use to DOR Form 4601.

- That if you are rated permanently and totally disabled for a service connected disability by the VA your spouse or children may be entitled to CHAMPA VA health benefits. You can be 40%, 60% doesn't matter as long as the key words "permanently and totally" are included in your rating. Many believe you have to be 100% and that is not the case. For more information call (800)733-8387 or go to <http://www.va.gov/HAC>



UPCOMING EVENTS

July 4- Spirit of American Celebration is being held on the State Capital Grounds – Heritage Village (by the Veterans Monuments) in Jefferson City from 11:00am – 7:00pm. There will be informational booths for Veterans and Veteran Service Officers available. POC- Norma Deagle at (573)353-8938.

Jul 31- Combat Vets Motorcycle Association is holding a Support Our Veteran Poker Run from 11:00am-4:00pm. Event is at the Zach Wheat American Legion Post #624, Sunrise Beach, MO. All proceeds go to various Veterans needs and causes. Food, entertainment and Veteran Service Offices will be available. POC Steve Popplewell at (573)230-3704.

August 12-22- The Missouri Veterans Commission will have an informational Booth at the State Fair the during the hours of 9:00am – 8:00pm everyday. We will be located in the Matheson Center building. Stop by and say hello and ask about your benefits. Sunday, August 15 is Homegrown Heroes Day (Military Appreciation :Free admission for active military and Veterans with ID; \$1 off admission for immediate family members; and \$5 admission after 5 pm for others. For more information contact Jamie Reed at 573-522-4228 or Jamie.Reed@mvc.dps.mo.gov.

September 11 – An Armed Forces Family Day and Vet Rally will be held at Clark Ketterman Park 8100 E. 107th Street, Kansas City, MO from 2:00-7:00pm. It's a day of softball, fun and entertainment. They are seeking softball players willing to donate free entertainment. VA benefits will be discussed and informational booths will be available. For more information contact: Rebecca Bradley at Rebecca.Bradley@mvc.dps.mo.gov or call 816 889-3081.

September 18 - Missouri Veterans Commission is holding Veterans Benefits Awareness Day. The event is awareness of Federal and State Benefits available to Veterans; Compensation, Health Benefits, Education, Non-Service Pension, Veteran Nursing Homes, Veterans Cemeteries, Honor flight, VA Medical Center, Mobile Vet Center, Military Funeral Honors and much more. Event is being held at the National Guard Armory, 1616 South Missouri Street, Macon, MO from 9-3. There will be a free lunch consisting of hotdogs, chips and drink. For more information contact Cindy Stivers at 660-385-6192 or Cindy.stivers@mvc.dps.mo.gov.



VA Announces Change to Medication Copays for Some Veterans

Effect July 1, 2010 the VA will increase the copay for prescription for Veterans in priority group 7 & 8 from \$8 to \$9. This is the first increase in VA Medication copay since Jan 1, 2006. Veterans in priority group 2-6 will remain at the \$8. Veterans in priority group 1 are exempt from copay cost.

VA Shortened Forms



The VA has shortened application forms to reduce paperwork for Veterans as part of Secretary of VA Eric Shinseki's effort to break the backlog of claims. The new forms, which are being made available on VA's Web site at www.va.gov/vaforms, include:

- A Shortened VA Form 21-526 for Veterans applying for the first-time to VA for disability compensation or pension benefits. This form has been cut in half- from 23 to 10- pages. It is immediately available to Veterans via Web download, and will be available through VA's on line claim-filing process later this summer at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>
- VA Form 21-526b for Veterans seeking increased benefits for conditions already determined by VA to be service connected. This new form more clearly describes the information needed to support claims.



VSO success story: Years of Perseverance finally pays off!

In Jan 2001, a Veteran came to my office to file a claim for service connected diabetes due to Agent Orange exposure. Before his claim was finalized, he died on **Sep 9, 2001**. I filed a claim for his widow for service connected (S/C) death benefits (DIC) due to the diabetes. In a rating decision dated **Jul 22, 2002** the VA denied S/C for diabetes even though "the service record showed that the Veteran participated as a member of the Clymer's crew in the landing on Marine amphibious units, however the records do not show that he actually disembarked in Vietnam". We filed a notice of disagreement, as this Veteran did actually disembark (confirming exposure to Agent Orange) and we were able to submit photos of him on the ground in Vietnam. However, the VA upheld the original denial, at which time the claim was sent to the Board of Veterans Appeals, Washington DC (BVA). Over the period of the next 8+ years, several events happened with this claim from being lost for 2 years and needing to be rebuilt from scratch, to being returned to St. Louis twice for the same medical opinion to finally being approved for accrued benefits owed the Veteran had he lived for S/C diabetes. However, the DIC claim was returned back to DC because the death certificate did not show cause of death as diabetes. The Veteran was treated solely by the VA, but had an emergency and was taken to a civilian hospital where he died. The Death Certificate was signed by the doctor in the ER. He died from acute myocardial infarction and that was listed as his cause of death. So I contacted this civilian doctor and he readily agreed that diabetes would have contributed to his death and wrote a letter confirming that. I faxed this to the BVA, and finally on **Mar 18, 2010** my widow received her award letter! She received a check for \$1800 for accrued benefits, \$1050 for additional burial benefits and was back paid \$117,973 for the DIC! Thus finally giving not only closure to this widow for the death of her husband, but also closure for me for the longest claim I have worked as a VSO.

Submitted by Karen Etzler, VSO

Editor's note: I readily agree that this is not the norm for VA claims; however I wanted to give hope to those Veterans whose claims have been in appeal for a long time. Appeal claims are sometimes granted in favor of the claimant!



VA Still Looking For Vietnam/Vietnam Era Women Veterans (Note Deadline for registration)

If you are a Woman Veteran who served on active duty between the dates of July 4, 1965 and March 28, 1973 then the VA is looking for you. A comprehensive study was announced on November 18, 2009 by the Secretary of the VA, Eric Shinseki to explore the effects of their military service upon their mental and physical health. The HealthViEWS Study will include all Women Vietnam Veterans who served in Vietnam, or facilities near Vietnam, as well as a sample of women who served in the United States. The HealthViEWS Study represents to date the most comprehensive examination of Women Vietnam Era Veterans, and will be used to shape future research on Women Veterans in future wars. This understanding will lay the groundwork for planning and providing appropriate services for all generations of Women Veterans. Participant registration will occur from **MARCH 2010** through **JULY 2010**. If you are interested in participating in this compensable study (\$75.00 for the mail in survey and \$75.00 for the telephone survey) contact Perry Point Cooperative Studies Coordinating Center, Perry Point VA Medical Center, PO Box 1010, Perry Point, MD 21902 or call 888-831-3325, or e-mail HealthViEWS@va.gov.

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www.mvc.dps.mo.gov





State of Missouri Women Veterans

Name: _____

Name you served under (if different from above) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ County: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime phone: _____

Email address: _____

Birth date: _____ / _____ / _____
Day Month Year

Place of Birth _____
City/State

Service (Circle one) USA USMC USN USAF USCG OTHER _____

Service dates: From _____ To _____
From _____ To _____

Receiving VA or Medical Benefits: Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what benefit: _____ (i.e. pension, comp., medical, etc.)

Have received benefits in the past: Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what benefit: _____

Would you like contact information and a schedule for a Veteran's Service Officer in your local area to explain your potential benefits? Yes _____ No _____

Do you wish to share this information with WIMSA (Women in Military Service for America Memorial) in Arlington VA? Yes _____ No _____

To receive your free Woman Veteran State Sticker
Return this to: Missouri Veterans Commission/Karen Etzler
Women Veterans Coordinator/VSO
525 Jules, Room 320
St. Joseph, MO 64501
816/387-2841
or send a request via email to: Karen.Etzler@mvc.dps.mo.gov