



VETERANS CHRONICLE

FRIDAY, September 20, 2019



Learn more at VeteransHelpNet.com.

The Faces of Agent Orange

By Jean Bledsoe

Three years ago at a town hall meeting, I first heard about the link between Agent Orange exposure and the negative health effects in children and grandchildren of those exposed. I felt like I'd been hit in the gut by a very personal and angry 2x4. The more I've read, the more convinced I am that many of the chemicals service members are exposed to will be haunting our descendants for generations.

In July, the Vietnam Veterans of America had their national convention in Spokane. My husband, a Vietnam veteran, brought home a packet of information that contained heart-wrenching stories – stories about Vietnam veterans and their children and grandchildren who were impacted by Agent Orange. I decided it was time to do more than just worry about this. So, I'm going to share stories and information to help inform and encourage others.

Herb Worthington's Story

Herb Worthington's e-mail, sharing background on his own Agent Orange-connected diseases and the diseases now afflicting his children, is not yet two sentences long before the words leap off the page.

"It rips me apart with self-hatred every time I tell it," he wrote. "I get so sad, the tears flow like a stream, and it makes it that much more difficult, because the keyboard is totally blurred."

Asked about it later, he said, "I hate myself. Why? For bringing all this pain and suffering to my children. They don't deserve it." He has not spoken to his children about it. "I don't have the courage," he said.

His daughter, Karen, 35, suffers from multiple sclerosis (MS). His son, Michael, 33, has suffered from bronchitis and allergies since infancy. Michael's own children, ages 3 and 5, have been diagnosed with chronic bronchitis as well, and Herb says the grandchildren also display

uncontrolled and inexplicable fits of anger. Herb, himself, is 100 percent disabled, diagnosed with Agent Orange-caused Type II Diabetes. He has peripheral neuropathy, which the VA recognizes as a service-connected condition.

"It starts out as a tingling, like pins and needles," he said. "Hands and feet get cold. You think they're cold, but they could be warm to the touch. As it progresses, they go numb and have stabbing knife-like pains. They say it's a circulation problem, a secondary condition usually to diabetes.

Now the VA in Newark is trying to deny guys because of self-medication, because the disease is also symptomatic to alcoholism."

Herb is the President of the New Jersey State Council. He has been married to Angela Sorrentino since 1968; they met in high school. "She supports me 10 million percent," Herb said.

Both went to college, Herb working a full-time factory job to stay in school at the New York Phoenix School of Design in Manhattan. Five days after he graduated in 1969, he was drafted.

After completing AIT, he received orders to Vietnam as a Light Weapons Infantryman. He was assigned to the 2/60 Recon Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 9th ID. He found himself in "charmingly named hell holes" such as the Parrot's Beak, Tan Tru, the Plain of Reeds, and then with the 25th ID in Cu Chi.

"What is significant of such places is the amount of Agent Orange dumped on the Plain of Reeds and the barren dust bowl camp known as Cu Chi," he said.

Three years after he came home, he and Angela started a family, the firstborn being Karen, who would grow into such an attractive woman that strangers stopped her on the sidewalks of New York to ask if she were a model or an actress.

Continued on 2 / Agent Orange



The Worthingtons



1970: Herb at a fire support base in the Plain of Reeds near the Cambodian Border



children, Michael and Karen

HEY, VETERANS DID YOU KNOW

Blue Water Navy veterans are eligible for Agent Orange exposure disability benefits?

If you served on a Blue Water Navy ship on the inland waterways or coastal waterways of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, or if you ever came ashore in Vietnam during that time, a recent court case decided that you qualify for the same disability benefits as "boots on the ground" veterans.

There are 14 presumptive diseases that qualify Vietnam veterans for disability benefits due to presumed Agent Orange exposure. A surviving spouse may qualify for monthly financial benefits.

To find out if you qualify and file a claim, contact a VSO (see "How Can I Get Help?").

Rotary 21 Club welcomes veterans to annual park picnic

Spokane Rotary Club 21's Support Our Veterans committee hosted its annual BBQ picnic for residents of the Spokane Veterans Home at the Manito Park picnic shelter on Wednesday, August 14.

Rotary Club 21 has hosted this picnic every summer for the past several years, giving the residents of the Spokane Veterans Home the chance to enjoy the outdoors and eat some fine barbecued pork, fried chicken, coleslaw, potatoes au gratin, and dessert. The downtown Spokane Red Lion Inn catering department provided the food, which was outstanding.

Approximately 20 veterans attended the picnic, including some who had served in the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Afghanistan War, Operation Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom in Iraq. Also present were several Veterans Home staff members and American Red Cross volunteers.



About 20 Rotarians attended the picnic, spending time talking with the veterans and serving food. One Rotarian played his guitar and sang songs during the event as well. The veterans were very appreciative of this tribute to their service, and expressed their gratitude to Rotary Club 21 for hosting this event.

Below is a thank-you message that Joy Drake, the co-chair of the Rotary Club Support Our Veterans Committee, sent out to the committee members who helped put on this event.

"Hello, everyone. A sincere thank you to those whom were able to make it to the Manito Park Veterans BBQ lunch this afternoon. The weather was perfect, Greg was amazing on the guitar and our Rotary smiles filled the pavilion. I have attached a few pictures to enjoy. Thank you."



"Where's my disability check?"

At a pre-planning seminar about funeral arrangements, there was a section about benefits available to veterans. One of the attendees commented that he was receiving health care from the VA, but had never received his monthly check for disability benefits.

Five years earlier, a Veterans Service Officer had helped him obtain the medical benefits, but he hadn't heard back regarding his disability claim. Why did he wait so long to ask? He said that he didn't want to bother them!

It is the VA's job to help you, but it is your job to follow up with them regularly until you are satisfied that you are receiving the appropriate benefits.

Veterans must follow through on all applications, but help is available. If you need help filing or appealing a claim, see our "How Can I Get Help?" section and call one of the Veteran Service offices listed.



MILITARY/VETERAN APPRECIATION GAME
Nov. 9, 2019 | 12:30 p.m. kickoff | Whitworth University Pine Bowl

Please join us as the Whitworth Pirates take on the Linfield Wildcats, with special programming honoring our armed forces throughout the game.

Free admission for military/veterans and their families.





Continued from 1 / Agent Orange

“She was talented, played two instruments, was an athlete (All-state softball catcher), and an A-student,” he said. “Everything went well until her senior year of high school, when she started getting migraine headaches.”

Several MRIs and doctors later, she was diagnosed with MS. She married, then divorced, and swears she will never have children for fear of passing the disease to them.

“She still works, but she uses a cane, and the right side of her face is numb,” Herb said. “Now she’s beginning to fall down. She goes to the MS center in New York. She’s seen so many specialists and tried different treatments, but I think most of it is a bunch of crap. It’s so sad to see her like this.”

Herb sees signs of disease in his grandchildren, too.

“Both suffer from bronchitis,” he said. “And they can turn to anger in a second. I can see the physical change in them when they do it. I can see it coming, because I watch them like a mother hen. I’m looking for anything, you know?”

Significant numbers of Vietnam veterans have children and grandchildren with birth defects and conditions related to exposure to Agent Orange. If have a personal story to share about family health struggles that you believe are due to Agent Orange/dioxin, send an email to mporter@vva.org or call 301-585-4000, ext. 146.



3 Steps to Start Getting Your Benefits

Many deserving veterans or their families believe they qualify for some earned veteran benefits or health care, but don’t know where or how to start the process. Below you will find 3 steps to get you started on the path to hope and help.

Step 1: Find Your DD 214

Your official discharge papers certify your service, time of service, and your veteran status. You will need it before you can file any claim or get any benefits.

“I can’t find it!” You can order it by going to one of the Veteran Service providers listed in the “How Can I Find Help” section.

Step 2: Make an Appointment with a Veteran Service Officer (VSO)

These are the experts that can walk you through the process and help you find out what you need to make a claim and receive your earned benefits. Help from a VSO is a free and you can find them through several veteran service organizations. And they can also help you replace a lost DD214! Review to the “How Can I Find Help?” section to find a VSO near you.

“I’ll just go online.” Talk to a VSO before you try to apply online. The effort to meet with a knowledgeable VSO will save you time, and reduce your frustration.

Step 3: Start Today!

Don’t wait any longer. It’s your life, health and money. Make it a priority for yourself and your loved ones.

Herb has worked as a Veteran Service Officer and has visited the VA to discuss his diseases and the illness of his children. He comes away angry.

“I went to doctors I knew in the VA,” he said. “I went to the regional office and spoke with people I knew, and I asked if there was anything, and there was nothing. You talk to these doctors, and you mention the possibility of Agent Orange, and they ‘yes’ me to death and say, ‘Oh, that’s interesting.’

He doesn’t know what the future will bring. In the present, he carries a great anger toward the VA and the government and the Vietnam War.

“I had a map set out for me (his life), and the war ruined almost everything,” he said. “It ruined whatever chance I had to do in life; it ruined my health; it ruined my children’s health. The VA hates me. They will tell you that I have an acid tongue. This thing has consumed my life like no one can imagine.”

Why Should I Consider Hiring a Veteran?

Courtesy of National Veterans Training Institute

Military experience has provided veterans with training and work experience valued by many employers. Veteran and employer, please consider these opportunities and find a way to use the information to your best advantage. The following is a list of opportunities and strengths that many veterans have acquired and used in the uniformed services:

21 Strengths Arising from Military Experience Part 2: Strengths 4-6

4. ABILITY TO WORK UNDER PRESSURE AND MEET DEADLINES: One definite characteristic of the military service is that service members must perform. They must do their job, do it right the first time and do it in a timely manner. They are continuously setting priorities, meeting schedules and accomplishing their missions. Pressure and stress are built into this, but service members are taught how to deal with all these factors in a positive and effective manner.

5. ABILITY TO GIVE AND FOLLOW DIRECTIONS: People in the military know how to work under supervision and can relate and respond favorably to others. They understand accountability for their actions and for their subordinates’ actions. They also understand and use discipline in their lives and when dealing with others. They have learned to respect and accept legitimate authority.

6. DRUG FREE: With an honorable discharge, service members are certified drug free. Employers will view this as a distinct advantage.

We will be publishing 3 or more of these strengths in each edition and the complete article is available on our website at www.veteranshelpnet.com.

HEY, VETERANS DID YOU KNOW

Purple Heart Recipients Can Save Thousands on VA Loan Fees?

If you are in the market for a VA home loan and have been awarded a Purple Heart, you will be able to save thousands of dollars on your loan thanks to a new law. Purple Heart recipients will be exempt from the funding fee that the Department of Veterans Affairs charges on its guaranteed home loans starting Jan. 1, 2020. To receive this exemption, you must provide proof of your Purple Heart award to the lender and the VA before the loan closing date.

HOW CAN I GET HELP?

Every county and state has a Veteran Affairs office to answer questions about benefits and provide assistance. There are also other useful resources for veterans in the Inland Northwest.



GO ONLINE

VA.gov
The Department of Veterans Affairs website has resources on every topic relevant to veterans.

VA.gov/welcome-kit
The VA Welcome Guide covers all types of benefits and services available for veterans, new recruits, active service members and their families.

DAV9.com
Based in Post Falls, Disabled American Veterans Chapter 9 Fort Sherman shares links and information to both local and national help organizations for veterans.

Explore.VA.gov/benefits-navigator
Explore VA benefits and discover which ones you and your family may be eligible to receive.



IN PERSON

Spokane County Regional Veteran Service
1117 N. Evergreen Rd.,
Spokane Valley, WA
(509) 477-3690

Apply for emergency services, or have any benefits or service questions answered by 5 Veteran Service Officers (VSO) and staff.

North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

120 E. Railroad Ave., Post Falls, ID (208) 446-1092

Meet with a VSO or staff for help with VA benefits enrollment, claims or other veteran needs.

Goodwill Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

130 E. Third Ave., Spokane, WA (509) 828-2449

SSVF helps homeless veterans and their families find housing and connects veterans with other support organizations.



BY PHONE

Spokane County Regional Veteran Service
(509) 477-3690

North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

(208) 446-1092
Veteran Crisis Line
1 (800) 273-8255, press 1

North Idaho Crisis Center
(208) 625-4884

Washington or Idaho 2-1-1

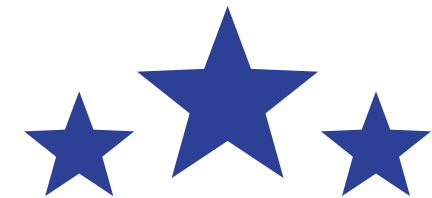
Dial “2-1-1” for health and human resources referrals.

Healthcare for Homeless Veterans HCHV

In Person or Phone
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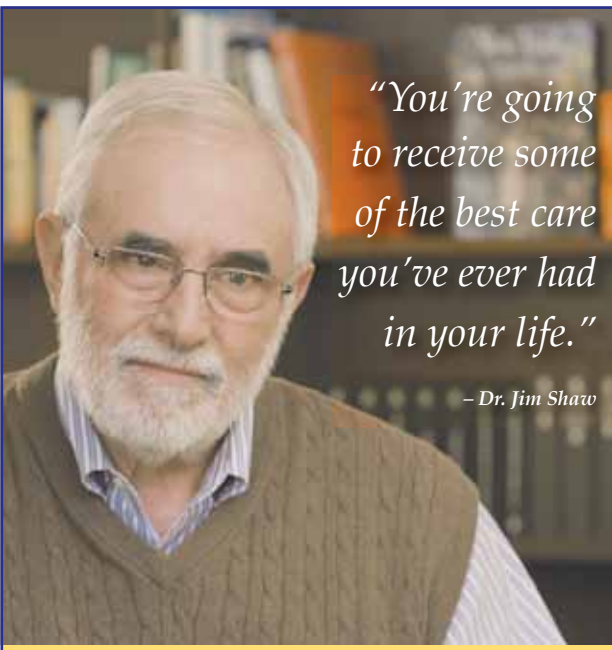
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VeteransHelpNet partners with *The Spokesman-Review* to publish Veterans Chronicle on the third Friday of every month to increase awareness about veteran issues and help veterans find hope and help.

If you would like to share a veteran story or a "Did You Know" fact about resources for veterans, please contact info@VeteransHelpNet.com or visit www.VeteransHelpNet.com. For advertising information, please contact (509) 459-5095 or advertising@spokesman.com.



Did You Serve In The US Military?

The Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that certain illnesses and health concerns have been associated with military service.

Some injuries are common to all wars, such as amputations, traumatic mental health disorders such as TBI, PTSD (including Military Sexual Trauma), and vision and hearing loss. The VA can make monthly monetary payments, or "service-connected disability compensation" for these and other illnesses and diseases that related directly to the unique circumstances of your military service.

In addition, many veterans suffer from chronic diseases later in life as the result of exposure to toxic chemicals and biologics used during their wartime service.

In Vietnam, veterans (Feb. 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975) were exposed to Agent Orange and other toxic herbicides and pesticides. These veterans who have been diagnosed with various cancers and other maladies, such as Type II diabetes, ischemic heart disease, and Parkinson's disease, can file for compensation benefits and health care with the VA. Children with birth defects born to a veteran parent exposed to AO may also be eligible for certain VA benefits and healthcare.

The same is true for any Persian Gulf veterans (Aug. 2, 1990 to present) and OIF/OEF vets (Sept. 11, 2001 to present) exposed to depleted uranium munitions or the toxic fumes and chemical smoke released from oil well fires and "burn pits" who are now diagnosed with illnesses such as Lou Gehrig's Disease (ALS), fibromyalgia, and other neurological disorders.

The amount of compensation depends on the severity of a veteran's service-connected disability and in some cases the number of qualifying family members.

To file a claim or learn more, contact one of the Veteran Service Offices listed in the section "How Can I Get Help?"

If a veteran dies of a service-connected medical condition, the spouse (and their children) may be eligible for monthly compensation payments through the VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation program (DIC). To file a claim or learn more, contact one of the Veteran Service Offices listed in the section "How Can I Get Help?"

We thank the Veterans Health Council, a program sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans of America.

HEY, VETERANS DID YOU KNOW

DD214 replacements are free?

A copy of your DD214 (your official discharge papers) is required in order to apply and receive a number of VA benefits. If you have misplaced your original, you can order an official copy with the help of a Veteran Services Officer. This is a free service! See our "How Can I Get Help?" to get started.


Coming Next Month

"Rich's Story..."

The walk is over, but the mission continues: Rich Henning provides some insights and stories from his 500-mile "I'm Ok" PTSD awareness walk.

"The Faces of Agent Orange"

Generations of hurt, help and hope: A continuing series about impact of Agent Orange on the lives and health of Vietnam veterans, their children and their grandchildren.



Volunteer With Veterans Help Net

Veterans Help Net is a volunteer veteran support organization that serves veterans in Eastern Washington and North Idaho. It was conceived by a small group that believed that there were a lot of veterans out there who were not aware of the benefits and help available to them.

Some of our current projects include this publication, VETERANS CHRONICLE, a cooperative project with *The Spokesman-Review*, and VETERANS PRESS, in cooperation with the Coeur d'Alene Press.

WE ARE IN NEED OF VOLUNTERS to help us spread the message of "Help and Hope" to local veterans. We are looking to fill the following volunteer opportunities:

1. Reporters to gather information, interview subjects, and help write 1-3 articles for our monthly print projects.
2. Social Media Coordinators to share stories and information for veterans through Facebook and other social media channels.

This opportunity is available to anyone who would like to help veterans, including non-veterans. If you are interested, please contact Don Walker at don@vethelpnet.com or (509) 655-9266, and visit our website veteranshelpnet.com.

Veterans Help Net is on Facebook

Check out our page and give us a LIKE!
facebook.com/VeteransHelpNet



HEY, VETERANS DID YOU KNOW

Health care and disability rating are two separate processes?

An application must be made for each. For instance, you may have qualified for VA health care with or without a disability rating. If your medical condition changes and the new condition would qualify you to receive a disability rating, you must apply in order to receive it. Go to our "How Can I Get Help?" section and call one of the Veteran Service offices listed; they can help with both application processes. This is free of charge.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Family & Friends CPR Class

Sept. 25, Oct. 23; 4-5:30 p.m.
Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center
4815 N. Assembly St., Spokane
Learn basic CPR skills, choking relief for adults and infants, and AED operation (no CPR card will be issued). Free for veterans, their family members, caregivers, or friends (children over 12 years old please). Space is limited. Call Kari at (509) 434-7657 to register.

Access Spokane Job Fair

Oct. 1, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
Centennial by Davenport Hotels
303 W. North River Dr., Spokane
Meet employers hiring in a variety of industries and connect with service providers in transportation, assistive technology, social assistance and more! Event is free, wheelchair accessible, and ASL interpreters will be on site. You can also attend free prep sessions on Sept. 23 and 27; RSVP is required. For details and prep session registration, visit accessspokane.org or WorkSource (130 S. Arthur St.). Call (509) 532-3120 with accommodation questions.

Avista Energy Assistance Days

Oct. 1-2, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Spokane County Fair & Expo Center
404 N. Havana St., Suite 1, Spokane Valley
Eligible customers will be able to conduct an energy assistance appointment with SNAP. All attendees can visit the free energy fair, where they will receive an energy savings kit to help weatherize their homes. Call (509) 495-1470 to reserve an appointment.

2nd Annual Opioid Solution Symposium

Oct. 10, 10 a.m.-8:30 p.m.
The Kroc Center
1765 W. Golf Course Rd., Coeur d'Alene
According to Defense Department research, nearly one in four active-duty service members had at least one prescription for an opioid at some point in 2017. While these medications were prescribed for various reasons, veterans were often prescribed higher and longer doses. The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) states patients with PTSD have higher risk factors for pain, other psychiatric conditions, and substance use disorders. The VA has taken an active response to addressing this issue with the release of their Opioid Safety Initiative.

All are welcome to attend our public film showing and panel discussion. Learn about current trends, resources, and how everyone plays a role in creating community-driven solutions. Registration is required per session for this event.

For further information, please contact Kelsey Orlando at korlando@phd1.idaho.com or visit panhandlehealthdistrict.org.

Final Arrangements 101

Oct. 23, 9-11:30 a.m. and 1-3:30 p.m.
Quality Inn Oakwood
7919 N. Division St., Spokane
Complimentary seminar to learn about pre-planning your end of life affairs. Presented by Army veteran Kellie Richardson. RSVP to (509) 714-7482 or KellieR91@yahoo.com.

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OUTLYING AREAS

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