

# KEARSAGA

## U.S.S. KEARSARGE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 78

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SUMMER 2021

### President's Message by C. V. Lindley



### Shipmates, Families & Friends

Great news for the crew, we are in the midst of planning our 2022 KEARSARGE Association reunion. VP Barry and Lynda accompanied me and Jan to Branson Missouri recently to meet with various hospitality entities to plan and set our 2022 Reunion.

We have reserved with the Radisson Branson Hotel for May 23 through May 28 of 2022 so that we can finally get together once more. Details on all aspects are still a work in progress but we're confident that the final plan will be much fun to be enjoyed by "ALL HANDS."

The tentative itinerary will include several great "Live Shows" (Branson is billed as the "Live Entertainment Capital of the USA" as well as a Supper (Navy speak) river boat cruise with a live show included. We'll possibly have our Memorial service in conjunction with the "cruise" also.

We don't have final pricing yet for meals and shows but we're thinking that there will be somewhat of an increase, and we'll do our very best to minimize your costs despite the ongoing inflation (at least here in Pensacola, Florida.)

FULL DETAILS WILL BE FORTHCOMING IN THE FALL AND WINTER NEWSLETTERS. Reunion registration as well as hotel registration information will be included. I'm hoping that we'll have a huge turnout and also a lot of "First Timers" coming. Try and talk with some of your "shipmates" that have been missing out on the fun and frivolity to come to Branson. We'll have some "special recognition" for them.

I'm taking this opportunity to give appreciation and sincere gratitude to your LEADERSHIP TEAM. Vice President Barry Rittle, Secretary/Treasurer Bill Hollywood, Web Master Dale Maddy and KEARSAGA Editor Jack De Merit. Please let these dedicated and loyal shipmates know that they are appreciated. They are all hard-working and give many, many hours of their time to keep the KEARSARGE Association a viable active organization. They ALL STEPPED UP and never missed a step during the Covid 19 Pandemic.

"IN OMNIBUS PINACULUM"

C.V.

## WELCOME ABOARD New Members!

Charles Talmadge 1522



## TAPS!

|                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| Wesley Swick     | 791        |
| Elmer Hopson     | 1489       |
| Marsh L. Blunt   | 1480       |
| John R. Williams | Non Member |



### MEMBERSHIP DUES NOTICE

All KEARSARGE Association Members,  
Please be attentive to your membership  
expiration date that's on the address label.  
We don't want to be forced to drop a single  
member for EXPIRED dues.

## SVAC WANTS BOLD NEW PLAN FOR VETERANS TOXIC EXPOSURE

At a recent Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) legislative hearing, Chairman Jon Tester (Mont.) announced the committee's "bold" plans to take up comprehensive legislation to provide generations of veterans suffering from military toxic exposure their earned benefits and care. The SVAC Chairman claimed the process is "broken" and "disjointed" for ensuring coverage for veterans who are experiencing adverse health effects of toxic exposures. He wants comprehensive legislation to provide health care for all veterans suffering from the consequences of toxic exposure, from the past, present, and into the future. "It is a cost of war," he said, "and the country must take care of these veterans."

This issue was included in FRA's testimony by National President Mick Fulton during the March 18, 2021 joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. In addition, FRA provided a statement for the record of the April 28, 2021, SVAC toxic exposure hearing. The FRA is a member of the Toxic Exposures in the American Military (TEAM) Coalition and wants to ensure that no veteran who had exposure to burn pits or other environmental toxins goes without access to VA health care benefits. This issue is listed on the FRA Action Center and members are urged to weigh in on this issue by going to the Action Center. 

## NEW LAW MAKES MANY ACTIVE DUTY, VETS & SURVIVORS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR DISCOUNTED INTERNET

*By Jim Absber*

Active duty members, veterans and survivors may be eligible for free or discounted internet, and up to a \$100 discount on a computer, thanks to a new program from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program is a \$3.2 billion federal initiative created by Congress to help lower the cost of high-speed internet for low-income Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To be eligible for the program, a household or household member must:

- Have an income that is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines or participate in SNAP, Medicaid or Lifeline;
- Participate in the free and reduced-price school lunch or breakfast program;
- Have received a federal Pell Grant during the current year;
- Have experienced a substantial loss of income due to job loss or furlough since Feb. 29, 2020, with a total 2020 income at or below \$99,000 for single filers or \$198,000 for joint filers; or
- Meet the eligibility criteria for a participating pro-

vider's existing low-income or COVID-19 program.

For a family of four in most of the country, an income equal to 135% of the poverty level is \$35,775; for a family of two, that amount is \$23,517. Income limits are higher for Alaska and Hawaii. See the Department of Health and Human Services website to calculate other levels.

For the purposes of this program, income includes:

- Salary or earnings
- Unemployment compensation
- Social Security
- Veterans' benefits
- Survivor benefits
- Pension or retirement income

However, families who exceed the federal poverty level still may be eligible for the program if at least one member of the family meets another criteria, such as receiving a Pell Grant, receiving SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program -- commonly referred to as food stamps) or is attending a school where every student receives free or reduced-price lunches.

Families who suffered a substantial loss of income in the past 12 months are also eligible, even if they make more than the poverty level.

Participants approved for the program will receive up to a \$50 monthly discount on qualifying high-speed internet from their provider, they may also receive up to a \$100 discount for a laptop, desktop or tablet computer purchased from their internet service provider. Those who seek to receive the discount on a computer must pay at least \$10 but less than \$50 after the discount is applied. Each participating household is limited to only one internet and one computer discount in all situations.

A list of participating internet service providers can be found on the FCC website.

The temporary program is scheduled to end either when the money runs out or six months after the COVID-19 emergency is declared officially over, whichever is sooner.

### STAY ON TOP OF YOUR VETERAN BENEFITS

Military benefits are always changing. Keep up with everything from pay to health care by subscribing to Military.com, and get access to up-to-date pay charts and more with all latest benefits delivered straight to your inbox. 

### Wierd Stuff You Didn't Know!

Only two people signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, John Hancock and Charles Thomson. Most of the rest signed on August 2, but the last signature wasn't added until 5 years later.

The first novel ever written on a typewriter, Tom Sawyer.

## DEBT RELIEF EXTENDED

VA recognizes that some Veterans and beneficiaries continue to be impacted by COVID-19. To provide relief, VA is suspending the collection of Veteran benefit overpayments incurred between April 6, 2020, and Sept. 30, 2021. Additionally, medical and pharmacy copayments incurred during this period will be canceled and any payments refunded. Use our new online tool to check the status of your VA debt, as well as options to resolve it.

## BENEFITS FOR CAREGIVERS

Through VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), Veterans can appoint one primary and up to two secondary caregivers who may be eligible to receive financial assistance, training, and more to support their important role of caring for a Veteran. Find out if you're eligible and how to apply for PCAFC.

## DISCOVER YOUR VA BENEFITS

Are you transitioning or planning to transition out of active-duty service? VA's Military Life Cycle (MLC) modules are available to help you plan for the future. These brief 30- to 45-minute online courses can be completed at your own pace

and cover topics including your available VA benefits and other resources to help you adjust to civilian life.

## WATCH THE LATEST VA BENEFITS NEWS

Don't miss the first episode of our new video series: VA Benefits News (VBN)! Join the Acting Under Secretary for Benefits, Thomas J. Murphy, to learn about initiatives and updates to benefits and services that directly impact you and your family.

## AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN HELPS VETERANS

As part of the American Rescue Plan, the Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP) provides financial aid to help you recover from the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. VRRAP offers up to 12 months of tuition, fees, and a monthly housing allowance.

## GI BILL IS GOING DIGITAL

You will have faster access to your educational benefits to pursue your academic and career goals. Stay tuned.

# U.S.S. KEARSARGE ASSOCIATION SHIP'S STORE



### Ship's Crest

Cloth CV, CVA, CVS 33 - \$5.00



Magnetic - CV, CVA, CVS 33 - \$5.00



### Golf Shirts

CV, CVA, CVS 33 - Navy Med, Large, X-Large, 2X Large-\$29.00



### Sweat Shirts

CV, CVA, CVS 33 - Navy Med, Large, X-Large, 2X Large-\$36.00



### Dress Shirts

CV, CVA, CVS 33 Short Sleeve Navy Med, Large, X-Large, 2X Large-\$29.00

### Hat



CV, CVA, CVS 33 NAVY - \$16.00

### Watch Caps



Navy - CV, CVA, CVS 33 \$11.00



**50th Anniversary  
1st Day  
Cover  
Envelope  
\$1.50**

### Jackets



The Port Authority Challenger jacket has a Tekon nylon durable, water repellent outside with a poly-filled body with heavyweight fleece lining. It has rib knit cuffs and waistband, zippered pockets outside and a zippered inside pocket. We are offering it in Navy with a Navy lining with USS Kearsarge, CV, CVA, CVS and ship's silhouette on the back. Small, Medium, Large & 1X Large for \$57.00 2X Large for \$61.00 - 3X Large for \$65.00



A light weight nylon jacket with mesh lining is also available in Navy with the same stitching on back. Small, Medium, Large & 1X Large for \$53.00 2X Large for \$55.00 - 3X Large for \$57.00

They are Special Order items only and all sales are final. When I have 6 orders, I will place the order with the supplier. We need a minimum of 6 to be eligible for the above mentioned prices.

### ALL PRICES INCLUDE SHIPPING AND HANDLING

Make your checks payable to the Kearsarge Association and send order to:

**Charles Patton**

2501 Bienville Blvd., Unit 514

(228) 324-7174

Ocean Springs, MS 39564-3129

charlotteap@bellsouth.net

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## UPDATE: BLUE WATER NAVY

*By Nehmer*

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it will readjudicate claims for Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

This review is part of the Veterans Benefits Administration's implementation of the November 5, 2020, U.S. District Court of the Northern District of California decision to readjudicate previously denied claims as applied in *Nehmer vs. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*.

Veterans who were previously denied service connection for an herbicide related presumptive condition due to lack of in-country Vietnam service will automatically have their claims readjudicated.

Readjudication means VA will review the evidence of record and provide replacement decisions in the cases of Veterans who were previously denied service connection for one or more herbicide related conditions on the basis that military service was not performed on the landmass of the Republic of Vietnam or on its inland waterways. This review will also apply to eligible survivors of deceased Vietnam era Veterans. VA is dedicated to ensuring all Veterans receive the benefits they have earned.

VA ensures that we have the proper resources in place to meet the needs of the Veteran community. Eligible survivors of deceased Veterans may also benefit from the policy and may be eligible for benefits based on the Veterans' service.

Veterans who have a condition caused by herbicide exposure during military service can learn more about Agent Orange exposure at the Agent Orange website.

## VA WILL RE-EXAMINE AGENT ORANGE CLAIMS THAT IT PREVIOUSLY DENIED

*By Jim Absber*

The Department of Veterans Affairs will reexamine compensation claims from veterans exposed to Agent Orange while serving in the waters off Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

All claims that were previously denied will be automatically reviewed to determine whether affected veterans are now eligible to receive compensation benefits as a result of their exposure to the herbicide.

In November 2020, a district court ordered the VA to review any previously denied compensation claims related to Agent Orange exposure for so-called "Blue Water veterans," who served aboard ships in the territorial waters of Vietnam.

Originally, these veterans were denied benefits, while those who served on inland and coastal waters, along with those serving on land in Vietnam and some other nations, were eligible for benefits.

However, numerous court rulings and changes to the

law finally made Blue Water veterans eligible for compensation benefits for illnesses caused by exposure to the herbicide. Children of veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange may also suffer health issues, and may be eligible for VA benefits.

Originally, the VA said that Blue Water veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and whose claims were denied due to their service not being in a qualifying location would have to file a new claim. However in an about-face, the department has now said that veterans do not need to file a new claim.

All Agent Orange compensation claims that were originally disallowed because the veteran's service was not in a qualifying location will be automatically reviewed by the VA to determine eligibility based on the new law.

## VA WILL REVIEW BLUE WATER NAVY CLAIMS FOR VIETNAM

*By Randy Kafka*

The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced it will begin immediately re-adjudicating Blue Water Navy claims for veterans who served in the offshore waters of Vietnam following a push from Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC). This review is part of the Veterans Benefits Administration's implementation of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California order to re-adjudicate previously denied claims, per the *Nehmer vs. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs* consent decree.

"This review provides an entire generation of veterans with another shot at getting the health care and benefits they've earned. And it sends a clear message that VA is working to right a wrong perpetrated by a government that ignored their service and sacrifice for far too long." Said SVAC Chairman Jon Tester (Mt.). As of April 30, VA processed more than 45,000 Blue Water Navy claims and paid nearly \$900 million in retroactive benefit payments to disabled Blue Water Navy veterans.

In March, Tester sent a bipartisan letter asking VA Secretary Denis McDonough to provide the VA's estimated timeline for completing initial processing of Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act claims and the VA's plan to adhere to the *Nehmer v. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs* consent decree.

The FRA-supported Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act guaranteed that veterans who served off the shores of Vietnam could access VA health care and benefits related to their exposure from Agent Orange. President Donald Trump signed the bill into law on June 25, 2019. Vietnam veterans and their survivors who believe that VA has not assigned them the correct effective date for the award of benefits for their Agent Orange-related disease can contact the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) Nehmer team at the toll-free hotline number - 855-333-0677.

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## U.S.S. HORNET MUSEUM

*By Captain Mark Epperson, USNR (Ret.)*

The Hornet is still battling fire, smoke, and the pandemic. We unfortunately had to cancel our 9/11 tribute as well as being closed both Saturday and Sunday. The air quality was in the very unhealthy category both days and the Museum values our visitor's health above all. We will reschedule the 9/11 tribute and it will be published on our website and on social media.

Our Mid Summer Appeal has come to an end and the crewmembers on the Hornet want to express our gratitude for every donation we received. This is a tough time in our country and while there are so many deserving organizations helping our citizens, we are grateful you chose the Hornet. I want to acknowledge the generous donations by the USS Kearsarge Association and The Lisa Borstein Fund in honor of Milo Yoshino.

The USS Hornet Museum's motto for the next year is "Sail with the Bold". We invite everyone to join in preserving the Hornet by volunteering, donating, and adding whatever talent you possess to further our mission. The Hornet is starting our recruiting drive on October 1st. Our positions range from security, docents, aircraft and ship restoration, Museum staffing and many more that are exciting and rewarding. Please check our website in October for details and "sign on" for a tour.

Dale Berven is a docent on the Hornet and has quite a story to tell. Please come and join Dale and the other 200 plus shipmates for our next cruise. 

### FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS

## SEARCHERS FIND WRECK OF THE U.S.S. NEVADA

*By Wyatt Olson*

The sunken hulk of the USS Nevada has been found off the coast of Hawaii, where the battleship — dubbed "unsinkable" for its endurance through World War II — lay since 1948.

Two private firms working together, Search Inc. and Ocean Infinity, discovered the Nevada almost three miles underwater and about 65 nautical miles southwest of Honolulu, the firms said in a statement Monday. Search Inc., a cultural resource management firm, specializes in archaeology; Ocean Infinity surveys the seabed with marine robotics, according to their websites.

The Nevada's lifespan was exceptional, given the troubled waters in which it sailed. It stayed afloat through two world wars and two nuclear-bomb tests.

"Nevada is an iconic ship that speaks to American resilience and stubbornness," James Delgado, the lead maritime archaeologist on the mission, said in the statement. "Rising from its watery grave after being sunk at Pearl Harbor, it survived torpedoes, bombs, shells and two

atomic blasts. The physical reality of the ship, resting in the darkness of the great museum of the sea, reminds us not only of past events, but of those who took up the challenge of defending the United States in two global wars."

Photos and video of the excursion show portions of the ship, such as an anti-aircraft gun and hatch for a 5-inch gun room, still intact. Portions of the hull number are visible, as are inscriptions in the steel, all preserved because of the lack of light and oxygen at the extreme depth.

The Nevada was commissioned in 1916 and headed to Great Britain during World War I, according to an account posted online by the Naval History and Heritage Command.

It spent the interwar years cruising everywhere from the Caribbean to Australia. In the late 1920s, the ship was modernized, including installation of new anti-aircraft guns and other beefed-up firepower.

Top of the USS Nevada's foremast, which would have towered more than 100 feet above the sunken battleship's deck. After operating in the Pacific for most of the 1930s, the Nevada was moored at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, when the Japanese Imperial Navy launched a surprise attack on the Pacific Fleet on Oahu on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941.

The attacking aircraft concentrated on Battleship Row in Pearl Harbor, sinking or crippling most of the ships, which had been moored closely together.

The Nevada took one torpedo and several bomb hits during the first of two attack waves. Moored at the end of Battleship Row, the Nevada took advantage of the lull after the first wave to get underway. But it had not made it to sea before the second wave of aircraft descended on the harbor, striking the ship with a half-dozen bombs.

The crew was forced to beach the sinking ship at the head of the channel. After frenzied temporary repairs, the Nevada sailed on its own power to the U.S. West Coast in April 1942, where it spent the next year being repaired and overhauled.

It returned to combat during the Battle of Attu in the Aleutian Island in May 1943 and was then transferred to the Atlantic for the D-Day invasion in June 1944. It sailed back to the Pacific and became part of the Iwo Jima and Okinawa invasions in 1945. In the latter battle, the ship was hit by a kamikaze plane and an artillery shell. It was preparing to be part of the invasion force on the Japanese mainland when the war ended in 1945.

With the end of World War II, the Navy deemed the three-decade old battleship too ancient for the fleet.

Its final job was to serve as a target during two atomic bomb tests at Bikini in the Marshall Islands in 1946 — though even that dirty work left the ship only badly damaged and radioactive, not sunk.

The ship was decommissioned in 1946, and two years later it was towed to sea off the Hawaiian islands and used for target practice for other Navy ships. 

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## U. S. S. THEODORE ROOSEVELT ARRIVES IN VIETNAM

*By Wyatt Olson*

The USS Theodore Roosevelt arrived Thursday in Vietnam, becoming only the second U.S. aircraft carrier to make a port call there since the fall of Saigon in 1975.

The carrier, accompanied by the guided-missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill, steamed into Danang, where they were met by Vietnamese and U.S. government and military officials, according to a 7th Fleet news release. Waiting to greet the vessels were Adm. John C. Aquilino, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Daniel Kritenbrink.

The port call by the Roosevelt and its strike group, a total of 6,500 military personnel, marks 25 years since the two former foes normalized their diplomatic relations. Adm. Phil Davidson, commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, announced Tuesday that the Roosevelt would stop in Vietnam.

"It's true. We do have TR pulling into Danang this week," he said in response to a reporter's question during 2020 West, a naval conference in San Diego.

The BBC's Vietnamese language online news site reported that the Roosevelt would stay in port five days. The strike group crew is expected to take part in community service projects, sports competitions and other events, according to 7th Fleet.

"This visit will not only serve to strengthen our bilateral defense relationship, but also help further advance our cultural and professional ties," said Capt. Brett Crozier, the Roosevelt's commanding officer, according to the 7th Fleet.

The Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group left San Diego on Jan. 17 for deployment in the Indo-Pacific region.

The strike group also includes the guided-missile destroyers USS Russell, USS Paul Hamilton, USS Pinckney, USS Kidd and USS Rafael Peralta.

The carrier USS Carl Vinson made the first historic visit to Danang in March 2018.

Davidson remarked Tuesday on the growing importance of Vietnam's support of U.S. efforts to push back on China's broad but disputed claims of sovereignty over most of the South China Sea, which also borders Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Vietnam has been "quite vocal and supportive" of U.S. freedom-of-navigation operations near islands claimed by China in the South China Sea, Davidson said. The Navy sails ships close to islands claimed by China in a subtle show of force during those operations.

Vietnam is also chairing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations this year, thus taking the lead on negotiating a code of conduct with China for defined "rules of the road" for international air and sea traffic in the South China Sea, he said.

The U.S. has a growing interest in deepening military ties with Vietnam, a country that America was at war with in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Vietnam's importance as a regional partner became even more relevant last month after Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte moved to terminate his country's visiting forces agreement with the United States.

If Duterte follows through with that termination, "U.S. access to ports in Vietnam on a regular basis will become all the more urgent to support U.S. naval presence patrols in the South China Sea," Carlyle Thayer, emeritus professor at The University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, wrote Tuesday in a background brief for Thayer Consultancy.

The U.S. tried and failed last year to convince Vietnam to approve U.S. aircraft carrier visits on an annual basis, Thayer said. "This proposal was part of a larger U.S. diplomatic initiative to raise bilateral relations to a strategic partnership," he said.

"It is likely that China's intrusion into Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone in waters near Vanguard Bank for several months last year proved to be a tipping point."

The Roosevelt's visit is a signal by the U.S. that it "intends to remain the pre-eminent naval power in the Western Pacific and South China Sea," Thayer said.

By granting the port call, Vietnam is indicating it supports the U.S. Navy in nearby waters "as long as it contributes to peace and stability," he said. 

## U. S. S. THEODORE ROOSEVELT

*By Ed Mathews*

I am a big fan of Theodore Roosevelt and I belong to the Theodore Roosevelt Association (TRA). In 2017 the TRA members were guests of the captain for a day at sea aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt. Tracie, Allison and I flew to San Diego and had a nice adventure at sea.

Since then I have become a pen-pal of one of the sailors: Kenneth Bello.

Right now they are having a tough time of it and they appreciate hearing from people stateside; especially written letters. Many are lonely during the extended tours at sea and they like getting letters even if they don't have time to write back. Right now they have had to stop in Guam for testing, treatment and cleaning of the ship because of a COVID outbreak aboard ship.

If you have time please write to Kenneth Bello. The sailors appreciate being thought of and letters of encouragement and support go along way towards boosting moral. The letters are shared with other sailors so one letter will go a long way towards cheering them up. You can tell Ken I asked you to write. You don't need any special or extra postage. Thank you.

SHSN Bello, USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71)  
Unit 100250, Box #5504, FPO AP 96632 

## VA WILL SOON BEGIN PROCESSING CLAIMS FOR 3 NEW AGENT ORANGE ILLNESSES

By Patricia Kime

The Department of Veterans Affairs will soon start processing claims for three new presumptive illnesses linked to exposure to herbicides in Vietnam and elsewhere. It also plans to automatically review all previous claims and denials for the conditions, VA officials said.

According to VA Secretary Denis McDonough, the department in coming weeks will issue a policy to implement a law that added bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism -- or Parkinson's-like symptoms -- to the list of conditions considered linked to Agent Orange.

Veterans with a listed condition have an expedited process for receiving health care and benefits from the VA. The National Defense Authorization Act, approved Jan. 1, added the three conditions to the list of diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other defoliants used during the Vietnam War.

Veterans whose claims are approved may receive an earlier date for entitlement to benefits -- a decision that could result in more compensation.

"Many of our Nation's Veterans have waited a long time for these benefits," said McDonough. "VA will not make them wait any longer. This is absolutely the right thing to do for Veterans and their families."

The department plans to automatically review previously denied claims and will notify those veterans or their survivors via mail.

According to McDonough, benefits could be extended to roughly 52,000 veterans and 6,000 surviving family members "in the first year alone."

"This means that any Vietnam veteran suffering from one of these three new conditions can now file and receive benefits and care and, consistent with [a court ruling, *Nehmer v. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*], their survivors who previously filed and those who were denied benefits will have their cases automatically reviewed," he said.

VA officials could not provide a timeline for adjudicating claims and providing benefits. They said the department is looking at ways to accelerate claims processing and has been chipping away at a claims backlog. As of this week, the backlog is 190,000 claims, down from 211,000 in January, according to McDonough.

He has said that veterans should file claims for illnesses they believe are service-connected even if the conditions aren't listed as presumed to be related to service.

"Oftentimes, the absence of a presumption serves as a disincentive for an individual vet to come forward with her claim, which obviously speaks to a trust issue we have on the claims process," McDonough said in late March. "So the first thing I'd say is ... if [veterans] have a claim ... please come forward with it."

## CONNIE FRANCIS COMES TO THE KEARSARGE

By Connie Francis

My tour of Nam was by far was the most rewarding experience of my life. I remember so well when our plane landed on the Kearsarge & how startled I felt when we "caught the wire."

I found it hard to get a wink of sleep because the aircraft carrier made so much noise. The day was near my birthday & I was presented with this humongous birthday cake.

Even though all my friends & family were so opposed to my trip because they all felt it was far too dangerous, I pleaded with them to allow me to go saying, "There is no other place on earth where I feel more needed."

And I was right. To me, every man & woman - and the nurses who served their country in Nam were heroes.

I was furious & dismayed by the outrageous behavior towards our returning vets by the ignorant persons whom they served with such bravery & valor. While I was totally opposed to the War, nonetheless I simply wanted to bring a touch of home to our boys.



## MILITARY RETIREE SURVIVOR COMFORT ACT IN SENATE

By Fleet Reserve Association

The "Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act" (S. 1669) was introduced in the House in February at FRA's request. Surviving spouses who are unaware that the Defense Finance and Accounting Services (DFAS) should be notified **immediately** on the death of the military retiree are surprised to learn of this requirement. Those who had joint bank accounts, in which retirement payments were made electronically, gave little if any thought that DFAS could swoop down and recoup any overpayments of retirement pay from such accounts. This action could easily clear the account of any funds remaining, whether they were retirement payments or money from other sources. Instead of withdrawing the payment all at once, the bill would allow a gradual repayment over 12 months and gives the Secretary of Defense the option to forgive the over payment.

Members are strongly urged to use the FRA Action Center to weigh in on this issue.

# KEARSAGA

## U.S.S. Kearsarge Association Newsletter

First  
Class  
U. S.  
Postage

### U.S.S. KEARSARGE ASSN.

% Bill Hollywood  
3059 Crest Ave.  
Ketchikan, AK 99901

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



**CHECK MAILING LABEL FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION DATE**  
*If it has been highlighted in yellow please renew immediately.*

*You can now check your membership details on the website roster to determine your expiration date, the date by which your dues are due.*



**U.S.S. Kearsarge  
CVS 33**

### DUES and MEMBERSHIP

Annual membership dues are \$15.00

Check payable to the: **Kearsarge Association**

Mail to: **Bill Hollywood**

**3059 Crest Ave.**

**Ketchikan, AK 99901**

New members, send your information including:  
Name, Address, Phone Number, E-Mail Address,  
Rate, Rank, Division, and years serving aboard.

If you are interested in receiving your Kearsaga via E-Mail, go to our website and leave a message stating: "Send KEARSAGA via E-Mail"  
If you do not have a computer, we will continue to send it via U. S. Postal Service.

### Association Office Holders

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Honorary President Kenneth McDaniel (Deceased) Association Founder  
John Bennett "President Emeritus," John Starnes Past President

[www.kearsargeassociation.com](http://www.kearsargeassociation.com)