



(516) 887-7100 Fax (516) 887-7175

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK, INC.
200 Atlantic Avenue, Lynbrook, New York 11563



DECEMBER 2008 NEWSLETTER

A SNAPSHOT OF MY ACTIVITIES

Robert J. Finnerty, Department Commander

I would like to wish all our members and their family's season's greetings and a happy new year. Lets not forget our brothers and sisters who are in the hospitals, and those who are serving our country. When you see a person in uniform, make sure you thank them for serving our country. All veterans can never forget the treatment Vietnam veterans received when they returned home. I still bear the stings of outrage. God bless all of our veterans and their families.

November was a great month for the Department. On Thursday November 6th, Sid Siller and I attended a meeting in Albany with all the veteran organization leadership from New York State. Congressman Hall was there and shed light on some problems with the VA. He said this investigation is on going and it is not just a local problem, it is much bigger than first reported.

On Saturday, November 8th, Sid and I along with our wives attended a dinner honoring the 75th anniversary of Chapter #38. The food and the entertainment were wonderful. I would like to thank the officers and members of Chapter #38 for their very warm welcome, especially Commander Kevin Larson and Adjutant Thomas Reiter. Thank you again.

Veteran's Day was spent on the USS Intrepid, along with President Bush and a ship full of veterans. Thanks to Senator Serf Maltese who was able to get tickets for the event. It was a great opportunity to revere this day of remembrance.

On Saturday, November 15th, my wife and I attended the Testimonial Dinner for Terri Skyler, Commander of the DAVA. The Department of New York continued its tradition and presented her with a beautiful bouquet of flowers. The room was decorated in a winter wonderland style, along with a visit from Frosty the Snowman. Everyone had a great time.

Tuesday, November 25th, the Department of New York took a big step forward. We held the first Department Service Officer (DSO) class. The class was held at the New York City Regional Office of the DAV, and on December 18th, a class will be held at the Buffalo Regional Office of the DAV for the western counties. The members who will attend these classes will have the same training as the NSO's have so that our professional staff will be able to help us with our claims. The Department goal is to have well qualified DSO's in every area of the entire state.

Thanksgiving day, I spent a quiet day with my daughter and son-in-law along with my three grandchildren.

To all of you - have a healthy, great new year. God bless us all!

ON THE HILL

Sidney Siller Sr., PDC, Department Adjutant

Last November 6, 2008, was a special day for the over one million veterans of New York State. New Yorker's have two capital hills; the one in Washington D.C.; and the one in Albany, New York. Although the one in Albany has produced a number of Presidents; it is still not as familiar as the building that is a great symbol of freedom for the ratio veal world and us.

Located at the top of State Street, at the intersection of Eagle Street; it hovers over all facing the west bank of the great Hudson River.



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The event of special interest to veterans, called by the Director of the Division of Veteran's Affairs for New York State, for the leaders of every state veteran's organization to meet for the purpose of "leader's talking to other leaders" about improving benefits for new veterans and the veterans' community as a whole.

Department Commander Bob Finnerty and I were present as well as the leaders from the other VSO's in New York.

The importance of this meeting having been called at this critical time is great. I have thought for many years that New York's Division of Veteran's Affairs was a "SOP" to New York veterans and a bureaucratic fantasy that was a smokescreen for that which did not happen. Good leadership was always selected to head the Division, which was mostly in tune with the veteran community, but basically had no money to support vital programs, overtime, i.e. (100% tax exemption for 100% disabled veterans; thruway passes for 100% disabled veteran programs).

Simply put, good government leaders cannot enjoy success without legislative support.

In 1960, Governor Nelson Rockefeller called a similar conference to the one held on November 6, 2008. The purpose of that ill-fated event was to discuss the closing of Camp McGregor. Gov. Rockefeller, a wonderful man, and one of New York's most popular officials (elected four times) needed to save one million dollars from the budget. Most important, the American Legion Department of New York was not in attendance that day. Gov. Thomas E. Dewey purchased Camp McGregor from Metropolitan Life for one million dollars, so disabled veterans could rehab after leaving a VAMC. Gov. Rockefeller, after hearing all those leaders, said he would decide in two weeks and let the chairperson State Commander Ray McDonald of the Veterans of Foreign Wars know his decision. McGregor thereafter was shortly closed.

Bearing the above in mind, the splendid action taken by current Director Jim McDonough needs to be widely supported. His open mindedness and leadership are worthy of our support. That does not mean we can't disagree with his decisions or offer constructive suggestions. And, here are two of mine.

Firstly, we must get the Governor and the chairpersons of the Veterans Committee from the Senate and Assembly, with their counsel, to attend these meetings in the future.

Secondly, everyone should stop telling us the state is broke when at the same time we veterans are a priority. Money is an issue in every benefit legislation, is it not?

Our Department's Legislative Chairman Bob Becker is also Chairman of a Legislative Committee formulating veterans programs. His committee should have our thanks for their hard work, but they need our support.

Finally, we can all work together and when it comes to veteran's issues, make New York the best state to live in. Go for it Director McDonough.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR NSO OFFICE...

William F. Gibney, NSO Supervisor, Albany

It has come to our attention many National Service Offices have been receiving telephone calls in response to the article "Landmark Court Ruling Victory for Widows of Disabled Veterans" published in the



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DAV's Nov/Dec 2008 magazine (pg 20) concerning Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). Many of those callers are also being referred to both the Communications and Service Departments.

Additionally, the October 2008 Service Bulletin addressed DIC/SBP and the new Special Survivor's Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) administered by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS).

Understandably, DFAS will only release information to the beneficiary and in order to ensure NSO responses are consistent throughout the country, we are asking CSO's to encourage any callers with questions pertaining to SBP or SSIA to contact DFAS at the following address or numbers:

Defense Finance and Accounting Service
US Military Annuitant Pay
P.O. Box 7131
London, KY 40742-7131
Toll Free: 1-800-321-1080
Commercial: (216) 522-5955
FAX: 1-800-982-8459

Your attention to sharing this information with your members will be greatly appreciated.

HOLIDAY WISHES

The Department of New York extends warmest wishes for a wonderful Holiday Season. May each of you have a New Year filled with peace, happiness and good health.

LONG-AWAITED INCREASE IN MILEAGE APPROVED

DAV.org

As of Nov. 17, 2008, the mileage reimbursement rate for travel to VA facilities increased from the 28.5 cents per mile to 41.5 cents per mile, under the fiscal year 2009 VA appropriations act.

Service-connected disabled veterans, veterans receiving VA pensions and veterans with low incomes are eligible for the reimbursement of travel expenses for medical care, compensation and pension examinations and vocational rehabilitation counseling and the like.

The VA appropriations law instructed the VA to retain the current deductible amounts for beneficiary travel at \$7.77 for a one-way trip and \$15.54 for a round trip, with a calendar month cap of \$46.62. However, under the 2008 Veterans' Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act, on Jan. 9, 2009, those deductibles decrease to \$3 for a one-way trip, \$6 for a round trip, with a maximum of \$18 per calendar month.

According to the VA, deductibles can be waived if they cause a financial hardship to the veteran.



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A DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS POEM

*LCDR Jeff Giles, SC, USN
30th Naval Construction Regiment
OIC, Logistics Cell One
Al Taqqadum, Iraq*

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light,
I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.
My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,
My daughter beside me, angelic in rest.
Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,
Transforming the yard to a winter delight.

The sparkling lights in the tree I believe,
Completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.
My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,
Secure and surrounded by love I would sleep.
In perfect contentment, or so it would seem,
So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.

The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,
But I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.
Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know, Then the
sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.
My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,
And I crept to the door just to see who was near.

Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,
A lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.
A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old,
Perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,
Standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.

"What are you doing?" I asked without fear,
"Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your sleeve,
You should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"
For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,
Away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts..

To the window that danced with a warm fire's light
Then he sighed and he said "Its really all right,
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night."
"It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,
That separates you from the darkest of times.

No one had to ask or beg or implore me,
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.
My Gramps died at 'Pearl on a day in December,"



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Then he sighed, "That's a Christmas 'Gram always remembers."
My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam',
And now it is my turn and so, here I am.

I've not seen my own son in more than a while,
But my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her smile.
Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,
The red, white, and blue... an American flag.
I can live through the cold and the being alone,
Away from my family, my house and my home.

I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,
I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat.
I can carry the weight of killing another,
Or lay down my life with my sister and brother..
Who stand at the front against any and all,
To ensure for all time that this flag will not fall."

"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright,
Your family is waiting and I'll be all right."
"But isn't there something I can do, at the least,"
"Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?
It seems all too little for all that you've done,
For being away from your wife and your son."

Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,
"Just tell us you love us, and never forget.
To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone,
To stand your own watch, no matter how long.
For when we come home, either standing or dead,
To know you remember we fought and we bled.
Is payment enough, and with that we will trust,
That we mattered to you as you mattered to us."

TAPS

Department has been notified that the following comrades have been called into final formation above:

Louis F. Puzo, Chapter #153, 11/20/08

Department and the membership extend deepest sympathies to the family members, friends and comrades of these fallen heroes. May each one rest in honor.

Please feel free to call, write or e-mail davny@optonline.net Headquarters if you have a loss in your Chapter that you would like to include in this column.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



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2009 Mid-Winter Conference

February 22, 2009 to February 25, 2009
Crystal Gateway Marriott
Arlington, VA 22202

State Executive Committee Meeting

March 13, 2009 to March 15, 2009
Hudson Valley Resort
Kerhonkson, NY

Department of New York's 88th Anniversary Celebration

Sunday May 17, 2009
El Caribe Country Club
Brooklyn, New York

Department of New York Convention

June 28, 2009 to July 1, 2009
Hudson Valley Resort
Kerhonkson, New York

Rehab Cruise XVII

July 14, 2009
Nautical Empress
Freeport, NY

2009 National DAV Convention

August 22, 2009 to August 25, 2009
Sheraton Hotel Denver
Denver, CO 80202