



CHAPTER 271 NEWS

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 271, Salem, Oregon

July 2008

JULY MEETING

Meetings, every second Monday of the month, start with pizza at 1800 Hours. The location is Pietro's Firehouse Pizza, 1637 Hawthorne SE

Bring this newsletter with you to the July meeting.

If this number is drawn:

_____, you eat **FREE!**

Any Viet Era Vet you bring to the meeting, who is not yet a member of Chapter 271, eats **FREE!**

Bring your ideas for growing our chapter and, raising funds to assist other veterans in Oregon.

We need your input!

MEETING SCHEDULE

July 14

October 13

August 11

November 10

September 8

December 8

GRAND RONDE POWWOW

Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is having their powwow July 11-13.

New Tribal powwow grounds are near Fort Yamhill State Park.

Start 6 P.M. on Friday. Veterans will be honored at the pow wow by the Grand Ronde Honor Guard, all drummers and dancers are welcome as well as all veterans.

Free dinner Sat. night and breakfast Sun. free parking, free camping.

FREE TRANSPORTATION IS NOT ALWAYS FREE

As you know, FREE is never free. Of the 21 DAV vans that provide free transportation to all Oregon veterans, to and from appointments, 8

will have to be replaced by next June 2009. Each of these vans will have over 250,000 miles on the odometer and the VA requires they be replaced. The cost will be \$130,000.

To raise money for van replacement, our comrades at DAV Marion/Polk Counties Chapter 6, has a booth at the Salem Saturday Market on the last Saturday of each month through October. July 26th, August 30th, September 27th, and October 25th. They were at the Market on July 5th and had a very productive day. There were several veterans who signed up for "life memberships" in the DAV, as well.

I was at the booth on the 5th with Chapter 6 Commander, Don Baker. There was a steady stream of people dropping bills in the collection cans. Those folks Don and I could explain what we were collecting for gave significantly more, from \$10 to \$20 and more. If there were a couple more of us, we could have talked to even more people and collected much more.

Won't you please consider helping our comrades for a few hours on these previously mentioned days? We could very well sign up some new members for Chapter 271, as well. Let's show the public that Vietnam Veterans care for others too. Call Don baker at Mobile 503.507.1889 or Home 503.3912845 and tell him which days and hours you can help. You can wear your VVA beret so the public will know Chapter 271 is actively supporting Oregon Veterans.





(Continued from page 1)

SUMMER BBQ

A number of our comrades have expressed a desire to have a BBQ this Summer. August 2nd seems to be the most convenient to the most. How about you? Can you make it to an afternoon BBQ on August 2nd? Call Ron Morgan at 503.931.9555. We need to know very soon how many can come.

E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Please send an E-mail to Ron Morgan at:

rhmorgan@usa.net.

I will then be able to send you important updates and let you know when the CHAPTER 271 NEWS is posted to our webpage at:

<http://vva-or.org/271.htm>.

I will post a PDF version of the newsletter that you can easily print, if you desire, or just read online. This will save me the expense of printing and postage.

If you have information you would like to see in this newsletter, simply E-mail it to me.

VA ADDS AL AMYLOIDOSIS TO LIST OF PRESUMPTIVES FOR HERBICIDE EXPOSURE

**However,
VA says it will not grant
disability claims for
hypertension related to
Agent Orange**

By Chris Roberts / El Paso Times

The VA will not grant disability claims for hypertension related to Agent Orange or other herbicide exposure, according to Veterans Affairs Secretary James Peake, who decided existing research doesn't clearly establish a link between the two.

"The science didn't support it," Mark Brown, di-

rector of VA's Environmental Agents Service, said Tuesday.

However, Peake did decide to allow AL amyloidosis - a rare incurable disease that can lead to organ failure and death - as a service-connected illness related to herbicide exposure, Brown said.

Local veterans advocates said they weren't surprised by the denial of hypertension because it is a relatively widespread condition.

"I can tell you very simply (why Peake denied the hypertension claims); it's one word and it's five letters long - money," said Jeri Elena Mark, an El Paso advocate who also suffers from hypertension and was exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam where she served on a Hawk missile crew. "I think it's a load of bull."

Mark and other veterans advocates point to numerous studies they say support the connection, including a long-term study of a 1976 accident in Italy referred to by Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt in a 1990 report commissioned by the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Zumwalt's report also mentions hypertension developed by agricultural workers exposed to herbicides.

The study of the accident in Italy, updated earlier this year in an American Journal of Epidemiology article, lists hypertension as a contributing cause to deaths of people exposed to dioxins, which are used in the herbicides.

Brown, a toxicologist, said Peake's decision was based on a broad review of existing research done by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, which veterans advocates have criticized for a lack of objectivity.

However, Brown said the review - which Congress requires every two years, the most recent of which was released about a year ago - examined about 25 studies, and was "very exhaustively thorough."

The Institute of Medicine does not make recommendations to VA on policy, said Christine Stencel, an institute spokeswoman.

(Continued on page 3)



CHAPTER 271 NEWS

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 271, Salem, Oregon

July 2008

(Continued from page 2)

"There are scientific studies of adequate quality that have yielded information that points to a possible statistical link or plausible biological means, by which exposure to Agent Orange, the herbicides, the dioxins that contaminated them could result in the increased risk of developing hypertension," Stencil said. "But at the same time, it's not clear-cut. There are contradictory results from other studies."

On June 10, Peake sent a letter notifying the veterans affairs committees in the House of Representatives and the Senate that he would not allow the "service-connected" status for hypertension.

"It's ambiguous," Brown said, "which is, in some ways, the worst situation."

Brown said recommendations from the team Peake formed to look at the issue didn't mention cost. He also points to type 2 diabetes, an illness he said is very costly to treat and fairly common, which was recently added to the list.

"I would argue that, really, the decision was driven by the science," Brown said.

When the Institute of Medicine released its review in July 2007 with a finding of "limited or suggestive evidence" linking hypertension to herbicide exposure, VA was required by law to determine whether it should be listed as "service-connected," according to an internal agency document obtained by the El Paso Times. The document - called a "fast letter" and distributed to all VA regional offices and centers - states that a decision was expected by September 1.

Veterans who served during certain time periods in Vietnam, in vessels off the shore of Vietnam, and in Korea along the demilitarized zone would have been eligible for the benefit if Peake had approved it, according to the document. It concludes that, if the service connection is not warranted, "we will not, of our own initiative, take any additional action on this issue."

AL amyloidosis was added to the list because it was very similar to a type of cancer linked to herbicide exposure and "it made sense to make a

service connection," Brown said. In the past, it has taken about six months between approval of a new illness for service-connected status and new regulations being issued that allow claims to be processed, he said.

Part of the reason veterans exposed to the herbicides are angry is that their cases were more extreme than those of most people exposed in nonmilitary situations.

The Zumwalt report quotes Dr. James R. Clary: "When we (military scientists) initiated the herbicide program in the 1960s, we were aware of the potential for damage due to dioxin contamination in the herbicide. We were even aware that the 'military' formulation had a higher dioxin concentration than the 'civilian' version due to the lower cost and speed of manufacture. However, because the material was to be used on the 'enemy,' none of us were overly concerned. We never considered a scenario in which our own personnel would become contaminated with the herbicide. And if we had, we would have expected our own government to give assistance to veterans so contaminated."

Although there are no lack of studies on hypertension's relation to herbicide exposure, Brown said, there also has been nothing definitive - either way.

"This could change of course," Brown said. "We had a similar situation with prostate cancer. ... There were new developments and new scientific studies and we had to reconsider that position. This is not static."

Chris Roberts may be reached at chris@elpasotimes.com.


Keeping an eye on the  because somebody has to!

Visit: <http://www.vawatchdog.org/>

For more articles like these.



Military Unit Combs World for Remains of U.S. Soldiers

Fox News

On the Hawaiian island of Oahu, inside a non-descript government building, works a rare group of men and women who follow in the footsteps of Revolutionary War hero Paul Revere.

They're not planning a tea party in Pearl Harbor, nor are they toiling as silversmiths. They're the dedicated forensic scientists, historians, anthropologists and active-duty military personnel of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, or JPAC, an elite military unit tasked with finding the more than 80,000 Americans listed as missing in action since World War II.

"America has always had an interest in recovering and identifying its war dead," Thomas Holland tells Oliver North for FOX News' "War Stories." Holland, an anthropologist with a doctorate from the University of Missouri, is the chief scientific director of JPAC.

America's interest in identifying its fallen soldiers arguably starts with Revere. In 1775, his co-conspirator in his famous "midnight ride" — Joseph Warren — made the ultimate sacrifice for American independence fighting the British at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Buried initially in a mass grave, Warren's body later was identified by Revere, who earlier had fashioned a set of dentures inside his friend's jaw, making Paul Revere this nation's first forensic dentist.

During World War II, thousands of Americans who fell in battle were buried in U.S. cemeteries overseas. After the war, in 1947, the military established the Central Identification Laboratory — the predecessor to JPAC — to search battlefields for missing soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines and repatriate their remains for burial here at home.

The laboratory continued its work through the Korean War and, after Vietnam, added a new urgency.

"There was concern when the Vietnam War ended that there was potentially live POWs," Holland said.

Renamed JPAC in 1991, the unit's designation reflects the commitment to employ the skills and tools of all four branches of the U.S. military, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard, to their mission.

For those serving in uniform, such as Lt. Lesley Alexander, a Navy aviator and JPAC recovery team leader, this mission is great assurance.

"My husband's a Marine pilot," she said. "Just knowing that if something were to happen to him or to me that somebody would be out there looking for us until all means were exhausted, it's a pretty powerful feeling."

The numbers can seem daunting. More than 80,000

Americans remain missing in action from World War II, 8,000 from the Korean War and almost 1,800 from Vietnam.

Moreover, their last known locations often are in harsh, inaccessible terrain on steep mountains, dense jungles or at the bottom of the ocean. And there are politics.

"Many of the places we go to simply cannot imagine that this country is doing this," Holland said. "They cannot imagine that we are expending the effort and the resources to find the remains of a private or a corporal. So there's a certain level of suspicion."

Today, the JPAC mission is undertaking its own revolution. It is now the largest forensic skeletal laboratory in the world and the traditional methods of searching the battlefield for dog tags and personnel effects are augmented by new forensic technology, most importantly, DNA.

"We're going back to cases that we put back on the shelf since the mid-'80s and we're resolving those cases now because of DNA," Holland said.

Family members of those missing in action can submit DNA samples to JPAC, whose members compare this genetic profile with unidentified tissue remains.

Laverne Ransbottom of Edmond, Okla., knows well the work of JPAC. Her son, Lt. Fredrick Joel Ransbottom, disappeared in action in Vietnam in 1968. In 2006, a JPAC recovery team found her son's remains atop a remote mountain near Vietnam's border with Laos.

"I am eternally grateful and thankful to JPAC for this happening in my lifetime," she said.

The motivation for the unit's mission is simple.

"It's a debt that this generation owes to the generation before it and that the next generation will owe to the current one," Holland said.

Two-hundred-and-thirty-two years after our nation's independence, JPAC's mission would make Paul Revere proud.

Filing A Claim with the VA - What To Do

The following information was provided by Robert White, MSA, of the Ntnl Gulf War Resource Center.

If you do the following you will have a better than average chance of winning your claim.

1. Gather All Military, Private and VA Medical Records

(Continued on page 5)



CHAPTER 271 NEWS

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 271, Salem, Oregon

July 2008

(Continued from page 4)

Gather all the military, private and VA medical records (get copies made). Make a Privacy Act Request at your VA Regional Office. They will have a copy of your Military Medical Record. Request Copies of Military Personnel Records http://www.archives.gov/research_room/vetrecs/ to include all restricted records, counseling statements and evaluation reports. Do not expect the VA to automatically have your medical records from your active duty. Those records will need to be requested either from your unit of assignment or the staging facility in St Louis, MO by completing an SF180. Call or visit your Service Officer from DAV, VFW, or American Legion for this form. Mail the SF 180 to the appropriate address listed on the back of the Form.

[http://contacts.gsa.gov/web-forms.nsf/0/6A748D94A429DE1085256CB10043FB7B/\\$file/sf180_f.pdf](http://contacts.gsa.gov/web-forms.nsf/0/6A748D94A429DE1085256CB10043FB7B/$file/sf180_f.pdf)

Written letters may be mailed to: The National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records) 9700 Page Avenue St. Louis, MO 63132-5100. Response time varies dependent upon the complexity of your request, the availability of records, and workload. Please do not send a follow-up request before 90 days have elapsed as it may cause further delays. http://www.archives.gov/research_room/vetrecs/index.html

2. Obtaining medical records that are already within the VA system

Obtaining medical records that are already within the VA system can be achieved by faxing or mailing a written request providing a "release of information" to the VA Records Section. State the dates of records you're looking for, doctors' reports, lab and X-ray reports; your name, address, phone number, social security number, and signature. Label your request as a Privacy Act Request.

3. Go to your civilian doctor

Go to your civilian doctor, have him/her perform a C&P exam. Download a copy of the exam from the VA web site <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Benefits/exams/index.htm>. Have your doctor perform all the test you should have. The VA rarely does the necessary tests. You need to have this done because the VA will not do a complete C&P examination. See #4 for further explanation

4. Get statements from all private doctors or other medical provider

Get statements from all private doctors or other medical provider, have them state that your problems and how they could be service connected. Get more than one doctor to say the same thing then write if two doctors say the same thing, then the reasonable doubt (§3.102) rule should apply and you state the probability is slim that the issue ISN'T service connected. Doctors don't like to be pushed to give tenuous opinions - unless they are lousy doctors who will swear to anything. And the bottom line is that the opinion won't be worth spit unless he has medical findings to support it. It is awfully easy to disregard a

"definite" opinion given by some yo-yo who hasn't made a decent exam nor recited any findings to give that opinion a sound basis. You need to tell the doctor what you were exposed to in the military. If you have documentation, then show that to the doctor, then ask the doctor to assume you were exposed to this hazard in service, and this is his work and personal history where he did not have other similar exposures, then assuming those things to be true ask the doctor to express his opinion based on reasonable medical certainty as to the cause of his condition? If the doctor is uncertain, then you need to him/her to say he/she it is probable. Obviously the more evidence the better. The fact is that one opinion of probable, based on the right assumptions and medical facts and findings, is enough to carry the proof because probable means that it is more likely than not, and the legal system operates on belief that truth is that which is most likely. Medical facts means the doctor can't say it's a particular disease with out the required blood tests, cat/MRI scans, and whatever is necessary to prove the doctors opinion.

An example would be, if the doctor says you have cancer and when there has been no cat scan, no biopsy, no blood test of antigen - looking pale, or an undocumented complaint doesn't cut it. Or, to state it differently, when there are complaints that are not documented by physical findings, the doc can talk all day about how disabled this man is (because he says he is), and that really is unpersuasive.

There are exceptions. Connective tissue diseases exist which cannot be documented. There a doctor can say in his/her letter to the adjudicator: "the complaints are persistent, and this person who used to be happy and outgoing and very active has now adopted a very restricted lifestyle. There is a recognized medical condition called xxx. It causes the kinds of things which force a person into that sort of lifestyle." There is no known test to identify and diagnose this illness (the doctor needs to be direct the comments to either a Judge or adjudicator by talking in the first person) The doctor should state he "believes in this person" and he/she should state "If you also believe her complaints and that she now lives this lifestyle, then you have to believe she has this disabling condition."

5. Get statements from anyone

Get statements from anyone who knows you and your issues. Write your own statement too! Have these individuals state how the problems affect you (example: It is hard to bend over, or squat, or hear, etc.). This includes your wife, kids, parents, co-workers even the guy/gal walking along the street. All of these people can contribute! All their statements are evidence that must be considered. If you have them put their phone number down on the statement and request the adjudicator to call (not if they have any questions), the adjudicator is required to call. If they don't call, you have grounds for appeal. The medical facts and findings speak louder than any of this testimony, and the veterans own testimony is quite powerful in describing the effect of this proven medical condition. The VA doctor's report that seeks to negate the claim is wide open to attack when he fails to do procedures or make determinative tests.

6. Get the Vet Center Records

(Continued on page 6)



CHAPTER 271 NEWS

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 271, Salem, Oregon

July 2008

(Continued from page 5)

If you have been going to a Vet Center, get their records. They are independent of the VA medical system (CAPRI) so you need to get a statement or copy of your provider's notes or both from your treating Social Worker.

7. Vocational Rehabilitation

If you have gone to Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab), you were evaluated by them too. Do a Privacy Act request and get all copies of evaluations and anything else (to include reports of contact [ROC]). The Voc Rehab evaluations carry some weight, since they are independent evaluations. Get copies of the contractor evaluations (the people that did the Voc Rehab screening) and the VA's Voc Rehab evaluations.

8. Legal Research

Go to <http://www.findlaw.com> or <http://www.veteransresources.net/database.html> or <http://www.va.gov/vbs.bva/> and look up all Board of Veteran Appeal, Court of Veteran Appeals, US District Court, US Court of Appeals and Supreme Court decisions that affect your issues. These legal opinions as well as the courts opinions narrows the focus of how the adjudicator can look at the evidence. Use these sites to support your other evidence. Do your own legal research! If you don't have access to the internet or are not internet savvy, you can get copies of any appeals and decisions from the VA. They can be requested from Veteran Benefits Office or the Adjudication Office. A simple phone call to one of those offices, explaining that you are requesting a copy of those records for your own file should be sufficient. Keep the information of who you talked with and their phone/fax numbers and addresses in your notebook for ready reference! Again, you may need to provide this request in writing, but this can usually be accomplished by phone or fax. Some Service Officers from DAV, VFW, or American Legion will do this for you, but don't depend entirely on them! Some mental health records are kept separate from the main medical records, so again, you may need to call the Mental Health Clinic in your VA to request copies of those records from that office.

9. Statements From VA Personnel

If you have been seeing a counselor at the VA Hospital, then get him/her to write you a statement of how bad they think you are. Plus, write up a statement on your own, let the adjudicator know about your background, your stressors and how this affects your daily life. Counselors are sometimes skeptical that people are acting out, pretending, not real. If the guy is really bogus, you might do better not to ask, but in truth, further questioning may well reveal that the skeptical counselor really believes the guy is pretty bad off or he wouldn't be going through all of this. That it is the stress of daily life that drives him to it. And NO counselor ever treats a death threat as anything other than real!

10. SF 180

Use our system to create a customized order form to re-

quest information from your, or your relative's, military personnel records. You may use this system if you are: A military veteran, or Next of kin of a deceased, former member of the military The next of kin can be any of the following: surviving spouse that has not remarried, father, mother, son, daughter, sister, or brother. If you are not the veteran or next of kin, you must complete the Standard Form 180 (SF 180). You can obtain this form from Fax-on-Demand, or download it, then mail or fax it to the appropriate address on the form.

The SF 180 may be photocopied as needed. Please submit a separate request (either SF 180 or letter) for each individual whose records are being requested. You may submit more than one request per envelope or fax. How to Initiate a Request for Military Personnel Records: Click on the "Request Military Records" button to start. This will launch a separate window. Enter the required information in the system to create your customized request form. There are 4 steps that you need to navigate. The system will guide you through the steps and tell you exactly which step you are on. Print, sign and date the signature verification area of your customized form. If you don't have a printer, have a pen and paper handy and we will guide you through the process. This is important because the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a) requires that all requests for records and information be submitted in writing. Each request must be signed and dated by the veteran or next of kin. Mail or fax your signature verification form to us, and we will process your request. You must do this within the first 20 days of entering your request, or your request will be removed from our system.

11. Reviewing Your Military Records

Review your military medical records and make a list of every ailment that you had while on active duty. Note each biohazardous exposure you may have had. For example, If you used cosmoline on everything to protect it from rust, and then we would be in carbon tetrachloride up to the elbows because that was what used to clean it off. Carbon tet is cancer producing. I am sure there are many other examples.

12. Cross Reference All your Military Ailments With Your Civilian Ailments

Cross reference all you military ailments with your civilian ailments. If the problem persists or a secondary issue has cropped up as a result of the issue that developed during your time in the military then you need to apply for that issue (as a secondary issue). An example of a secondary issue would be if you hurt your right knee and had to put weight on your left knee and now the knee is damaged. You can claim the left knee as a secondary issue to the injured right knee.

13. Downloading

Go to the VA web site and down load all the Fast Letters, Memo's and any other documentation that will support your case. www.va.gov.

(Continued on page 7)



CHAPTER 21 NEWS

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 271, Salem, Oregon
(Continued from page 6)

July 2008

14. Go to the DAV, PVA and any other VSO Web Site

Go to the DAV, PVA and any other VSO web sites and bookmark them (and down load anything related to your claims).

15. WARMS

Go to <http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/bookc.html> Look up what your issue is and determine the percentage that you want to apply for. Now 98% of the Veteran Service Rep's (VSR's) will tell you not to give a percentage, but if you don't ask for a percentage and you are awarded 0% for an issue, you can't complain because they gave you exactly what you asked for. If the adjudicator denies your issue and you did not ask for a certain percentage, then you have to prove the VA didn't follow proper procedure (this is very hard to prove). Your VSR will tell you that the law can change. If it increases then just fax, email (w/receipt) or mail in an updated request. If the percentage decreases, you don't need to do anything. The Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000 allows the law that is most favorable to you to be applied to your claim so don't change your percentage.

16. Current law favors the Vet.

The VA fights it but you can use this to your advantage. Invoke VCAA. Read, understand and learn what VCAA can do for you. If you are within a year of the VCAA letter you received, then you have rights to reopen old cases, don't let the time limit pass.

17. You need to tell your story

You need to tell your story as to how you were injured. You need to compile all your evidence by issue. Yellow highlight those portions that pertains to you and your issues. Cite this in your narrative. You need to write up a narrative of how you were injured, under what circumstances (Who, What, When and How). List anyone who might have witnessed it. If you have a phone number or address, you need to provide that with your statement, cite the times you went to the medial facility, and later the follow-up care you have received from your private doctor. Invoke the reasonable doubt clause as well as all legal citations and regulations that support your claim VCAA. Site VBA and Court of Appeals legal cases that support your claim that you are entitled to a certain percentage rating. You will refer to evidence that you collected. Review the ratings percentages. Think of your worst day (pain, etc.) and rate yourself on that basis. After a few years your pain will probably be at that level, unless you can get the symptoms reversed somehow. Look up medical studies to support your claim and provide those studies to help in the adjudication process. VA or DoD or NIH medical studies are the best. It's hard to argue with yourself when yourself (the government) has come to the conclusion that the problem exists and what the symptoms are (which are the same symptoms you're reporting).

18. Eligibility

You are entitled to claim all periods of active duty, all peri-

ods covered under Vocational Rehabilitation and any injuries suffered under the care of the VA for the purposes of disability claims (issues). You need to list all periods of active duty, to include ADT and reserve time. There are limited benefits for non-active duty personnel. By stating the periods of active duty, and providing documentation (such as copies of orders), you will increase your chances of winning your claim.

19. C&P Examinations

Go to the C&P office at your local VA Hospital (if you're too far away, having them either email or fax to you the exam criteria). Go to your private doctor. Have him do the C&P exam the correct way. Make sure he is a specialist (preferably board certified) in the field. Then show him the exams you were given by the VA as well as all your personal medical records on this issue. Ask him if he concurs with their exam. If he doesn't, get him to put it in writing and cite the different tests that he performed to support his conclusions. If he can cite any medical studies, that would make his statements stronger too. Thus you beat them at their own game. When you write it up, make sure you had the "COMPLETE" C&P exam done by a private doc and the VA doc's refused to perform the proper tests. Under the reasonable doubt rule, you have proven your case, and they failed to prove theirs. Get the doctor to explain the disease and the disease process, and the way it develops and what it can lead to, as well as describing the tests that prove or disprove its existence. Let the doctor describe a little of the misery involved. Then after you have agreed as to what needs to be done schedule the client for that examination. That raises you to a reasonable level of function as to the medical aspects. This way the doctor is explaining the disease to the adjudicator so the adjudicator will understand the disease and better informed and able to make a fair decision.

20. Idiot Proofing Your Claim

List every time you went to the doctor, provide a copy of that medical record, highlighted the medical record and bunched them together in a group so the claims examiner does not have to hunt for the information. You need to idiot proof the claim! You need to give your claim to a third party and see if they can find holes in your arguments. Try and anticipated the weaknesses in the claim and find the law or regulation that turned the weakness into a strong point.

21 Finalizing Your Claim

After you finished pulling your information together, you need to find an organization that will represent you before the Veterans Administration. If there is any supporting evidence you can not find, either the veterans representative can try and find it or the VA is required under the Veterans Claims Assistance Act to find the documentation for you. You need to point out what documentation they need to assist you and you need to provide them enough information necessary to find it (Who, What, When, Where and How Much).

Note: Call Ron Morgan at 503.931.9555 for Service Officer numbers.



SO, WHY DOES THIS GUY WANT MY WAR JOKES FROM HELL?

"...A compelling way to show how war changes soldiers and reflects

the soul's numbing after the shock waves of killing and chaos."

Why do I think a book on the grim humor of combat is important? It occurred to me that real combat jokes infused with gallows humor, accompanied by well written essays, could be a compelling way to show how war changes soldiers and reflects the soul's numbing after the shock waves of killing and chaos. In WW II, Korea, and Vietnam, Americans were fed a steady, innocuous diet of Readers Digest "Humor in Uniform" material, a bland, predictable collection of military hijinks and jokes depicting war as a kind of comedic relief, with not a drop of blood or tears of anguish in sight. Today, the 'war on terror,' bereft of good news, has bred its own dark satire.

My idea jelled several months ago after receiving a request for submissions from an independent publisher seeking material for a Vietnam vet combat anthology. I forwarded the email to other vets including, Tony



WAR JOKES FROM HELL!

**Widely-published
'Nam vet seeks
your best combat
jokes from hell to
teach civilians the
grim, raw truth of
war. Any war,
branch or MOS.
Nothing off limits.**

**click here or email to
silverspartan
@ gmail.com**

Swindell, who I'd met several years ago via counter-punch.org. Over the last few years we've both written for its hard copy and online versions. As contributors to the anthology, we pondered a unique approach to telling a story about war that would educate families and friends of combat vets, as well as other civilians, about the heartbreaking toll combat takes on every soldier it touches during their time in hell.

Tony liked the idea, as did my friend George Dickerson, an acclaimed actor, writer and founding editor-in-chief of a well known literary magazine. George could not recall a book in his long literary career taking this approach to combat, and was intrigued by the concept. As a result, we sent queries to fellow vets, contacted several veterans groups, and took out ads with VAwatchdog.org and Army Times. In addition, we expanded the original idea to include all wars, all branches, and even war drawings, cartoons and photographs that depict the dark, bitter humor of combat. Thus far, responses have been slim, especially from Iraq and Afghanistan vets.

To all who served and saw their share, we invite you to send us your best combat jokes from hell. Email to: silverspartan@gmail.com.