

The Patriot Reader

VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY

CHAIRMAN BILL DUDLEY

VICE CHAIRMAN RAY QUINN

SECRETARY GEORGE APRIL

TREASURER MICHAEL ROTHFELD

Newsletter Editor Michael Rothfeld

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Message from the Chairman



Fellow Veterans,

This past week we observed Veterans Day here in St. Johns County. There were many observances held at various locations and many in the community turned out to honor our veterans. Such an outpouring was certainly the case at our Veterans Day ceremony held downtown at Francis Field as well as the event held later in the day at St. Augustine Beach Veteran's Memorial at Lakeside Park.

Our guest speaker for our Veteran's Day ceremony at Francis Field was Brigadier General Craig Crenshaw, USMC. We are very appreciative that Gen. Crenshaw and his lovely wife LaDonna took the time from their busy schedule to fly down from Washington, D.C. to help us pay tribute to our many veterans who have served and are still serving our nation.

We especially want to thank Mayor Andrea Samuels and the St. Augustine Beach City Administration for an outstanding ceremony at Lakeside Park to honor our veterans. A very moving ceremony that represented the true feeling of the St. Augustine Beach community towards our veterans was observed by all those who attended.

Mayor Samuels and her Administration are to be congratulated.

The Veterans Council is very pleased to announce that again this year our Wreaths Across America program is a total success. Our WAA committee under the leadership of Ray Quinn and Judy Davis has assured that all 1216 headstones and markers at St. Augustine National Cemetery will have a wreath placed on them for the Holidays. This fulfills the commitment made by the Veterans Council when it took over this program several years ago that all headstones at our local National Cemetery would always have a wreath at Christmas. We intend to continue to honor that pledge.

Our Veterans Treatment Court is nearly ready to commence in January. We expect to be on the opening docket for the court's opening schedule in 2015. Much behind the scenes work has occurred to make this plan a reality. We have several volunteers to work as mentors. Thanks to Howard McGillin's legal input and Charlotte Matthews, VA Justice Outreach, we are prepared to reach out to our veterans who qualify for the Veterans Treat-

ment Court assistance and provide them the help they need in the judicial system.

Lastly, we have achieved another milestone that the Veterans Council has been working on for over a year.... having our veterans share their experiences with students in our local schools. This past week, two of our Vietnam Veterans met with students at Valley Ridge Academy and shared with them their experiences of over forty years ago of their time in Vietnam. Their story appears elsewhere in this month's Patriot Reader. We intend to continue this program with our local schools as a way of educating our young people about the service of our veterans to this country. It's important to hear from our veterans first hand their experiences since it seems our history books don't seem to find it important to tell their story.

Bill Dudley, Chairman
Veterans Council of
St. Johns County

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A local veteran's version of Veterans Day

Many years ago, Col Ed Taylor came to me and said he wanted me to present the history of Veterans Day. It would be on a video to be presented to a captive audience of school children on Veterans Day. It was a make-up day for weather.

As we all know, you never said “no” to Col. Taylor.



COL Ed Taylor

Along with myself was former County Commissioner Ben Rich who recited the poem Flanders Field, and Dr. Giles McCoy who survived the sinking of the USS Indianapolis and the subsequent shark attacks.

As you all know by now, I have to tell a story, not just present the facts. I told the story from the viewpoint of a fictional grandfather sharing with his grandchildren.

Here is the text of my presentation:

My name is Michael Isam.

I served in the United States Air Force from March 1966 to June 1973.

I served in Vietnam from December 1969 to December 1970

I am the current Commander of Disabled American Veterans, Chapter 6, a member of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I offer to you a history of Veterans Day.



Michael Isam

The beginning - From a grandfather's memory:

The pre-dawn hours were cold! So cold the breath of the men walking toward the railroad car could be seen almost a foot in front of them. Of course, it was November and we were in the Forest of Compiègne (COM PIN YEAH) in Northern France.

As the men reached a pre-determined spot, they were stopped and searched. Even in the dim light from my vantage point of a rail car, I could see the look of resignation on some of their faces, disgust and even haughtiness on the faces of others who would never admit defeat.

As a young man, I expected the leaders of the German army to look like giant ogres, but to my surprise, the men entering the rail car looked just like ordinary humans, some short, some tall.

But regardless, their purpose for being here was historic. They were here to sign a declaration of armistice putting an end to “The War to end all Wars”. The anticipation I felt was mounting so that my heart felt as if it would leap from my chest at any moment. “The world would never see another war” was running thru my mind.

At 5 am, November 11, 1918, I witnessed signatures being applied to the document. Now, it was only 6 hours until the fighting completely stopped.

Far away, the artillery could still be heard, using up rounds so munitions would not have to be packed up and shipped back to the depot. Somehow, knowing what was to come, it seemed the noise was louder.

On the final stroke of eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year 1918 the guns of Europe fell silent; and that silence that was deafening.

After four years of the most bitter and devastating fighting, “The Great War” was finally over.

The noise of the cannons, rifles and grenades was quickly replaced by the blowing of whistles, the pealing of church bells and the voices of people holding impromptu parades in the nearby village. All over the globe there were demonstrations celebrating peace.

After I returned home in 1919, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11 as Armistice Day.

But it was not until 1938 that Congress passed a bill that each November 11 "**shall be dedicated to the cause of world peace and ...hereafter celebrated and known as Armistice Day.**"

In many communities, the American Legion was in charge of the observance, which included parades and religious services. At 11 A.M. all traffic stopped, in tribute to the dead, then volleys were fired and taps sounded.

If the realization of the idealistic hope that World War I was "the War to end all Wars," November 11 might still be called Armistice Day. Only a few years after the proclaiming of the holiday, war broke out in Europe again. World War II was upon us and my father became an active participant in the second hope that this would really end all wars. However, it was not to be.

The Korean War followed closely behind and introduced my youngest uncle to war. The Vietnam War, 1961 to 1972, followed in 1961 where my turn in the family rotation came. There have been so many more since then.

My Memories

Realizing that peace was equally preserved by veterans of WW II and Korea, Congress made an occasion to honor those who had served America in all wars. In 1954, when I was just beginning 2nd grade, President Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11 as Veterans Day. Leading up to that point were several events:

After World War II, there were many new veterans who had little or no association with World War I. The word, "armistice," means simply a truce; therefore as years passed, the significance of the name of this holiday changed. Leaders of Veterans' groups decided to try to correct this and make November 11 the time to honor everyone who had fought in all American wars, not just in World War I.

In Emporia, Kansas, on November 11, 1953, instead of an Armistice Day program, there was a Veterans' Day observance. Ed Rees, of Emporia, was so impressed that he introduced a bill into the Kansas House to change the name to Veterans' Day. After this passed, Mr. Rees wrote to all state governors and asked for their approval and cooperation in observing the changed holiday.

I was 7 years old when the name was changed to Veterans' Day by Act of Congress on May 24, 1954. President Eisenhower referred to the change of name to Veterans' Day in honor of the service men and women of all America's wars.

In 1968, well into my first enlistment in the Air Force, a law was passed which changed the national commemoration of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. It soon became apparent, however, that November 11 was a matter of historic and patriotic significance to a great number of our citizens. It was 1978, 10 years later, that the observance of this special day returned to its traditional date by enacted legislation (Public Law 94-97), which brings us to today.

Knowing what you know now, who among you will stop at 11am on November 11 with a moment of silence to thank those young soldiers who gave up their lives? Who will remember the graves of 400 Americans buried in Flanders Fields and at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier?

I will. My children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will. Will you?

Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home

Patriotism is our Motto



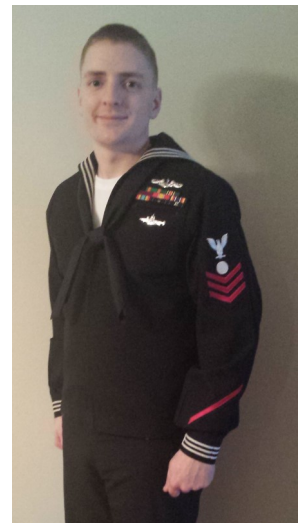
Please note that because of the many events and pictures from the Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home this month we had to have a separate newsletter created to hold all their pictures.

We have moved the Lassen pictures to: <http://www.veteranscouncilofstjohns.org> because we wanted you to enjoy all their monthly activities.

USS Alabama Sailor of the YEAR

The Geronimo family is pleased to announce that the Commanding Officer of the USS Alabama (SSBN 731) (Gold) has commended **Electrician's Mate First Class, James Joseph Geronimo Jr. as "Sailor of the Year"** for Calendar Year 2014. James has also qualified as the Senior Engineering Watch Supervisor aboard the USS Alabama, stationed out of Bangor, Washington. He is a graduate of St. Augustine High School.

James' next board will be for Sailor of the Year for Sub Group 9. If he keeps being selected he'll be up for Regional and then West Coast.



Mark Miner is doing a Toys for Tots drive at his office on County Road 210. Toys can be dropped off anytime between business hours at my office or they can contact me and I will meet them and pick stuff up. Toys must be new and in their original packaging and unwrapped. The toys go to kids right here in our community. Toys for Tots is a program run by the United States Marine Corps Reserve. I will be concluding the drive in the second week of December.

Here is my office info:

Edward Jones

Offices at Johns Creek





The Jacksonville National Cemetery Greetings from the Support Committee at the Jacksonville National Cemetery!



Chairman Howard McGillin,
COL US Army ret.

The Support Committee invites everyone to attend its next scheduled meeting on **Monday, January 5th, 2015** at 7:00pm. The meeting will take place at Community Hospice, 4266 Sunbeam Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32257 in Conference Room A.

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Governor Rick Scott announced the appointment of Howard O. McGillin, Jr. to the Seventh Judicial Circuit Court.

McGillin 55, of St. Augustine, is the Founder of the Allegiance Law Group. McGillin is a retired U.S. Army Colonel after serving for 24 years. He previously served as the Deputy Staff Judge Advocate for the U.S. Army in Hawaii from 1998-2000. From 1994-1997, McGillin was a professor and Deputy Director of the Academic Department of the U.S. Army Judge Advocate Generals School. McGillin began his legal career in 1989 with the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate. He received his bachelor's degree from the U.S. Military Academy, his law degree from the University of Florida College of Law, and his LLM from The Judge Advocate General's School of Law. McGillin fills a vacancy created by the resignation of Judge Carlos E. Mendoza.

Governor Rick Scott said, "With his military background and legal experience, Howard will make a great addition to the Seventh Judicial Circuit bench. I welcome him to this new position and look forward to his continued service to Florida families."

On Tuesday November 4th, the **St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners** issued a Proclamation naming November 11th as Veterans Day, a day to honor all veterans in the county. After the Proclamation was read, Veterans Council of St. Johns County Chairman Bill Dudley presented all County Commissioners a plaque thanking them for their continual support for veterans.





Pomp and circumstance for St. Johns County veterans, By Michael Isam

St. Augustine, Fla, (November 11, 2014)

With the colorful display by veteran and civic organizations, period re-enactors, and an impressive display of firepower of days gone by, over 100 residents of St. Johns County were treated to a celebration of our county veterans they have come to expect.

Beginning at 11:59 a.m., re-enactors from Men of Menendez and the 1740 Spanish Garrison began firing period weapons to simulate the final barrages before the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, 1918 (French time), which is noted in history as the armistice of World War I. The official documents of surrender by the German Army had been signed five hours earlier in Ferdinand Foch's railway carriage in the Forest of Compiègne, about 37 miles (60 km) north of Paris. Until the appointed time both sides fired continual bombardments using armaments so they would not have to be packed and transported to storage.

Lead by the Florida National Guard Adjutant General Honor Guard, over 30 active duty, veteran, and civic organizations passed in review for the "Massing of the Colors" to honor our veterans.

After the traditional welcoming remarks by Lt. Col Bill Dudley, USAF (retired), came the invocation by Father Ken Herzog, the Pledge of Allegiance and singing the National Anthem by Ms. Faith Miller. Dudley then introduced guest speaker, Brigadier General Craig Crenshaw, USMC. General Crenshaw currently serves as Assistant Deputy Commandant for Installations and Logistics (Plans).

General Crenshaw spoke eloquently of the sacrifice many have made for their county. More pointedly, he spoke of the sacrifice paid during the 1965 battle in the Ia Drang Valley during the Vietnam War, and most important to local residents, he spoke of Leo C. Chase Jr. who lost his life in that battle 5 days before his rotation home. Chase was a rifleman in Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry (Airmobile). He was the first of many St. Johns County residents to die in the Vietnam war.

Many men and women were honored during the ceremony. During the time set aside to remember those who have passed since Memorial Day, more than 100 names were read by Ms. Peggy Tappan and Mrs. Deidre Mountcastle, representing the Military Officers Association of America, (MOAA). Each branch of American service was represented as well as service in the British Army and Navy, and the Royal Canadian Army. A single peal of a ship's bell acknowledged the branch of service of those who have passed.

During "Trooping the Line", re-enactors and others covering the military history in St. Augustine since its founding in 1565 by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés were announced along with their period of service. Dudley noted that "Menendez has sent his regrets that he will be unable to attend," meaning Chad Light, the well known epitome of Menendez.

One who was able to attend, resplendent in his uniform was Marine Lance Corporal Brandon Long. Long and his family, wife Nicole and daughter Claire, are recent residents to St. Johns County. The Longs and two other War on Terror veteran families live in specially adapted homes provided by Homes for Our Troops.

Long lost both of his legs in an IED blast in Sangin, Afghanistan on December 21, 2010. Rid-

ing a special motorized chair equipped with rubber ‘tank tracks’, Long made his way to the center of the formation and was acknowledged by a standing ovation lasting over a minute. Long fought back tears as he made his way back to his position in line.

The ceremony ended with a three volley salute by re-enactors, “Taps” by St. Johns Sheriff Commander John Donlon followed by a stirring rendition of “God Bless America” and the “Retirement of the Colors” led by CW4 George McCrea, USA (retired).

The most unsung person of these ceremonies is almost always the person who is always front and center for all the speeches; the hand speaker for the hearing impaired. Many thanks go out to Ms. Jackye Ward of Ward Media Group, Inc.

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photos by Michael Isam



Color Guards Step off



One minute volley begins



Brigadier General Crenshaw



Pearl Harbor Survivor
Barry Reyelts



Sons of Pearl Harbor
Survivor Reyelts



Parade Marshal George McCrae



Veterans of tomorrow thank veterans of yesterday

By Michael Isam

St. Augustine, Fla, (November 7, 2014) – Back in the day the people that stood out were the “Rainbows”. The name given to those freshly arrived to boot camp. To those yet to receive that full set of green everything; green from the skin out. To paraphrase the verse by Billy Joel; “When we wore a younger ones clothes.”

On Friday, one small band of “Rainbows” again stood out amongst a sea of camouflage fatigues of today’s Army and Air Force National Guard issue. “It is interesting to come full circle and assume the title again,” said Tom Crawford. “But,” he continued, “I have been called worse, much worse.”

Crawford refers to a time when those returning from Vietnam were called anything but human. “But we bucked up and swallowed it, that was the military way,” he said. “One would think that after 50 years, the emotions would have passed,” he said. “Well, think again.”

On Friday, all that changed for a platoon of Vietnam veterans with a special “Welcome Home” retreat ceremony. Members of the Florida National Guard led by Adjutant General Emmett R. Titshaw, Jr. offered a “Welcome Home” filled with dignity and respect.

The veterans returned that dignity and respect, in formation, and in unison like the well-oiled of lo, so many years ago. “Just like your original serial number,” said Joe McDermott, “military ceremonial movements will stay with one forever.”

“We can not make up for the past,” said one current guard member, “but we can take the work you have passed to us and insure that the disrespect you endured never happens to another of our family.”

After the short ceremony outside, all were invited to the Officer’s Club for a small intimate ceremony “GI to GI”.

The high point of the ceremony was the presentation to Robert Dinkins, Commander of Vietnam Veterans Chapter 1084, of the flag which had just flown over the ceremony at Patriot Field. “From a grateful nation,” said General Titshaw as he solemnly and carefully passed the consecrated flag to Dinkins.

Dinkins clutched the flag to his chest and raising it over his head, he haltingly spoke emotion filled words dedicating it to “All my brothers and sisters of the Vietnam War; those who came home and to those still missing.”

Afterwards, all retired to the Elks Club for food, libation, and the type of comradeship that can only be shared by veterans.

[Disclosure: The author of this story is the current Commander of DAV Chapter 6 and a Vietnam Veteran, 1969 to 1970.]

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Photo credit: Michael Isam



Members of the Vietnam Veteran Platoon render respect to the flag



General Titshaw presents consecrated flag to Bob



Held over his head, Robert Dinkins dedicates the just consecrated flag to veterans of the Vietnam War

November 09, 2014: On behalf of the Missing in America Project – FL

I would like to take a moment to send out a sincere note of appreciation for all the support that we have been getting. Our service on Friday, Nov 7th was the largest one attended to date with over 60 bikes riding escort which was led by the Jacksonville's Sheriff's Office and well over 200 people in attendance with many participating in the service. There are too many people to individually thank but I am sure everyone knows what it takes to put a service like this together. It takes a TEAM and there is no "I" in the word team. So to all I say THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU. We can proudly say to the 10 veterans and 5 spouses "YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN".



I would like to close by wishing everyone a very Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas. I am honored to be associated with such a wealth of military people who have guided me in this project.

Kathy Church, MIAP-FL State Coordinator.

(photos by Rusty Crowdus)



American Legion Post 372, Mandarin: Our monthly meeting is on the 2nd Thursday of each month. We meet at the Mandarin/St Johns' Elks Lodge, 4280 Old Field Crossing Drive, Jacksonville, Florida 32223. POC Franklin Hunt (904) 536-3144. Hope to see you there!

Parading for patriotism

Liberty Pines Academy students focused on freedom at celebration

BY JAKE MARTIN jake.martin@staugustine.com

Liberty Pines Academy in St. Johns recognized local veterans and active military members Friday morning ahead of Veterans Day.

Each grade in the K-8 academy marched and sang its own patriotic song in honor of family and community members who have served or are currently serving in the military.



Family and friends of the school came out in support of the parade, which has been held annually for the past 6 years. Only one ceremony has been interrupted since the school opened in 2008.

Principal Judith Thayer addressed the crowd prior to the parade, reminding students and parents that freedom isn't free.

"Nowhere else in the world is freedom so fiercely protected and preserved as it is in the United States by the faithful men and women who serve our military both here and abroad," she said.

She said the purpose of the parade is to preserve that ideal.

At the ceremony's conclusion, students, teachers and the crowd joined in singing "God Bless the U.S.A."

Ron Raizis, who has two grandchildren at Liberty Pines, served 22 years in the U.S. Air Force.

"Twenty-two years and 24 days, but who's counting?" he said.

He has attended the parade the last three years with his daughter, who has a first- and seventh-grader in the school.

"It's just very refreshing," he said. "They're teaching them about the country, our history and the Bill of Rights. A lot of people nowadays don't have a clue what that's all about."

He said he was also glad to see that students are learning the songs and the histories behind them so that it is not forgotten.

St. Johns County School Board chair Bill Mignon, who served in the military and National Guard for 34 years, said he comes to the event every year.

"It's beautiful. Every year it is superb," he said. "... They go all out to acknowledge the services provided by our veterans."

Thayer said the parade gets better each year.

"This is part of our heritage and it's what we do every year to honor veterans and to instill citizenship in our children," Principal Judith Thayer said.

The school board had asked the academy upon its opening if it could find a way to honor veterans throughout the county.

The committee came up with the name Liberty Pines to honor locals who fought and served and the idea for the parade followed soon after.

"It does so much for the students as it relates to their knowledge of American history, service and what it stands for," Mignon said.

Veterans Day is Tuesday.

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Veterans Council documentary premieres at University of N. FL as part of Jacksonville's "Week of Valor"

The documentary "Unleashing the Underdogs: The K9s for Warriors Story", produced by Michael Rothfeld, Bill Dudley and Dr. Nadia Ramoutar, was shown on Friday November 7th at UNF. By all accounts it was an unqualified success. It was followed by a panel discussion led by Dr. Anne Freund, noted author and PTSD expert. The panel consisted of Alexander Hildenbrandt, who serves as a leadership member of the Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), and Matt and Danique Masingill. Matt is a graduate of K9s for Warriors and now serves as the Warrior Trainer for K9s and Danique, Matt's wife serves as Director of Operations for K9s for Warriors.

The evening opened with Ray Wikstrom of UNF welcoming everyone, followed by comments from Ken Johnson representing Jacksonville's Dept. of Military Affairs and Bill Dudley, Chairman of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County.

Chaplain John Hugus, LTC ret. Gave the invocation and Vietnam Veterans of America provided the Color Guard.

The panel discussion was very lively, covering such topics at PTSD, TBI, adjusting to life back home and how service dogs provide assistance to returning veterans.



UNF host Ray Wikstrom



VVA 1046 Color Guard



Chairman Bill Dudley



Ken Johns, COJ



Matt & Dozier



Panel: Alex, Dr. Anne,
Danique & Matt



Matt, Dozier & Director
Dr. Nadia Ramoutar

Vietnam Veterans Return to School by Michael Rothfeld

A few days after Veterans Day Bob Dinkins, President of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1084 and John McGinty, founding President of VVA ch. 1084 “invaded” Valley Ridge Academy. Their intent was not hostile, they were there to speak with the students. This Mission was the idea of VRA teacher Aletha Dresback who set up the presentation and coordinated the event. The Veterans Council would also like to thank: Ms. Goldhagen (2nd grade), Ms. Flock (3rd Grade), Ms. Xanders, Ms. Kovacs, Ms. Green (1st grade), Ms. Pollard (3rd), Ms. Norman, Ms Hickey (3rd), Ms. Hoffmann, Ms. Klabacka (2nd), Ms. Sandler, Ms. Dewees (both 4th grade) and Ms. Leighty (5th grade) for allowing John and Bob to speak to their students.

The students were incredible, very interested in what Bob and John were talking about and had questions about everything, some spoke about their parents who were now in service or their grandfathers who were in service. Topics ranged from dog tags, to monsoons, hooches, medals, Purple Hearts, RPD's, sleeping arrangements, etc. The students didn't miss a thing.

I have always felt that students learn more from a direct source than they would from a textbook and the students proved me right.

A special thank you has to go to principal Wayne King also for allowing us to speak to his students.





Helping veterans heal at St. Augustine Beach Veterans Day ceremony

By Michael Isam

St. Augustine, Fla, (November 11, 2014) –

“We take care of our own, if we don’t who will?” is a recurrent theme in both active and veteran military organizations. That theme was never more prevalent than during the Veterans Day ceremonies in St. Johns County.

A small gathering of veterans and civilians gathered before the Veterans Memorial in Lakeside Park adjacent to the St. Augustine Beach city offices.

The Veterans Memorial was a dream of Captain Robert Beskind, USN, (retired). Beskind passed without seeing his dream come to fruition. With the help of Former County Commissioner John Reardon, a Marine Corps veteran, and others in the community, Beskind’s Veterans Memorial came to life.

Quite different than the wall Beskind had in his mind’s eye, the memorial is circular with six posts, each one bearing the emblem of a branch of service. At the entrance to the memorial is a dedication plaque with the quote, “For those who have fought for it, freedom has a flavor the protected will never know.”

The ceremony started with the entrance of the Honor Guard which included those serving in the St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office, St. Augustine, and St. Augustine Beach Police Departments.

Following close behind the Clay County Sheriff’s Office Pipes and Drums Corp offered a rendition of “Amazing Grace” which, as one person noted, “has the haunting ability to stay in the ear for days.”

The ceremony had three guest speakers. William E. Dudley, Lt. Col. USAF, (retired); Robert A. Hardwick, Chief of Police for St. Augustine Beach; Col. Lisa Craig, Florida National Guard.

Each speaker stressed the need of veterans to have time to heal after deployment and some of the avenues available to veterans. This was punctuated by the presence of information tables from the St. Johns County Veterans Service Office and staff members of the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). Each table held pamphlets and brochures on help available and how to get that help.

Dudley, President of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County, said “We currently have a membership of close to 50 veteran and civic organizations. We work very closely with our Veteran Service Office, which is ranked #1 in the State of Florida, and the leadership of the CBOC. However we can help, we are there.”

“Our veterans are very special to us,” said Dudley. “Here in St. Augustine since the very beginning, we have always had a military presence. From the first muster to today’s national guard, those serving have been at the tip of the spear in providing protection, safeguarding the home front and insuring our freedoms.” “We can never thank them enough, he added, “In St. Johns county we have more than 22,000 veterans of WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, and the most recent War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan calling this county home.”,” said Dudley.

“Our country has now been engaged in the longest continuous battle in the history of our nation, fighting the war on terrorism,” he said. “It has required all our military forces including our national guard and reserve units serving multiple tours. This has left our fighting men and women with many scars both physi-

cally and emotionally,” Dudley said and added, “Our Veteran Administration has struggled to keep up with the demands placed on their system.”

The Veteran’s Council of St. Johns County has been a legal entity since July 4th, 2000 when it was incorporated by Col. Ed Taylor, USA (retired) and officially recognized by the St. Johns Board of County Commissioners. Before that it was a group of veterans, lead by Len Prentiss, who met monthly to plan activities for veterans.

“The Veteran’s Council has chosen to recognize the service of our veterans in many ways here in St. Johns county,” said Dudley. “In addition to the celebrations of Memorial and Veterans days, and Wreaths Across America, we present individual awards, support our Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home, our National Cemeteries in St, Augustine and Jacksonville. We hold a homeless veterans stand-down every year, we support the well-known ‘Poppy’ sales and the ‘Forget-Me-Not’ sales for our Disabled American Veterans.”

On the horizon is the institution of a Veterans Treatment Court. “Plans have not been completely finalized, but it has the support of local law enforcement agencies county and state prosecutors and several judges,” said Dudley.

“Our Veterans Service Office is an integral part of our organization,” said Dudley. “Our office, lead by Joseph McDermott, has been rated number one in the state in several years. Their main focus is to help our veterans get their VA claims processed.”

“Five years ago, we embarked on another way to honor our veterans and pay tribute to those who have served our nation,” said Dudley. “In collaboration with Florida Veterans Programs and Projects of Coquina Crossing, we produced five documentaries highlighting the services of many of our St. Johns County veterans.”

“Beginning with the WWII documentary which featured our “greatest generation,” said Dudley, “the documentary highlighted interviews with many of our WWII veterans. It was so well received by the community that we went on to produce documentaries highlighting the service of our Korean and Vietnam veterans followed by a very emotional film of our POW’s from all wars.”

“The latest documentary speaks to those who have served in the current threat to our country, the ‘Global War on Terrorism’, said Dudley, “It is the story of our veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.” “Many of these veterans,” said Dudley, “are suffering from PTSD, TBI, and other physical and emotional stresses. The film is entitled “Unleashing the Underdogs: the K9’s for Warriors story”.

“This film highlights the importance of using dogs to assist in the recovery of our veterans who are suffering from PTSD,” he said. “Doctors aren’t certain why this has such a positive effect on these veterans; they just know that it does.” The film was produced at the K9’s for Warriors facility in Ponte Vedra with additional scenes filmed on location around Jacksonville and St. Johns County. A showing of K9’s for Warriors is tentatively scheduled for March, 2015 here in St. Augustine.

Many veterans have always struggled to fit back into our society when they return from war. That has never been more apparent than in present day with our veterans having been subjected to 3-4 and sometimes 8-10 deployments in Iraq or Afghanistan. In previous wars, our troops were deployed to a combat area, served a tour, and returned home, usually not having to return for a second tour if they had their combat

ticket punched.

We owe these men and women a deep debt of gratitude. As a civilian, as a citizen of a free nation with a debt paid by those who have worn the cloth of this nation, please be sure to pay your respects by thanking them at every opportunity, not just on veterans day.

Hardwick, besides being Chief of Police, holds the rank of Sergeant First Class (SFC) in the Florida Army National Guard. He is a Senior Instructor at the Regional Training Institute, Infantry Battalion. Hardwick participated in multiple deployments to the Near East beginning with Desert Storm in 1990 serving with the 82nd Airborne Division and recently in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004 serving with the 53rd Infantry Brigade.

Hardwick stressed the difference between today's military and those before. In WWII, service was for the duration plus six, or six months after the end of the war. In Korea and Vietnam, there were single tours lasting one year giving the service member a definite deployment and coming home date." "Since 9/11," he said, "the military life is completely different, especially for the national guards. Multiple deployments, very little down time between deployments, no clear front line, never knowing which civilian to trust."

"We trusted ourselves, our unit, and our weapons." "With no real decompression time, trusting your wife, family, and friends was not a reality formed easily."

Craig currently serves as Deputy of the United States Property and Fiscal Office for the Florida National Guard. She was deployed twice, once to support Operation Iraqi Freedom then to support Operation Enduring Freedom in Kuwait and Iraq.

She spoke also of the hardship on families, those with two parents and single parent families. "It is tough enough with one spouse deployed," she said, "but as a single parent, finding a trusted environment for your children is an added burden." "Most of the time," Craig added, "single parents have to rely on their parents or siblings." In either case, there is time that cannot be replaced. "The recitals, the class play, the first tooth, the first step, the first word," and, she added, "not to mention that your child has grown much larger than you remember them when you left."

"All these things come into play upon the return stateside," said Craig. "Your spouse will want you to pick up where you left off, but you can barely remember where that was." "For the time of deployment, your focus has been on staying alive while performing your duties." "Then, in many cases," said Craig, "you are deployed again with little preparation time to make the transition."

"As a unit," said Craig, "we attempt to watch each other upon our return. We look for the little signs, the difference in attitude, inability to focus and other telltale signs that our comrade next to us is not necessarily the one who left." "Our comrades cannot be forced," she said, "but we let them know the door is always open. No blame, no recriminations, only respect for them, and the place they inhabit."

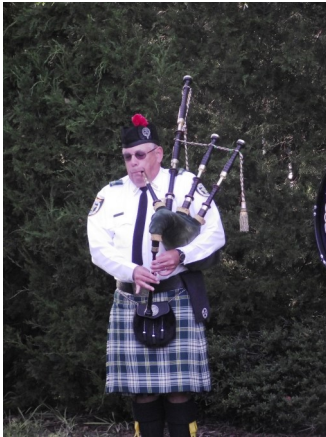
[Disclosure: The author of this story is the current Commander of DAV Chapter 6 and a Vietnam Veteran, 1969 to 1970. He was the founding secretary of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County.] of the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). Each table held pamphlets and brochures on help available and how to get that help.



Wreaths of Remembrance



Admin Staff– CBOC



Amazing Grace



Audience



Below is the link to a video that AT&T had made to honor Mike DelPizzo, MIAP volunteer and urn maker. They sent in a professional film crew that spent two days with Mike and then sent in another person the day of our Nov 7th service at Jax National. Mike was in the USAF and works for AT&T for many years.

AT&T has rewarded him for his donations of urns to MIAP. This video is so beautifully done, it starts with Mike and ends with our Nov 7th service. Mike is not on FB but we all appreciate what he is doing not only for our "forgotten heroes" and for families who might need an urn for their loved ones. Thank you Mike also for your service to our great nation. I guarantee this will bring tears to your eyes from the very first scene. This can now be forwarded to anyone.

[Quicklink.io :: by Mediasilo](https://www.quicklink.io/::by/Mediasilo)

The main speaker for the October Veterans Council was Col. Len Loving, USMC, ret., and director of the Five Star Veterans Center.

Last year, 34 homeless veterans graduated from program with full time jobs and permanent jobs.

Three of their graduates have been accepted into the Wounded Warrior Track program.

As a community Resource Center for Veterans, the Five Star Veterans Center provided assistance and referrals to more than 350 veterans last year.

The Center partners with the Fourth Judicial Circuit Veterans Treatment Court, a diversion program for veterans, to provide the structured environment that promotes successful transitions.

Five Star Veterans Center provides: Private Rooms, Exercise room, Computer Lab, Meals prepared on-site and Transportation to medical appointments.

The Passport to Independence Program provides a safe setting for veterans with PTSD and TBI to learn the skills to re-integrate into society. The program includes: Skills assessment and enhancement, Employment training, Financial Education classes, Career development and Job placement, Case management and VA analysis.

The Mission of the Five Star Veterans Center is to provide stable, secure supportive housing to homeless veterans, and the supportive services to ensure their re-integration into the workforce; and to be a community resource for all veterans.

Resident Qualifications

Application submission (accepted every Wednesday from 9am to 4pm), DD-214, Honorable Discharge or General Discharge under Honorable Conditions, Proof of recent Communicable Disease Test (TB and hepatitis), Psychological Evaluation.



COL Loving & Chairman
Bill Dudley



Contact Information

Five Star Veterans Center
40 Acme Street
Jacksonville, FL 32211
(904) 723-5950

www.5starveteranscenter.org

A special thank you from the Veterans Council of St. Johns County

The Veterans Council is made up of representatives from all the veterans organizations in the county and has as its **Mission** is to: *work with city and county governments and other local organizations to achieve the mutual goal to provide a central agency to assist in the coordination and presentation of matters concerning veterans and veterans activities in St. Johns County. The Veteran's Council will endeavor to precipitate, stimulate and assist various organizations as they perform patriotic events. One of the major purposes as is the promotion and education of national patriotic matters.*

The veterans groups in the county have been lucky over the years to have local non veteran businesses and individuals assist us in fulfilling our Mission. We would like to single out a few for special recognition:

The St. Augustine Elks Lodge no. 829 St. Augustine: The Lodge has allowed the Veterans Council to hold its monthly meetings there, allowed us to film our documentary interviews within its walls and has contributed monetarily to various veterans events and activities. It has also hosted our annual "Standdown" for Homeless Veterans as well as our Council supported motorcycle escort of the Traveling Vietnam Wall when it treats several hundred escort riders to lunch.

Herbie Wiles Insurance: Doug and Herbie Wiles, both veterans, have assisted and supported the Veterans Council in many of its endeavors, they have assisted us with our liability insurance and donated to our veterans documentaries depicting the heroic stories of our local veterans. They are true supporters of veterans causes and we highly value their support and friendship.

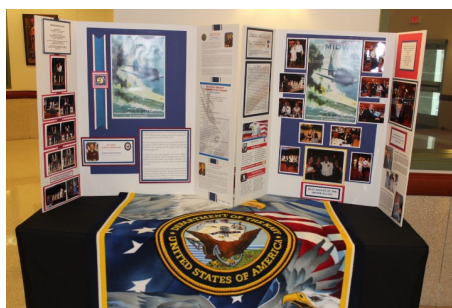
Dr. Roger Geronimo: Dr. Roger Geronimo, a world famous opera tenor, has proven to be an invaluable asset to our Veterans Council team. He has volunteered his professional skills and has been a strong presence at our last two annual veterans events at Anastasia Baptist Church. Roger has led the entertainment portion of the show and has sung our National Anthem to a wowed audience. With the help of his brother Dennis they have helped promote Veterans Council events and causes on their highly rated Flagler College radio station which airs every Thursday afternoon from 1 to 3 pm on WFCF. Thank you Roger for your invaluable professional expertise and we hope you will again take the entertainment lead on our next veterans event.

Jim Stafford, Eclipse Recording, St. Augustine: Jim has been our "go to guy" when it comes to designing our dvd cases and labels. When you see our documentaries you are seeing Jim's creative work making our dvds look professional. This year Jim has assisted the Council with a reduced rate on our sound system for our Veterans day event at Francis Field. We appreciate Jim's help and hope you will use his services if the need arises.

The Veterans Council appreciates partnering with the private sector as our mutual goals will always be to assist our county's veterans.

**Bill Dudley, Chairman
Veterans Council, St. Johns County**

The County Commission has invited the Veterans Council of St Johns County to place an exhibit in the Rotunda of the new County Commission Building, to run the month of November and to commemorate both Veterans Day and all the Veterans living in this County. The exhibits will show the timeline of the military stationed here over 449 years and will include items from members of all 28 organizations that comprise the Council as well as from the Florida National Guard, the British Night Watch and the Battle of Midway organizers. This project was organized by Project Officer, Harry Metz, amazingmetz@yahoo.com.





Numbers...we're surrounded by them. Your Age, Your Phone Number, Your V.A. Number, Your Social Security Number, Your Street Number and yes, Your Military Service Number. Numbers, Numbers, they are everywhere!

All of the numbers listed above mean something to each and every one of you. Well, there is now a New Number that means a lot to the Veterans of "The No Name Island" and Vilano Beach.

The Vilano Beach VFW now has a number....and that is the VFW Number. Now Vilano Beach VFW 12142.

While most people will just call us the Vilano Beach VFW, 12142 is a number we are very Proud to have. Remember VFW 12142, we are getting larger and stronger every day. www.VilanoBeachVFW.org

Next to come in 90 days, is our Post Charter! Come join the fun....

A. J. Sartin, Commander - VFW; VilanoBeachVFW@att.net



**Saturday,
December 13th,
2014**



**Post 444 Ladies is hosting a Poker Run for
Toys for Tots!**

**Stops are: Post 444, 9 AM Registration, KSU 10 AM
Post 88-Bronson, Post 42-Chiefland, Post 447-Inglis (snacks),
American Legion Post 236 (snacks), return to Post 444.**



**\$10 registration with a toy.
Additional Hands, \$5.**



If you have any questions, please contact Michelle at Post 444, 528-2550 or Vickie at 339-3398.

THE JACKSONVILLE LADIES - JACKSONVILLE NATIONAL CEMETERY is a local organization that is asking for volunteers. Daily there are two ladies at the JNC and they attend every funeral service for that day to comfort family members. If you would like to volunteer for one day a month please read below and contact Gail Williams or me and I will put you in contact with Gail. About The Ladies - Mission Statement: No Veteran will be buried alone in the Jacksonville National Cemetery!



Objective: To honor those who have served this nation; to assist, accompany and promote a sympathetic relationship with Veterans and their families at internment services as needed; and be present when family or friends are unable to attend.

In September of 2008, a new volunteer service was formed for the Jacksonville National Cemetery. At the Dedication Ceremony the Jacksonville National Cemetery Advisory Committee suggested that local women's organizations take on this "Last Tribute" to our Veterans that will be buried in the cemetery. The Jacksonville Ladies started meeting in November 2008 and were present for the first internments that began in January 7, 2009. This non-profit volunteer program shadows the Arlington Ladies, a volunteer group of military wives and lady veterans at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, whose service began in 1948.

Veterans with no family in attendance are of particular concern and the Jacksonville Ladies will be present when family or friends are unable to attend the services to ensure no Veteran will be buried alone. The intent of participation by the Jacksonville Ladies is strictly not to interfere with funeral services, but rather to support any Veteran or Veteran's widow or family during a time when they feel the loss of a loved one. One Jacksonville Lady will be represented to honor and attend each Veterans service at the cemetery as requested by the family. A condolence card will be presented to the families and the Jacksonville Ladies will affirm that they are there to assist, accompany and promote a sympathetic relationship with Veterans and their families.

Membership and participation in the Jacksonville Ladies is strictly voluntary and not limited to military service related women and is not connected to membership or participation in any other affiliation. Members are obtained through word of mouth and participants will volunteer for specific dates depending on their availability with morning and afternoon shifts available. Up to four volunteers may be assigned to a specific date to cover the possibility of multiple funeral services running simultaneously.

The first service begins as early as 9:00 a.m. and can take place every thirty minutes with the last service ending by 2:30 p.m. from Monday through Friday. There is no minimum or maximum number of times a volunteer may participate; however, training is mandatory before being put on the schedule. The Jacksonville Ladies will wear a uniform consisting of a navy blue suit with a patriotic collar and Jacksonville Ladies name tag at all services and events so they can be clearly identified. Volunteers will demonstrate a sincere desire to support Veterans and their families, and exhibit a willingness to honor those who have served this nation. In addition, Jacksonville Ladies will assist the cemetery staff with other volunteer duties as needed.

The Jacksonville National Cemetery is located north of the Jacksonville International Airport at 4083 Lannie Road in Jacksonville, FL and is just a few miles off of 1-295 and Lem Turner Road. For service information contact the office 766-5222. For information about the Jacksonville Ladies contact Chairman, Gail Williams, 2759 Ravine Hill Drive, Middleburg, Fl. 32068. Gail can be reached by phone at 904-291-0604 or send an email to mgcwilliams1217@aol.com with "The Jacksonville Ladies" as the subject.

Woodland Acres Neighborhood
FREE GROCERIES EVENT

Thursday, December 4
4:00 to 7:00 p.m.



Drop by for Fresh &
Nutritious Foods
provided by



The Five STAR Veterans Center
Here to help our Veterans and our Neighbors



40 Acme Street
Jacksonville, FL 32211

Preference will be given to:
Veterans, Active Duty Military,
and our Woodland Acres Neighbors.
Neighbors MUST bring a Door Hanger

For several years, D.A.V. Fl Chapter 6 has furnished the passenger vans for the delivery of Veterans between the St. Augustine Clinic and the Gainesville, V.A. Hospital, and back, Monday – Friday. The Van departs the Clinic every weekday at 0600. Phone (904) 209-3710 to schedule a ride. Drivers furnished by the COA are:

Monday – Lonnie Woodard;
Tuesday – Jack LaLonde
Wednesday – Floyd Bubba;
Thursday – Bob Garlander
Friday – Robert “Butch” Harrison



**VFW, Bryan Tutton Memorial Post 2391
Presents**

It's Christmas Time Again

December 7th

Ham, scalloped potatoes, mixed vegs, salad, rolls

Christmas Cookies for dessert

\$15.00

Dinner begins at 5 p.m.

Show Begins at 6:30 p.m.



**For Tickets/Seating or Information Contact
Debbie 460-9345**

6184 US Hwy 1 South

St. Augustine



Military Children's Christmas Party

December 11, 2014
6:00-9:00PM

We are putting a twist on this year's Christmas Party with

Painting with a Twist

Come celebrate the holiday season with a festive memento that you can cherish forever. You and your child will paint a holiday themed painting that you will be able to bring home.

Santa will even be making a visit, so please bring a wrapped gift valued at no more than \$20 with your child's name on it that Santa can present.



Highlights

- ◆ Food and Beverages
- ◆ Holiday themed Painting
- ◆ Visit from Santa

An RSVP is a must so they can have enough materials for all who attend. Space is limited to the first 20 children so please RSVP as soon as possible.

Painting with a Twist, 292 State Road 312, Saint Augustine, FL
Riverside Center (Hobby Lobby Plaza)

Please contact Rebecca Gibson: 904-823-0646, rebecca.j.gibson.ctr@mail.mil

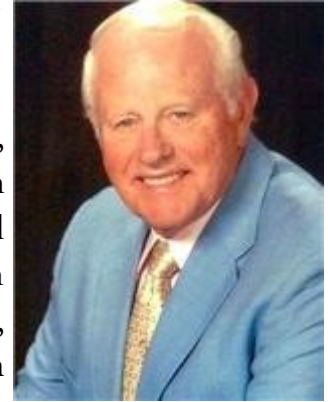
Time: 6:00- 9:00 PM

Date: 12/11/2014



I met and spoke with Mr. Leahy several times at the First Militia Chapter of AUSA meetings.

John Leahy, of St. Augustine, Fla., and formerly of Chester, N.Y., entered into eternal rest surrounded by his loving family on Nov. 10, 2014. He was 87. The son of the late Michael "Mick" and Elizabeth Falvey Leahy, he was born on March 20, 1927, in Lixnaw, County Kerry, Ireland. After immigrating to the U.S., **John proudly served his new country during the Korean War.** John was a member of the Knights of Columbus, the Kiwanis Club, the VFW and an active member of St. Anastasia Church in St. Augustine. **John will be remembered for getting posthumous citizenship for the Irish military who served in the Korean War;** his great sense of humor; love of Irish sports; charitable work; and devotion to his family, faith and friends.



Leahy, a decorated Korean War Veteran who eventually became an American citizen, relentlessly spent three decades toward the goal of persuading the U.S. government to extend the same benefits to the deceased Irishmen as it does to Americans killed in action by awarding posthumous U.S. citizenship to the men from Ireland. Most of the deceased came to the U.S., joined the military, and fought in Korea with the ultimate goal of becoming American citizens. After years of lobbying the U. S. Congress, his efforts paid off. Dec. 2, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law HR 2623, the Schumer Citizenship Bill for Deceased Veterans. With that accomplished, Leahy went on to spearhead the establishment of the Irish Korean War Memorial Headstone at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn.



The Disabled American Veterans Chapter 6, of St. Johns County, has a EZ-Access Modular Ramp System available for a Veteran that needs one that requires a turn, and two ramps to get from the porch to the sidewalk. This ramp cannot be parted out...must be used as manufactured.

**For more information,
contact A. J. Sartin (904) 669-1946**





Greater Jacksonville Area USO

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL TROOPS AND FAMILIES?
 DID YOU KNOW THAT GREATER JAX AREA USO IS AN "INDEPENDENT" CHARTERED USO AFFILIATE ORGANIZATION, OPERATING THREE LOCAL USO CENTERS SERVING OVER 250,000 MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES. GREATER JAX AREA USO RELIES TOTALLY UPON DONATIONS AND VOLUNTEERS FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND BUSINESSES FOR SUPPORT.
 PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE WWW.JAXUSO.ORG

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Wine & War Stories

IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS OF AMERICA (IAVA) VET-TOGETHER

New Owners of The Wine Bar and a recently separated Vet back from Afghanistan team up for a great social networking and community building event at The Wine Bar.

Located on 1st Street, Jacksonville Beach!

This is open to Veterans, Active Duty, and Military Supporters.

We are hosting once a month so come on out meet new friends, bark at old ones and don't be afraid to stick around a little while longer! It is A Wine Bar.

Check out our Facebook Page and Web Site—Events for the next one!

Tweet, Text and Share IAVA VetTogethers for Vets in Jax



For More Information, Please Call or Email

Phone: 912-271-5748
Email: alex@stonefran.com
www.facebook.com/
WineWarStories
www.facebook.com/IAVA.org/

RSVP :
www.stonefran.com
/events/wine-and-war-stories



STONERWORK FRANCHISING is proud to host another IAVA VetTogether in Florida. The IAVA (Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America) have dedicated quite a bit to helping vets get back on their feet, find employment, seek education and function within our communities upon separation. This is a chance to speak the lingo and get along with people who understand you.

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psmith@craigfuneralhome.com

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www.herbiewiles.com

Here is a good website to search archives for veterans' records:

<http://www.archives.gov/veterans/>

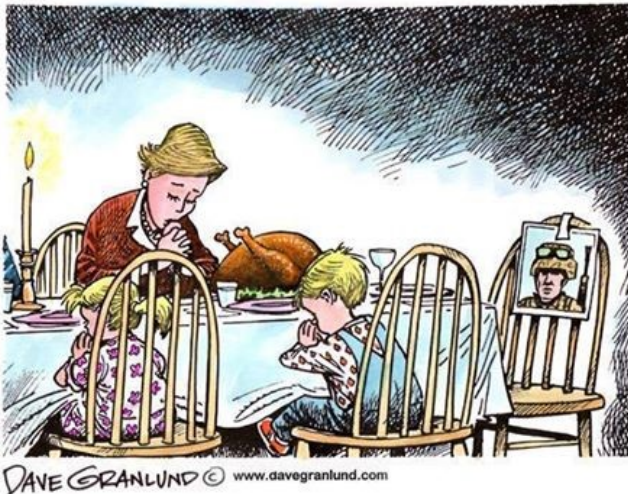
From Franklin "Frank" Hunt, LCDR, USN-Retired
Post Commander, American Legion Fallen Heroes Post 372

*Veterans Council of St. Johns County,
"Helping All Veterans"*

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County welcomes article submissions from all County Veterans & organizations. Articles should be of interest to all and veterans related. Submissions may be edited &/or shortened and used if space permits.

Send to: mrothfeld@anyveteran.org

Until they ALL Come Home



The views expressed in The Patriot Reader Newsletter articles, submissions and spotlights are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County or the editors of The Patriot Reader. It is the purpose of this periodical to share a variety of information that pertain to local veterans and their organizations.

**The Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc. is a
Not For Profit Florida Corporation.**

Our formation date was July 4, 2001 in a proclamation issued by the St. Johns County Commissioners. It is composed of representatives of the various veterans' organizations within St. Johns County.

The Veteran's Council will work with city and county governments and other local organizations to achieve the mutual goal to provide a central agency to assist in the coordination and presentation of matters concerning veterans and veterans activities in St. Johns County.

The Veteran's Council will endeavor to precipitate, stimulate and assist various organizations as they perform patriotic events. One of the major purposes is the promotion and education of national patriotic matters.

**The St. Johns County Veterans Council meets the last
Thursday of the month at 7 pm at the Elks Lodge,
1420 A1A So., St. Augustine.**

Visit our Website: www.veteranscouncilofstjohns.org

**Veterans Service Office
1955 US 1 South, Suite 550
St. Augustine, FL 32086**

(physical location)

The VSO Office is located in the St. Johns County Health and Human Services complex, behind the VA Clinic.

*The office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily,
Monday through Friday excluding holidays.*

*Service is by appointment.
Phone: 904-209-6160 Fax: 904-209-6161
Joseph McDermott, CVSO
Rick Rees, Assistant VSO
Tammy Shirley, Assistant VSO*