



Warning to Veterans
Forwarded by Kevin Secor
VSO Liaison
Office of the Secretary of the
Department of Veterans Affairs

An organization called Veterans Affairs Services (VAS) is providing benefit and general information on VA and gathering personal information on veterans.

This organization is not affiliated with VA in any way.

<http://www.vaservices.org/us/index.html>

VAS may be gaining access to military personnel through their close resemblance to the VA name and seal. Our legal counsel has requested that we coordinate with DoD to inform military installations, particularly mobilization sites, of this group and their lack of affiliation or endorsement by VA to provide any services.

In addition, general counsel requests that if you have any examples of VAS acts that violate chapter 59 of Title 38 United States Code, such as VAS employees assisting veterans in the preparation and presentation of claims for benefits, please pass any additional information to Mr. Daugherty at the address below:

Michael G. Daugherty
 Staff Attorney
 Department of Veterans Affairs
 Office of General Counsel (022G2)

Inside This Issue	
1	Warning to Veterans / Pres Sez
2	REMINDER!! TriCare Provides Free Vaccinations
2	Our Troops Are Deployed
2	Board of Director Election Notice
3	Board of Director Nomination Form
4	In Memoriam - Lt Col Frank Oddo /
4	In Memoriam – SSgt John D. “Jack” Smith
5	In Memoriam – MSgt Kenneth H. Warwick II
5	2011 COLA For Retired Pay
6	VA Extends Coverage for Gulf War Veterans
7	America’s Christmas Tree – A Christmas Poem
8	Dondi’s Mercantile Shop / Member Application
9	Final Fly-By / New to the Gang
9	Gift Cards
10	Board of Directors / Missing in Action

The Prez Sez
The President’s Column
 COL John L. Ruppel, Jr. (Ret.)

Col Wayne Albright’s September retirement led to several Wing leadership changes. Lt Col Steve Butow has been appointed the new Vice Commander. Col Butow was the Wing Air Operations Officer and the Assistant Operations Group Commander prior to assuming the Vice Commander position.

Lt Col Jeffery Magram has been appointed as the Wing Logistic Group Commander. Col Magram has previously served as an aircrew member and held several Wing staff positions. Prior to assuming the Logistic Commander position he served on the California Air Guard Headquarters staff.

The Association will hold a 2011 election for the four Board Directors. The Newsletter’s publication opens the nomination period for the Director election. Election details and nomination procedures are contained in the Newsletter.

The Association was notified of the passing of SSgt John D. “Jack” Smith and Lt Col Frank Oddo. The Wing announced the death of MSgt Kenneth Warwick. The Newsletter contains obituaries for them.

The Newsletter contains several articles of interest to Association members obtained from the Air Force News Service and the Veterans Administration.

The annual Old Timers’ Luncheon is scheduled for Wednesday, March 23, 2011, at the Castro Valley Moose Lodge. The February Newsletter will contain reservation and direction information. This would be a good time to save the date!

The 2011 dues assessment is due January 2011. A dues notice will be mailed in January to members who haven’t prepaid 2011 dues. If you intend to attend the annual luncheon, dues can be included with the reservation or paid at the luncheon.

The Board extends Holiday Greetings and wishes you and yours a prosperous New Year!

Cheers!

John

REMINDER!! TRICARE Provides Free Vaccinations

TRICARE covers the seasonal and H1N1 flu and age-appropriate doses of vaccines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Beneficiaries can visit participating TRICARE retail network pharmacies to receive seasonal flu, H1N1 flu and pneumonia vaccines at no cost. This expanded coverage is available to all TRICARE beneficiaries eligible to use the TRICARE retail pharmacy benefit. To find a participating pharmacy, visit [TRICARE's Express Scripts webpage](#) or call Express Scripts at 1-877-363-1303. TRICARE regularly adds coverage for new vaccinations based on CDC recommendations on the [CDC website](#). For more information on immunizations, visit the [Military Health System Immunization Awareness page](#).

Our Troops Are Deployed

Many members of the 129th Rescue Wing have deployed into combat during this holiday season. Please keep them and their families in your prayers and thoughts.

God speed, and a safe return.



Board Election

March 2011

An election for the three at-large Directors is scheduled for 2011. The AHA Corporation Bylaws proscribe that Directors are elected in odd number years (2011) and Officers are elected in even number years (2012).

The AHA President, John Ruppel, will appoint an Election Committee composed of the Vice President, Steve James; the Secretary-Treasurer, Dave Russell; Newsletter Editor, Lynda Fawcett; and an association member at large, James Rommelfanger. The committee will be responsible for gathering nominations, distributing, collecting, and counting the ballots. The newly elected Directors will be announced at the Association's annual meeting, the Annual Old Timers' Lunch, scheduled for Wednesday, March 23, 2011.

Any AHA member in good standing may serve as a Director. Individuals interested in serving as a Director should complete the form included in this newsletter. Return the completed form (or a reasonable facsimile) no later than January 14, 2011, to:

Col John Ruppel
6718 Zerillo Drive
Riverbank, CA 95367-2122

Nominations must be postmarked by January 14, 2011, to be valid. All nominations will be included on the ballot. Ballots, a self-addressed stamped postcard, will be mailed to all members, with the next edition of the newsletter, in early February. There is no write-in provision. Ballots must be returned with a postmark no later than March 18, 2011, to be valid. The three nominees with the highest number of votes will be declared Directors, and will be announced and begin their two-year term at the Old Timers' Luncheon.

Interested in serving? Get your nomination form completed and returned ASAP!



NOMINATION FOR DIRECTOR AT LARGE

Now is your opportunity!

Do you want to have a hand in running the 129th Alumni and Heritage Association? Do you want to be more involved in the Association? Do you have lots of great ideas for things the Association could be involved in?

Now is your opportunity. Nominate yourself (you CAN NOT nominate another person) to serve for 2 years as a Director at large. If elected, you will serve on the Board of Directors of the 129th Alumni and Heritage Association.

Volunteer NOW!

NOMINATION FOR DIRECTOR AT LARGE

Yes! I want to be more involved in the 129th AHA!

Place my name in nomination for Director at Large.

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Rank: _____ Dates of Service in 129th: _____

Signature: _____

Must be postmarked by January 14, 2011. Mail to:

Col John Ruppel
6718 Zerillo Drive
Riverbank, CA 95367-2122
Email: J-L.Ruppel@att.net

Lt Col Frank Oddo

3 September 1925 - 9 August 2010

Frank was born to Mario and Consetta Oddo in Chicago, Illinois.

He served as a Merchant Mariner in WWII. He joined the U.S. Army, served in Korea, joined the National Guard and retired as a Lt. Colonel. He worked at the US Naval Supply Base in Oakland, CA. He was a member of the National Association of Retired Employees, Sons in Retirement, a Mason, a member of the Eagles, The American Legion, VFW, and volunteered to work with the Oroville Police Department and also worked for the Oroville Chamber of Commerce.

He is survived by his wife, Phyllis; sons: Guy Oddo of South Dakota, Frank Andrew Oddo of Oroville; daughters: Alice Van Buren of South Dakota, and MaryAnn of Texas; granddaughter, Jennifer Byrd of Omaha, NE; grandsons: Beau Byrd of U.S. Army in Germany, Frank Anthony Oddo of Oroville; and four great-grandsons and great-granddaughters; his sister, Mary (Dave) Blondin of Oroville; nieces and nephews: Constance (Tom) Dolan of Carlsbad, CA, Divvy (Col. John) Kidd of Big Springs, TX, Richard (Anita) Dittmar of Oroville, Charles Dittmar of Santa Clara, CA, Lisa Blondin of Antioch, CA; eight great-nieces and nephews; and six great-great-nieces and nephews.

REST IN PEACE - Husband, Father, Grandfather, Great-Grandfather, Brother, Uncle, Great-Uncle and Great-Great-Uncle.

SSgt John D. "Jack" Smith

14 December 1937 – 8 September 2010



John D. (Jack) Smith Pleasanton Dec. 14, 1937 - Sept. 8, 2010
Jack was born in Oakland, CA, and moved to Pleasanton in 1969. He worked for P.G. & E. in Power Control in San Francisco and retired after 40 years in 2002. Jack was affiliated with the 129th Alumni & Heritage Association; the El Dorado Brass Band of Sacramento; the Pleasanton Blairgowrie Fergus Sister City Organization; SIR's Branch 34, and was a long time member of St. Clare's Episcopal Church in Pleasanton. Jack is survived by his wife, Pat; his children: Deborah Bennett (Michael) of Danville, and Diane Smith Young (Gregory) of McKinleyville; and grandchildren: Cole Bennett (Carrie) of Pleasant Hill, Brett Bennett of Danville, Erin Young of McKinleyville; and great grandson, Carter Bennett. Friends and family are invited to funeral services on Sept. 18, 2010 at 11:00 am at St. Clare's Episcopal Church, 3350 Hopyard Rd. Pleasanton. The family requests donations to: St. Clare's Episcopal Church, 3350 Hopyard Road, Pleasanton; or the Salvation Army, Concord Corps, 3950 Clayton Road, Concord, CA 94521.

MSgt Kenneth H. Warwick II

15 May 1973 – 9 October 2010



MSGT KENNETH H. WARWICK II Age 37, of Hemet, California passed away on Saturday, October 9, 2010 in San Jacinto, California. Ken was born in Long Beach, California, May 15, 1973. He joined the Air Force September 1995. He served in Iraq in 2005. He was currently stationed at North Island, California, but was still a member of the 129th at Moffett FAF in Mountain View, California.

Ken is survived by his loving wife Melissa Warwick; four children: Jayden, Brandon, Sabrina, all of Hemet, and Cole of Temecula. His mother, Beverly Warwick, and step father Bill of San Jacinto, California; his sister, Bernice Stroba, her husband Dennis, and their two children, Julie and Emily, all of Washington state; in-laws: John Skalberg of Iowa, and Karen Skalberg of San Jacinto, California; Military brothers and sisters, and many friends. You will be truly missed by all. We Love you. Internment at Riverside National Cemetery.

2011 COLA for Retired Pay

2011 COLA Watch: The Federal Government announced that the 2011 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for military retirees, disabled veterans, and social security recipients will be zero for the second year in a row.

COLA Explained: Each year Military Retirement pay, VA Compensation and Pensions, and Social Security benefits are adjusted for the rate of inflation. This annual Cost of Living Adjustment is determined by the Consumer Price Index for the previous year. In a normal cycle the CPI for a given year is compared to the previous year to determine the actual rate of inflation. However, since 2008 was the last year the rate of inflation was positive, it is the baseline for determining the 2010 rate of inflation.

For example, the 2011 COLA will be based on the 2010 rate of inflation. The 2010 rate of inflation was -0.1% when compared to 2008, therefore there will be no COLA for Fiscal Year 2011.

Note: Retiree Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) differs from the Active Duty Cost of Living Allowance which is paid based on the cost of living in a given high-cost locality. This number will be released in late December.

More on Retiree COLA from DFAS:

Cost-of-Living Increases: Perhaps the most common change to retiree pay accounts are the Cost-of-Living (COLA) increases. Currently, federal law authorizes periodic increases to reflect rises in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). COLA increases impact your monthly gross pay, federal withholding tax, SBP premiums and annuities. While DFAS does not establish COLA increases, the agency does apply any authorized increases to your pay, SBP premiums and other account information.

COLA is applied depending on your date of entry into the armed forces and your date of retirement. If you entered service on or after Sept. 8, 1980, and became eligible for retired pay on or after Jan. 1, 1996, any authorized COLA will be decreased during your first calendar year of retirement. Full COLA increases will be applied for all subsequent years.

Retirees who entered military service on or after Aug. 1, 1986, will have any authorized COLA increases reduced by 1 percent.

VA Extends Coverage for Gulf War Veterans

by Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON (AFRNS) -- Veterans of the first Gulf War as well as current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan now have a smoother path toward receiving health-care benefits and disability compensation for nine diseases associated with their military service, announced Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

A final regulation published in the Sept. 29 Federal Register relieves veterans of the burden of proving these diseases are service-related: Brucellosis, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Coxiella Burnetii* (Q fever), Malaria, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, Nontyphoid *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, Visceral leishmaniasis, and West Nile virus.

Secretary Shinseki added the new presumptions after reviewing a 2006 National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine report on the long-term health effects of certain diseases suffered among Gulf War veterans. He also extended the presumptions to veterans of Afghanistan, based on NAS findings that the nine diseases are prevalent there as well. The new presumptions apply to veterans who served in Southwest Asia beginning on or after the start of Operation Desert Shield on Aug. 2, 1990, through Operation Desert Storm to the present, including the current conflict in Iraq. Veterans who served in Afghanistan on or after Sept. 19, 2001, also qualify.

For Secretary Shinseki, who pledged to honor the 20th anniversary of the Gulf War by improving health-care access and benefits for its 697,000 veterans, the new presumptions represent a long-overdue step in addressing the medical challenges many face. "This is part of historic changes in how VA considers Gulf War veterans' illnesses," he said. "By setting up scientifically based presumptions of service connection, we give these deserving veterans a simple way to obtain the benefits they earned in service to our country."

The new presumptions initially are expected to affect nearly 2,000 veterans who have been diagnosed with the nine specified diseases, John Gingrich, VA's chief of staff, told American Forces Press Service. He acknowledged that the numbers are likely to climb as more cases are identified.

With the final rule, a veteran needs only to show service in Southwest Asia or Afghanistan during the specified time periods to receive disability compensation, subject to certain time limits based on incubation periods for seven of the diseases. "It gives them easier access to quality health care and compensation benefits," Mr. Gingrich said. "The message behind that is that the VA is striving to make access to health care easier for our veterans who have served in our combat zones." He expressed hope that by providing quick, easy access, VA will help veterans get the care they need early on, without having to fight the bureaucracy. "When we find these presumptions and we reach out and get the veterans into our system, we can help them and give them the proper medical care they need, and maybe keep their disease from getting worse or getting it to go away altogether," he said. It also will help eliminate the piles of paperwork and long claims adjudication process veterans had to go through to prove their cases to receive care and benefits. "This will help break the back of the backlog in the long run, while sending a reassuring message to veterans that the VA is there for them," Mr. Gingrich said. He called the new presumptions part of Secretary Shinseki's effort to "create a culture of advocacy" within VA that builds trust as it reaches out to veterans.

For Mr. Gingrich, a Gulf War veteran himself, the effort is very personal. He remembers being deployed as a 1st Infantry Division field artillery battalion commander during Operation Desert Storm, when one of his officers became very sick with an illness nobody could diagnose. "The medics couldn't diagnose it. We called in the doctors and they couldn't diagnose it. And eventually, he had to be medevaced back," he recalled. "And now here we are, 20 years later, and I saw him in Dallas in August, and he is still sick. You can't identify all the reasons and symptoms, but he is sick." Veterans deserve better, Mr. Gingrich insisted. "I believe that our veterans that served in uniform for our country deserve the absolute best care and benefits that we can provide," he said.

VA provides compensation and pension benefits to more than 3.8 million veterans and beneficiaries, and received more than 1 million claims last year alone, VA officials reported. Veterans without dependents receive a basic monthly compensation ranging from \$123 to \$2,673.

For more information, contact the VA at 800-827-1000, or visit www.va.gov. (Courtesy of VA)

For more retiree news and information, please visit www.retirees.af.mil.

America's Christmas Tree

by [Angela Posey-Arnold](#)

Wednesday, November 14, 2007

A poem for our troops
OOORAH from the aunt of a Marine.



I got the gift you sent me,
Today as I watched the news.
It was so beautiful wrapped in camouflage,
And elegant in the dress Blues.

I opened it prayerfully and carefully
Because I know it is true
That you have given a gift to me
Just by being you.



Thankful I am for the strength you have
The braveness and courage too
The sacrifice that you make for us
So we can stand free for the Red White and Blue.

This country and I are so grateful
For the brave and right that you do.
For Christmas this year we give you a gift
Of our hearts and prayers, support too.

When we see each other again real soon
Directly face to face
But the best gift I get this Christmas
Is to know you fight with Grace.



Grace is a gift that is given
To us from God above
It is free for just the asking
Just because of His great love.

You fight for our country and for me
With honor and loyalty
You give us a gift we can never repay
Our right to be proud and free.



So this year just remember
As you eat your MREs
You are the greatest gift
Under America's Christmas tree.

God Bless You. God be with you and send His mighty angels to look over you.
May God make His face to shine upon you and give you rest.

Dondi's Mercantile Store

129th AHA Merchandise & Apparel

If you would like to order a 129th AHA jacket, we again have jackets in stock. Please contact Liliana Ramos for ordering information.

Want to own a really unique & distinctive shirt or cap to show your affiliation with the 129th AHA? Dondi's Mercantile Store has a healthy stock of 129th AHA related items. Jackets and vests are customized with your name and rank.

All merchandise can be ordered by phone or on-line. Items and prices are shown at right. Shipping and handling are EXTRA.

Order from Liliana Ramos at:

(408) 263-5352

LilRamos@pacbell.net

or online at

<http://www.129aha.org>

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>COST</u>	<u>SIZES</u>
Logo Jacket or Vest	\$65 - \$80	
Logo Polo Shirts - Men's & Ladies	\$22	M, L, XL, & 2XL
Logo Baseball Cap	\$15	
Large Jacket Patch	\$10	
Small Shirt / Hat Patch	\$5	
Logo Pin	\$5	
129 th 50 th Anniversary Commemorative Coin	\$5	

All items can be shipped. Shipping and handling are EXTRA. All items are sent via U.S. Mail.

All profits are used for 129 AHA benefit projects.

Have you moved? Know a former member of the 129th who isn't a member yet?

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / CHANGE OF INFORMATION FORM 2011 Dues \$15.00

NAME: _____ SPOUSE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ ST: _____ ZIP+4: _____ + _____

TELEPHONE: _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

RANK: _____ 129TH SERVICE DATES FROM: _____ TO _____

Please complete the above information and mail to:
129th Alumni & Heritage Association
c/o Col John L. Ruppel, Jr. (ret)
6718 Zerillo Dr.
Riverbank, CA 95367-2122

**If your personal information has changed,
PLEASE USE THIS FORM AND NOTIFY US IMMEDIATELY!!**

Form is available at www.129aha.org

Final Fly-By

In Memoriam

Lt Col Frank Oddo
SSgt John D. "Jack" Smith
MSgt Kenneth Warwick



New to the Gang

Our Newest Members

A1C Rodney Keith

Welcome!

Do you know someone who has been affiliated with the 129th RQW or its predecessor organizations - and is not a member of the Association? Let's get them signed up!

Application form is available at

www.129aha.org

Gift Cards Ensure No Airman Is Left Behind This Holiday Season

DALLAS (AFRNS) -- A favorite time of year for thousands of military members serving overseas is just around the corner. While the holiday season and the gifts that accompany them always bring a sense of joy, time is running out for those considering sending mail to troops in Afghanistan and Iraq.

According to the Military Postal Service Agency, "space-available" mail should be postmarked no later than Nov. 26; parcel airlift mail, Dec. 3; priority and first-class mail, letters and cards, Dec. 10; and express mail military service, Dec. 18.

Regardless of the date sent, the Army and Air Force Exchange Service offers fast, easy and convenient gift cards (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/aafespa/5182576790/>) that anyone can include in a package or even have sent directly to loved ones serving overseas. Exchange gift cards can be used at stores, ranging from 900 to 24,000 square feet, that have all the candy bars, protein shakes and magazines a servicemember could desire. The exchange has also partnered with food vendors such as Subway, Burger King and Pizza Hut to ensure troops get a taste of home.

The exchange's infrastructure makes the gift cards both convenient for those looking to send support and the deployed troops who receive it. In fact, the exchange has developed partnerships with organizations including the American Red Cross and United Service Organizations to ensure donated gift cards reach servicemembers who need them.

"For many deployed servicemembers, a package is the closest they will get to their family this holiday season," said Colonel Williams, the exchange's chief of staff. "Exchange gift cards are a great way to ensure Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines are able to get what they want at any of 81 stores and more than 200 food vendors in contingency locations including Afghanistan and Iraq."

Friends, family, and even civic groups can send exchange gift cards ranging from \$10 to \$500 by calling 800-527-2345. or logging on to <https://shop.aafes.com/gcs/default.aspx>. (Courtesy of AAFES)

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AND
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Riverbank, CA 95367-2122

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Are You Missing in Action?

Dead Letter Department

Have you moved recently - or not so recently? Do we have your correct mail and e-mail addresses & phone number? Please let us know when you move.

The newsletter is mailed out with a request for address correction. The post office does not forward the newsletter to you – nor do they return it to us. They charge us 75¢ for providing your forwarding address. Then we update your file, but you do not get a newsletter until next edition unless you request an electronic copy. Total additional cost to the association is nearly \$1.00 per returned newsletter.

Please take a moment to remember the 129th AHA when you notify your correspondents of your new address. A member information form is included in every issue.

Col. John L. Ruppel, Jr. (Ret.)
6718 Zerillo Drive
Riverbank, CA 95367-2122
E-mail: J-L.RUPPEL@ATT.NET

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