



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

**Northwest Chapter**

**Volume XLIII Issue 6**

# **NORTHWEST OUTPOST**

**August/September 2020**

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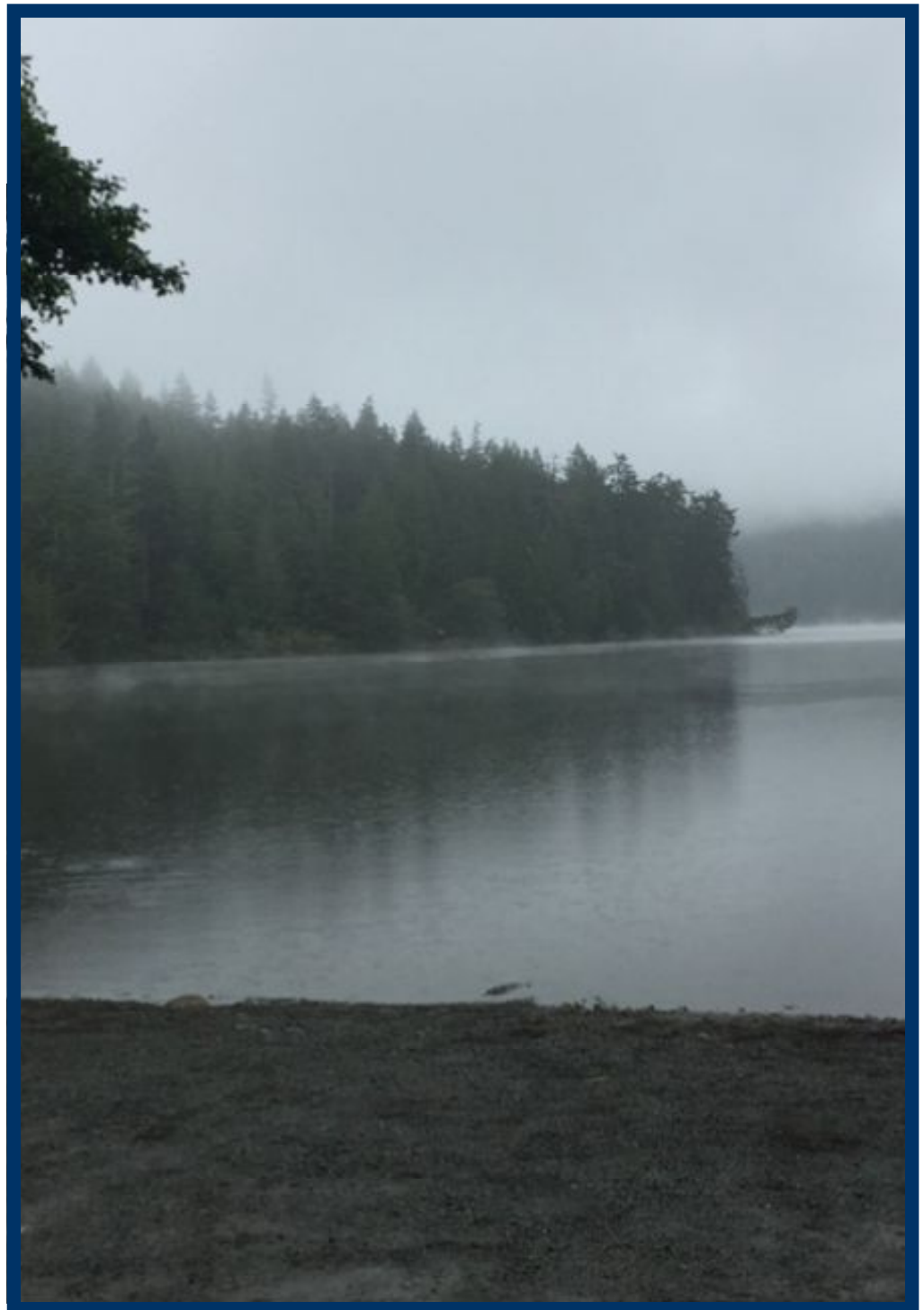
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*Pass Lake, Whidbey Island, WA*



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## ***Our Mission***

**The Paralyzed Veterans of America**, a congressionally chartered veterans service organization founded in 1946, has developed a unique expertise on a wide variety of issues involving the special needs of our members-veterans of the armed forces who have experienced spinal cord injury or dysfunction.

PVA will use that expertise to be the leading advocate for:

- Quality health care for our members,
- Research and education addressing spinal cord injury and dysfunction,
- Benefits available as a result of our members' military service,
- Civil rights and opportunities which maximize the independence of our members.

To enable PVA to continue to honor this commitment, we must recruit and retain members who have the experience, energy, dedication, and passion necessary to manage the organization and ensure adequate resources to sustain the programs essential for PVA to achieve its mission.

**The Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America (NWPVA) a member chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America** accomplishes it's mission by coordinated efforts through programs that:

- Provide opportunities for health promotion, recreation, employment, sports and recreation, service and camaraderie for paralyzed veterans;
- Elevate society's information level about the attitudinal, physical and legal barriers that confront persons with disabilities in order to influence the removal of those barriers;
- Advocate for and monitor the delivery of high quality and appropriate health care benefits and service;
- Cooperate with and seek the support of other groups and individuals that share NWPVA's objective;
- Educate the public with the current and ongoing needs and current and past contributions of America's veterans.

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Matthew Mickunas

## NWPVA Continuing to Serve



**T**he Northwest PVA is ever pressing forward to accomplish many service projects and plan for future programs for the membership such as the Winter Sports Clinic at Snowmass,

CO (Mar 27<sup>th</sup> - Apr 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021) & National Veterans Wheelchair Games in New York (Aug 8<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> 2021). By the time you read this, the Soldier Home and Colony in Orting, Washington will have Wi-Fi throughout the skilled nursing facility for all residents. Because of the valiant effort of Northwest PVA's service donation, it accomplished two important mission requirements; Adaptive Communication Services for all nursing residents, and the project was completed on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July, thus celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> year of signing the American Disabilities Act. It has been a long time coming, but we had to buckle down and invest in some facilities maintenance & servicing on the Chapter; A new A/C maintenance program, touch-less door entry system, re-surfacing the parking lot, and adding private lot & local towing signage to keep out public vehicles. We are very thankful to some great volunteers that came to help fix some minor safety concerns with cementing holes, cracks, and miscellaneous repairs.

The Seattle SCI, MS, & ALS Units continue to support the Northwest PVA membership and others in the

SCI/D community by telehealth and phone. So far Seattle VA is not performing elective surgeries as of yet, but they are performing urgent/emergent surgeries. Some units are slowly bringing in Veterans for day appointments that need service and assistance by priority. On the SCI/D registry, you should have been called at least once by a medical representative to check on your status and see where you are as far as wellness and any needs of service.

We have had a lot of success during the COVID-19 with pizza delivery to the Spinal Unit for all the inpatients in June and July. We just order from Pegasus pizza online, its picked up by Door Dash and delivered to the Seattle VA, and the Charge Nurse secures it at the main entrance. As long as we cannot host our usual pizza party in the dayroom, your Northwest Chapter will continue to serve pizza via delivery with the SCI Staff's awesome help. If you are an inpatient at the Seattle SCI unit, we have thought of some great recreational activities to keep you busy fighting off boredom. Tom, your Northwest Membership Officer, is going from hobby store to specialty store's gathering donations and purchasing all kinds of hobby kits and other types of craft kits for every Seattle SCI inpatient. We plan to store the bulk of the kits not in use at the chapter, that way we can better serve patients' by delivering the kits when needed. If you need to contact the chapter or want more information, please go to Northwest's website @[www.nwpva.org](http://www.nwpva.org).

## Chapter Elections: Ballots Due By August 6, 2020

**T**he Chapter newsletter, *The Outpost*, reminds you if you haven't voted, time is running out. If you have voted, thank you. Your names are in the lottery for a chance to win one of ten (10) fifty (\$50) gift cards.

Get well to all of our members hospitalized. If you need help voting, call me at 206-605-3935 and leave a message.

If you need help voting in Washington State's primary or General election, call me. NWPVA can enable assistance. Be engaged and healthy!

## Brent King PADI Certification-Open Water Diver Course



**I** love to keep active in a variety of outdoor sports. The more I keep moving the less my nerve pain bothers me. There are abundant adaptive scuba opportunities to participate in all over the world. So, I was intrigued to try something new.

I found a local scuba instructor and explained my situation as a paraplegic and a double amputee. There was zero hesitation on his part to include me in his mid-July class that still had a few open slots. Jake, the owner of Jake's Scuba Adventures boasted that he certified 700 students last year. I chimed back that he could certify 700 and a half this year.

I arrived in the very full classroom at Jake's Scuba Adventures in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho for a review of the open water diver manual. I felt like we were being fed information with a firehose. Thank goodness quizzes were much gentler than the instruction. I passed all the quizzes and tests along with the 52 other students in the class.

The next afternoon was four hours in a heated pool. There was room for 6 of us to be spread out per session. We swam five laps and then had to tread water for 10 minutes. Both tasks were fortunately easy for me as I float like a bobber! Who knew? I yelled "leg cramp" a few times and the students struggling to tread water told me to "shut up!"

We then prepped all of our gear and tore it down numerous times. My entry and exit of the pool were the only differences compared to the other students along with the omission of scuba fins. I had to be weighted more on the shoulders and waist than the others along with positioning my tank higher to level me out to submerge parallel to the pool bottom. The repetition and step by step procedures were a

good fit as it was a familiar feeling from my military service. Playing around in the heated pool was relatively easily.

The final four dives were to take place in Lake Coeur d'Alene. The water was much colder at 66 degrees and visibility was not near as clear as in the pool. The biggest difference was diving much deeper and the pressure on your body and ears is significantly much higher. Diving down slow and paying attention to the tasks to pass the course were key. Jake, the head instructor stated I was the easiest student to work with once a few of his assistant instructors carried me into the lake.

I didn't have to repeat any task given to me and I had an absolute blast. On my last fun dive of the day I dove to 37 feet. I swim very well with webbed fingered gloves and loved seeing huge bass and the underwater structure of the lake. I do look forward to diving in warmer water in the future! I am now a PADI Certified Open Water Diver for life.



*Brent King with Jake's Scuba Adventure Instructors*

# Fishing Eastern Washington By: Brent King

**D**aily plans and schedules are definitely being tossed around by the constantly changing regulation changes with this COVID19 pandemic. Yet I've still been able to get out fishing with a guide in Eastern Washington twice so far this year. I'll be taking another trip on July 30<sup>th</sup> in Brewster, WA for Sockeye Salmon.

On June 3<sup>rd</sup> we launched from Porcupine Bay boat launch on Lake Roosevelt to fish for Walleye. There is a bit of a transfer to the edge of the boat and then back into our manual wheelchairs. The seat bases move giving a few manual chairs plenty of room to maneuver comfortably and be spread apart.

We hit the water at 5:30 AM and see very few other anglers. Two Army Veterans, a paraplegic buddy, my son Skyler and Steve Morris of SJM Guide Services. We trolled up and down the lake traversing the contours with his GPS guided trolling motor and fish finder. We had a long fun day and came home with 55 walleye making some great eating fillets! An amazing whitetail buck swam across the lake in front of us along with two beautiful bald eagles flying overhead.

We were supposed to go out on Lake Roosevelt July 16<sup>th</sup> near Kettle Falls for sturgeon fishing. The water temp was till too cold and the prehistoric looking bottom monsters just weren't biting.

So, we made a change of plans with the SJM. Skyler and headed to a Loon Lake that's 45 minutes from my door step to fish landlocked kokanee salmon on July 17<sup>th</sup>. They are a planted fish in this lake. Their growth depends on the food supply. We have night fished for them using floating headlights and trolled for them during the day. If you night fish for the Kokanee and catch your limit of 10 and stay passed midnight, you can catch your next days limit too. These are great fish to cure and smoke!

If you're looking for free Disabled Veterans fishing trips, they are available on a first come first serve basis. If a trip opens up, commit right away or you will miss out. The trips fill up quite rapidly. Look up online your local [Heroes On The Water Chapter](#), [Salmon For Soldiers](#) and [Healing Waters](#). These are three of the most active non-profits providing fishing trips for Vets. Each operates a bit differently, but each enjoy helping Vets get out fishing. FISH ON!



*Brent & Skyler King fishing for Kokanee*



*Brent King, Jeff Rossey, Lara Miller, & Skyler King fishing for Walleye*



*Smoked Kokanee fillets*



## Hello By: Jerrell Briscoe



**M**y name is Jerrell Briscoe and I will be filling the SCI position previously held by Maria Rigolo at the Seattle VA Medical Center. I started working for PVA as a National Service Officer in September of 2019. Before that I served in the US Army as a Combat Engineer. After two deployments, and nine years of service I was medically retired. I am honored to have been given this opportunity to help my fellow Veterans and their families.

Matthew Mickunas, Northwest PVA President-Elect and I had a meeting with the Chief of the SCI services, and I wanted to give you a brief overview of what was discussed. First, as we are all aware, COVID 19 has made in-person appointments limited per new VA COVID 19 policies. This will continue for the foreseeable future, to insure the safety of Veterans and staff. That being said, annual evaluations will still be conducted through telehealth services. Inpatient beds have been lowered from 32 to 18 to limit exposure to the virus.

The expansion of the SCI center is still on track for its FY 2021 start date. The renovation looks to bring the number of outpatient exam rooms from 4 up to 6. The expansion of the outpatient overhead nurse call/notification lights in the SCI center, is estimated to be completed by the end of 3rd quarter, FY 2020. As for staffing, there is the possibility of adding a second registered full-time nurse as early as August. As part of the phase 1 reopening, SCI has added 2 PT or OT outpatient appointments per day, and continued to provide approximately 1 face-to-face provider clinic visit per day.

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## Duane Hughes

December 12, 1946-July 12, 2020

By: Michael Killen

**O**n July 12, 2020, Duane Hughes, former PVA National Service Officer, passed away at the Seattle campus of the VA Puget Sound HCS. His family at bedside. Duane believed in the motto, No One Left Behind, living his life advocating for veterans and their families. Duane was born on December 12, 1946. Shortly after graduating from Auburn High School, Duane enlisted in the US Army on June 27, 1966. During his stint in the Army, he served in Vietnam from January 1967 to August 1968. Duane was honorably discharged on June 26, 1969. After his military service, he went to work for US Customs, eventually retired from the agency. During this time, Duane was busy raising a family and an active member in the Veterans of Foreign Wars both at the Post and District level. In October 1999, he became an Assistant Department Service Officer at the Seattle Regional Office in October 1999 assisting veterans and their families until December 2000. After leaving the VFW, Duane continued his service work and advocating for veterans working as a National Service Officer for the Military Order of the Purple Heart from January 2001 to January 2008. In February 2008, Duane came to work for PVA as a National Service Officer in the Seattle Service Office and working there until transferring to the Seattle SCI Office in 2014. He eventually retired from PVA in 2015. Even in retirement Duane was still active in the VFW. Duane is survived by his daughters, Jennifer Chorman and Kimberly Kent, and one son, Christopher Hughes, and grandchildren.

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The SCI area in the parking garage is currently being used for drive-up COVID testing. With so few outpatient visits per day, this has not been a problem, but if you have any issues with parking please contact me at [jerrellb@pva.org](mailto:jerrellb@pva.org) or call the office at 206-768-5415. I look forward to this exciting new step both for myself and the NW Chapter.

## Board of Director's Meetings By: Bob Clinton

**P**VA Northwest Chapter Board of Director's (BOD) meetings have been on Zoom Meetings. The meetings on May 21, and June 19, were both held online via video conferencing. Diving right into the "new normal," conducting the May and June BOD meetings on Zoom, researched, and set up by President-Elect Matthew Mickunas, who took the initiative to purchase the "command" program, set up the meetings, and send out invitations to Board members. On the day of the first meeting, Matthew appeared on attendees' screens as if he were lounging on the

beach somewhere in Hawaii or the Caribbean, as he explained, even in the days of the Coronavirus, you can at least "look" like you are traveling. Sign-on for the meetings proceeded well, but there were a few glitches including; problems like forgetting to note the meeting ID number, audio problems, "can you hear me now," "mute/unmute your audio," "stop shuffling papers you're drowning everyone out," and "where's the mute button?" Well, as Gomer Pyle, an outstanding Marine, used to say, "Surprise, Surprise," you CAN teach old, and some not so old, veterans new tricks.

Returning to the serious subject at hand, conducting BOD meetings on Zoom allows the BOD to conduct its important work even in these difficult times, safely and effectively. By requesting motions, discussing them after you have heard a 2<sup>nd</sup>, and approving them with a quorum. Looking to the future, the General Membership can be confident that the Board of Directors will hold its next meeting soon after Labor Day on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September. We hope in person, but even if the shutdown continues, the BOD will continue its work supporting veterans with no interruptions.

## Zoom Meeting

Audio only



With video



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# Rename Fort Lee to Fort Kearny By: Skip Dreps

**I**f Fort Lee is to be renamed, I suggest one of my military heroes, General Kearny, the 'One-Armed Devil'. I served in the Army in many Continental Army Forts named after someone I never knew their personal histories. To me, Fort Polk will forever be known as Fort Puke. At Fort Benning I pushed-up the base at least three feet and called it Fort Bananas. Drained the swamps around Fort Gordon, Fort Gore. And at Fort Bragg, I found it better to be humble than a braggart, brave better than fool hardy, and called there home a place on Smoke Bomb Hill. This is why I believe a change in Army Fort names would inspire new troops more than us old soldiers.

Mexican-American Disabled Veteran

A native of New Jersey, General Kearny distinguished himself in the Mexican-American War where he lost his left arm and later served in Emperor Napoleon III's forces during the Second War of Italian Independence. Returning to the United States after the outbreak of the Civil War, Kearny quickly gained a position of prominence in the Army of the Potomac. A tenacious fighter who relentlessly trained his men, he earned the nickname 'One-Armed Devil' from the Confederates.

The Civil War Begins!

Remaining in France into 1861, Kearny returned to the United States following the outbreak of the Civil War. Arriving in Washington, Kearny's initial attempts to join the Union service were rebuffed as

many remembered his difficult nature and the scandal surrounding his second marriage. Returning to Belle Grove, he was offered command of the New Jersey Brigade by state officials in July.

Commissioned a brigadier general, Kearny joined his men who were encamped outside Alexandria, VA. Stunned by the unit's lack of preparation for battle, he quickly commenced a rigorous training regime as well as used some of his own money to ensure that they were well equipped and fed. Part of the Army of the Potomac, Kearny became frustrated by a lack of movement on the part of its commander, Major General George B. McClellan. This culminated in Kearny publishing a series of letters that severely criticized the commander.

Into Battle ...

Though his actions greatly angered the army leadership, they endeared Kearny to his men. Finally in early 1862, the army began moving south as part of the Peninsula Campaign. On April 30, Kearny was promoted to command the 3rd Division of Major General Samuel P. Heintzelman's III Corps. During the Battle of Williamsburg on May 5, he distinguished himself when he personally led his men forward. Riding ahead with a sword in his hand and his reins in his teeth, Kearny rallied his men yelling, "Don't worry, men, they'll all be firing at me!" Ably leading his division throughout the doomed campaign, Kearny began to earn the respect of both the men in the ranks and the leadership in Washington. Following

the Battle of Malvern Hill on July 1, which ended the campaign, Kearny formally protested McClellan's orders to continue withdrawing and advocated for a strike on Richmond.

One-Armed Devil at Manassas

Feared by the Confederates, who referred to him as the "One-Armed Devil", Kearny was promoted to major general later in July. That summer Kearny also directed that his men wear a patch of red cloth on their caps so that they could rapidly identify each other on the battlefield. This soon evolved into an army-wide system of insignias. With President Abraham Lincoln tiring of McClellan's cautious nature, the aggressive Kearny's name began to surface as a potential replacement.

Leading his division north, Kearny joined in the campaign that would culminate with the Second Battle of Manassas. With the beginning of the engagement, Kearny's men occupied a position on the Union right on August 29. Enduring heavy fighting, his division almost broke through the Confederate line. The next day, the Union position collapsed following a massive flank attack by Major General James Longstreet. As Union forces began fleeing the field, Kearny's division was one of the few formations to stay composed and helped cover the retreat.

Chantilly: Never Surrender.

On September 1, Union forces be-

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came engaged with elements of Major General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's command at the Battle of Chantilly. Learning of the fighting, Kearny marched his division to the scene to reinforce Union forces. Arriving, he immediately began preparing to assault the Confederates. As his men advanced, Kearny rode forward to investigate a gap in the Union line despite his aide urging caution. In response to this warning he allegedly replied, "The Rebel bullet that can kill me has not yet been molded."

Encountering Confederate troops, he ignored their demand to surrender and attempted to ride away. The Confederates promptly opened fire and one bullet pierced the base of his spine and instantly killed him. Arriving on the scene, Confederate Major General A.P. Hill exclaimed, "You've killed Phil Kearny, he deserved a better fate than to die in the mud."

The next day, Kearny's body was returned under a flag of truce to the Union lines accompanied by a letter of condolence from General Robert E. Lee. Embalmed in Washington, Kearny's remains were taken to

Bellegrove where they laid in state before being interred in the family crypt at Trinity Church in New York City. In 1912, following a drive led by New Jersey Brigade veteran and Medal of Honor winner Charles F. Hopkins, Kearny's remains were moved to Arlington National Cemetery.

General Kearny's Memorial stands within a stone's throw of Generals Lee's House on the top of Arlington Cemetery. If General Lee could vote on a name change from Fort Lee to Fort Kearny, I'm sure today he would smile in agreement.

**Memorial to General Kearny on top of Arlington National Cemetery.**



Paralyzed Veterans  
of America

## WASHINGTON UPDATE

*Recent news regarding legislation and regulatory actions affecting veterans and people with disabilities.*

Written and produced by Paralyzed Veterans of America - Government Relations Department

July 17, 2020

Volume 26, Number 13

# SENATE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON RESILIENCY OF VA'S SUPPLY CHAIN

**O**n June 9, Dr. Richard Stone, Executive in Charge, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) testified before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee on the resiliency of VA's supply chain.

According to Dr. Stone, VA is experiencing the same challenges with obtaining supplies like personal protective equipment as every other hospital system in the country. Unlike other health care systems, however, VA has the ability to share their supply and personnel resources between sites based on immediate health care needs.

VA is in the process of collaborating with the Department of Defense (DoD) and will transition to the Defense Medical Logistics Standard Support (DMLSS) on an enterprise-wide basis. DMLSS is an information technology system within the Defense Medical Logistics – Enterprise Solution (DML-ES) portfolio. The DML-ES portfolio

provides a continuum of medical logistics support for the Defense Health Agency. DMLSS delivers an automated and integrated information system with a comprehensive range of medical material, equipment, and facilities management functions. DMLSS will replace VA's legacy system designed and developed in the 1970s.

VA is currently piloting DMLSS at the James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center in North Chicago, Illinois, and VA's initial electronic health record (EHR) deployment sites in Spokane and Seattle to analyze VA enterprise-wide application. According to Dr. Stone, moving to DMLSS will allow VA to leverage a proven system that DoD has developed, tested, implemented, and interfaced with its EHR, the same Cerner platform being deployed across VHA.

Dr. Stone also discussed establishment of Regional Readiness Centers, geographically distributed, in support of four Veterans

Integrated Service Network (VISN) Consortiums. A VISN Consortium is a partnership between multiple VISNs located in the same region of the country. Each Regional Readiness Center coupled with VHA medical facilities must be capable of maintaining a combined supply depth of 180 days. We support any efforts that will ensure that PVA members, VA employees, and all veterans and their caregivers have access to needed PPE supplies without needing to ration them.



# VA FUNDING BILL CLEARS KEY COMMITTEE

**T**he House Appropriations Committee recently approved its version of the fiscal year (FY) 2021 Military Construction, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies (MILCON/VA) spending bill by a vote of 30-20 on July 9. The draft measure provides \$250.9 billion in both discretionary and mandatory funding that includes an extra \$12.5 billion in emergency spending to cover increasing costs of health care through VA's Community Care Network.

Roughly \$90 billion of the bill goes directly toward veterans'

medical care: \$10.3 billion of that amount would be provided for mental health care, including \$313 million for suicide prevention outreach; \$661 million would go toward the specific health care needs of women veterans; and \$840 million would go toward Medical and Prosthetic Research. The latter figure would be an increase of \$40 million above the 2020 enacted levels but is \$20 million less than what the *Independent Budget* recommended. The bill also provides \$2.6 billion for VA to continue developing its new Electronic Health Record System as well as continued oversight of the project by the Government Accountability Office.

The Committee allocated roughly \$1.4 billion for VA's major construction projects and \$400 million for minor ones. Another \$3.2 billion was set aside to cover the operating expenses of the Veterans Benefit Administration to ensure the prompt processing of disability claims. Finally, the bill provides advance appropriations for FY 2022 of \$145.3 billion for VA's benefit programs and \$94.2 billion for veterans' medical programs.

Action on this legislation could take place in the House prior to the August recess.

## NEWS ITEMS OF NOTE

### **P**VA Participates in Hearing on Reproductive Care

On July 1, PVA testified at a House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health [hearing](#) titled, "Veterans' Access to Reproductive Health Care.: The oral testimony included permanent authorization of in vitro fertilization services; inclusion of surrogacy and gamete donation to assistive reproductive technologies provided by VA; and the importance of asking about sexual health, incontinence, and other topics to veterans with spinal cord injuries or disorders (SCI/D). Our written comments included the need for more research on reproductive health among veterans with SCI/D. Of

note, during the hearing, Rep. Michael Levin (D-CA) mentioned a recently introduced infrastructure bill and asked witnesses if issues of physical accessibility of services were widespread.

### **Senate Version of Auto Act Introduced**

On July 2, Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Joe Manchin (D-WV) introduced S. 4155, which would allow qualified service-connected disabled veterans to receive a grant every ten years towards the purchase of a new vehicle. This legislation is a companion bill to H.R. 5761, which was introduced in the House by Representatives Dan Meuser (R-PA) and Anthony Brindisi (D-NY) in February. Sena-

tor Collins' [press release](#) on the bill can be found here; and the video of her floor speech, mentioning PVA member Neal Williams, as she introduced the measure [here](#).

### **Prosthetic Benefit Applications**

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, VA is recommending that all prosthetic benefit applications (Clothing Allowance, Home Improvement and Structural Alterations, and Automobile Adaptive Equipment) be submitted to the local facility by email, fax, or regular mail. At this time, in-person submission or dropping off applications is not recommended.*

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For clothing allowance applications, the submission deadline is August 1; however, if veterans have extenuating circumstances (such as lack of resources; lack of access to email, fax, or mail; hospitalization) applications should still be submitted by fax, email, or regular mail to their local Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service and will be accepted for an entitlement decision after August 1. However, we cannot stress enough the importance of timely submission of applications as clothing allowance applications are currently being accepted and processed. VA tells us payments for applications processed on or before August 1 will be released by the Veterans Benefits Admini-

stration between September 1-October 31. If you have any questions about your eligibility and/or applying for prosthetic benefits, or any other VA benefit, contact your PVA national service officer for assistance.

#### **VR&E Renamed**

VA has renamed their Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service to the Vocational Readiness and Employment Program. VA Secretary Wilkie stated, "The new name puts an emphasis on the Veteran and the department's mission to help them reach their employment goals."

#### **David Capozzi Retires as Executive Director of the U.S. Access Board**

On June 30, Access Board Executive Director David Capozzi retired after 28 years of service. He joined the agency in 1992 as Director of the Office of Technical and Information Services and became Executive Director in 2008. During his tenure, the Board's mission expanded significantly, and David led the development of new accessibility guidelines and standards in a variety of areas. He also greatly enhanced the Board's influence both nationally and globally as a leading resource on accessible design and was instrumental in engaging the public and stakeholders in the Board's rule-making and other work. Prior to joining the Access Board, Capozzi served as PVA's National Advocacy Director.

## HEARING ON RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND BUILDING A RESILIENT VETERANS HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE

**O**n July 1, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a hearing on Recruitment, Retention and Building a Resilient Veterans Health Care Workforce. Dr. Steven L. Lieberman, M.D., Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) was the key witness.

According to Dr. Lieberman, during the COVID-19 pandemic, VHA has hired new staff and redistributed current staff across the sys-

tem to areas of greatest need. Between March 29 and mid-June 2020, VHA hired more than 20,000 employees including over 3,800 RNs, 250 Nurse Practitioners, and more than 1,000 Nursing Assistants. Approximately 85 percent of the new hires have been hired on as permanent appointments. VA also has the option to convert some of the remaining 15 percent of new hires to permanent positions.

The hiring surge resulted in a net onboard increase of 2.2 percent since the start of fiscal year (FY)

2020 (8,020 net gain), more than half of which occurred since the COVID-19 hiring surge began (4,900 net gain). Nurses have grown at even higher rate of 2.7 percent since the start of FY 2020 (2,820 net gain).



# VA Caregiver Program

**A** bill introduced by U.S. Senators Gary C. Peters (D-MI) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) on 23 JUL 2019 would strengthen the Department of Veterans Affairs' caregiver program. However, it was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs a year ago and has only gained 18 cosponsors and no amendments to date. The VA provides stipends

and support to caregivers for wounded veterans. To be eligible, veterans must have sustained or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001; caregivers can include family members or other members of the veteran's support group. Caregivers and veterans have reported being dropped from the program, often with little explanation or time to appeal the decision, Hassan said. The **Transparency and**

**Effective Accountability Measures for (TEAM) Veteran Caregivers Act** would ensure all caregivers are included in veterans' medical records; require the VA to provide more context and explanation leading to a downgrade or termination decisions; and extend benefits for at least 90 days after a termination letter is sent for cases when a veteran is deemed "no longer clinically eligible" for the program.

## HR 3504 is Almost Law!

**T**he changes to specially adapted housing is finally ready for the President's signature. It should be law by the time you read this.

Paralyzed Veterans of America applauds final passage of specially adaptive housing improvement legislation, H.R. 3504, as amended. This legislation ensures that catastrophically disabled veterans can more easily make needed accessibility modifications to their homes.

"If we have learned anything during this pandemic, it is that veterans with catastrophic injuries and diseases need a safe place to shelter in to ride out the pandemic as well as when the boomerang of the virus returns this fall," said Carl Blake, executive director of Paralyzed Veterans of America. "We applaud original bill sponsors Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jerry Moran

(R-KS), Senator Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), Representative Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Representative Mike Levin (D-CA), and House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Phil Roe (R-TN) for their persistent leadership to advance the most significant improvement to the specially adaptive housing program in many years."

The Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act (H.R. 3504, as amended) would increase the current amount of the Specially Adaptive Housing grant to better match the cost of construction, establish a supplementary grant for veterans who need it, and allow veterans more opportunities to draw from the grant funds to accommodate moving and life changes.

"Like all of us, housing needs change over time, based on a variety of circumstances. Veterans should not have to limit themselves from moving into a different residence due to not being

able to afford to make the necessary modifications or having to shoulder the burden of paying for the modifications themselves," said Blake. "It's hard to imagine President Trump not signing the legislation that would assist catastrophically injured veterans who fought in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and other conflicts in having accessible homes."



# American Lake Veterans Golf Course

By: Matthew Mickunas

**T**he American Lake Veterans Golf Course; A private golf course for veterans and their guests. This course exists solely because of dedicated volunteers and is such a wonderful place to come and pay a visit with veterans and their guests of all ages and experience. This golf course is incredibly special because its primed and built specifically for our veterans, especially for our disabled veterans. There are on average 70%-80% veterans that have some sort of disability that come to practice, play, or put, and the real emphasis at American Lake is for the mobility impaired golfers. Veterans learn that playing golf is possible, no matter what their disability, as they gain confidence on the course, they find themselves surrounded by others

who have been there and care. On site instruction and help is available, they even have para-golf riders and different types of clubs to use depending on your disability.

Do not worry about using the bathroom facilities, a company called "Green Flush" worked with American Lake for several months to try to make their existing restrooms meet the accessible needs. They expanded the bathroom building on the back nine by two feet and lengthened it by two feet and put double doors on it. This way mobility apparent golfers that drive para-golfer riders could actually go in, use the restroom, turn around and drive back out. This bathroom building is about 1/2 a mile to 3/4 of a mile away from the closest hookup to sewer, so Green Flush has a holding tank underneath the

building that holds up 1200 gallons of waste and needs to be pumped out only about twice a year. This is very economical and is the only way they can get a bathroom like this out there, were they use to have just porta potties.

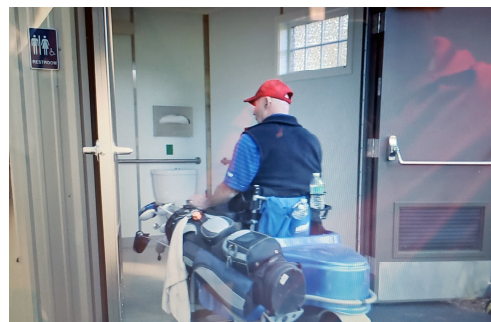
This is extremely exciting for our veterans who use the facility, management is so incredibly happy with Green Flush, that they are getting ready to order another one to put on the front nine. Veterans are saying this is the best thing that ever happen, so come and join us at the at American Lake Veterans Golf Course. They are open now with some restrictions, for more information and times please call 253-589-1998.



*From Left: Russ Norris, Brent King, Fred Margiotta, Joe Sapienza & David Zurfluh at The American Lake Veterans Golf Course*



*Robert Brush Golfing and Checking Out The "Green Flush" Accessible Bathroom*





# Remembering THE FOX By: Skip Dreps

## In Memorium

I met Joe Fox at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, DC twenty years ago when he was holding 'court' in a large sofa lounge in the main hallway to the main conference rooms. The sofa was large enough for me to sit next to him and share some quiet time.

We talked about his Marine Corps service in Vietnam. Joe was a 'tunnel rat' who was sent down spider holes to find the enemy alone only armed with a .45 pistol and a flashlight. After that experience I would think he would avoid firearms and shooting, but he was a Marine and I was a soldier, and I was wrong.

He told me he enjoyed trap shooting as a favorite sport. Once a Marine, always a Marine. When the next person appeared to greet Joe I knew it was my turn to leave. He told me to go find Hilda, his wife, that she wanted to 'talk' to me.

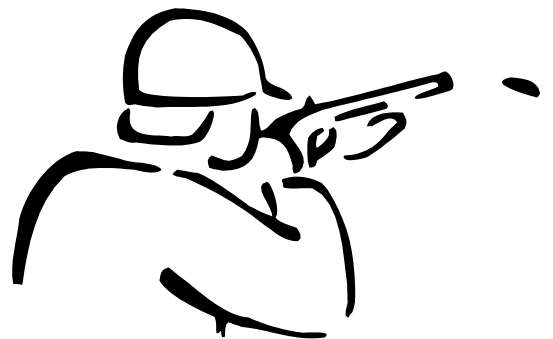
I found Hilda after asking the older members if they saw her. Each one of them smiled and told me I could find her directly across from Joe in another sofa lounge. I introduced myself and told her Joe ask me to talk with her.

She asked me how many tickets I wanted. I said ten not knowing what they were for or how much they cost. It turned out Hilda was promoting raffle tickets for their Chapter's Annual Trapshoot. With a smile I gladly purchased my tickets and she told me to put my name and phone number on the back in case I won a prize, and then she broke into a big smile. At that moment I knew my chances of winning a prize was slim. And it was.

The next times Joe and I were together at the Mayflower for various PVA meetings, I always found Hilda and 'paid my dues' before I sought THE FOX. Joe would greet me with asking if I saw Hilda yet. I finally told him I no longer was putting my name on the raffle tickets and we both laughed as I realized this soldier was out-foxed by a Marine.

I always wanted to shoot with him, but the calendar was always not in my favor. I wanted to see him enjoy an activity he cherished almost as much as his love for PVA. I am sure he is having a great time in the Afterlife where he is not resting in peace, but looking intently on the next clay target to blast to pieces.

May his memory be a blessing to us all.



# August

4th Washington State Primary

6th NWPVA Elections

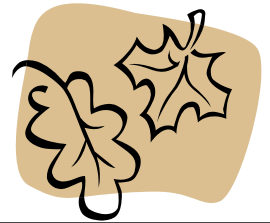


# September

7th Labor Day

9th Patriot Day

22nd Autumn Begins



## Three Times To Remember By: Skip Dreps

If you can spend time during the pandemic to learn more about our modern military history that exemplifies duty, honor, and country, there are three significant times to remember that are now available on cable television services. They are the movie *1917*, Ken Burns' series on the *Vietnam War*, and the most recent true story of military courage is *The Outpost*.

Sam Mendes' personal family story that he wrote and directed, *1917*, was about his relative that was given an impossible mission. Mendes' long take makes you feel the characters in a way that leaves a space between the movie and the audience that allows the audience to be a third person participant. The movie epitomizes duty.

Ken Burns spends years bringing the history of the Vietnam War alive in the eyes of those who participated. The documentary is told in a series that reflected the changing nature of the war over a decade that portrays the American in uniform devoted to each other and they become a microcosm of military honor.

*The Outpost* is the true story of the most horrific battle in the Afghanistan War. This story is about the mission of the unit in a combat position General Custer would have avoided a long time ago. The unit is attacked by the enemy and is overwhelmed, but never quits fighting to preserve the mission ... hold the Outpost and the bottom of a

(Continued on page 17)



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

Northwest Chapter

## GET INVOLVED

*The mission of Paralyzed Veterans of America, Northwest Chapter is to improve the quality of life for veterans of the United States Armed Forces and others who have a spinal cord injury or dysfunction.*

**DONATE NOW**

**JOIN NOW**

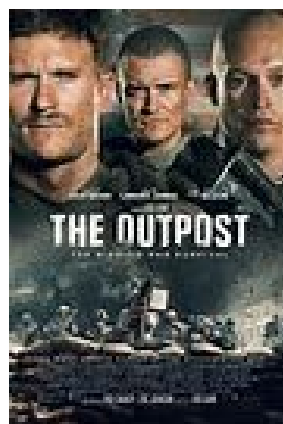
**SURVEY**

**H**ello everyone, I am Matthew Mickunas, your Northwest PVA President-Elect, and will officially be your Chapter President this September when sworn in. The Northwest PVA Chapter covers Washington, Alaska, Montana, and Members that have stayed with the Northwest Chapter throughout the nation. I have a short 10 question survey that I would like you to participate in. With this survey I hope to get a feeling on the chapter's general participation, program involvement & interest, and a secure way to obtain your current contact information. I have many of your addresses but need a good email. All I want is to be able to provide great service as we are here to serve you. For the survey, please go to our homepage @[www.nwpva.org](http://www.nwpva.org).

(Continued from page 16)

mountain valley. I have met a few who survived the movie based upon CNN's reporter Jake Tapper who have received the nation's highest honors. They bear the burden of service to their country that few will ever know in modern times and many paid the ultimate price to demonstrate their commitment to following their country's call to battle.

You will have time during this pandemic to come up with your own list. Please think about sharing your favorites with our members to pass the time reflecting where we came from, where we are, and where we want to go and be.



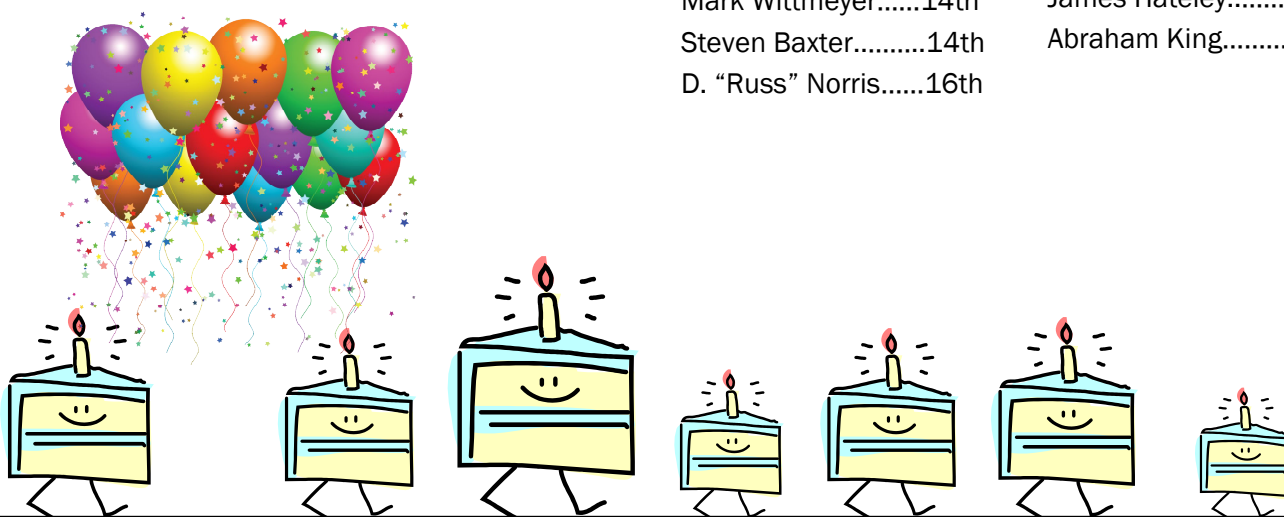
# Happy Birthday!

## August

|                        |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Henry Benavidez...2nd  | James Peeples.....15th    |
| June Hamilton.....3rd  | Phillip Jones.....16th    |
| Ronald Anderson....3rd | Niki Countryman....16th   |
| Adam Lindberg.....3rd  | Joy Cochran.....16th      |
| Spencer Nelson.....4th | Elizabeth Burris.....23rd |
| Doug Coppin.....5th    | Christopher Giles...23rd  |
| Douglas Booth.....6th  | R. Rosenberger.....29th   |
| Howard Burkett.....7th | Elizabeth Lasak.....29th  |
| James Warnken.....8th  | Kwan-Su Bae.....30th      |
| Roy Goodner.....11th   | Orlando Wells.....30th    |
| Naomi Newton.....12th  | William Bass, Sr.....31st |

## September

|                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| James Mushta.....3rd      | Terry Chenoweth.....17th |
| John Bennett.....3rd      | James Monk.....21st      |
| Jeffery Blair.....4th     | Matthew Allen.....21st   |
| Kenneth Quilantang..5th   | Ronald Merkel.....24th   |
| Dave Stump.....5th        | Warren Emmons.....24th   |
| Maevette Zumek.....5th    | William Longworth..24th  |
| Timothy Hoff.....7th      | Herbert Coburn.....26th  |
| Dana Cooper.....7th       | Kurt Karlson.....26th    |
| Duane Henry.....8th       | James Hansen.....26th    |
| David McNeil.....9th      | Philip Church.....26th   |
| Terry Campbell.....10th   | K. Van Gerpen.....27th   |
| Wayne King.....10th       | Michael Sneddon....28th  |
| Eric Hall.....11th        | Thomas McCurdy....29th   |
| Mark Wittmeyer.....14th   | James Hateley.....30th   |
| Steven Baxter.....14th    | Abraham King.....30th    |
| D. "Russ" Norris.....16th |                          |



Paralyzed Veterans  
of America

## PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA VEHICLE DONATION PROGRAM

**P**aralyzed Veterans of America has been on a mission to change lives and build brighter futures for our seriously injured heroes—to empower these brave men and women build brighter futures for our seriously injured heroes—to empower these brave men and women with what they need to achieve the things they fought for: freedom and independence. They returned to a grateful nation, but also to a world with few solutions to challenges they faced. They made a decision not just to live, but to live with dignity as contributors to society. They created Paralyzed Veterans of America, an organization dedicated to veterans service, medical research and civil rights for people with disabilities.

Have an old car taking up space in your driveway? Donate it to Paralyzed Veterans of America! Call us: 877-900-8387. <https://pva.careeasy.org/HOME.html>





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