



MOPH March 2010 Department News Bulletin

DFAS Retiree Pay Statement Update 01:

On 28 DEC 09, the Document Automation & Production Service (DAPS) printed Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay annual increases information to military retirees on behalf of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS). The statements were subsequently mailed to retirees by a DFAS vendor beginning 6 JAN 2010. During the printing of one file containing the statements, the document duplicating system malfunctioned. The malfunction was fixed, but upon restarting the printing run the data streams, with information for the front and back of the statement forms, were no longer synchronized correctly. As a result, approximately 18,000 recipients of the statements in the Norfolk, Virginia area received letters containing another retiree's data on Page 2 of their form. The other retiree was not fully identified on the Page 2 but the information included data such as allotment type (insurance, savings bonds, etc.) the name of the payee (bank name, insurance company name, etc.) and the amount of the allotment. There is no indication that anyone other than the intended recipients received privacy data such as Social Security Numbers, bank account numbers or phone numbers. Recipients of the misprinted statements will be asked to destroy the erroneous statements and corrected forms will be reissued. Maintaining the privacy of customers is of the utmost importance to DAPS and DFAS who proudly serve our nation's military personnel. Both organizations regret the error and will work to ensure quality control procedures are improved and followed. Retirees that have any questions regarding their accounts should contact DFAS at 1(800) 321-1080.

[Source: DFAS Press Release 0110-002 dtd 13 Jan 2010 ++]

Tax Deduction Wisdom Update 01:

Many taxpayers take the standard deduction rather than itemizing their tax deductions, even though some taxpayers with mortgages or home equity loans could have saved money by itemizing. Consider how well you will do with itemized deductions in the following areas:

Property Tax:

For those that do not itemize the standard deduction amount is increased by \$500 (\$1,000 for married couples filing jointly) if they paid at least that much in property taxes during the year. This break allows those who do not itemize to get some tax benefit for the property taxes they pay.

Tax Deduction Wisdom Update 01: Continued...

Many lenders provide a year-end tax summary that includes any real estate taxes and insurance paid through escrow accounts. The real estate taxes are deductible, but homeowner's insurance and homeowner's association fees are not. If your real estate taxes aren't paid through an escrow account, review your property tax bills and cancelled checks and add up what you paid. You can't deduct any penalties you paid for late payment of property taxes; you can only deduct the actual taxes assessed and paid.

MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENT RATES 2010 UPDATE:

The Senate adjourned for the weekend on 26 FEB without clearing legislation to extend a range of federal programs set to expire 28 FEB. Thus, Congress failed to pass legislation by the mandated 28 FEB cut-off date to prevent a 21% decrease in Medicare physician reimbursement rates. It is anticipated that with implementation of the payment cuts there will be a drastic reduction in the number of physicians willing to treat Medicare and Tri-care patients.

Earlier, this month Congress passed a law allowing a 5 year fix without complying with the PAYGO rules. But they have not passed the bill itself. This bill was clearly intended to allow them to work on this and several other matters. However, it is not clear what will happen now. That bill would stop the scheduled 21% Medicare payment cut for doctors until 31 MAR. In the interim an extender bill H.R.4691 containing short extensions through 5 APR of federal laws that are to expire at the end of the FEB including health insurance subsidies for the jobless, COBRA for the unemployed, the Medicare Doc Fix, highway construction, the federal flood insurance program, and the compulsory copyright license used by satellite TV providers.

On 25 FEB the bill passed the House by voice vote and they sent it on to the Senate. And there it stopped.

MILITARY DISCOUNTS UPDATE 01:

Lowe's Companies, Inc. recently announced that it is expanding its support of the military by offering a 10% discount 24/7 to all military personnel who are active, reserve, retired or disabled veterans and their family members, with a valid, government-issued military ID card. All other military veterans (non-disabled) will receive the 10% discount only on Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Veterans Day weekends. The discount is available on in-stock and Special Order purchases up to \$5,000. Excluded from the discount are sales via Lowes.com, previous sales, and purchases of services or gift cards. In addition, Lowe's has also extended benefits for its employees serving in the military and offers employment opportunities to military personnel after their military service has ended. Currently, more than 12,000 Lowe's employees are military veterans or reservists.

[Source: EANGUS Minuteman 26 Feb 2010 ++]

VA HOMELESS VET:

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki on 19 FEB promised a "full court press" to alleviate homelessness and other critical issues facing the 23.4 million veterans in the U.S. Shinseki emphasized that he and the Obama administration are committed to addressing programs of greatest concern to veterans: reducing the growing backlog of claims, improving health care facilities, creating more access to health care in rural areas, and helping more veterans, especially those who are homeless, get jobs and educational opportunities. "Ending homelessness among veterans involves a host of other things," he said. "It is about jobs. It is about education. " Shinseki, a retired U.S. Army general who spent time at Fort Bliss during his military career, met in private with veteran leaders and U.S. Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D-El Paso), U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez (D-San Antonio), and U.S. Rep. Harry Teague (D-NM). "The veterans came away satisfied that we have a partner," Teague said, "He openly addressed the hurdles that we face in the VA. He's not trying to sweep them under the carpet."

[Source: El Paso Times article 20 Feb 2010 ++]

TAPS:

It's a song burned into the American consciousness, a tune that wafts over both sleep and death. It's a piece that some believe hasn't been given the recognition it deserves. What has come to be known as 'Taps' --- 24 notes that floated from a Civil War encampment at nightfall to become the tune that sends to their final rests fallen troops, policemen and firefighters, departed veterans and even presidents of the United States --- may soon be given a more official place in the roster of national melodies.

"My idea is to have [Taps] recognized as our National Song of Remembrance," said Jari Villanueva, a retired trumpet and bugle player for the U.S. Air Force Band who may very well be the country's leading authority on Taps. A veteran of more than 5,000 ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, Villanueva was an adviser on bugle calls for the movie 'Gods and Generals.' He has researched Taps, written about it, debunked myths about it (it was not found by a Union officer on the body of his son, a Confederate soldier) and offers what is probably the best history yet of the tune on a West Point Web site.

Now, along with fellow bugler Les Hampton, a Navy vet, Villanueva is working with a New York lawmaker to get Congress to officially recognize "Taps" as a song of remembrance. They hope to have this done in time for the 150th anniversary of "Taps" in 2012. As far as who would be officially eligible to have Taps played at their funeral if it does become the National Song of Remembrance, Villanueva takes a broad view. Besides troops and veterans, he said, police officers, firefighters, first responders, public health service workers - even the Boy Scouts. "My feeling is if you rate a flag on your coffin you rate Taps." According to Villanueva, the music of Taps had its origins in "Extinguish Lights," an end-of-day bugle call adapted from a French tune. But in 1862, while encamped at Harrison's Landing, Va., Union Army Gen. Daniel Butterfield revised the tune - holding certain notes longer, etc. Taps was quickly picked up by other buglers in other units, and after the Civil War and became an official Army bugle call. Villanueva and Hampton met several years ago through playing memorial services and began thinking of ways to bring attention to the need for Taps players. The rising numbers of World War II and Korea vets passing away, as well as troop losses in Iraq and Afghanistan, has resulted in greater demand for buglers.

TAPS Continued...

Several years ago the military began making a bugle insert that played Taps available to veterans groups. The discrete device plays the notes while the "bugler" - standing away from the grave site - holds the instrument to his lips and pretends to play. "It's something that's used a lot now. It is disappointing, but sometimes no one bothers to look for a live bugler. It's a matter of convenience." Villanueva said. While brainstorming the fake bugler problem they hit on the idea of elevating Taps to an official national song. Hampton said Rep. John Hall (D-NY), has been working with them to frame legislation. According to Villanueva, the earliest official reference to Taps for a military funeral is found in Army regulations from 1891. But he says it was doubtlessly used unofficially long before then, though still called 'Extinguish Lights'. Later still officials from other countries came up with their own versions of Taps, some sounding very much like the Army's. A French general wrote 'Aux Morts' ('To the Dead') - after hearing Taps, Villanueva said; it sounds much like Taps and has the same number of notes.

The Germans came up with a solo trumpet call later, as did the Italians.

The British wrote and adopted "The Last Post"; after "Taps" became known, and that song is now played by all Commonwealth countries for its fallen troops and veterans, Villanueva said. As part of their efforts to raise awareness of "Taps," the two have set up an online petition and hope to get as many names in support as possible. They're also producing a CD that will include 'Extinguish Lights,' Taps, and other tunes that were inspired by Taps.

[Source: Military.com article 23 Feb 2010 ++]

KOREAN WAR VETS:

The Friends of American Veterans of Korean War (FAVKW) are extending an invitation to their annual 'Appreciation Dinner, Ceremony, Concert and Dancing, Symposium and Prayer' in honor of American Veterans of Korean War. More than 800 veterans and their spouse attended the 2009 Appreciation Event held in Las Vegas. This year's event will be held 13-14 JUN 2010 at The Orleans Hotel, 4500 W. Tropicana Ave., Las Vegas (1-800-675-3267, www.orleanscasino.com). Attendees do not have to be a member of the KWVA. All vets who served in Korea from 1945 to present are eligible to participate. FAVKW will be inviting as many 1000-1200 American Korean War veterans from across the USA. They plan to provide a full accommodation for one night and two days (June 13: lunch, dinner and room/ June 14: breakfast and lunch) to veterans and their spouses if they come to the venue by their own expense for transportation. If you are interested in attending you should directly inform FAVKW by 31 MAR 2010 via one of the below means. In early MAY they plan to send the formal invitation to all of those who informed their participation. To read the letter announcing this event and a complete a complete itinerary of events refer to the FAVKW Invitation Letter attached to this Bulletin: Mail to: FAVKW, 9636 Garden Grove Blvd. Suite 17, Garden Grove, CA. 92844 Phone Call to: Mrs. Sunny Lee at (1-562-922-3656) or Mr. Do-young Kim at (1-714-452-3006) E-mail to: gasiri0112@yahoo.com

[Source: KWVA Secretary Frank E. Coheel letter dtd 15 Jan 2010 ++]

For the Good of the Order:

MOPH Chapter 0034, Green County to hold "First Annual Car Show"

See the Invitation at our Webmasters Corner Page or just click here,

<http://www.mophdepartmentpa.org/Chapter%200034%20Purple%20Heart%20Car%20Show.pdf>

Proceeds to benefit Veterans at Aspinwall VA Hospital Pittsburgh Pennsylvania

Entry Fee is: \$10.00

Chinese Auction

50/50 Drawing

Trophies

Best of Show

Ladies Choice

1st, 2nd and 3rd Place

Place: VFW Post 3491, Carmichaels Pennsylvania 15320

Date: June 6th 2010

Time: 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, Trophies Awarded @3:00 P.M.

Not responsible for accidents, loss or damage.

Contact: Frank Smith: 724-627-8682

If no answer: 724-833-3556

From our National MOPH Organization:

As has been previously announced, Chuck Baker has resigned as Editor, PH Magazine.

Effective immediately, all electronic communications/e-Mails Re: Editor, PH Magazine are to be submitted to >> Magazine@Purpleheart.org <<. This request includes Letters to the Editor, articles and photos for consideration in future publications, Changes of Address, etc.

Various Categories of U.S. Korean War MIAs

1,788 Declared KIA

2,031 Died as POW

5,400 Remains still in North Korea

229 Remains recovered by JPAC since 1996

75 Remains identified from the 229 recovered since 1996

126 Remains identified since 1982

866 Sets of remains interred at the Punchbowl Cemetery in Hawaii.

Source: DPMO, January 11, 2010.

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