

VeteranN Journal

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
SUMMER 2005



Remembering The Heroes



A member of the 108th Air Refueling Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, places a flag in preparation for the annual Memorial Day Ceremony, May 28 at the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The ceremony began with a parade of color guards from various veterans organizations led by the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery Joint Honor Guard. Other highlights included the 63rd Army Band, a Missing Man Formation Fly-over of F-16 Fighting Falcons from the 177th Fighter Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard; a seven-gun rifle salute; and the presentation of memorial wreaths by representatives of more than 30 veteran and service organizations. The cemetery was named in honor of BG William C. Doyle on January 3, 1989. Since its opening, more than 33,000 veterans and family members have been interred. Photo by Lt. Col. Roberta Niedt, NJDMAVA/PAO.

Distinguished Army Veteran Appointed Deputy Commissioner For Veterans Affairs

By Roman Martyniuk, NJDMAVA/PA

In October 2004, the Governor appointed Col. Stephen G. Abel, United States Army (Retired) to serve as the Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs, succeeding Col. (Ret) Emil Philibosian.



In his capacity as the DCVA, Col. Abel administers three Divisions. The Division of Veterans Healthcare Services oversees the operations of the state's three long-term care veterans' homes and respite care program. The Division of Veterans Programs oversees the Veterans Service Offices, other state entitlement programs and services—veteran's preference determinations, veteran's status determinations, and the blind and catastrophic veteran pension entitlements. The Division of Veterans Services oversees the nation's busiest State Veterans Cemetery, located in North Hanover Township; the operation of the state's Homeless Veterans Transitional Housing program, the State Approving Agency that is responsible for certifying the VA funded educational and training program, and the state-owned monuments and memorials.

Col. Abel previously served as the Director of the Division of Veterans Services from 1 April 2000 to 2 October 2004. In that capacity, he oversaw the operation of the Brigadier General William C. Doyle

Cemetery at Arneytown as well as the maintenance of the veterans' section of three satellite cemeteries. He also was responsible for operation of Veterans Haven, a transitional housing unit for homeless veterans. Additionally, he

supervised the State Approving Agency, which certifies all educational and training programs for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Finally, he was responsible for the construction, operation, and maintenance of New Jersey's Veterans Monuments and Memorials. They include the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Educational Center in Holmdel, the New Jersey Korean War Memorial in Atlantic City, and the New Jersey World War II Memorial, which is under design. He chaired the Doyle Cemetery and Jersey City Veterans Park Quality Review Boards, served as the Secretary to the World War II Commission, and was the Department's liaison to the Cemetery Veterans Advisory Council and the World Trade Center Memorial Commission.

While still on active duty with the Army, Col. Abel served as the Inspector General for the New Jersey Army and Air National Guard. Born on July 25, 1951, in Tamaqua, Pennsylvania, he earned a Bachelor of Science in Education degree

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VeteranN Journal

- Richard J. Codey**
Acting Governor
- Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth**
The Adjutant General
- Col. (Ret.) Stephen G. Abel**
Deputy Commissioner for
Veterans Affairs
- Lt. Col. Roberta Niedt**
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The **New Jersey Veteran Journal** is an official publication of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and is intended to serve New Jersey's veterans, their families, friends, and concerned individuals and groups. All correspondence should be sent to the editor at: NJDMAVA, PAO-V, PO Box 340, Trenton, NJ 08625-0340.

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Message From The Governor

Dear Friends,

In New Jersey, we understand the importance of our Veterans. We know how fortunate we are to have benefited from their bravery and are grateful for their service and sacrifice. We are committed to giving back to those New Jerseyans who have served in the Armed Forces and given us so much in preserving our freedom. We are dedicated to providing services, support and respect to those brave enough to serve their country.

Recently, I unveiled the Fallen Heroes Memorial at the War Memorial in Trenton. It displays the names of all of those brave New Jersey members of the Armed Forces who have perished in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. We have also developed a website that brings this memorial to you at www.nj.gov/fallenheroesmemorial. Please take the time to visit this site and honor these servicemen in your own way. As a Veteran, you can appreciate their ultimate sacrifice in a way that few of us can understand.

New Jerseyans are proud people. We are proud of our service men and women, our state and our country. When our National Anthem was not played at a soccer game in my state, I felt it showed a lack of respect. It was disrespectful not only to us as the host; it was disrespectful to our country, the teams, the sport and all involved. I have been told that it is normal protocol to only play the anthems of the teams participating. It may be protocol, but it is not right. I stood up and voiced my displeasure because our veterans and our country deserve better than that.

As Governor, it is important that I understand the concerns of New Jersey residents. I am especially interested in hearing from you, our veterans. Contact the Office of the Governor with any questions or concerns at (609) 777-2500. My Administration is committed to providing a State government that works for all the people of New Jersey. With stability, pride and dignity, we have the power to make our lives better.



With regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard J. Codey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard J. Codey
Acting Governor

New Jersey Veterans' Homes Update

From the NJDMAVA Veterans Affairs

MENLO PARK

The Department of New Jersey Jewish War Veterans (JWV) of the USA dedicated a monument at the NJ Veterans Memorial Home at Menlo Park April 3.

This monument is the result of a special project undertaken "to perpetuate the memory of all members of the armed forces, regardless of race, religion or creed, who made sacrifices to defend universal liberty, equal rights, and justice for all" according to Robert Richter, Commander of the JWV. The same monument had also been installed at both the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home in Vineland and at the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

The New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Menlo Park recently established a relationship with the Edison Job Corps Academy for the operation of the "Canteen" (Food Services) at the facility. This will be a seven-day per week operation. Joseph Brandspiegel, CEO stated: "We are very pleased to have established such a relationship with the Job Corp and are confident that with extending the hours, our residents, family members and our staff will benefit from this undertaking.

PARAMUS

The dedicated staff can be counted on for outstanding service.

Having the support of Central Office also contributes towards our success in offering the care that we are noted for. Speaking of that, our US Department of Veterans Affairs' survey during the week of March 14 went very well. Received accolades during this intense survey. We had our annual Volunteer Luncheon April 19. This is the one time a year when we have the opportunity to thank

our hundreds of volunteers for contributing towards the quality of life and care that our residents receive.

The USO show was held on Feb. 23, and, as usual, a grand success. As I continue my position as the Vice President of the National Association of State Veterans Homes towards the Presidency next year, I can assure you that I will represent New Jersey by getting the information needed to maintain operations. There are many challenges nationwide, mostly regarding benefits/budget proposals. As an organization we work hard to represent the veterans across the country. Again, thank you for the support you continue to give us. We could not do it without all of you.

VINELAND

The New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland is in Phase II of construction. Projected completion is July 4 (unless there are delays in construction that can occur for numerous reasons). At the time of completion, Administration can take possession of the new building. It will take approximately five weeks to move in all the new furniture and equipment in preparation for occupation by veteran home residents. Another three weeks is anticipated in order to relocate the residents and vacate the old buildings. The new facility should be in operation by Aug. 29. Phase III, the demolition of the old buildings, will then be followed by landscaping.

The new state-of-the-art facility will consist of 240 long-term care beds, a 28-bed Assisted Living Unit, a 32-bed Alzheimer's Unit. A mosaic tile "Wall of The Tides" will adorn the center courtyard, which will include a 12' waterfall surrounded by beautiful plants and flowers.

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(1973) from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Science in National Security Strategy degree from the National Defense University (1994).

The Deputy Commissioner earned his commission through the ROTC Program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania where he was a Distinguished Military Graduate. In 1976 he was assigned to Camp Pelham, Korea, where he served as the Executive Officer of Battery B and then as the Commander of Service Battery, 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery. In 1981 he was assigned overseas again, this time to 25th Infantry Division at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. During this tour, he served as the 1st Brigade's Fire Support Officer and Division Artillery's Adjutant. In 1994 he was promoted to Colonel from below the zone and reassigned to Korea where he served as the Secretary to the Combined Joint Staff of United Nations Command/Combined Forces Command/U. S. Forces Korea and the Eighth United States Army. After returning to the United States in 1996, he assumed duties as the Chief of Combat Arms Division, U. S. Total Army Personnel Command.

His military decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, two awards of the Legion of Merit, six awards of the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Star, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Ribbon with numeral three device, and the Army Staff Badge.

New Jersey Medals Honor Veterans

Photos and story by Tech. Sgt. Mark Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA



Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth (left), awards a veteran with the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal.

New Jersey has four medals, the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal, New Jersey Meritorious Service Medal, New Jersey Korean Service Medal and the New Jersey Vietnam Service Medal that are awarded to veterans in honor of their service to their country.

The New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal was originally issued in 1858 for those who had distinguished themselves in the New Jersey Militia, but was infrequently used until re-authorized by Governor Kean in 1988.

After the Spanish American War, the Mexican Border Expedition and again after World War I, the State of New Jersey minted special medals for returning NJ veterans to honor their service.

After WWII, Korea, Vietnam and subsequent combat actions no such medal was available. The State of New Jersey was looking for an appropriate way to honor all of these returning combat veterans and acknowledge the debt the state owed them for their service. The

NJ DSM was then authorized for that purpose. It is New Jersey's highest military award.

The New Jersey Meritorious Service Medal is awarded to combat veterans who were not residents of New Jersey when they entered the military service, but who are current residents of New Jersey and have resided in the

state for the previous five years. All other qualifications are the same as for the Distinguished Service Medal.

The New Jersey Korean Service Medal is awarded to all New Jersey residents who were on active duty in any branch of the armed forces of the United States in Korea, Japan, or the contiguous waters or airspace thereof on or after June 23, 1950 and on or before January 31, 1955, who have been given an honorable discharge for their service.

The New Jersey Vietnam Service Medal is awarded to members of the armed forces of the United States who served in Vietnam, Thailand, Laos or Cam-

bodia or the contiguous waters or airspace thereof on or after December 31, 1960 and on or before May 7, 1975.

For more information or forms contact your local veterans service officer or go online to: www.state.nj.us/military/veterans/index.html for a list of the medals and their eligibility requirements.

Those interested in applying for any of these medals should send a completed application together with copies of all pertinent information, discharge document award citation, honorable discharge, etc. to:

NJ Department of Military And Veterans Affairs

Attn: DVP-VBB

PO Box 340

Trenton, NJ 08625-0340

Be sure to include full name, home address and daytime telephone number. For more information call 609-530-6980.



Left to right: New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal, New Jersey Vietnam Service Medal, New Jersey Meritorious Service Medal and the New Jersey Korean Service Medal.

State Establishes Veterans Mental Health Hotline

By Roman Martyniuk, NJDMAVA/PA, graphic by Tech. Sgt. Mark Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA

On April 13, Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth, The Adjutant General of New Jersey and Colonel (Ret) Stephen Abel, Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs along with John J. Petillo, Ph.D., President, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), and Christopher Kosseff, President and CEO, University Behavioral HealthCare (UMDNJ) to announce the creation of a new, mental health helpline for veterans returning from service in Southwest Asia.

The new toll free number will provide immediate assistance to veterans suffering from psychological or emotional distress as well as



those having difficulty re-assimilating back into civilian life following the conclusion of their mobilization for active duty service.

The toll free helpline, which is accessible 24/7 by dialing 1-866 VETS-NJ 4 (1-866-838-7654) will be coordinated by UMDNJ's University Behavioral HealthCare, and will feature peer counseling, clinical

assessment, assistance to family members and will provide New Jersey veterans and their families with access to a comprehensive Mental Health Provider Network of mental health professionals specializing in PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and other veterans issues. All services are free and confidential.

The event took place at the New Jersey National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters located at Fort Dix.

More than 4,000 National Guard and Reserve personnel from New Jersey have been mobilized since September 11, 2001 for service in Operations' Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom.

State of New Jersey

World War II Memorial at Veterans Park (Trenton)

Today fewer and fewer Americans have a personal connection or awareness of the sacrifices and courage of New Jersey's World War II Veterans and Generation. It is the Commission's goal to dedicate the WWII Memorial in the Fall of 2005. Time is quickly passing. We urge you to support the New Jersey World War II Memorial through a tax-deductible contribution.

Individual Donors:
Eagle: \$1,000 and up
Falcon: \$500 - \$999
Hawk: \$100 - \$499
Osprey: \$25 - \$99
Other: \$ _____

Name	Phone
Address/City/State/Zip	

Memorial donations are payable to: Treasurer, State of New Jersey*
***Indicate on check: NJ WWII Memorial**

Mail to: WWII Memorial Commission
c/o Dept. of Military and Veterans Affairs-DVS
PO Box 340, Trenton, NJ 08625-0340
Contact: 609-530-7049

Army Showcases Support Program For Disabled War Vets

By Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample, USA, American Forces Press Service

The Army hosted a Pentagon media roundtable to discuss a new support program aimed at helping those soldiers and their families through the rehabilitation and transition process Nov. 10.

The Army began work on Disabled Soldier Support System 3 (DS3) eight months ago to provide counseling and help to severely disabled soldiers and their families through a "direct support" system, said Col. Robert H. Woods Jr., Director, Army Human Resource Policy Directorate.

"Dealing with injuries can be a traumatic experience," he said. "And we want to be there, right there with them, taking them through the entire process."

He said that support system would incorporate the help several existing military agencies, such as Veterans Affairs and the Army Career and Alumni Program, as well as civilian agencies and corporations.

DS3 began after Acting Army Secretary Les Brownlee and Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony J. Principi sought ways in which disabled vets could be better served. Veterans eligible for the program must have received a disability rating of 30 percent or greater and be in a "special category" as a result of injuries or illness. Those injuries may include amputees, severe burns and head injuries and loss of eyesight, Wood said.

According to Army statistics, recent conflict has so far resulted in more than 880 disabled veterans, 230 of them now enrolled in the DS3 program, he said. Soldiers entered into the program will go through three phases.

The first phase is getting the soldier through medical stabilization and rehabilitation, and then on to proper medical treatment channels.

The soldier is then provided medical care and evaluated for continued service on active duty or help with disability decision.

Phase 3 includes helping the soldier with decisions on retirement and transition back to civilian life. Soldiers also will be offered help with educational and employment decisions.

The Department of the Army is the largest employer of veterans, who make up 25 percent the department's civilian work force. Of that number, 7 percent are disabled veterans.

The Army is of hiring more than 200 caseworkers that will follow disabled soldiers for up to five years after they enter the program. The Army plans to have one caseworker for every 30 disabled soldiers. Caseworkers will help soldiers with problems that arise throughout the rehabilitation and transition process.

The Army also plans to establish a toll-free hotline for soldiers to call during normal business hours.

Currently most disabled soldiers returning from combat are being treated at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington. As the program continues to grow, the Army envisions placing DS3 counselors at Army regional medical centers throughout the United States.

Sgt. Michael Cain of the 299th Engineer Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, a truck driver, was injured during a resupply mission in Tikrit

when his truck rolled over an anti-tank mine. The blast severed his right leg below the knee.

Although Cain said he used DS3 counselors only sparingly during his two-month hospital stay, counselors were able to help find a place for his parents when they came to visit and were readily available to help during his recovery.

"They do let you know what they have to offer to you. They let you know what they do and how they can help you," he said.

Woods said the focus of the DS3 program is in the final statement of the Army Ethos: "I will never leave a fallen comrade behind."

The program is being briefed to the other services so that they can consider offering similar programs to their service members.

New Laser Eye Surgery Policies

From the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced a single, uniform standard of care throughout the Department for performing laser eye surgery procedures.

The policy states that all therapeutic laser eye surgeries at VA facilities will be performed under the supervision of an ophthalmologist in a manner consistent with Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations standards.

The new policy will take effect immediately at all VA facilities with the capability to perform laser eye surgeries.

VA Reaches Out To Newest Combat Veterans

From the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is expanding its efforts to reach veterans of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to ensure they are aware of benefits they have earned.

The VA is sending a letter to more than 150,000 veterans of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom who have recently separated from the military to thank them for their service and to remind them of their eligibility for VA health care and other benefits.

The letter includes brochures and links to the VA website at www.va.gov that contain more details about VA benefits and information for applying online.

As Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom veterans continue to leave the active-duty military, VA expects to mail about 10,000 letters each month.

The VA also regularly mails information packets to all service members separating from the mili-

tary to remind them of eligibility for basic VA benefits, such as guaranteed home loans and education benefits. Additionally, there are provisions in these programs for reservists and National Guard members.

The additional outreach to those recently deployed to combat theaters alerts them to special eligibility that increases their access to health care for two years after separation from the military for illnesses and injuries that may be the result of military service. For those medical problems, VA waives co-payments for inpatient and outpatient care.

VA focuses special attention on those with service-related disabilities. The department's goal is a seamless transition from military to VA services, with claims for financial benefits receiving expedited processing. For the seriously wounded, VA has counselors working at the bedsides of patients in

military hospitals with the largest numbers of casualties to begin benefit applications before they leave the military.

In addition, VA social service personnel work at these military facilities to plan health care coordination as service members move from military to VA care. This helps ensure a smooth transition to a VA hospital or clinic near the veteran's intended residence for continuity of medical care.

In partnership with state and local government benefits counselors and veterans service organization representatives, VA annually briefs about 200,000 service members around the world before discharge to help prepare them for civilian transition and VA benefits. It operates benefits offices at 133 military installations to help service members with conditions arising during service prepare to begin receiving VA compensation promptly after discharge.

Improvements In VGLI Information

From the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that veterans would now be able to access their Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) accounts at any time of the day or night from any computer or telephone.

Using a secure Web site, the VGLI Online Account Access system allows veterans to obtain basic information on their account through the insurance Web site at www.insurance.va.gov.

Veterans can check on their current amount of coverage, premium rate and billing method, as well as change their billing address. Future improvements include allowing veterans to change their method and frequency of payment.

The veteran enters financial information directly

into the website including financial obligations, net additional income needed by survivors and current assets. By subtracting assets from total financial obligations and net income needed, the calculator arrives at a recommended amount of life insurance.

Veterans can also access their account information through a new VGLI interactive voice response system that allows veterans to obtain account information through the telephone.

Veterans can call the VA at 1-800-419-1473 any time, day or night, by using their telephone keypad and can hear recorded information on their accounts. They can also request certain changes to their VGLI accounts, such as billing frequency and payment method, as well as order certain forms.

Veterans' News You Can Use

Compiled by the Veteran Journal Staff

Buried Veterans' Records Available On Internet

The Veterans Administration has just made it easier and faster for the public to get answers about family history, old war buddies or famous war heroes. The agency has put on the Internet 3.2 million records for veterans buried at 120 national cemeteries since the Civil War.

The VA's Nationwide Gravesite Locator at www.cem.va.gov also has records for some state veterans' cemeteries and burials in Arlington National Cemetery since 1999.

These records used to be on paper and microfilm. Private companies have put some of the information online and charged for it, but the VA information is free.

The VA's gravesite navigator includes names, dates of birth and death, military service dates, service branch and rank if known, cemetery and grave location. The VA will withhold some information, such as next of kin, for privacy purposes.

The site will be updated daily. Annually, about 80,000 veterans are buried at national cemeteries.

Labor Dept. Offers Vets Assistance Website

The Department of Labor's e-VETS Resource Advisor, located at www.dol.gov/elaws/evets.htm provides information to veterans on a broad range of topics, such as job search tools and tips, employment openings, career assessment, education, training, benefits, and special services available to veterans.

The e-VETS Resource Advisor is divided into two sections: General Services and Personal Profile. Based on a veteran's interests and the information provided, e-VETS Resource Advisor will provide website links of specific interest to you.

DFAS Expands Services For Retirees

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service recently announced that military retirees and annuitants would be able to obtain specific account information through the Interactive Voice Response System.

Customers choosing to use this new feature will be asked to enter their social security number and Personal Identification Number. Customers can use the same PIN to access the IVRS that they use to access myPay.

Retirees and annuitants will be able to obtain specific account information regarding correspondence

address, allotments, Certificate of Eligibility or Report of Existence, deductions, gross and net pay, Survivor Benefit Plan coverage and federal and state taxes.

DoD Announces To Selectively Employ Retirees

The Defense Department announced a new policy, which allows defense managers to hire civil service retirees in critical positions without offsetting their retirement pay, which was required under previous law. A similar provision was previously implemented for military retirees. This benefit applies only to those hired on or after Nov. 24, 2003.

The policy has a number of restrictions and requirements. A retiree can only be hired into hard-to-fill positions where the retiree has unique or specialized skills or qualifications. A retiree cannot be reemployed in his or her previous job position unless someone above the hiring official approves it and certifies the critical conditions. Before any retiree can be hired, the position must be offered to qualified defense workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

For executive level positions, only the secretaries of the military departments or heads of defense agencies and field activities may appoint annuitants to such positions.

VA Calls For Improved Services For Disabled Vets

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Task Force released The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program for the 21st Century Veteran - a report calling for improved vocational rehabilitation and employment services for disabled veterans.

The task force was created to give the VR&E program an independent examination, evaluation, and analysis.

The task force recommended that VA improve the independent living program and expand current services to National Guard and reserve personnel.

To view the full VA report, go to www.fpmi.com/lerpress/VRE_Report_2004.pdf.



Hire A Vet.

One Shots: Images Of NJ Veterans



WWII Vet Receives Bronze Star

Colonel Stephen G. Abel (Ret, right), Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs, presents the Bronze Star Medal to Daniel Wyant Sr. (left) at the Hunterdon County Freeholders meeting on April 12. Wyant, a World War II veteran had received his other medals and had his certificate for the Bronze Star but never the medal itself. Photo courtesy NJDMAVA.



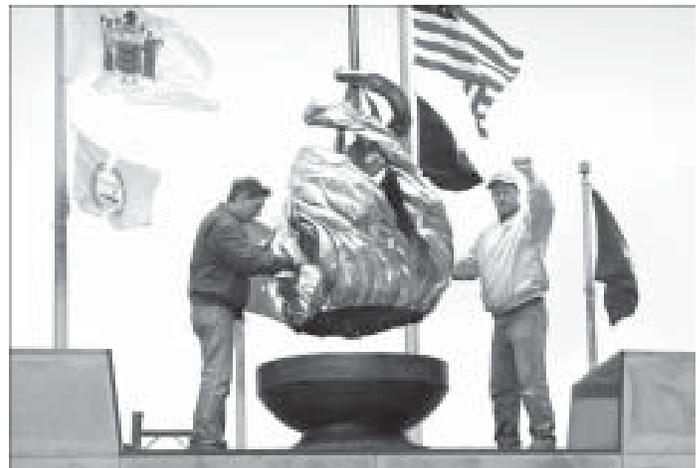
Cemetery Receives Donation

Colonel Stephen G. Abel (Ret, right), Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs, receives a \$5,000 check from Ted Behr (center), Post State Commander, American Legion and Barbara Newlin (left) Past President, American Legion Auxiliary Jan. 27. The donation will be used for a statue called *The Companion* to be located in the chapel. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA.



Elks Present Check For WWII Memorial

Members of the New Jersey Elks led by Robert Mauro (third from right) present Colonel Stephen G. Abel (Ret, right), Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs (fourth from left) a check for \$13,500 for the New Jersey World War II Memorial. The Elks also donated \$5,000 for the New Jersey Korean War Memorial. Also pictured are (l-r) Les Worthington, Arnold Miller, James Hall, James Schoener and Cus Dalik. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA.



Korean Memorial Torch Restored

Courtney Rynne (right), contractor, on-going maintenance of the New Jersey Korean War Memorial and Dave Moorland (left), Moorland Studios, guide the New Jersey Korean War Memorial torch into place May 26. The torch had been removed for refurbishing to prevent future corrosion due to ocean moisture and salt exposure. The Memorial is located on the Atlantic City boardwalk next to Brighton Park. The Memorial pays tribute to the more than 191,000 New Jerseyans that served and 836 were killed or still considered missing in action. Photo by Roman Martyniuk, NJDMAVA/PA.

Administration Expands Benefits For Ex-POWs

From the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Continuing its commitment to former prisoners of war, Veterans Affairs announced that the Bush Administration would expand benefits to all former POWs with strokes and common heart diseases.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the new benefits in a speech tonight at a recent national convention of the American Ex-Prisoners of War.

The Administration's decision benefits former POWs with strokes

and most heart diseases. Those veterans will be automatically eligible for disability compensation for those common ailments, and their spouses and dependents will be eligible for service-connected survivors' benefits if these diseases contribute to the death of a former POW.

In September 2003, the VA launched a nationwide outreach effort to identify and provide benefits to the estimated 11,000 former POWs who were not receiving VA

disability compensation or other services. There are about 35,000 living ex-POWs.

The VA also has urged Congress to change federal law that required that former POWs must be detained for at least 30 days to qualify for the full range of POW benefits.

The Administration's new decision will add to the list of 16 medical problems that VA presumes to be linked to the military service of former POWs.

VA Distributing Insurance Dividends

From the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced its distribution of more than \$449 million in dividends to 1.4 million active policyholders of veterans' life insurance.

Over the next year, veterans will receive payments on the anniversary date of their policies, with the specific dividend amount varying according to age; type of insurance, and length of time the policy has been in force. Veterans will automatically receive their annual dividend through one of the nine payment options available to them.

Dividends cover only veterans with government life insurance policies who served between 1917 and 1956. VA life insurance programs that do not pay dividends cover veterans of subsequent eras.

The dividends represent a return of trust fund earnings on the premiums paid by policyholders throughout the years. They reflect the fact that veterans are living longer than originally predicted. Dividends are

also attributable to the higher than expected yields earned by the trust funds from investments in government securities.

Only those with policies that have been kept in force are eligible for the payout. Inaccurate notices periodically surface suggesting that those who have not maintained insurance are eligible for a special dividend if they contact VA, but this is false. Dividends are automatically sent to eligible policyholders.

Although VA administers a special life insurance program for disabled veterans and a program offering mortgage life insurance coverage neither pays dividends. Additionally, no dividends are paid on Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance or Veterans' Group Life Insurance.

Veterans with questions about their policy should call VA Insurance toll free at 1-800-669-8477, or by e-mail VAinsurance@vba.va.gov or visit <http://www.insurance.va.gov>.

Card Protects Vets From Identity Theft

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently created an identification card for veterans that will protect confidential information.

The new identification card, called the Veterans Identification Card, ensures veterans' personal information is protected. The card also helps prevent the theft of important benefits and services from veterans.

The Veterans Identification Card will have veterans' photos on the front and identify them as enrollees in the VA's health care system. The card includes the words "service connected" under the photo if the veteran has a service-connected disability.

Veterans should request the new card at their local medical center. Processing will take five to seven days once eligibility is verified. VA hopes to complete the conversion to the new, safer card by mid-November. The existing cards will remain valid until veterans receive their new cards.

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

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8:30 am – 12 noon
(Thursday)
732-532-4465

Ocean

Joseph Salzano, VSO
Phyllis Goffin, Sec.
James J. Howard
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Fax: 973-383-1272
Dover (Wednesday)
973-366-8347

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