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### Editor's Note:

I received the "Women's Scars of War" article and wanted to share it with my readers. I think her story tells a lot of what our service women are currently going through and her courage in coming forth and sharing her story. This is opening doors for fellow women veterans to come forward for assistance as well. If you have issues you are dealing with, you do not need to suffer in silence any more. The VA now has in place Woman Veteran Coordinators in our VA Hospitals, VA Regional Offices, and you can also get assistance from our Vet Centers. Most of the states now have State Women Veteran Coordinators to assist our Women Veterans. **In fact, I just held our 4<sup>th</sup> annual Free Woman Veteran Conference on May 6, 2010 at the Maryland Heights Center at 2344 McKelvey Road, Maryland Heights, MO. This conference was designed especially for Women Veterans to learn about VA benefits and speak with various professional dedicated members of Veterans agencies.**

But you don't need to wait until May 6th if you have questions you would like answered or need referrals. Please feel free to contact me anytime at 816-387-2841 or email [Karen.Etzler@mvc.dps.mo.gov](mailto:Karen.Etzler@mvc.dps.mo.gov).

## Women's Scars of War

When retired Army Staff Sgt. June Moss returned from Iraq, she had to explain to her children why she couldn't hug them. Any embrace longer than two seconds made her skin feel like it was on fire. "When I got back, my kids were really clingy," Moss says. "They wanted affection. But, what do you say to a child?" At night, sleep never came. Instead, Moss baked cupcakes until dawn. At playgrounds, surrounded by the noise and chaos of crowds, Moss felt like her chest was going to explode. Worse, she was afraid she'd hurt someone. "I wasn't the same person when I came home," says Moss, who returned from Iraq in August 2003 and now lives in East Palo Alto. "I was different. I was cold." When imagining a struggling war veteran, it's likely few people picture a young woman such as Moss, who was eventually diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder. But women make up 15 percent of active-duty military members, and the Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that by the end of 2020, women will represent 10 percent of the nation's veteran population. And though military and congressional policy says women can't participate in direct ground combat, women carry guns, and use them. They drive Humvees hit by improvised explosive devices. They interrogate, and witness bloodshed. But for women, there is a major difference. They come home to a society that for the most part doesn't understand or accept that they're serving in the line of fire. As a result, the feelings of isolation can be even more overwhelming, especially since a woman is often one of few in her unit, says Natara Garovoy, program director of the Women's Prevention, Outreach and Education Center for the VA Palo Alto Health Care System. Complicating matters, some female soldiers live in fear of being attacked by one of their own. In 2008, the VA reported that one in five women screened for military sexual trauma had been sexually harassed or assaulted by a fellow soldier. Moss did little alone, whether it was burning confidential papers or taking out the trash. But she still feared for her safety, especially at night. "You already feared for your life," Moss says, "but the thought of a soldier attacking another soldier?" The mother of two spent eight months in 2003 as a light-wheel vehicle mechanic with the Third Infantry Division. As she drove through bustling marketplaces, often under aerial or ground fire, she clutched the steering wheel, scanning for suicide bombers. To get through those drives, she prayed. "I was calling to God really heavily," Moss says. "I was scared for my life every day, not knowing if I was going to come home to my children and what loss they would have to bear. So I just had to have my wits about me and believe in my training." Back at the base, Moss struggled with her identity. She was a soldier, wife to a soldier (her now ex-husband, who was also in the Army), her family's primary caregiver and a mechanic. Still, she tried to blend in, especially since she was the only woman in her unit. She cut her hair short. She wore boxer shorts and big T-shirts to hide her figure. She tried to be overly tough and stand up for herself, she says, particularly when male soldiers made off-color remarks or unwanted gestures. "You just have to know when to say, 'Stop. I don't appreciate that,'" Moss says. Returning to the states, Moss, then 32, was at first misdiagnosed. Had she been a man, the diagnosis might have been swifter, Moss says. "They probably thought, 'Oh you're a woman. You must have depression,'" she says. Last month, after 12 years of service, she permanently retired from the military, and she works as an assistant in chaplain services for the VA Palo Alto Health Care System. She still struggles with her symptoms, but because she knows her triggers, she avoids them. At restaurants, she sits in a corner booth that allows her an unobstructed view, should there be a sudden or loud noise. When she picks up her children at school, she calls the school secretary to send them outside. She can't wait in the busy parking lot with the other parents. In the end, though, Moss measures her progress by the duration of her embraces. When her children need a hug, they can now linger in her arms for a full 10 seconds.

Excerpts from Jan. 17, 2010 San Jose Mercury News (CA), by line by Jessica Yadegaran Contra Costa Times



## Women in Uniform PAST

### Eileen Cox



I joined the U.S. Navy and served from November 1953 until October 1955. I was the first woman from Ford County, Kansas to join the WAVES. I was twenty-six years old when I stepped into the recruiter's office. Ten days later I returned to be sworn-in and board a train that was leaving fifteen minutes later. The train trip ended in Bainbridge, Maryland. From there it was a bus ride to basic training to learn the Navy way. I still have my yearbook from boot camp. Learning the Navy way included lots of classes, marching, cleaning details, inspections, and rules. I can recall falling out of my bunk bed, and being required to jump into the ten foot end of a swimming pool. Unfortunately, I did not know how to swim. Women trained just like the guys did, but were not allowed to talk to any males at the base. After nine weeks of training, my first assignment was at Cabaniss Field in Corpus Christi, Texas. When that duty station was closed, I transferred to a Naval Air Station in Hutchinson, Kansas where I worked in personnel. The highlight of my time in the military was "Just being in the Navy." My Navy background led to a few more firsts. I was the first female Commander of American Legion Post 294, the first female Skipper of the Navy Club of Missouri, and the first female on the Soldiers Memorial Military Museum Building Commission. Military service helped me and also inspired one of my children. My son Lawrence followed in his mother's footsteps; he joined the Navy.



### Amy Bennett



In 1993 I was working as a secretary for an insurance company. At the time I was 23 years old and knew there was so much more I could do with my life. I went and visited with an Air Force Recruiter and decided to join the military. I entered boot camp about a month later and then went to Lowry AFB for AIT. The squadron I belonged to was one of the last flights to attend there as they were closing down the base. I then received orders to Travis AFB, CA. It was a dream come true, being from Minnesota I knew California would have much better weather. I was assigned to the 60<sup>th</sup> Supply Squadron and worked there for two years. I heard of an opening for a supply liaison for the 60<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron and I asked for a transfer from my Commander and he agreed to my request. In my new position I was in charge of all the ammo, artillery, Bianchi Gear, K-9 dogs, first-aid kits, police cars, and all of the other equipment they needed to operate. After my 4-year enlistment I chose not to re-enlist. My last day of inactive-status was Sept. 13, 2001 two days after 9/11. I was willing to go back if my country needed me; however, I received my discharge two weeks later. I moved to Missouri, found a full-time job working in Human Resources and used my G.I. Bill to attend college. I graduated in May 2009 with a B.S./B.A from MWSU. In Jan. 2010 I accepted a position to be a Veterans Service Officer. I have truly enjoyed my new challenges and working with my fellow veterans.



### Verla DeBeer



In 1940 I entered nursing school and when I graduated in 1943 I volunteered for the Army and entered as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant. Not long after basic training, I was assigned to the 188<sup>th</sup> General Hospital, a unit which organized in Little Rock, AR and finished preparations in Camp Kilmer, New York before shipping out to England. The 188<sup>th</sup> had a very busy routine with the operating room at times going 24 hours a day. Patients arrived by trainloads and were taken care of until they could be sent back to the front or sent home. I became Head Nurse for Ward 21, working in orthopedics. In January of 1945, I volunteered to transfer to the 51<sup>st</sup> Station Hospital in Luneville, France. Replacements were needed for nurses who were due to go home. The 51<sup>st</sup> was set up in a private school. Classrooms became hospital rooms and students rooms became living quarters. I worked wherever needed, but took care of many patients who would not survive. This was quite a different experience from the orthopedic ward in England where I saw most of them get well enough to go home. When the war ended in Europe, I volunteered to go to the South Pacific. However, Japan surrendered before I shipped out. I was sent back to the States to Camp Sibert in Alabama to await discharge. I left Alabama and went home on November 10, 1945. I have compiled my memories of my service years in a manuscript, My Years As An Army Nurse.



### Shakeya Calloway



I joined the Army Reserves May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1995 before I graduated high school. I delayed my entry into Temple University in Philadelphia, PA for a year. I did my basic training in Ft. Jackson, SC and then my AIT in Ft. Gordon, GA. I started out as a record Telecommunications Operator/Maintainer. After completing AIT I then regained entry into Temple University and finished up with my BA in Psychology in 2001. I was transferred to a finance unit in Wilmington, DE. After 9/11 I was detached from my finance unit and attached to the 744<sup>th</sup> MP BN out of Bethlehem, PA, who at the time was on alert to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi/Enduring Freedom. We were deployed on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2003. My life was changed forever. My tour was 15 months long. I spent five weeks on the USNS Comfort, Naval Ship, interrogating and processing prisoners then moved to Tahlil AB in Iraq and then to Baghdad International Airport for the remainder of my tour. Being a mother deployed away from my daughter and the rest of my family was definitely a trying experience. However, it was an experience that has made me into the person that I am today. I now work for the VA as an Outreach Technician for the St. Louis Vet Center. I have completed my Masters of Social Work program at Washington University in St. Louis George Warren Brown School of Social Work, using my Vocational Rehabilitation benefits and I now will be a social worker for the VA, continuing to provide readjustment services to my fellow combat veterans.







## Ask Karen



**Q.** I am a divorced woman veteran who is 50% service connected. I have been dating a gentleman who is also a veteran and he is 30% service connected. Lately we have been thinking about getting married, but I want to know how this would affect the already established benefits we are both receiving?

**A.** You are smart to check into how your benefits might be effected by marriage. Many VA benefits are affected by marriage, especially income based benefits. Although your benefit is not an income based benefit, in both of your cases, there will be a change in benefits, but it will be beneficial to both of you. You can add him to your 50% service connected benefits as your dependent and he in turn can add you to his 30% service connected benefits as his dependent. So your benefits would ( based on current rates) raise from \$770 to \$845 and his would raise from \$374 to \$421. To add a dependent you must complete VA form 21-686C. I highly recommend you contact your nearest Veteran Service Officer so that she/he may assist you in completing this form.

**Q.** I am looking into buying a home and have heard about a home loan through the VA. What can you tell me about it?

**A.** As VSO's we get asked that question quite a bit. The VA does not actually loan the money, they just guarantee the money to whatever lending agency you obtain VA financing from. Therefore, you have to qualify for the loan under your own credit rating; have sufficient income; obtain a valid Certificate of Eligibility from the VA and agree to live in the property. The Certificate of Eligibility is available to veterans who served on active duty and have obtained veterans status (check with your nearest VA service officer for your veterans status as it varies depending on the period of service served); members of our guards and reserves who have served at least 6 years of guard or reserve duty; and current active duty members who have served at least 90 continuous days. To apply for your Certificate of Eligibility you must complete VA Form 26-1880, it is then mailed to VA Eligibility Center, PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120 along with a copy of your discharge or letter from your commander. A certificate will be mailed to you. VA Loans can be used to buy or build a home; buy a residential condominium; buy a residential cooperative housing unit; repair, alter, or improve a home; refinance an existing home loan; buy a manufactured home with or without a lot; buy and improve a manufactured home lot; install a solar heating or cooling system or other weatherization improvements or buy a home and install energy-efficient improvements.

## Did You Know?

■ **That the MVC has an Incarcerated Outreach Program Coordinator** to assist veterans with their transition back into the community. This program assists qualified veterans who are in a Transitional Housing Unit 3 to 6 months prior to their release date by providing the necessary resources for shelter, food pantries, and VSO assistance, in the area that they will be living to become productive citizens again. Family members may also request this information for their spouse while incarcerated please contact **Paula Nordin** at [Paula.Nordin@mvc.dps.mo.gov](mailto:Paula.Nordin@mvc.dps.mo.gov) or 417-532-6754. **NOTE: Once released from the correctional facility, they have to have all warrants cleared before receiving assistance for VA benefits!**

■ **That the MVC has an Ombudsman** that assists Veterans, Service Members and their families with extraordinary needs that are not being met by other agencies or organizations. The Ombudsman acts as a referral source to local, state and national resources to address these needs. Her name is Melissa Wilding and her contact information is [Melissa.Wilding@mvc.dps.mo.gov](mailto:Melissa.Wilding@mvc.dps.mo.gov) or 573 -522-4220.

■ **That the MVC has an Outreach Coordinator** that provides assistance to veterans by researching and distributing information on programs, grants, and other resources as it relates to Service Members and Veterans and works with the Veteran Service Officers to educate Veterans and Service Members on their state and Federal benefits. Her name is Jamie Reed and her contact information is [Jamie.reed@mvc.dps.mo.gov](mailto:Jamie.reed@mvc.dps.mo.gov) or 573-522 -4228.

■ **That the MVC has a Minority Veteran Representative** to assist minorities by providing assistance with claim submissions, conducting outreach by holding workshops, luncheons and vet rallies. Her name is Rebecca Bradley and her contact information is [Rebecca.bradley@mvc.dps.mo.gov](mailto:Rebecca.bradley@mvc.dps.mo.gov) or 816 -889-3081.

■ **That the VA just unveiled an improved web site for wounded warriors.** The National Resource Directory is a comprehensive, free, on-line tool for wounded, ill and injured service members, Veterans and their families. Visitors to the site can find an extensive range of information about VA benefits, including disability and pension benefits, VA health care and educational opportunities. The site also provides information for those who care for Veterans, such as access to emotional, financial and community assistance. Go to: [www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov](http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov).

■ **If you go to this web site, [www.LetsSayThanks.com](http://www.LetsSayThanks.com)** you can pick out a thank you card and Xerox will print it and it will be sent to a soldier that is currently serving over seas. You can't pick out who gets it, but it will go to a member of the armed services.



## Upcoming Events

April 29-May 2, 2010, Vietnam Women Veterans' Conference, Branson, MO. For more information contact Nancy Jurgeвич at 321-725-6370 or [jjurgevich@aol.com](mailto:jjurgevich@aol.com).

The Missouri Veterans Commission (MVC) Veterans Home at 1111 Euclid, Cameron, MO is celebrating their 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on April 11<sup>th</sup> from 2:00-4:00pm in the lobby, everyone is invited; and Contributor/Volunteer reception will be April 23<sup>rd</sup> in the main dining room at 7:00pm; and the Missouri Veterans Home Assistance League will be holding its annual golf tournament on June 19<sup>th</sup> at the Veteran's Memorial Golf Course- registration 8:00am- contact Barbara Caldwell 816- 632- 6010 Ext. 227. April 10<sup>th</sup>- Flag Burning ceremony and May 28<sup>th</sup>- Memorial Day services- contact Darci Henry- 816- 632-6010 Ext 232.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Cameron Betterment thank you banquet is being held April 12<sup>th</sup> at the Cameron Methodist Church at 6:00pm. Reservations call 816-632-1006.

The MVC Veterans home at #1 Veterans Drive in Mexico will be having their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration on April 10<sup>th</sup> from 1-4pm. It will include a program, refreshments and tours. Everyone is welcome. Also a Poker Run is scheduled for June 5<sup>th</sup>- contact Susan Paden at 573-581-1088 ext 286 for more details.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Minority Women's Luncheon/Bazaar will be held June 19<sup>th</sup> at 1601 E. 18<sup>th</sup> Street (Lincoln Building) from 10:30am-2:30pm. Contact Rebecca Bradley at 816-889-3081.

June 6<sup>th</sup> The West Central Missouri Veterans Assistance League is holding their 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Tournament for the benefit of the MVC Veterans Home in Warrensburg. They will have door and raffle prizes. The tournament is limited to 36 teams. Call Jan Smith at 660-543-5064 to register.

April 17<sup>th</sup> 10:00am – 2:00pm, Veterans Benefits Fair, hosted by the 11<sup>th</sup> district VFW is being held at VFW Post 6137, 5468 Gravois Ave., St. Louis, MO. For more information contact Deborah Halter at [halterdi@yahoo.com](mailto:halterdi@yahoo.com) or 314- 397-5662. You may also contact the Post at 314-352-6137.

May 22<sup>nd</sup> 10:00am – ?? Soldier Salute Note: Honoring WWII Veterans and ALL Veterans. This is a FREE event for everyone. All are invited and encouraged to attend. This is a great event for your kids and grandkids to see and meet real "live" heroes." Second Baptist Church, 3111 E. Battlefield Rd., Springfield, MO. For more information contact Kurt Drees at [info@soldiersalute.org](mailto:info@soldiersalute.org) or [www.soldiersalute.org](http://www.soldiersalute.org).

May 22<sup>nd</sup> 10:00am – 2:00pm, Welcome Home Celebration. Note: OIF/OEF Veterans and ALL Veterans, join us for music, food, fun, informational booths, games for kids, and a great celebration of your dedication and service to our country. A special medal will be presented to those post 9/11/2001 combat Veterans who are registered for care with our VA Medical Center prior to the day of the event and who have not previously received the medal. St. Louis Soldier's Memorial, 1315 Chestnut, St. Louis, MO. For more information contact Gregory Campbell 314-289-7641.

Sound of Speed Air Show May 1-2, Gates open at 9:00, Rosecrans Memorial Airport, St. Joseph, MO. Come watch the Blue Angels Demonstration Team. This is a FREE event open to the public. For more information contact Maj. Barb Denny at 816-236-3582.

### Memorial Day Services at our MVC Cemeteries:

**Higginsville -20109 Business Hwy 13- 1:00pm**  
**Contact: Jess Rasmussen- 660/584-5252**

**Jacksonville- 1479 County Road 1675- 9:00am**  
**Contact: Gerry Hodge- 660/295-4237**

**Springfield- 5201 S. Southwood Road- 1:00pm**  
**Contact: Steve Maples- 417/823-3944**

**Bloomfield- 17357 Stars & Stripes Way- 1:00pm**  
**Contact: Ken Swaengin- 573/568-3871**

A Veteran is someone who at one point in their life wrote a blank check made payable to 'The United States of America', for an amount 'up to, and including their life'. That is honor, and there are way too many people in this country today, who no longer understand that fact!

Unknown author

### Women Veterans Statistics

Women Veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the Veteran Population. They comprise 7.5% of the total Veteran population and nearly 5.9% of all Veterans who use VA health care services. VA Estimates Women Veterans will constitute 10% of the Veteran population by 2020 and 9.5% of VA patients.





## VSO Success Story: From Homelessness to Success!!



While working as a VSO, I was approached by a homeless veteran. He suffered from severe asthma and wanted to know if the VA would provide inhalers. As our discussion progressed it became apparent that he might qualify for service-connection. I submitted the required forms and arranged for him to go to the Veterans Affairs Medical Center to enroll for healthcare. He was enrolled and came home with a sack of inhalers. His claim for service connection was approved, and he was accepted into the vocational rehabilitation program. He ultimately was accepted into the engineering program at the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque in order to finish the degree he had started some years earlier.

*Submitted by Jess Rasmussen, Higginsville Cemetery Director, former VSO*

Editors note: The above is a prime example as to why you should use an accredited Veteran Service Officer (VSO) when applying for your VA benefits. We are trained to seek out all benefits a Veteran may be entitled too. Had this Veteran applied for health care on his own, he may have never known about compensation, vocational rehab or gone on to finish his degree. What a great story, thanks for sharing Jess! To locate a VSO nearest to you go to [www.mvc.dps.mo.gov](http://www.mvc.dps.mo.gov) or call 866-Vet-INFO.

## Veterans wrongly charged for Free Care

Veterans seeking treatment for sexual trauma suffered in the military may have been improperly charged co-payments by the Veterans Affairs Department according to a new report from the VA inspector general. The report, issued Thursday, has resulted in a change in billing practices and a promise that anyone charged for mental health counseling or treatment for physical health conditions could get his or her money back. Free counseling and treatment, mental or physical, is available for male or female veterans for sexual trauma that occurred while on active duty or during National Guard and reserve duties. Unlike disability-related health issues, which veterans often must prove are service connected, veterans seeking treatment for injury, illness or psychological conditions relating to sexual trauma DO NOT have to provide any documentation or evidence that they reported the incident that caused the trauma. All veterans can receive the care; they don't even have to be eligible for veteran's benefits or be enrolled in the veteran's health care system. More than 65,000 patients were treated by the VA for sexual trauma in fiscal year 2009. The investigation of improper co-payments was launched at the request of Sen. Daniel Akaka, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee chairman, who had received specific complaints about sexual trauma victims being charged co-payments for visits and medications at a VA outpatient clinic in Austin TX. A review found that of 250 veterans treated for sexual trauma, 86 were billed for services. While investigators looked only at the Texas clinic, the problem could have happened elsewhere, the report say. "I am concerned that some veterans may still be charged for care they should receive for free, unnecessarily adding complications to the recovery process," Akaka said in a statement. "However, I am pleased that VA's leadership is ordering changes system-wide as the Inspector General recommended. I will continue to monitor this issue." He also made the point of thanking the veteran who initially complained about being charged. "If she had not stood up for her fellow veterans, these national changes would not be in the works. Once again, this veteran served her country well," he said.

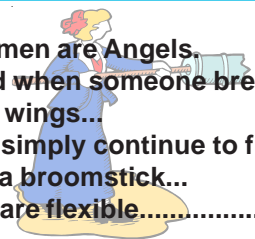
*IG finds by Rick Maze mail to: [rmaze@atpco.com?subject=Question for ArmyTimes.com](mailto:rmaze@atpco.com?subject=Question for ArmyTimes.com) reader  
- Staff writer posted: Friday Feb 5, 2010 15:04 EST*



If you served in the military during any era you are invited to attend a special Women Veterans event at the VA Medical Center (covers Branson and Mt. Vernon, MO CBOC's) Wednesday, May 12, 2010, from 10 am - 2pm, 1100 N. College Ave., Fayetteville, AR, Building 3 (Auditorium). For more information contact Carole McAlister at [carole.mcalister@va.gov](mailto:carole.mcalister@va.gov) or 800-691-8387 /ext, 15321.

*Thought for  
the Day....*

**Women are Angels.  
And when someone breaks  
our wings...  
We simply continue to fly...  
On a broomstick...  
We are flexible.....**



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[www.mvc.dps.mo.gov](http://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](mailto:Karen.Etzler@mvc.dps.mo.gov)