



The Straight Scoop

**Department Newsletter of the
Marine Corps League
Department of West Virginia
P.O. Box 11828
Charleston, WV 25339**



Volume 3, Issue 3, March 2010

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Department Financial Report

Marine Corps League, Department of West Virginia Hershel "Woody" Williams Scholarship Foundation:

22 Jan 2010 beginning balance: \$13,880.56 Deposits: None Interest: \$3.54

22 Feb 2010 ending balance: \$13,884.10

Please send all donations to John Nanny, P.O. Box 2121, Wheeling, WV 26003-0234.

Marine Corps League, Department of West Virginia General Account and Paymaster Report:

20 Jan 2010 statement beginning balance: \$4,924.23 Deposits: \$204.50

Debits: \$248.07

20 Feb 2010 statement ending balance: \$4,880.66

Iwo Jima Bus Trip

Fifty MCL members, spouses and guests departed on a Park Tour bus from Parkersburg on Monday, February 22, with passenger stops in Clarksburg and Morgantown to attend the 65th anniversary of the Iwo Jima flag raising. The group stopped in Hagerstown, MD, for lunch and then traveled to the Marine Corps Museum in Triangle, VA. After a tour of the museum, the group went to the Crossroads Inn on Quantico Marine Corps Base and checked into their rooms. They went to the Mickey Finn Detachment, MCL in Triangle for an "all you can eat" spaghetti dinner. A Department of WV MCL Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Commandant Mac Gardner for Mickey Finn Detachment's dinner and hospitality. Jr. Past Commandant Mike McLain was presented the Chapel of Four Chaplains' Legion of Honor Award after dinner during a Chapel of Four Chaplains Memorial Service. After dinner the group went back to the Crossroads Inn to spend the night. Early Tuesday morning after breakfast, the group departed for the Iwo Jima War Memorial in Arlington for the flag-raising ceremony. Attendants of the event included Marines past and present. The Marine Barracks Washington Color Guard, Firing Party, and "The President's Own," as well as Marines of Headquarters Battalion, Headquarters Marine Corps, participated in the ceremony. Several dignitaries were in attendance and included Lt. Gen. Duane D. Thiessen, deputy commandant for Programs and Resources, Headquarters Marine Corps; Vietnam-era Medal of Honor recipient Colonel Harvey C. Barnum; Marine Corps War Memorial Foundation Executive Director James Donovan; Mike Kessler, national executive

director of the Young Marines and board member of the Marine Corps War Memorial Foundation; Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and several WWII veterans who served on Iwo Jima. The Marine Corps League members from WV were the only MCL representatives present during the ceremony. When the ceremony was completed, the group drove by the Pentagon to review the repair from the 9/11 plane damage and had lunch at Union Station. A trip down Constitution Avenue allowed the group to see the U.S. Capital Building, the White House and several prominent government buildings and monuments. The group stopped at the WWII Memorial, the Korea War Memorial, and the Vietnam Memorial. Also viewed was the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, the Mall and the Jefferson Memorial. The group departed Washington and stopped for dinner in Lavale, MD, and then arrived at Morgantown, Clarksburg and finally Parkersburg.

2010 Department Convention May 7-8 in Elkins, WV

The Department Convention will be hosted by Leland D. "Crow" Crawford Detachment 956 in Elkins on May 7-8 at the Holiday Inn Express with business meeting and banquet across the street at American Legion Post 29. Hotel reservations can be made at 1-800-468-4329 or (304) 630-2266. Rooms \$78.40 with tax included. Mention code MCL. These rooms are blocked out for the convention at this price and will be released back to the hotel manager on April 1. If you desire room reservations, you must call and make your reservations before April 1 because of the demand for the American Mountain Theater show and the train rides. The banquet is \$20. If you desire additional info, call Roger Ware at 304-636-4365.

Letter from MCL National Senior Vice Commandant Vic Voitaggio

Marines: We are in a situation that can no longer be ignored ... I am sure that you have heard from the National Junior Vice Commandant and the National Judge Advocate in recent weeks concerning the unpaid members list. Now, I am writing seeking your assistance to work on the Delinquent Members List and to bring these members back into the fold. I am sure that with the tough economic times many on the list are having difficulties making ends meet and the Marine Corps League is not high on their list of priorities. That is understandable and as Marines we are committed to help each other when times are hard.

I am suggesting a telephone call to the delinquent member, a personal call inquiring as to why the member has not paid their dues. Is it because he or she no longer wishes to be a member of the league or is it because of some other reason. We would like to know and I am suggesting that each Detachment set up some sort of telephone bank with a few members who are serious about this issue. Call the members and speak to them one on one. It works. If the member needs help, maybe the Detachment can pay the dues for a year or until the member gets back on their feet. I am even suggesting that the Detachment hold a fund raiser such as a dance or spaghetti dinner or anything that will generate income and dedicate it to helping these members. The National Budget Committee has given us a dire forecast because of two disturbing factors ... first, we lost our label company Barton-Cotton who suddenly without warning closed their doors. That is a big chunk of lost income and secondly, our investments just broke even this year. Well, at least we didn't lost any money. If we could get back just 60% of the delinquent members, we would be in the black again ... Marines, let's get it done! Thanks for your help. Vic

VA to Reopen Gulf War Vets' Files

The Veterans Affairs Department will re-examine the disability claims of what could be thousands of Gulf War veterans suffering from ailments they blame on their war service, the first step toward potentially compensating them nearly two decades after the war ended. According to a VA press release, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki said the decision is part of a "fresh, bold look" his department is taking to help veterans who have what's commonly called "Gulf War illness" and have long felt the government did little to help them. The VA says it also plans to improve training for medical staff who work with Gulf War vets, to make sure they do not simply tell vets that their symptoms are imaginary -- as has happened to many over the years. "I'm hoping they'll be enthused by the fact that this ... challenges all the assumptions that have been there for 20 years," Shinseki told The Associated Press in an exclusive interview.

The changes reflect a significant shift in how the VA may ultimately care for some 700,000 veterans who served in the Gulf War. It also could change how the department handles war-related illness suffered by future veterans, as Shinseki said he wants standards put in place that don't leave veterans waiting decades for answers to what ails them. The decision comes four months after Shinseki opened the door for as many as 200,000 Vietnam veterans to receive service-related compensation for three illnesses stemming from exposure to the Agent Orange herbicide.

About 175,000 to 210,000 Gulf War veterans have come down with a pattern of symptoms that include rashes, joint and muscle pain, sleep issues and gastrointestinal problems, according to a 2008 congressionally mandated committee that based the estimate on earlier studies. But what exactly caused the symptoms has long been unanswered. Independent scientists have pointed to pesticide and pyridostigmine bromide pills, given to protect troops from nerve agents, as probable culprits. The 2008 report noted that since 1994, \$340 million has been spent on government research into the illness, but little has focused on treatments.

Last week, Shinseki and Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs committee, met privately in Charleston, W.Va., with several Gulf War veterans. In an interview after the meeting, Rockefeller told the AP that Shinseki's background as a former Army chief of staff made the changes possible. He said either the military has been reluctant over the years to release paperwork related to the war or kept poor records about exposures in the war zone, which made it harder for the veterans to prove they needed help. "The paperwork isn't very accurate, but the pain is very real," Rockefeller said. Shinseki has publicly wondered why today there are still so many unanswered questions about Gulf War illness, as stricken veterans' conditions have only worsened with age.

Last fall, he appointed a task force led by his chief of staff, John Gingrich, a retired Army colonel who commanded a field artillery battalion in the 1991 war, to review benefits and care for Gulf War veterans. The changes stem from the task force's work. Gingrich said in an interview that he feels a personal stake because some of his own men who were healthy during the war are dealing with these health problems. Gingrich said the VA isn't giving a new benefit to Gulf War veterans, just making sure the claims they submitted were done correctly. "We're talking about a culture change, that we don't have a single clinician or benefits person saying 'you really don't have Gulf War illness, this is only imaginary' or 'you're really not sick,'" Gingrich said.

A law enacted in 1994 allows the VA to pay compensation to Gulf War veterans with certain chronic disabilities from illnesses the VA could not diagnosis. More than 3,400 Gulf War have qualified for benefits under this category, according to the VA. The VA says it plans to review

how regulations were written to ensure the veterans received the compensation they were entitled to under the law. The VA would then give veterans the opportunity to have a rejected claim reconsidered. The VA doesn't have an estimate of the number of veterans who may be affected, but it could be in the thousands. Of those who deployed in the Gulf War, 300,000 submitted claims, according to the VA. About 14 percent were rejected, while the rest received compensation for at least one condition.

Benzene at Camp Lejeune

An environmental contractor dramatically underreported the level of a cancer-causing chemical found in tap water at Camp Lejeune, then omitted it altogether as the Marine base prepared for a federal health review, an Associated Press review has found. The Marine Corps had been warned nearly a decade earlier about the dangerously high levels of benzene, which was traced to massive leaks from fuel tanks at the base on the North Carolina coast, according to recently disclosed studies. For years, Marines who served at Camp Lejeune have blamed their families' cancers and other ailments on tap water tainted by dry cleaning solvents, and many accuse the military of covering it up. The benzene was discovered as part of a broader, ongoing probe into that contamination.

When water was sampled in July 1984, scientists found benzene in a well near the base's Hadnot Point Fuel Farm at levels of 380 parts per billion, according to a water tests done by a contractor. A year later, in a report summarizing the 1984 sampling, the same contractor pointed out the benzene concentration "far exceeds" the safety limit set by federal regulators at 5 parts per billion. The Marines were still studying the water contamination in 1991 when another contractor again warned the Navy of the health hazards posed by such levels of benzene.

By 1992, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease, an arm of the Department of Health and Human Services, showed up at the base to begin a health risk assessment. That's when a third contractor, the Michael Baker Corp., released a draft report on the feasibility of fixing the overall problem. In it, the 1984 level on the well of 380 parts per billion had changed to 38 parts per billion. The company's final report on the well, issued in 1994, made no mention of the benzene. Not only hasn't the benzene disappeared from the now-closed wells, it's gotten much worse over time. One sample from a series of tests conducted from June 2007 to August 2009 registered 3,490 parts per billion, according to a report from a fourth contractor.

Kyla Bennett, who spent 10 years as an enforcement officer for the Environmental Protection Agency before becoming an ecologist and environmental attorney, reviewed the different reports and said it was difficult to conclude innocent mistakes were made in the Baker Corp. documents. "It is weird that it went from 380 to 38 and then it disappeared entirely," she said. "It does support the contention that they did do it deliberately." News of Baker Corp.'s handling of the benzene levels has ex-Lejeune residents questioning anew the honesty of a military they accuse of endangering their lives. "It is a shame that an institution founded on honor and integrity would resort to open deceit in order to protect their reputation at the cost of the health, safety and welfare of its service men, women and their families," said Mike Partain, a 42-year-old who lives in Tallahassee, Fla., but was born at Lejeune and diagnosed with breast cancer in 2007. Capt. Brian Block, a Marine Corps spokesman, took exception to characterizing the conflicting information in the reports as anything but inadvertent. "It was probably just a mistake on the part of the contractor, but I can't tell you for certain why that happened," he said. David Higie, a spokesman for Baker Corp., declined to discuss the company's reports or why its employees might have revised the benzene levels. He referred questions to the military. Block

said Camp Lejeune held a news conference to alert residents of problems with the water system in 1985 and has spent millions of dollars in outreach and studies. "The Marine Corps has never tried to hide any of this information," he said. The discrepancies in the reports were tucked inside thousands of documents the Marines released last year to the Agency for Toxic Substances as part of the Marines' long-running review of water supplied to Camp Lejeune's main family housing areas. That water was contaminated by fuel and cleaning solvents from the 1950s through the 1980s, and health officials believe as many as 1 million people may have been exposed to the toxins before the wells that supplied the tainted water were closed two decades ago.

The newly discovered records, first reported Sunday by McClatchy News Service, show that a water well contaminated by leaking fuel was left functioning for at least five months after a sampling discovered it was tainted with benzene in 1984.

Benzene, a carcinogen, is a natural part of crude oil and gasoline. Drinking water containing high levels of it can cause vomiting, dizziness, sleepiness, convulsions, and death and long-term exposure damages bone marrow, lowers red blood cells and can leukemia, according to the EPA. Camp Lejeune environmental engineer Robert Alexander was quoted in 1985 as saying no one "had been directly exposed" to contaminants, including benzene. In December, Alexander told the AP he didn't recall anything about the well contaminated with the benzene or the ensuing studies that failed to account for its toxicity, but said that the methods at the time were still being perfected, and that he and the other base officials did the best they could. The records indicate the military knew a lot of specifics.

For years the Marine Corps knew the fuel farm, built in 1941, was leaking 1,500 gallons a month and did nothing to stop it, according to a 1988 memo from a Camp Lejeune lawyer to the base's assistant facilities manager. "It's an indefensible waste of money and a continuing potential threat to human health and the environment," wrote Staff Judge Advocate A.P. Tokarz. Minutes of a 1996 meeting with Moon Township, Pa.-based Baker Corp., the third contractor, indicate the fuel farm had lost 800,000 gallons of fuel, of which 500,000 gallons had been recovered. Benzene was "in the deeper portion of the aquifer" and the "fuel farm is definitely the source," the minutes quote a Michael Baker employee as saying. The Coast Guard categorizes any coastal oil spill larger than 100,000 gallons as major.

WEST VIRGINIA VET CEMETERY

A second West Virginia cemetery for military veterans has the green light, thanks to a land donation from Dow Chemical Co. and the likelihood of \$13 million in federal dollars. Gov. Joe Manchin and U.S. Sen. Jay Rockefeller announced 18 Feb, 2010 that the state has signed an agreement with Midland, Mich.-based Dow, which is donating 350 acres in Institute, an unincorporated area near Charleston. Rockefeller says final federal approval, which will come with a grant to build the cemetery, is likely a few months away. The cemetery will be named in honor of the late West Virginia veteran Don Kinnard. Work on the new veterans cemetery is expected to begin later this year. Rockefeller said the grant from the Veterans Administration is the largest ever for a cemetery. He called it a fitting tribute to the state's veterans. The cemetery would be the second veterans burial site in West Virginia, along with the Grafton National Cemetery in Taylor County. Manchin and Rockefeller say the new site will meet a longtime demand for a veterans cemetery close to southern West Virginia.

FREE MCL PUBLICITY THROUGH NEWSPAPERS, RADIO AND TELEVISION

Write an article for the newspaper to generate interest and/or participation in upcoming events such as a convention, award ceremony, etc., or to report on an event already held. Smaller, very brief public service announcements, such as for upcoming regular detachment meetings, may be submitted for “community calendar” listings that run daily.

Reporting on major events is recommended, but don’t write articles on relatively small matters, such as routine detachment meetings. Articles should be typed double-spaced in a clear, professional-style of font, such as Times New Roman (don’t use anything “cutesy” or hard to read). The detachment contact person’s title and name, detachment name/number, and daytime and/or evening telephone number should appear somewhere on the page in case the newspaper has any questions.

Articles should have the most important information first, followed by the second-most important information, and so on, in the “inverted pyramid” form of article writing. It has more impact to say in the beginning of an article about who received what prestigious award than who designed the banquet table decorations. Also be sure to use “spell check” and proper grammar. The more you do to keep the newspaper from having to rewrite your story, the better.

Submitting a related photograph with an article is always advisable. Take “action” photos of people engaged in some kind of activity -- don’t just shoot people standing in rows staring at the camera. You also need to supply information for its caption, or “cutline,” as known in newspaper jargon. In the cutline, tell what event the photo depicts as well as where and when it occurred. Also include the detachment’s full name and identify each person in the photo from left to right with the person’s title and first and last name, such as Senior Vice Commandant John Smith. Never submit a photo without cutline info -- the newspaper may reject it or have to take the extra time to contact you for it.

Direct the article/photo to the editor’s attention. If sending the article/photo by mail, make certain to have the correct spelling of the editor’s name and newspaper address. Don’t send a computer print of a photo on typing paper -- it will NOT work for reproduction in a newspaper -- and don’t send your original, since you may not get it back. Take the original photo to the photo department in a department store or drug store to have a copy made. If e-mailing the article, make sure you have the editor’s correct name and e-mail address. Most newspapers now have websites where you can access that information. E-mail the article with the photo attached -- send it in color in the RGB and JPEG formats and in a size no bigger than 4 inches by 6 inches. Send to all of the newspapers in your area to receive the maximum amount of coverage.

If submitting an article for an upcoming event, do it no later than two weeks before the event. Too early, and the article can get lost or forgotten by the paper; too late, and the article may not be published on time.

Newspapers may also want to send their own reporters/photographers to your event for special coverage if the event has enough potential for public interest/impact. It never hurts to ask the newspaper to cover the event -- you may wind up seeing your detachment on the front page.

Radio and television stations usually want paid advertising, however, they may agree to run free public service announcements for your event. The station may also do a free “remote” by having a reporter/announcer on-site at the event to do a live broadcast featuring the activity and/or

comments from detachment members. Call the station's news director to check out those possibilities. This info was submitted by associate member Judith Ware who has over 18 years experience in journalism as a newspaper reporter.

Calendar of Events

2010 Department Convention will be hosted by Leland D. "Crow" Crawford Detachment 956 in Elkins on May 7-8 at the Holiday Inn Express with business meeting and banquet at American Legion Post 29. Hotel reservations can be made at 1-800-468-4329 or (304) 630-2266. Rooms \$78.40 tax included. Banquet \$20.00 Mention code MCL.

2010 Mid East Division Conference 25-26 June, Westin Hotel and Resort, Virginia Beach Town Center, Virginia Beach, VA, hosted by Department of VA. Hotel reservations can be made at 1-800-937-8461 or (757) 557-0550 (mention MCL Conference). Rates are: \$94.00 with 13% taxes and \$1.00 city lodging tax. Parking is indoor multilevel parking garage and is included with room.

2010 MCL National Convention Aug 6 -14, Koury Convention Center, Greensboro, NC, 1-800-242-6556. Rooms \$100.00 plus 12 3/4% tax. Reservations can be made now.

2011 MCL National Convention Jul 31- August 6 at Doubletree Riverside Hotel, Boise, Idaho. 1-800-222-TREE or 1-208-343-1871. Room rates are \$86.00 plus 13% tax. Hosted by Treasure Valley MCL Detachment 878, Boise, Idaho.

Pictures from Iwo Jima Bus Trip



Department of West Virginia Jr Past Commandant Mike McLain, right, hand the "last-man-on-the-bus" biscuit to Department Sr Vice Commandant John Nanny, left, at the Morgantown bus stop on the trip by 50 West Virginia MCL members to Washington, D.C., to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Iwo Jima flag raising. (Photo by Judith Ware)



Marine Corps League members from across West Virginia join at the Iwo Jima Memorial in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 23, the 65th anniversary of the Iwo Jima flag raising. The state's MCL members were the only MCL representatives in the country attending the memorial ceremony. (Photo by Judith Ware)



Mike McLain, seated, presents a certificate of appreciation to officers of Mickey Finn Detachment 333 of Triangle, Va., which hosted an all-you-can eat spaghetti dinner for West Virginia Marine Corps League members on Feb. 22 during their trip to Washington, D.C. Accepting the certificate on behalf of the detachment were Past Commandant Danny Williams, left, and Commandant Mac Garner Jr., second from left. Park Tours bus driver and MCL member Glenn Stanley, background, later received a certificate of appreciation from the Marines for driving the bus on the trip. (Photo by Judith Ware)



Mike McLain, seated, Department of West Virginia Jr Past Commandant, receives the Chapel of the Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Award in a ceremony held on Feb. 22 by West Virginia MCL members in the Mickey Finn Detachment in Triangle, Va. Presenting the award is Department of West Virginia Commandant Roger Ware, center, and Department Sr Vice Commandant John Nanny, right. The award, honoring individuals for their military and/or community service, is named for four chaplains who lost their lives while selflessly helping those aboard the USAT Dorchester when it was sunk by a German submarine on Feb 3, 1943. (Photo by Judith Ware)

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