



The Alabama Veteran

Bob Riley
Governor

W. Clyde Marsh
Commissioner

FALL 2006

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Marine Corps Birthday—
November 10, 2006
- Veterans Day —
November 11, 2006
- Thanksgiving —
November 23, 2006
- National Pearl Harbor
Remembrance Day —
December 7, 2006
- Christmas —
December 25, 2006
- New Years —
January 1, 2007

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Commissioner's Corner

Alabama not only tops the list of our fifty states, but it tops the list of veteran friendly states. Our state has a rich heritage of patriotism, military service and sacrifice. We have the largest per capita of volunteers of men and women who take the oath to protect and defend our nation than any other state. This has been a reoccurring pattern during our nation's wars.

Alabama has a total of 426,322 veterans. Approximately 31,000 of our veterans are female and 97,000 are minority.

Patriotism, hospitality and hard work are something that we Alabamians are exposed to from a very early age. The bottom line is, our state is a good place to hail from and a great place to live, especially if you are a veteran.

Several independent polls have listed Alabama among the top three in providing veterans benefits and incentives. Those benefits are provided in recognition for their patriotism, sacrifice, and dedication to duty as well as continued service to our state and nation.



Veteran's Day is just around the corner and I urge everyone to support Veteran's Day events. Please take the time to acknowledge the great service and sacrifice of our veterans past and present. Governor Bob Riley signed a Veterans Day Proclamation, proclaiming November 11, as Veterans Day throughout our great state. He also urges Alabamians to support and observe special events to commemorate the great sacrifice and contributions made by our veterans which enables us to continue the freedoms that we currently enjoy.

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Montgomery, Alabama 36102-1509

INTERNET WEB ADDRESS

Web: www.va.state.al.us
E-mail: adva@va.alabama.gov

Pfc. Stephen D. Bicknell Laid to Rest



United States Army Private First Class Stephen Dean Bicknell, 19, Prattville, Alabama died Sunday, October 15th when the Humvee he was riding in struck a land mine near Samari, Iraq.

A member of the famed 82nd Airborne Division, Bicknell had been in the Army about six months and had been deployed to Iraq less than four months. Pfc. Bicknell was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, and Good Conduct Medal.

He was a 2005 graduate of Prattville High School and a standout on the gridiron playing quarterback for the Lions. He is one of many Alabama heroes who paid the ultimate sacrifice for his country, state, family and friends. This veteran, hero, son, husband, father and comrade in arms will be greatly missed but never forgotten.

Monument Honors Area WWII Aces

ELMORE -- They were the greatest warriors in the "greatest generation," a pair of aces from rural Alabama who created aviation history.

Hoyt Eason and Henry Rudolph were recently honored for a feat few men can claim: The World War II Army Air Corps fighter pilots shot down five or more enemy aircraft.

John Stuart Tilley, a Wetumpka High School junior, believes the pilots should be remembered for their gallantry and sacrifice, especially at a time when WWII veterans are dying at the rate of more than 1,000 a day.

Henry Rudolph, a Wetumpka native, traveled back to Elmore County from Atlanta to witness the unveiling of a monument in his home town honoring his valor under fire. Mr. Rudolph flew 98 missions against the Luftwaffe and downed five aircraft in the skies over Germany.

"The 354th Fighter Group was an aggressive squadron," Rudolph said before the unveiling. "Going up against another pilot never frightened me. I knew I had them. It was the anti-aircraft fire that scared me."

Tilley's father, Lt. Col. Ken Tilley, is an historian at Maxwell Air Force Base. As he researched WWII air battles, he discussed them with his son, who expressed an interest in native Alabamians who earned the ace title.

"There were just 20 WWII aces from Alabama," Ken Tilley told the audience assembled for the event that "only four are living today and three of those are Navy pilots". Mr. Rudolph is the only living Army Air Corps pilot in Alabama.

Obtaining Foreign Birth Certificates

Children born abroad to U. S. citizen parents can obtain a U. S. Consular Report of Birth or a certified copy of the Certification of Report of Birth from the U. S. Department of State.

Birth certifications for alien children adopted by U. S. citizens and lawfully admitted to the U.S. may be obtained from the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service if the birth information is on file. Additionally, persons who were born abroad and later naturalized as U. S. citizens may apply for a Certificate of Citizenship from the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

To obtain the death records of U. S. citizens who died in foreign countries or on the high seas, you must contact the U. S. Department of State or your nearest County Veterans Service Office. Write Passport Services, Correspondence Branch, U. S. Department of State, 1425 K Street, Room 386, Washington, DC 20522-1705).

Tricare Info Now on the Web

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1, 2006 – Tricare beneficiaries will get a pleasant surprise the next time they visit Tricare Online. The web site (www.tricare.mil) has a new name, a new look and a new home. It is now part of Tricare.mil, the official Web site for all Tricare information.

“We reorganized the Web site with our beneficiaries in mind,” said Army Maj. Gen. Elder Granger, deputy director, Tricare Management Activity. “Now they can go to one site to look up benefit information, schedule an appointment or track claims. Everything’s in one place, making the site easier to use.”

Tricare.mil comprises five main content areas:

- My Health (Tricare Online) -- personal health information and online appointment scheduling for Tricare Prime enrollees;
- My Benefit -- Tricare benefit information;
- MHS Staff -- resources for Military Health System staff members;
- Tricare Providers -- information for Tricare network providers; and
- Pressroom -- the latest news about Tricare and the military health system.

In the next phase of Web site improvements, beneficiaries will be able to enter their profile and receive benefit information tailored to them. Tricare expects this feature to be available in winter of 2007.

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Disabled American Veterans

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Veterans of Foreign Wars

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Wayne Dial—Talladega
Rayburn Hill—Tyler
Charles Stephens—Fort Payne

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Robert J. “Bob” Hewitt—Blountsville

Vietnam Veterans of America

Ken Rollins—Oxford

Court Expands Relief For Agent Orange Victims

A recent federal appeals court expanded the group of Vietnam veterans who may have come in contact with the herbicide Agent Orange during the Vietnam War to include those who served on ships off the coast of Vietnam. The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims ruled that Jonathan Haas, who served in the Navy off the Vietnam coast and never set foot in the country, is entitled to relief for exposure to Agent Orange.

In 2001, Haas submitted an application for VA disability compensation, requesting service connection for diabetes mellitus, peripheral neuropathy and loss of eyesight resulting from "exposure to Agent Orange during his service". Haas testified that during his tour aboard the U.S.S. Mount Katmai, he often saw large clouds of chemicals being dropped by aircraft over the forests. He further stated: "These large clouds would drift out over the water because of the prevailing offshore winds, and they would engulf ships, my ship in particular. Now you could see the chemicals, you could taste them, smell them, and they landed on your skin."

Veterans groups applauded the court's decision. John Rowan, national president of Vietnam Veterans of America, said in a written statement, "Some of the inequities of the application of presumptive coverage for exposure to Agent Orange have finally been set aside." Rowan also said, "This Court decision will allow for an untold number of veterans and their families to receive the compensation and health care they are entitled to, as well as other VA programs."

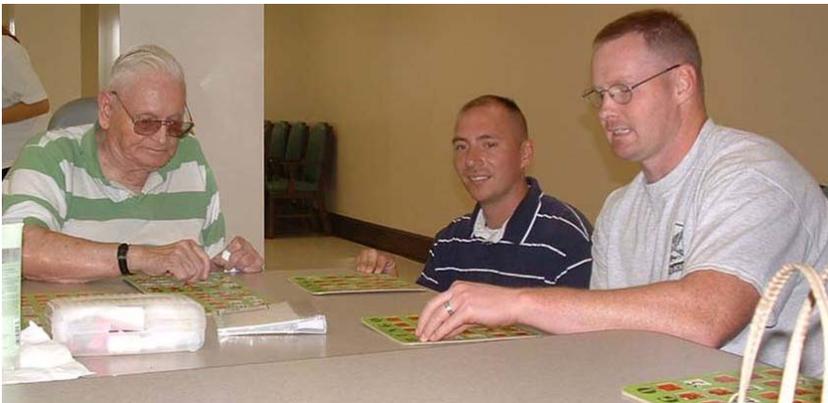
In the 31-page decision, the court determined the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been unlawfully denying presumptive disability compensation for exposure to Agent Orange for service members who served in the waters offshore of Vietnam and earned the Vietnam Service Medal.

Airmen Visit Bill Nichols State Veterans' Home

On August 19, 2006, Airmen from Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base in Montgomery took a road trip to Bill Nichols State Veterans Home. More than 35 volunteers visited some of our nation's heroes and spent the morning talking, exchanging stories, and even played a game of Bingo. With all Maxwell volunteers enjoying the experience, we hope they will make the visit a quarterly event.

Staff Sergeant Clinton Dykes was inspired to lead the group to Bill Nichols and encourage interaction with previous veterans. The group wanted to give back and show support for veterans who have recently supported troops in the fight for freedom.

All of the veterans look forward to visitors and especially the special ones from people who share the same goal no matter what the generation.



Resident Fontiel Wise and Airmen play bingo during recent visit.

Sergeant Dykes and company have made a commitment to the veterans to come back on November 11, 2006 and spend the day with them. The day will begin with a commemorative program titled, "Honoring All Who Served" followed by a barbeque cookout, and a Classis Car and Motorcycle show.

Santa Claus Visits William F. Green Veterans Home

Santa Claus had no snow to ride his sleigh into town on Saturday, July 29, 2006, but that did not keep him away! He, along with bags of gifts, arrived at the William F. Green State Veterans Home by automobile.

Santa found the dining room filled with happy veterans awaiting his arrival. Since he had given his little North Pole helpers the summer off as a reward for their hard work last December, he brought along members of the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 864 who provided the gifts and assisted with passing them out. As with any Christmas Party, the holiday tree was aglow with lights and Christmas music playing.

Several residents were heard saying, "We get to do this again in six months." Shown in the photo is resident James Odom receiving a gift from Santa.



Resident James Odom receiving a gift from Santa.

Supermarket of Veterans Benefits

The Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs held its first Supermarket of Veterans Benefits on September 14th in Montgomery. Approximately 185 - 200 individuals attended the Supermarket to gain more information.

There were 35 stations set up representing various veterans programs. Some of the programs included Homeless Veterans Programs, Women's Veterans Programs, Vocational Rehab Program, Tricare, My-HealthEVet Program, Operation Grateful Heart, Still Serving Veterans, Benefits Advisor for the



National Guard & Reserves, Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve (ESGR), Military Funeral Honors Program, State Veterans Home Programs, VA Scholarship Program, VA Regional Office. ADVA Veteran Service Officers and ADVA Claims Representatives were on hand and filed several claims for veterans on the spot that had no idea of their entitlement. Several phone calls were received from veterans seeking benefit information that heard about the event, but could not attend.



The ADVA Commissioner declared the first Supermarket of Benefits a major success and challenged the department to improve upon the next supermarket outreach event which will likely be held in the Birmingham area during 2007.

Alabama State Veterans Homes

Anyone who may know of interested eligible veterans are asked to encourage them to make application for admittance to the home in their geographic area. For more information and/or an application, contact your local Veterans Service Office or Home Representative:

Bill Nichols State Veterans Home

1784 Elkahatchee Road
Alexander City, Alabama 35010
Kathryn Fuller—(256) 329-3350

Floyd E. "Tut" Fann State Veterans Home

2701 Meridian Street
Huntsville, Alabama 35811
Charlotte Eason—(256) 851-2807

William F. Green State Veterans Home

300 Faulkner Drive
Bay Minette, Alabama 36507
Lavon Henley—(251) 937-8049

Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

December 7, 2006 will mark the 65th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs encourages all Alabamians to fly their flags at half-staff on December 7th in honor of the individuals who died as a result of their service at "Pearl".

2007 Federal COLA

The cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), for the year 2007 will be 3.3 percent effective December 1, 2006. This adjustment applies across the board to recipients of Social Security Administration benefits, recipients of VA benefits to include surviving spouses, children and parents who are also receiving VA benefits, as well as federal and military retirees in receipt of retired pay as well as their survivors in receipt of federal and military survivor annuities. The Medicare Part B insurance premium will increase 5.6 percent to \$93.50 for most Medicare Part B recipients. (Ref: 38 USC 5312, 42USC 401).

Veterans Urged to Wear Medals on Veterans Day

WASHINGTON – The Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and leaders of major veterans organizations recently called on America's veterans to help kindle a new spark of patriotism on Veterans Day by wearing the medals they earned during military service.

"We are announcing a *Veterans Pride Initiative* to remind Americans of the pride and honor in the hearts of those who have served," Nicholson said. "We expect Americans will see our decorated heroes unite in spirit at ceremonies, in parades and elsewhere as a compelling symbol of courage and sacrifice on Veterans Day, the day we set aside to thank those who served and safeguarded our national security."

The campaign is modeled after a tradition in Australia and New Zealand, countries who honor the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) on April 25. ANZAC Day sees veterans wearing their military decorations whatever they are doing on that day. Nicholson said he hopes a U. S. tradition will ensue to emulate this pride in being a veteran and in honoring our veterans.

VA is offering information about the campaign on its Web page, <http://www.va.gov/veteranspride>, where veterans also can obtain information about how to replace mislaid medals and learn how to confirm the decorations to which they are entitled.

