

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
Military Order of the Purple Heart
7180 Highland Drive 118-VH
Building 1, Room 6023W
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Combat
Wounded
Veterans



MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART | CHAPTER 455

FALL ISSUE 2011

VOLUME – NO. 26

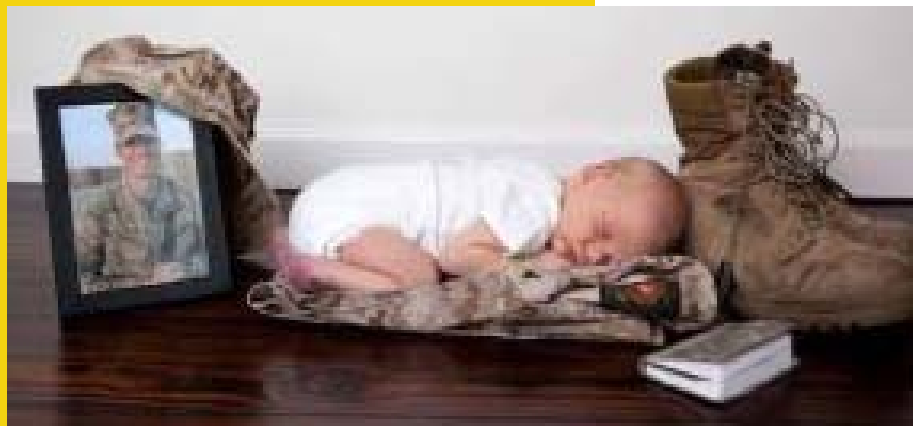
PURPLE HEART NEWSLETTER

EDITOR – JAMES LANG
COMMANDER – LOUIS LaCIVITA

ASST. EDITOR – DAN WILHELM
CHIEF OF STAFF - HARRY CLARK

All Gave Some, Some Gave All

The photo below is Landon Carpenter, born one month after his dad L/Cpl Jarred L. Carpenter paid the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan serving with 3/8 on his second tour earlier this year. It is clearly one of the most moving photos ever seen representing the sacrifice of our Marines in this conflict.



VA Compensation May Increase

Veterans and their survivors may see a cost of living adjustment (COLA) increase in their comp and pen payment rates for the first time since 2009.

Like military retirement pay, the survivor benefit plan, and social security, the monthly payment rates for Dept. of Veterans Affairs disability comp., and veteran pensions are annually adjusted for inflation. This means that the present year's rate of inflation is used to determine the following year's COLA increases.

According to the Military Officers Ass. of America, the inflation rate continued to increase in August, which will most likely result in a 2012 COLA rate of 3.7%. This could mark the first COLA increase in two years.

CORPORAL JESSICA ANN ELLIS

Birth: June 26, 1983
 Burley,
 Cassia County
 Idaho, USA

Death: May 11, 2008
 Bagdad, Iraq

Army Cpl. Ellis was assigned to the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Div. (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Kentucky. She died of wounds sustained when the vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device. Jessica graduated from Lakeview High School in 2002. While in high school, she lettered in track and cross country, was on the school's swim team, and was involved in dance groups. She is remembered as the friendliest kid you would ever want to meet. She then attended Central Oregon Community College in Bend for two years and worked three summers as a US Forest Service firefighter at the Fremont Winema National Forrest. In Sept. 2004, she decided to enter the Army where she became a medic because she cared about people. She would never discuss politics or her views about the war but would always say that she was there for her fellow soldiers. Her awards and decorations include: Army Commendation Medal; Army Good Conduct Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Iraq Campaign Medal; Meritorious Unit Citation; Global War on

Terrorism Service Medal; Army Service Ribbon; Overseas Service Ribbon; Combat Medical Badge; and Weapons Qualification, M4, expert. Three weeks before Jessica's death, she escaped with only cuts and bruises when her heavily armored vehicle was destroyed by a roadside explosives. This time the courageous medic who was equipped with an M-4 rifle, a 9mm pistol and body armor in addition to her medical bag was seated behind the driver when her Buffalo armored vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device during a nighttime mine clearing operation.

She is the second woman to die in the conflicts in Iraq and the first soldier from the region to die in the past 3 1/2 months.



VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System - University Drive Campus Consolidation Building



Photos of the Consolidation Building at University Drive campus taken in October 2011

The Jump to University Drive *Behavioral health care gets a modern makeover*

Some highlights of the new Consolidation Building

- A state-of-the-art education suite featuring a multi-use conference room.
- An updated library to serve both patients and hospital staff.
- Integrated primary care and behavioral health clinics.
- Expansion of the current canteen to improve flow and increase seating capacity.
- Distinct “day” and “night” areas with a nurses station in each, designed to help inpatients maintain routines of daily living.
- Motion sensor lighting throughout the building.
- An elevator designated to transport only staff and behavioral health patients.
- Pursuing silver LEED certification, a mark of environmentally responsible building design.

By the Numbers
\$75.8 million
Estimated
construction cost

194,850:
Square feet

Seven:
Floors

Two:
Slate fountains in
the plaza

One:
Stained glass
window, saved
From the
Previous chapel at
University Drive.

What’s Inside?
Basement:
Utility space

Ground floor:
Utility space with a
connection to the
retail store

Floor 1:
Outpatient clinical
services

Floor 2:
Library, medical
media, chapel,
education suite,
speech pathology
and audiology

Floors 3-5:
Inpatient units for
behavioral health
services

Official groundbreaking was March 13, 2009
Estimated date of completion Aug. 2011
(interior still in construction). Estimated
date to occupy building May 2012.



GARY SINESE FOUNDATION

The *Gary Sinise Foundation* was officially formed in 2010, and is dedicated to serving the Nation by honoring our defenders, veterans, first responders, their families, and those in need.

Serving Honor and Need is the cornerstone of the foundation, which is built upon its founder's life long principals and long standing commitment to be a citizen of action, and to help in any way that one can, the people who serve our country.

Gary's work with veterans began in the early 1980's while living in the city of Chicago. As Artistic Director of Steppenwolf Theatre, which he co-founded in the mid 1970's, he began working on material for the theatre that had been written by a group of Vietnam veterans based on their experiences while serving there. During the rehearsals and

production of the play he contacted local Vietnam veterans groups, took his cast to the local VA hospital to spend time with veterans struggling PTSD, and began a series of free performances for veterans. While interacting with these local groups he became involved in an effort to build a Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Lansing, Illinois. The experiences of working with these group, interacting with them during the run of the play, and having spent time discussing the war with his Vietnam veteran brothers-in-law, had a profound effect on him. Later, in 1994, he would play disabled veteran Lt. Dan Taylor in the feature film *Forrest Gump* and was introduced to the DAV organization, which he has supported ever since.

But the catalyst that really changed Gary's life and threw him into a new level of service came on Sept.

11, 2001. Faced with a new reality about the world in which we now lived, soon after the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Sinise immediately stepped in to help by volunteering his time with the USO. Determined he was not going to let our service personal and their families experience the negative reception and lack of support received by veterans returning from Vietnam, Gary offered moral support, shook hands, and signed autographs, took pictures, visited the wounded, and entertained the military in both the US and abroad. Little did he know that everything he'd witness over the next decade would become the heart and soul that is The Gary Sinise Foundation.

If you want to learn more about his foundation go to

www.garysinisefoundation.org/about

BOOSTER'S-JAN. 1, 2011 TO DEC. 31, 2011

Mike & Veronica Blazeovich

Charles & Irene Hall

Wayne Donalson

William & Linda Hyslop

SPECIAL BOOSTER'S

John E. Barley
 John & Carolyn Abram
 Dave & Janet Alden
 John & Joan Alden
 Mr. & Mrs. William Aronson
 Edward & Susan Barker
 George & Mary Ann Bigelow
 Conrad Black & Marilyn Obrien
 Dick & Debbie Bostard
 Robert & Florence Bucholtz
 William Carr
 Dominic & Betty Cersosimo
 Phillip Cerussi
 Anne & Roche-Conners
 James & Renae Costabile
 Andrew & Doroty Cherok
 Michael & Michele Cummings
 Greg & Barbara Daley
 Howard & Edna Eichner
 Ray & Pearl Fritz
 Lou & Gloria Gambogi
 John & Donna Gochnour
 Joseph & Patty Henry
 Emil Hosko
 Ira C. & Jeannie Houck Jr.
 Lenny Kasubick
 Joe & Lois Kenney
 James & Juleen Kephart
 Dennis & Marsha King
 Frank & Anne Kravetz
 Larry Kushner
 Lou & Dolly Lacivita

Wayne & Karen Lamping
 Robert Lakes
 Jim & Betsy Lang
 Joe Laplace
 Michael Laskowski Jr,
 M/Sgt Leroy Lewis
 Massaro Corporation
 Steve Massaro
 Joe & Mlinac & Donna Madeja
 Charles Mancuso
 Oliver McClelland
 Col. Alex & Molly Mcclinchie
 Harry McCracken
 Darryl Merrison
 James Pella & Michele Hanson
 Gary & Patricia Ratford
 Michael & Michele Ratway
 Ernie & Nancy Rivers
 Stanley & Mary Rozanski
 Paul Sager
 Chester & M. Jane Sattiaux
 Joe & Anna Serenka
 Robert & Peggy Smith
 Mark & Nancy Sutton
 Terry & Ruth Swindell
 Larry & Mary Uplinger
 Robert & Ruth Vance
 Nicholas Viglione
 Ed & Joan Vogel
 Ed & Cheryl Werle

Newsletter UPDATE

Our chapter is still asking our members again to support our boosters and special boosters send \$6.00 and we will list your name and your spouse name for the up coming year 2012. If you can give more you will be listed as a special booster.

Thanks for your support in the past but we need help for 2012 or the newsletter will be discontinued.

Advertise with Us!

We also are asking anyone that would like to place and ad in our newsletter there we be no charge but a donation would be greatly appreciated.

NOTE:

We are asking our members to submit an outstanding Patriot who has donated a lot of time and energy in helping our veterans. The Patriot will be featured in our Chapter MOPH newsletter.

CHAPTER 455 CONTACT INFORMATION

COMMANDER LOUIS LACIVITA

FAX -412-954-5171

E-MAIL mophpgh455@yahoo.com

WEBSITES: mophchapter455.org

mophdepartmentpa.org

Interesting Veterans Statistics off the

SOMETHING to think about—Most of the surviving Parents are now Deceased.

There are 58,267 names now listed on the polished black wall, including those added in 2010.

The names are arranged in the order in which they were taken from us by date and within each date the names are alphabetized. It is hard to believe it is 36 years since the last casualties.

Beginning at the apex on panel 1E and going out to the end of the East wall, appearing to recede into the earth (numbered 70E-May 25, 1968), then resuming at the end of the West wall, as the wall emerges from the earth (numbered 70W—continuing May 25, 1968) and ending with a date 1975. Thus the war's beginning and end meet. The war is complete, coming full circle, yet broken by the earth that bounds the angle's open side and contained within the earth itself.

The first know casualty was Richard B. Fitzgibbon, of North Weymouth, Mass. Listed by the US Department of Defense as having been killed on June 8, 1956. His name is listed on the Wall with his son, Marine Corps L/Cpl Richard B. Fitzgibbon III, who was killed on Sept. 7, 1965.

There are 3 sets of fathers and sons on the Wall. 39,996 on the Wall were just 22 or younger. The largest group, 8,283 were just 19 years old 33, 103 were 18 years old. 12 soldiers on the Wall were 17 years old. 5 soldiers on the Wall were 16 years old. One



soldier, Pfc. Dan Bullock was 15 years old.

997 soldiers were killed on their first day in Vietnam. 1,448 soldiers were killed on their last day in Vietnam. 31 sets of brothers are on the Wall. Thirty one sets of parents lost two of their sons. 54 soldiers on the Wall attended Thomas Edison High School in Philadelphia. I wonder whys so many from one school. 8 Women are on the Wall. Nursing the wounded. 244 soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War. 153 of them are on the Wall.

Beallsville, Ohio with a population of 475 lost 6 of her sons. West Virginia had the highest casualty rate per capita

in the nation. There are 711 West Virginians on the Wall. The Marines of Morenci—they led some of the most scrappiest high school football and basketball teams that the little Arizona copper town of Morenci (pop. 5,058) had ever known and cheered. They enjoyed roaring beer busts. In quieter moments, they rode horses along the Coronado Trail, stalked deer in the Apache National Forest. And in the patriotic camaraderie typical of Morenci's mining families, the nine graduates of Morenci High enlisted as a group in the Marine Corps. Their service began on Independence Day, 1966. Only 3 returned.

“Carved on these walls is the story of America, of a continuing quest to preserve both democracy and decency, and to protect a national treasure that we call the American dream.”

President George Bush

VIETNAM MEMORIAL WALL

The Buddies of Midvale—LeRoy Tofoya, Jimmy Martinez, Tom Gonzales were all boyhood friends and lived on three consecutive streets in Midvale, Utah on Fifth, Sixth and Seventh avenues. They lived only a few yards apart. They played ball at the adjacent sandlot ball field. And

they all went to Vietnam. In a span of 16 dark days in late 1967, all three would be killed. LeRoy was killed on Wednesday, Nov. 22, the fourth anniversary of John F. Kennedy assassination. Jimmy died less than 24 hours later on Thanksgiving Day. Tom was shot dead assaulting

the enemy on Dec. 7, Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day.

The most casualty deaths for a single day was Jan. 31, 1968—245 deaths. The most casualty deaths for a single month was May 1968—2,415 casualties were incurred.

VETS FRAUD ALLEGATIONS PROBED

Washington, DC—Rep. Bruce Braley urged leaders of the House Veterans Affairs Committee to launch a probe into allegations that banks and mortgage companies have been charging veterans illegal home financing fees, potentially defrauding veterans and tax payers of hundreds of millions of dollars.

These reports warrant a prompt and thorough investigation by the Veterans Affairs Committee.”

Reports indicate that over the last 10 years, more than 1.2 million VA-backed loans have been made to veterans. Up to 90 percent of those loans might have been affected by the alleged fraud.

A whistle blower lawsuit unsealed in Atlanta federal district court alleges that several banks and mortgage companies, including the Bank of America and J. P. Morgan Chase, intentionally concealed attorney’s fees they charged to applicants of home loans backed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. VA rules explicitly prohibit lenders from charging attorney’s fees or settlement closing costs on these types of loans.

Bradley made the request for a probe in a letter to House Veterans Affairs Committee **Jeff Miller and Ranking Member Bob Filner.**

“If a bank intentionally preyed on veterans who’ve put their lives on the line for this country just to pad their profits, that’s beyond the pale,” Braley said. “These allegations raise serious questions about the scope of possible fraud. A staggering number of veterans could have been impacted by this alleged scam.



CHAPTER 455 MEETINGS

Our meetings are held the last Wednesday of the month at the VA Hospital at Highland Drive at 10 am sharp. Our office is in building one, 6th floor, room 6023w. Recently we have been having our meetings on the 2nd floor in room 2010W in building one because we have more space. After the meeting a lunch will be provided.

If you need more information please call 412-954-5166 Mon.—Wed. from 8:00 to 12:00 and ask for Dan Wilhelm.



Alan Moore Oldest College Player at 61



Faulkner's Alan Moore, right is congratulated by team mate Matt Nolan after kicking an extra point during an NAIA college football game against Ave Maria University. Moore 61, a Vietnam Veteran and grandfather of five, became the oldest player ever to get in a college football game.

MONTGOMERY, Ala.—A 61-year-old Vietnam veteran and grandfather of five became the oldest player ever to get in a college football game. Alan Moore kicked an extra point for NAIA Faulkner in its season opener.

Moore wore a square-toe shoe and kicked old-school style, not soccer style—trends that were popular when he first played college football in the late 60's. He gave Faulkner a 25-0 lead early in the second half en route to a 41-19 win over Ave Maria, located in southwest Florida and playing its first game ever.

Players one-third his age swarmed Moore as he jogged off the field smiling. Gray-bearded and tanned, Moore swapped high fives and fist bumps with teammates.

Moore—with the word “believe” written on his kicking shoe—said he was glad to get the first kick behind him.

“It’s not about me, and it’s not about being old. It’s about the team,” Moore said before hugging his grandkids at midfield after the game.

Faulkner coach Gregg Baker knew his team wanted to see Moore get a chance to play.

“When we called his number to go kick it all the players got really excited,” Baker said.

Moore replaces Tom Thompson as the oldest football player to get in a game, according to College Football Hall of Fame historian Kent Stephens. Thompson was also 61 when he kicked off once at NCAA Division III Austin

College in 2009, but Moore has the age edge.

Moore “is a couple months older,” Stephen said.

Originally of Mt. Olive, Miss., Moore kicked during his freshman year in 1968 at Mississippi’s Jones College before heading to Vietnam that Dec. He was in the war almost a year, serving with an infantry unit doing reconnaissance missions.

His military service over, Moore worked construction business for decades before losing his job to the slow economy in 2009. Now retired and living in Homestead, Fla., he went to visit his grandchildren in Miss. and wound up catching the kicking bug again after watching a Jones College game.

Using footballs he bought at a sporting goods store and the old style kicking shoes, Moore began practicing on goal posts he built in his daughter’s yard. He couldn’t get on the Jones College squad but played last season when he was 60 at Holmes community college, missing a 30 yard field goal against Jones but making an extra point attempt at Itawamba.

The College Football Hall of Fame already has asked for a football signed by Moore after his appearance for Faulkner, the historian said.