



2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter, Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)



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Volume 8

“A Soldier Once And Always”

March 2018

Commanders Corner: I am sorry for being late for the March 2018 input. Both my wife and I had bouts of the flu in tandem and I completely forgot about the short month. I hope that the rest of you have weathered the flu better than we did. Just some trivia this month.

Fort Lancaster (1855-1861) – Established in 1855 on the east bank of live Oak Creek just above where it joins the Pecos River, the fort was tasked to pursue and subdue the Comanche and Mescalero Apache Indians, as well as guarding the Pecos Crossing of the San Antonio-El Paso Road. The military post was first established as Camp Lancaster on August 20, 1855, when Companies H and K of the First Infantry Regiment, led by Captain Stephen D. Carpenter, arrived. It was designated as a permanent fort on August 21, 1856. One of the most isolated posts in Texas, Fort Lancaster’s only civilian activities were a sutler and a stage stop for mail. Soldiers constructed the permanent buildings at Fort Lancaster with a combination of limestone blocks and adobe. At the height of development, it consisted of 25 permanent buildings and had an average complement of 72 men and four officers. When the Civil War erupted, federal troops abandoned the fort on March 19, 1861.



Please look at the article reproduced from the March 2018 edition of the American Legion Magazine. It speaks about the 50th Vietnam War Commemoration program. Rich Heroux and I have taken on the chore of advancing for the Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA) efforts to honor the veterans who served during the 20 years of the war. We have collectively conducted several events at our recent reunions. We strongly encourage you to become involved in supporting this program. Read the article on page 6 and if you have suggestion and wish to conduct such an event let me or Rich know how we can help you get started toward a successful noble effort.

Remember our collective extended family, those Americans serving in our Armed Forces all over the world.

Got a comment, idea or complaint, contact me at Commander.2.1.jgw@gmail.com.

John

Keep safe and may the bond of battle never be broken!



Pres. Trump Nominates Former Army Captain as New Top Benefits Official for VA: After a nearly two-and-a-half-year wait, the Veterans Benefits Administration is poised to get a new permanent leader. President Donald Trump nominated Army veteran Paul Lawrence as the next under secretary of Veterans Affairs for benefits, a post that has been manned by a series of acting officials since Allison Hickey stepped down from the job in October 2015. Lawrence is currently a vice president at Kaiser Associates, an international consulting firm, where he specializes in organizational efficiency. For the last three decades he has worked in a variety of accounting firms in roles focused on federal government practices and effectiveness. He is also an Army Airborne School graduate who left the service at the rank of captain. Lawrence’s nomination was hinted at by VA Secretary David Shulkin during congressional testimony, when asked about high-profile positions vacant in his administration. Shulkin said he expected the benefits nominee to be announced in coming weeks, but could not offer a timeline for when a nominee for the under secretary of Veterans Affairs for health — his old job — would be made public. The nomination comes amid scandal and turmoil at VA, following the release of a critical inspector general’s report alleging multiple improprieties related to a overseas trip last July. Since then, Shulkin has spoken out about internal strife within the department, indicating that high-level firings for insubordination could be coming soon.

Pres. Trump Says He's Eyeing Veterans Day for Military Parade: President Donald Trump is eyeing Veterans Day for a military parade but says he’ll scrap the idea if it can’t be done at a “reasonable cost.” Trump wasn’t asked to define “reasonable cost” during a telephone interview with Fox News Channel host Jeanine Pirro. But White House budget director Mick Mulvaney recently told Congress that a parade could cost between \$10 million and \$30 million. Trump says officials are discussing Veterans Day in November as the likely date for the Pennsylvania Avenue parade, although he likes July 4. But the president says a parade would be “something great” for the country’s spirit. Trump got the idea for having a military parade after he attended France’s Bastille Day celebration last year in Paris.



The Remains of Missing WWII Marine Identified as Detroit Teen: The remains of a Marine missing in action in the Pacific in 1943 have been identified as a Detroit teenager who died during intense fighting against the Japanese that claimed the lives of thousands in just three days. Army officials say Pfc. Arnold J. Harrison was identified using dental and other analysis. The 19-year-old died Nov. 20, 1943, on the island of Betio on the first day of the Battle of Tarawa. Betio is part of the Tarawa atoll south of the Marshall Islands. The dead were buried in battlefield cemeteries on the island. The remains were then interred by 1949 in Honolulu. Harrison's remains were disinterred in January 2017 for analysis and positively identified in October. He's scheduled to be buried March 2, 2018 at Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery in Dallas.



Army Unveils Brown Beret, New Patch for Military Advisers, SFAB: When photos of a colored beret designed for the newly formed Security Force Assistance Brigade first leaked online, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley responded to the backlash by vowing to redesign the cover to an unequivocal shade of brown. Milley and the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade unveiled the new beret during the unit's activation ceremony at Fort Benning, Georgia. SFAB soldiers also donned a revamped unit patch and tab, retaining the sword and spearhead elements of the original. SFABs are made up of officers and noncommissioned officers who have already completed a stint in an operational unit. The effort to stand up the brigades — the Army plans to stand up six in all — has come from the highest levels of the Army, with Milley voicing his support for this growing need in the Army.



Decision Ready Claim Program: This is an introduction to a fairly new program for Veterans who are planning to file a VA disability compensation claim. It's the **Decision Ready Claim Program** -- the fastest way to get a VA disability claim processed. Eligible Veterans can get a decision on their claim within 30 days after it is submitted when they work with an accredited representative, such as a Veterans Service Organization. The DRC Program is administered by the Veterans Benefits Administration, and we are the source of all data related to the program. We're excited to see how DRC is drastically changing the way we process claims. Hear from Veterans themselves about how the DRC Program has worked for them and learn more at www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/drc.asp.

White House Meets with Veterans Groups Amid Dispute at VA, Tension Over Access to Health Care: White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly told top veterans advocates recently that President Trump supports Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, whose future in the administration was called into question this month amid a power struggle among political appointees, according to people who participated in the discussion. The meeting was arranged by Kelly following revelations that Shulkin, the only Obama-era holdover in Trump's Cabinet, had become a target of conservatives hoping to install a new secretary who would be more supportive of their plan to expand health-care options beyond the VA system — a controversial program known as Choice. Leading advocacy groups, including the American Legion, the VFW and the Disabled Veterans of America, fear the goal is to dismantle VA, and they view Shulkin as an ally in that standoff. Gary Augustine, who heads DAV's Washington headquarters, said the groups emphasized to Kelly their belief that Shulkin won't be effective unless VA's leadership team is united behind him. Kelly, a retired Marine general, appeared “gracious and intent on listening” to their feedback on how far the administration should go in offering private health-care options, Augustine said. Most of the groups represented at the White House support legislation, put forward by Sens. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) and Jon Tester (D-Mont.), calling for a gradual expansion of the Choice program while maintaining healthy funding for VA. The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee passed the bill last year, and the White House has signaled its support with “modest changes.” Since that vote, however, Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) introduced his own Choice expansion proposal and later merged it with a bill put forward by Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.). Both pieces of legislation have stalled amid political fights. In a statement released after the meeting, White House officials said the Trump administration “continues to work with Congress . . . and will continue these discussions to ensure veterans receive the care they deserve.” One group that attended the White House meeting, Concerned Veterans of America, favors a more aggressive approach. Its plan would allow veterans to be treated at non-VA facilities, and then patients, doctors and hospitals would be reimbursed by the government. Critics say such a plan would be too expensive and could harm VA's funding.

Veterans, Smiles and a Dog Named Honor: In early January the VA Medical Center in Muskogee, Oklahoma, became a brighter, cheerier place with the arrival of its newest staff member. Her name is Honor, and she's only 18-months-old. “Patients smile when they see her coming,” said 34-year-old Terri Woodworth, Honor's co-worker. “All day long we make regular rounds to the chemo, palliative care and inpatient psych units. We walk around the entire medical center to visit patients throughout the day.” Honor is a happy, easy-going Golden Retriever who, without even trying too hard, seems to be a natural at instantly boosting everyone's spirits. “She can really sense people's emotions,” said Woodworth, a staffer on the hospital's social work unit. “She senses emotions and reacts in just the right way to make someone feel better. Having Honor here, doing what she's doing, is turning out to be better than I had ever imagined.” The friendly canine always seems to hit the right note with every patient she sees.



We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.

Russians Charged with Meddling in 2016 Presidential Race: Thirteen Russians, including a businessman close to Vladimir Putin, were charged Friday in an elaborate plot to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election through social media propaganda, aimed in part at helping Republican Donald Trump and harming the prospects of his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton. The federal indictment, brought by the office of special counsel Robert Mueller, represents the most direct allegation to date of illegal Russian meddling during the campaign that sent Trump to the White House. It also marks the first criminal charges against Russians believed to have secretly worked to influence the outcome. Trump claimed vindication, noting in a tweet that Russian interference efforts alleged in the indictment began in 2014 — “long before I announced that I would run for President.” “The results of the election were not impacted. The Trump campaign did nothing wrong — no collusion!” he tweeted. However, the Mueller investigation continues. The collusion question, still unresolved, has been at the heart of the probe, which before Friday had produced charges against four Trump associates. The U.S. intelligence community has said the Russian government interfered to benefit Trump, including by orchestrating the hack of Democratic emails, and Mueller and his prosecutors have been assessing whether the campaign coordinated with Russia in any meddling. The latest indictment does not focus on the hacking but instead centers on a social media effort that began in 2014 and continued past the election, with the goal of producing confusion and discontent in the American political process. Trump himself has been reluctant to acknowledge the interference. The intent of the meddling, the indictment says, was to “sow discord in the U.S. political system, including the 2016 presidential election.” By early-to-mid 2016, the indictment alleges, Russian efforts included supporting Trump’s campaign and disparaging Democrat Clinton. The charges say that Russians also communicated with “unwitting individuals” associated with the Trump campaign and other political activists to coordinate activities.

Kentucky National Guard Unit Deploying with 101st Airborne: A Kentucky National Guard unit is deploying with the 101st Airborne to Afghanistan for a yearlong tour. A statement from the National Guard says 35 soldiers with the Louisville-based unit will integrate with the Fort Campbell-based 101st Airborne Division to provide assistance in intelligence, operations and logistics while deployed. A departure ceremony was held Monday in Louisville for the unit. It will be the first deployment the new guard unit, which is one of 13 that have formed across the country and are associated with active-duty Army commands. The guard soldiers have trained with the 101st over the last several months to prepare for the deployment.

Young Americans Unable to Serve in the Military: The military depends on a constant flow of volunteers every year. According to 2017 Pentagon data, 71 percent of young Americans between 17 and 24 are ineligible to serve in the United States military. Put another way: Over 24 million of the 34 million people of that age group cannot join the armed forces. If only 29 percent of the nation’s young adults are qualified to serve, and if this trend continues, it is inevitable that the U.S. military will suffer from a lack of manpower. A manpower shortage in the United States Armed Forces directly compromises national security.

In World War II, the youngest serviceman in the United States military was Calvin Graham - age 12. Graham lied about his age when he enlisted in the US Navy. His real age was not discovered until after he was wounded.

Former Slave and Two-time Olympian Becomes an Airman: Airman 1st Class Guor Maker fled war and slavery in South Sudan almost 20 years ago, came to the United States, and has become a college graduate, an Olympian, and, now, an airman. As an 8-year-old, Maker, now 33, lost eight of his nine siblings in the Sudanese Civil War and was captured and enslaved twice, once by Sudanese soldiers and once by herdsman, according to a Joint Base San Antonio press release. He escaped both times, and in 2001, he and his uncle’s family were granted permission to come to the U.S. He settled in Concord, New Hampshire, where he learned English by watching cartoons, and later received a running scholarship to Iowa State University. Guor Maker, a trainee at Air Force basic military training, supports a wingman taking a physical fitness test Jan. 30 at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas. (Airman 1st Class Dillon Parker/Air Force). “I wanted to change my life, help my parents back in South Sudan, and give my future children a better childhood than the one I had,” Maker said in the release. “And the only way to do that was through education and determination.” He dreamed of qualifying for the Olympics, and he did — one year after graduating with a bachelor’s degree in chemistry. But though South Sudan was now independent, they were not a member of the International Olympics Committee. Not yet a U.S. citizen, Maker ran the marathon without a country. The experience inspired him to bring South Sudan to the Olympics, and in 2016, he was one of three athletes to represent South Sudan in the Olympics for the first time. Guor Maker, a trainee at Air Force basic military training, completes the one and a half mile run portion of the Air Force physical fitness test Jan. 30 at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas. Maker finished his run with a time of 7:31, earning the top fitness score for males in his graduating class. (Airman 1st Class Dillon Parker/Air Force) Maker, now a dental assistant in technical training, is turning his eye to serving his new country in the Air Force. Maker hopes to join the Air Force World Class Athlete Program, which gives elite athletes the opportunity compete in national events to train for the Olympics. He wants to qualify for the 2020 Olympics, where he’ll have the opportunity to represent his new home country. “All of the things I’ve accomplished have derived from the opportunities the U.S. has afforded me,” said Maker. “When I first came to America, I didn’t have hardly anything, but with the support and opportunity this country has given me, I’ve been able to completely change my life.”



Total casualties for World War II totaled between 50 - 70 million people, 80 percent of which came from only four countries - Russia, China, Germany and Poland. Over 50 percent of the casualties were civilians, with the majority of those being women and children.

Army Chief: Future of US Troops in Iraq TBD as ISIS Crumbles: The U.S. Army chief of staff, who recently returned from a trip to Iraq, said U.S. troops there will continue to help Iraqi security forces root out Islamic State militants, but what comes after that for the Army in the war-torn country remains to be seen. "I think the situation in Iraq is a lot different than it was three or four years ago when ISIS came rolling out of the desert and screaming down the Euphrates River Valley," Gen. Mark Milley told reporters Jan. 17 following an Association of the U.S. Army breakfast in Arlington, Virginia. "The caliphate, such as it was in terms of owning land, etc. — that has been destroyed. And the land that ISIS, or Daesh, controlled has been liberated. It's back in Iraqi hands and that has reverted to what would be called sort of small-scale terrorism," he said. Just the other day, for example, there was a small attack in Baghdad, Milley noted, adding that ISIS no longer replicates or has a "proto-state sort of thing, so that is a big step forward." But the war against ISIS is not yet over, and Milley has visited Iraq, as well as U.S. soldiers there who are helping Iraqi security forces, to get a sense of what needs to be done. "There is a lot of work left to be done," he said. Yet, what the combatant commander decides for future U.S. troop presence in both Iraq and Syria has yet to be determined. "We will see what the combatant commander, how he wants to shift gears" once ISIS is defeated, Milley said. "But the Iraqi security forces are in a consolidation period where they have to continue to eliminate the small pockets of terrorists and insurgents, the ISIS terrorists that are out there, and we will help them do that." Milley wouldn't say whether such troop presence could include the Army's newly conjured security force assistance brigades designed specifically to train, advise, assist and enable foreign militaries and police forces. The first SFAB based out of Fort Benning, Georgia, is headed to Afghanistan next month and has been training rigorously at the Joint Readiness Training Center ahead of the deployment. Milley said during the breakfast that SFABs formally institutionalize a practice of training, advising, assisting and enabling indigenous forces that has long been resident in the Army. Funding for the new units were requested for the first time in the fiscal 2018 Army budget yet to be approved by Congress. "The need has been there for a long time, and we have met that need," Milley said, "but we have met it in the last 16 years through ad hoc measures, in my opinion, and I've been a participant in that. "That is not say it's bad, it's just been ad hoc and it's been very disruptive to the training of the force structure that does exist for conventional higher-end operations."

Remains of Airman Missing Since WWII Recovered in France: An airman whose plane was shot down during World War II is finally coming home. Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. John Canty, who served with the 555th Bombardment Squadron, 386th Bombardment Group, 9th Bomber Command, was accounted for on Jan. 22, 2018. Canty was one of eight crewmembers aboard a B-26 Marauder on a bombing mission on June 22, 1944; all eight members were marked as killed. "These service members have been missing for up to 75 years, in some cases," said Sgt. 1st Class Kristen Duus, a spokeswoman for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, according to the Air Force. Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. John H. Canty, a gunner and engineer, was killed 16 days after D-Day when his B-26 Marauder was shot down just east of Caen, France. His body has been recovered by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. SSG Canty, from Winsted, Connecticut, is recorded on the Tablets of the Missing at the Normandy American Cemetery, an American Battle Monuments Commission site in France. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate that he has been accounted for. Interment services are pending and more details will be released seven to 10 days prior to the funeral service.

Senate Reaches Budget Deal with Huge Defense Boost: Senate leaders have reached a two-year deal that would set defense spending at \$700 billion for 2018 and \$716 billion for 2019. Those top-lines, part of a deal announced by Senate leaders, hews to those authorized by National Defense Authorization Act for 2018 and President Donald Trump's expected 2019 defense budget. Not all of the details were announced immediately, as bipartisan talks continued, but sources close to them said spending limits for defense and non-defense combined would be raised by \$300 billion over two years. It was not immediately clear exactly how the deal will address budget caps and how much of the defense funding will be sought as cap-exempt Overseas Contingency Operations funding. The caps, excluding OCO or Department of Energy funding, limit the Defense Department's base budget to \$549 billion for fiscal 2018 and \$562 billion for fiscal 2019. The emerging deal still may face opposition from House fiscal conservatives over proposed increases to the non-defense side of the budget and from House Democrats who sought a vote on protections for young immigrants. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said in a Senate floor speech the agreement would, "unwind the sequestration cuts that have hamstrung the military and jeopardized our national security." Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said the emerging deal could be a clean break from the budget dysfunction that has gripped Washington for years. "After months of fiscal brinkmanship, this budget deal is the first real sprout of bipartisanship. and it should break the long cycle of spending crises that have snarled this congress and hampered our middle class," Schumer said. The deal was hailed by defense advocates emerging from a meeting with McConnell "I'd rather we didn't have to do as much on non-defense, but this is an absolute necessity, that we've got these numbers," said the Senate Armed Services Committee's No. 2 Republican, Sen. Jim Inhofe, of Oklahoma.

It's official: DoD releases new 'deploy or get out' policy: The Pentagon recently released its new policy on military lethality, which will begin separation procedures for service members who have been non-deployable for the last 12 months or more. "This new policy is a 12-month deploy or be removed policy," Robert Wilkie, the under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness, told a Senate panel. "However, there are exceptions." As Military Times previously reported, there will be exceptions, such as pregnancy. Medical boards will review wounded personnel, and the services will retain the ability to grant exceptions to wounded warriors. "The situation we face today is really unlike anything we have faced, certainly in the post-World War II era," Wilkie told the Senate Armed Services subcommittee. "On any given day, about 13 to 14 percent of the force is medically unable to deploy. That comes out to be about 286,000 [service members]." Wilkie said that the new policy was the result of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis' July memo that "everyone who comes into the service and everyone who stays in the service is world-wide deployable." Wilkie likened having 14 percent of forces non-deployable to Jeff Bezos at Amazon walking into his company on Christmas week and finding that 14 percent of his employees were unable to work. "He would no longer be the largest company in the world," Wilkie said. Wilkie acknowledged several deployability challenges that are "on us," such as unit leaders not ensuring that all of the service members under their leadership had gotten all of their required dental and medical care. Command Sgt Maj. John Troxell, the senior enlisted adviser to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Joe Dunford, estimated that as many as 99,000 military personnel are unable to deploy. But "the other thing we've seen is that in the down years of recruiting for the military, we offered too many medical waivers," Wilkie said. "The medical conditions those service members have followed them into the service as they progressed through their careers. We have to address that."

The Water Buffalo Caper: by Bo Borysiak;

I remember the day we were walking down into a rice paddy where a mother water buffalo and her baby were on our left front. The baby spooked and ran through our column gap. Then as we kept moving in spaced line, mom reared up and came charging after her baby. Guys were yelling get out of the way and let her go through! But the group in her direction opened up on her. You could see the dust on her hide making mini clouds around her (I think there was an M-79 HE round that was shot too, but she was too close and it caromed off her shoulder and landed within 10 feet back to her rear. But that day the baby was spared. Also it is my recollection that all US forces were obligated to report and arrange for a financial reimbursement to the Vietnamese Farmer or owner. Now, were they the Vietnamese pissed off? Sure... Were they turned into VC? Maybe? And maybe they were already VC? God only knows... But the grunts in her path were green and scared shitless, plus extremely wary, which the momma may well have sensed. While the baby didn't, but wanted to get away because they both were in the short corner of that rice-paddy. It was sad and could have wounded some or many of our men, had that M-79 round detonated on or around that water buffalo! Even when the dinks drove the 2 water buffalo & baby up that narrow cut trail well after the first one (as written above). That green M-60 Machine gunner from one of the 2 platoons in front of us, opened up with the M-60 and wounded (Thank God did not Kill) one or more GI's! The *chu-hoi* in the 2/1 company behind us shot the Momma water buffalo (with his 45 pistol, between the eyes from 3 feet) and was cutting hind steaks off of it, within minutes. While the rest of us were getting down from the nearest "Monkey Vine"! That M-60 Newby was sent to the rear on the next chopper, and never returned to Bravo. He was African American, that much I do remember, but I did not know his name, sorry Terry Tenney had ran to the right about 10 feet or so from the trail just ahead of me. Over by a big rock the size of a VW bug. When the Baby appeared in front of him. He had it by the horns, and was yelling "Get it off of me" Foxhole I think ran to help Terry, but the babies' head turned toward Foxhole, and headed in his direction, all within a dozen feet in front of me, as I was above them still climbing the MV! Mind you I still had my ruck on as did most of us walking "Drag" for Bravo!

A Army: No More Kissing Soldiers During Parade. The Army wants to halt a favorite St. Patrick's Day shenanigan in Savannah that for decades has left marching soldiers with lipstick-smudged cheeks. Roughly 200 soldiers from nearby Fort Stewart, GA are expected to march in the coastal Georgia city's sprawling St. Patrick's Day parade March 17, 2018. Traditionally, women wearing bright red lipstick dart from the crowd to plant kisses on the cheek of passing troops. A spokesman and parade's chief organizer said this week the Army wants the soldier smooching stopped.



Old age is coming at a really bad time. When I was a child I thought "nap time" was a punishment. Now, as a grownup, it feels like a small vacation.

V A Launches Welcome Kit to Guide Veterans to the Benefits and Services They've Earned: VA's

on boarding process can be overwhelming at times. Veterans who have visited a VA outreach booth, VA eligibility office, or have gone through a Transition Assistance Program know that VA has no shortage of technical handouts, benefits books and materials. But, even with all of these resources, Veterans are telling us "Where do I start?" No matter where you are in life, the new welcome kit will help you use the VA benefits and services you have earned. In addition to step-by-step enrollment instructions, the kit also lists points of contact for dozens of VA program offices. The welcome kit is so simple, it's the way everything needs to work in VA," said VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin. The kit is now available on Vets.gov and will soon be sent to all separating service members as part of VA's existing welcome home process. The Veterans Experience Office created the kit using human-centered design principles, including the feedback of more than 150 Veterans throughout the country. The guide will continue to be updated based on additional feedback and information. The kit was distributed and warmly received at the Student Veterans of America conference in San Antonio, Texas. Veterans commented, "I wish I had this when I got out" and "I've never seen something from VA like this." While the VA kit does not provide all of the technical information on VA's programs included in the Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors handbook, it does provide a summary and the steps required to enroll in VA services.

O maha Couple Plan D.C. Honor Flight Exclusively for Female Veterans: Less than a year after vowing they

were done organizing Honor Flights for military veterans, Bill and Evonne Williams of Omaha are planning one more. This trip to the war memorials in Washington, D.C., is different. It's for women only. The Nebraska Female Veterans Flight is for women who served in the European or Pacific theaters during World War II, in Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf War or in Afghanistan or Iraq. The tentative date is Sept. 24. Plans call for 135 veterans to fly on one Sun Country charter aircraft from Omaha's Eppley Airfield to a Washington airport. Everyone aboard will be female, including pilots, flight attendants, volunteer assistants and news reporters and photographers, Bill Williams said. "Even I'm not going," he said. Evonne Williams, president of the couple's Patriotic Productions, said female veterans deserve recognition and appreciation for their roles, whether on the battlefield or somewhere far behind the lines. "I would venture that none received an actual homecoming celebration — like most of the men, especially from Vietnam," she said. "Whether they can go or not, to see their fellow veterans honored, they'll feel it, too. It should have been done earlier." Since 2008 the Williamses have organized 11 Honor Flights to take nearly 3,400 Nebraska veterans on emotional one-day trips to visit monuments in Washington. Seven were for WWII veterans and two each for Korea and Vietnam. Bill Williams said no more than two dozen of the veterans on those trips were women. Veterans who served in combat were given preference on most trips. Most participants on the new Honor Flight will be veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. More than 100 women are included in Patriotic Productions' Remembering Our Fallen traveling photographic exhibits. The displays feature men and women from 19 states who have given their lives in the nation's wars following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Three Nebraskans in the exhibit of the fallen are Army Staff Sgt. Lillian Clamens of Omaha, Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Tricia Lynn Jameson of Omaha and Army National Guard Master Sgt. Linda Ann Tarango-Griess of Sutton. The Williamses said they hope Nebraska women who served in the WWII theaters and the Korea and Vietnam combat zones would apply for the trip.

“We ask for no rewards but our nation’s thanks.”

Vietnam War commemoration partner program opens the opportunity to honor veterans and their family. A year ago President Trump signed Vietnam War Veterans recognition Act establishing March 29 as Vietnam War Veterans Day. This recognition day is only one part of an historic trend. Across the nation, Americans are united in their desire to thank and honor Vietnam Veterans and their families. VA estimates that we are losing as many as 382 Vietnam veterans per day, so we must act now. We have an opportunity to make a positive difference in every one of the 7 million veterans and Vietnam-era veterans and each of their families. Reaching out with a sincere “Thank You for your service and sacrifice” is a wonderful way to start. This initiative is the main focus of the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration, a national 50th anniversary remembrance authorized by Congress, established under the Secretary of Defense and launched by President Obama in May 2012. This tremendous effort to show our thanks to Vietnam veterans and their families include all U.S. veterans who served from November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, and their families. While we acknowledge the distinction between veterans who served in-country, in theater, and were stationed elsewhere during this period, we honor all who served. They are known to us simply as “Vietnam veterans”. Key to the commemoration accomplishing its primary objective is its hometown-centric Commemorative Partner program. To date, more than 10,000 organizations at the local, state and federal levels have committed to conducting two events per year that recognize and honor Vietnam veterans and their families. There is no cost associated with becoming a commemorative partner, and a mix of dedicated local and national businesses, corporations, veterans and military organizations, educational institutions, community groups, towns, cities, states and others have stepped up to assist in this effort. To date partners have honored millions of veterans in their hometowns, conducting more than 11,600 events since the commemoration’s inaugural event at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 2012. At these events, partners can present special Vietnam Veterans lapel pins to living U.S. veterans who served during the war period regardless of location, and/or certificates of honor to former POWs and family members of deceased and MIA veterans. Now is the time for all Americans to fully embrace the brave men and women who returned home from Vietnam, often to shame and disgrace, by publicly thanking them, as well as recognizing the sacrifices of their families. I am proud to be the American Chairman for the 50th Commemorative Committee a position co-chaired by our Vice Commander Rich Heroux. We have conducted numerous events that honored Vietnam Veterans at the annual ADVA reunions and other occasions. Everyone in our 2/1 Infantry Chapter should take advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity to honor those who served during the Vietnam War. We stand ready to assist any member of the Chapter who would like to entertain such an event. Let us know how we can help get this going in your area. To quote retired Army Col. Albert Nahas, a Vietnam War veteran, “We had no expectations but to serve where duty called us. We asked for no reward except a nation’s thanks.”

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