



RETIREE NEWSLETTER



“They Also Serve”

COAST GUARD RETIREE COUNCIL NORTHWEST NEWSLETTER

FROM THE CHAIR

I had the pleasure to attend a very special ceremony on the 27th of September in Cle Elum Washington. The Douglas Munro Memorial VFW Post 1373, The Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association and the Seattle Chapter of the CPOA presented “A Symbolic Call to Arms and a Posting of the Colors”. The ceremony dedicated a new Veterans Memorial Wall and a lighted flagpole at the gravesite of Douglas Munro. It was a very moving ceremony attended by over 1000 individuals from as far away as Florida.

Special thanks go to Captain Gary Beck and the staff at Integrated Support Command Seattle for the help they provided for Retiree Appreciation Day held on 19 June. Over 120 retirees and spouses attended. RADM Paul Blaney, Commander 13th CG District, presented an update on the happenings in the 13th District and the outlook for the Coast Guard as we enter the next century. Special thanks also go to Captain James Spitzer and his staff at MSO/Group Portland for the support they provided for Retiree Appreciation Day on 26 June. Over 25 individuals attended and were briefed on Council activities, National Council activity and a special presentation on the grounding of the “New Clarisia” near Coos Bay. Judging from the turn out for both days, we will be looking at having meetings in other locations. I am open to suggestions for dates and locations.

I was very encouraged by the response to our call for volunteers to help the Council with our various activities. As you have heard before—we are the most active Retire Council. To continue our efforts, we still would like to have addition help particularly to assist in the office in Seattle. We will be in touch with those that signed up in June.

From all of us on the Council ——Happy Holidays and a Happy New Century.

“IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME”

29 Sep 1999

As I sit here in my Seattle hotel room continually bursting with pride and joy after having witnessed a group of sterling examples of chief petty officers who have raised the bar on setting the standard of fulfilling the commitment of living the Chief Petty Officer’s Creed, I can’t help but put my thoughts together in words. On Monday, 27 September, I had the privilege and pleasure to participate in the Munro Gravesite Flagpole dedication ceremony in Cle Elum, WA. As you recall, this event was the pinnacle of a successful effort put together by the Seattle Chapter, CPOA, spearheaded by the proactive efforts of their chapter president, RDCM Mark Brown.

If I may, I’d like to do a quick synopsis of what led up to this joyous day of reaffirming our service’s commitment to embracing our history, heritage and tradition. Please forgive

me for indulging with a somewhat lengthy email to address my point.

The genesis of this project began on November 11, 1998,

when an article appeared in the Seattle Times, of a heartwarming story of Douglas Munro’s childhood friend, Mr. Mike Cooley. Mr. Cooley kept a personal vigil over his close friend’s grave, personally raising and lowering the



MCPOCG Vincent W. Patton, III addresses gathering

National Ensign every day without fail for over thirty years. This human interest story told of how Mr. Cooley took the long three mile walk from his home everyday to the cemetery to conduct “colors” honoring his fallen friend and hero. He never missed a day conducting this solemn ritual so that Munro’s deed will not disappear. According to his daughter, Mr. Cooley suffered from pneumonia three years ago, yet he still “stood the watch” twice a day, however his daughter had to drive him back and forth, allowed him to execute his mission, then return home back to bed to convalesce. Mr. Cooley was truly a remarkable man who was totally committed to keeping his friend’s legacy alive, even he had to do it alone.



RADM Blayney leads salute to SMI Douglas Munro

This particular article was forwarded to me by the reporter, Ms Michelle Malkin, after she had received a copy of a speech I had given, talking about my initiatives of bringing the history of Munro to the forefront. After I read the article, I passed it on via the CMC network, with a little help through my good friend Norm Paulhus’ “Norm Net” which many believe guarantees email distribution to the universe. It wouldn’t surprise me in the least if the great Creator himself is on Norm’s bang list.

Within days of forwarding the Seattle Times article, I immediately received an outpouring of emails responses throughout the Coast Guard and beyond, asking if there was something that we could do to help Mr. Cooley. Judging from the article, he was getting up there in years, and his days of standing the watch would soon be over. Mr. Cooley unfortunately died in August of this year after a long illness at the age of 81. He lived long enough to know that this day would come where he would be “formally relieved of his duties,” and this project was well underway to his satisfaction. My spiritual guess is he thought it was time to watch the completion of this project, and enjoy the dedication ceremony along next to his close friend Doug Munro.

It was then suggested that we look into finding a way to light the flagpole, so the flag would remain flying. I inquired to MCPO Dave Ojeda, the D13 command master chief to see if he can have someone take a look at the gravesite to see if it was possible. As is with just about anything you need done in the Coast Guard — you simply “Ask the Chief!” This statement was immediately validated as the D13 chiefs took action immediately. Upon a site visit by several of the D13 chiefs, they found that the flagpole had stood its test of time and was soon worn for wear. Through Mr. Cooley’s own efforts to keep the flag flying he had jury-rigged it dozens of times to keep it together. The consensus from the chiefs was the cemetery needed a new flagpole. The other obstacle in this idea was there was no source for power to have a lighted flagpole. To a Chief, obstacles are merely minor inconveniences which provide opportunities to conquer.

Through the update of the status of this initial project, I had passed it on to the CMCs, who of course continued to keep others informed of what was going on. No doubt about it, this project took on a life of its own, where the true meaning of “Team Coast Guard” in addition to the D13 chiefs were more than willing to help. The facilities engineer at ISC Portsmouth offered up the opportunity to get an excess property flagpole that came from Governors Island. However because the cemetery was not government owned/operated, we had to follow the excess property procedures. There laid an obstacle where another government agency was waiting in the wings to take ownership of it. To a Chief, obstacles are merely minor inconveniences which provide opportunities to conquer.

After the field received this update of not so good news, the Yorktown Chapter CPOA offered the suggestion to buy a new flagpole, which came to the amount of approximately \$3,000. Again, “Team Coast Guard” went into action, in addition to the donations given by the local CPOA Chapters, many others joined in, including individual donations from chiefs, officers, other enlisted members, civilians, auxiliaries, Coast Guard veterans, retirees and family members. The amount was raised so quickly, I don’t think anyone kept track of the pace of how fast the donations poured in. The next obstacle was getting someone to put the flagpole in, this included getting some assistance and permission from the cemetery. Somebody had to make this happen - especially when the nearest Coast Guard installation was over 80 miles away. To a Chief, obstacles are merely minor inconveniences which provide opportunities to conquer.

In a matter of days after this project’s plan began to materialize, dozens of chiefs from the Seattle area and the entire crew of Aids-to-Navigation Team, Kennewick, WA drove hundreds of miles over a course of several days in a pilgrimage of sorts to Munro’s gravesite. They did this on their own time and at their own expense, surveying the site and visualizing at what challenges would lay ahead of them. There was no source of power, which had to be done, with some cooperation and assistance from the local power company. Equipment and supplies had to be sought to build the

RETIREE NEWSLETTER

The RETIREE NEWSLETTER is a publication containing news of general interest, suggestions, and information to keep Coast Guard retirees and their dependents informed of recent developments. This publication shall not be considered authority and is non-record material. Comments and suggestions should be directed to the editor, Patrick Wills, care of:

COAST GUARD RETIREE COUNCIL NORTHWEST
USCG Integrated Support Command
Worklife (Retiree Council)
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foundation of the flagpole. There were other countless number of “challenges” that would have to be overcome to make this project a reality. To a Chief, obstacles are merely minor inconveniences which provide opportunities to conquer.

As timing is always perfect, another initiative was in the making at the same time. The VFW Post in Cle Elum which by the way bore the name of Douglas A. Munro, had been trying for a number of years to erect a memorial veterans’ wall that listed names of fallen servicemen who died in past wars from the State of Washington. A similar wall did exist at one time attached to the side of a building in the state capital of Olympia, but through neglect in upkeep, the wall was taken down and stored in a warehouse. The VFW Post had made numerous attempts to retrieve it and erect it in the local cemetery which a large number of deceased veterans are in their final resting place. RDCM Brown coordinated with the VFW post to work on getting the wall erected - which was to be placed just a few yards from Munro’s grave. The problem, the VFW members were elderly and unable to accomplish the task of constructing the wall site. To a Chief, obstacles are merely minor inconveniences which provide opportunities to conquer.

In steps RDCM Brown, who after some discussion with the VFW and the Seattle CPOA Chapter members, agrees to take the wall project on in conjunction with the flagpole task. Spearheading this effort was taken on by the entire crew of ANT Kennewick, headed up by the officer in charge, BMC Tom Carroll. Working in a concerted effort to ensure the wall and the flagpole site be completed together, scores of other chiefs throughout the 13th district got involved, both active and reserve. Additional equipment was needed, supplies, and strong able bodies. All to be done on their own time, with no government expense. The chiefs accomplished this without a skip in their progressive step. Additional funding to pay for the building materials, construction, and the wall continued to come in donations coordinated by RDCM Brown. To a Chief, obstacles are merely minor inconveniences which provide opportunities to conquer.

On Monday, 27 September, the 57th anniversary of the death of Douglas Munro. The lighted flagpole and the veterans’ wall was dedicated under the clearest sky that the State of Washington had ever seen. I recall telling someone that the traditional grey skies of western Washington state, gave way to a picture perfect day only because Doug Munro and Mike Cooley wanted to make sure they had a perfect view of the action. After all, they’re a lot closer to the decision-making process and outcome of what the weather would be.

While the event organizers, RADM Blayney and even myself, since my office handled the RSVP list anticipated anywhere between 150 to 250 attendees, we were in for the most pleasant surprise of all. The number swelled to well over 750. Some estimate the number to be around 800 people attended this event. All I know is, there were only 400 programs printed, and they were gone inside five minutes after they were available to be handed out.

My quick scan of the crowd displayed a unique diversity



that the small town of Cle Elum, with a population of just under 2,500 may have never experienced before. Attendees came from all over. They came from as far away as St. Petersburg, FL, Cape Cod, MA, San Antonio, TX, Tulsa, OK, Southern California, to just a few hundred yards across the street from the cemetery at the nearby Safeway supermarket. The poor town police department of four officers and a dozen of volunteers probably witnessed their first “traffic congestion” since the introduction of the automobile in the town of Cle Elum.

There were young school children, high school students, retirees and veterans who pulled their uniforms out of the closet after so many years and wore them with pride to this event. There were seaman apprentices to admirals, active, reserve, retired. Even Medal of Honor recipient, Air Force Colonel Joe Jackson, USAF Ret. was there, wearing his medal around his neck with pride which paved way for the snappiest salutes from everyone. They came in walkers, wheelchairs and strollers. There was probably every ethnic group prominently represented. Retired Army Sergeant Bill Sumner, a proud Native American decked out in full heritage attire formed up with the honor guard of chief petty officers who stood by the flags representing every Allied nation that took part in World War II.

In my 18 months since I assumed the position of Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, there’s been three occasions where I have become so overwhelmed with such emotion that I actually had tears flowing down my cheek like a baby, the USO Service Salute in New York City after the award was read for ET2 Richard Nieman who was responsible for rescuing over 150 people during the Grand Forks, ND flood; on Coast Guard Day this year on Capitol Hill during a reception honoring BM2 Mark Coady, one of the many heroes who were involved in the JFK Jr. rescue and recovering operations; and hearing of the SAR case at Station Atlantic City, where the RHI crew felt the value of a woman’s life was worth the risk. There’s about six or so other cases that brought a lot of goosebumps and a swelling of the eyes. This event rates right up there as a “tissue grabber.” My predecessor Rick Trent never told me this part of the job!

There were a countless number of people that were directly and indirectly involved with this event. Although I’m sure I’ll miss a few names, these individuals listed below are

certainly the most visible key players and are most deserving of a public thanks from me:

MCPO Dave Ojeda - D13 Command Master Chief
 RDCM Mark Brown - VTS Puget Sound
 BMCM Kim Brown - MSO Puget Sound
 MKCM Jeff Andrie - NESU Seattle
 SKCM Ben Runez - ISC Seattle
 SKCS Greg Pankau - ISC Seattle
 GMC Gene Hunt - ISC Seattle
 DCC Henry Conners - ISC Seattle
 BMC Tom Carroll - ANT Kennewick
 - and the entire crew of ANT Kennewick

Together these members made a dream a reality, showing us all what it means to embrace our history, heritage and tradition with confidence, competence and commitment. When you think of the words to our core values, "Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty" these actions that these individuals have shown are clear evidence that core values are real, not abstract. By their actions, it has given full rejuvenation the importance of learning, living and caring about our Coast Guard legacy.

As you'll note below my signature block, the USCGC NORTHLAND, along with the USCGC MUNRO and many other Coast Guard units took time out on September 27th to first of all reflect on the life of our fallen hero, and actively participated in a celebration of honoring Munro along with other Coast Guard heroes who have gone before us, being the guiding light of leadership for us to follow. There are three USMC units that I am aware of that also took time out to celebrate the heroic efforts of Munro, Henderson Hall Marine Corps installation in Washington, DC and the First and Third Marine Divisions in Okinawa and Japan.

The town of Cle Elum will never be the same after this event. Nor will I. I can assure you that I will continue to push forward events like this throughout the Coast Guard. I know that I have a great group of Chief Petty Officers behind me who will continue to be the "lamplighters of our history."

This experience can be summed up in the words of the movie starring Kevin Costner, entitled, "Field of Dreams." It's true - *"IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME!"* All we need to do now is get Costner to play the part of a Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer, and we're ready to film the sequel in Cle Elum.

Semper Paratus!
MCPOCG Vincent W. Patton, III

R 280126Z SEP 99
 FM USCGC NORTHLAND
 TO USCGC MUNRO
 INFO COMLANTAREA COGARD PORTSMOUTH VA
 CCGDONE BOSTON MA
 COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC
 BT
 UNCLAS //N01732//
 SUBJ: Signalman First Class Douglas Albert Munro, USCG
 1. At 271845q, NORTHLAND observed a special memorial service while at sea on Georges Bank (41-03N/068-55W), 50 NM east of Nantucket Island, to honor the heroic service of the only Coast Guard recipient of the congressional medal of honor —Douglas Albert Munro, Signalman First Class, USCG.
 2. On a tranquil sea under clear skies, the first class petty officers led an all-hands ceremony to recall the great sacrifice and leadership

demonstrated by SM1 Munro on the 57th anniversary of his valiant action.

3. ET1 Bell, 1998 runner-up for the Douglas Munro leadership award, read the summary of the CMH citation: "Petty Officer Munro was in charge of a group of 24 Higgins boats engaged in the evacuation of a battalion of Marines trapped by enemy forces at Point Cruz, Guadalcanal on 27 September 1942. After preliminary plans to evacuate nearly 500 Marines, under constant fire by enemy machine guns, Munro led five of his craft toward shore. As he closed the beach, he signaled the others to land, and then, in order to draw enemy fire and protect the heavily loaded boats, he valiantly placed his craft, with only two small guns, as a shield between the beach head and Japanese gunfire. When the evacuation was nearly complete, he was instantly killed by enemy fire, but his crew of two — although both wounded — carried on until the last boat was loaded and safely cleared."

4. SM1 Munro gallantly gave his life for his country. At the age of 22, he died asking his shipmates, "did they get off?"

5. After a prayer and a moment of silence, eight bells sounded, followed by taps as the steaming ensign was lowered to the dip.

6. Crew of mighty NORTHLAND share with you the great honor and memory of your name sake, Douglas Munro. His selfless service reflects the honor, respect, and devotion to duty to which we all aspire.

7. Respectfully, CDR Egli
 BT

A Message from the District Commander

Dear Retirees,

This year's Combined Federal Campaign kicks-off on October 6th. As a CFC Area Chair and member of the Planning Committee I'm committed to the mission of the CFC...to support and promote philanthropy through a program that is employee-focused, cost-efficient and effective in providing all Federal employees the opportunity to improve the quality of life for all of us.

During your years on active duty, you were offered and generously responded to this CFC opportunity. The purpose of my letter is to inform you that your retirement did not terminate that opportunity. The Code of Federal Regulations specifically recognizes that retirees may contribute to the CFC. Although retirees are not to be directly solicited...no one is planning on knocking on your door...you should be informed of your option and be allowed to participate, should you choose to do so.

Recently, the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard circulated a copy of the "Creed of the Coast Guardsman" which was written in 1938 by VADM Harry G. Hamlet, Commandant (1932-36). Sixty years later, one line in the Creed is particularly apropos to our Coast Guard's continuing CFC efforts ... "I shall endeavor to be a model citizen in the community in which I live." The CFC continues to be an ideal way to be 'model citizens' and support the communities in which we live. Should you choose to continue to participate in the CFC, you can designate which agencies you desire to receive your donations, including agencies supporting the military communities.

If you have additional questions regarding the CFC or would like information on how you may participate in the Combined Federal Campaign, please contact this year's Campaign

Coordinator, Captain Carl A. Swedberg, at the address/telephone number listed below.

Sincerely,
Paul M. Blayney, RADM, USCG

Captain Carl A. Swedberg
Thirteenth Coast Guard District Legal Officer
915 Second Avenue - Room 3462
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206-220-7110
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This is the beginning of a series of questions and answers about TRICARE that will appear over the next several issues of the Retiree Newsletter.

1. What is TRICARE?

TRICARE is a health care program for members of the uniformed services and their families, and survivors and retired members and their families. TRICARE brings together the health care resources of each of the military services and supplements them with networks of civilian health care professionals to provide better access and high quality service while maintaining the capability to support military operations. There are 11 TRICARE Regions in the U.S. plus TRICARE Europe, TRICARE Latin America and TRICARE Pacific. Each region has an assigned Lead Agent staff who are responsible for the military health system in that region. TRICARE Pacific is managed administratively by the Region 12 Lead Agent staff.

2. What will happen if I don't take any action to change my current health care plan?

If you are on active duty, you will be enrolled in the TRICARE Prime benefit. All other eligible persons deciding not to enroll in TRICARE Prime may still be eligible for care in military medical facilities on a space available basis and maintain TRICARE Standard eligibility (formally CHAMPUS). You may also participate in a new money-saving option called TRICARE Extra by choosing a physician in the Extra network.

3. How does TRICARE improve military readiness?

TRICARE increases flexibility of the Military Health System (MHS), which affords our military medical personnel the ability to maintain their personal readiness while assigned to a base hospital or clinic. This flexibility is demonstrated in the unprecedented collaboration among the military medical departments and in the partnerships we are building

with civilian health care companies. These initiatives which include joint service sharing and strong public-private partnerships, contribute to the durability of the MHS.

4. Will the quality of care that I am currently receiving through the Military Treatment Facility (MTFs) improve with the TRICARE program?

The same high quality of care that you are receiving will continue and be enhanced because of improved access and continuity of care for enrolled members. TRICARE Prime also offers the additional benefit of wellness and prevention programs.

5. How can I find the location of my nearest TRICARE Service Center?

If your region has initiated TRICARE, you may inquire using your phone system's directory assistance operator, or call the nearest military hospital or clinic. Additionally, below are telephone numbers for each region, where you can call and get information about TRICARE and your health care benefits.

Central (Region 7/8)

New Mexico, Arizona excluding Yuma, Nevada and southwest corner of Texas, including El Paso, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho excluding northern Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa and Missouri Operational April 1997
1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378)

Region 11

Washington, Oregon, and northern Idaho Operational March 1, 1995 1-800-404-0110

Region 12 (Pacific)

Hawaii and Alaska Operational April 1, 1996 1-800-242-6788

Pacific and WESTPAC 1-888-777-8343

6. Who is eligible to participate in TRICARE?

All active duty members in the seven uniformed services: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Public Health Service (PHS), as well as their CHAMPUS-eligible family members, CHAMPUS-eligible retired military, their family members and survivors as well as active duty family members and retirees and their family members who are under age 65, Medicare eligible because of a disability, and enrolled in Medicare Part B.

7. I am currently enrolled in the Uniformed Services Family Health Plan (USFHP). How does that program fit into TRICARE?

As an enrollee of the Uniformed Services Family Health Plan you are covered by the TRICARE Uniform Benefit. The designated providers administer the USFHP through contracts awarded by the Department of Defense providing TRICARE

Prime to all enrollees (including Medicare-eligible beneficiaries). Only active duty personnel are prohibited from enrolling in the USFHP. As a USFHP member you may transfer to other TRICARE areas, elect for split enrollment of family members between TRICARE contractors, or move to another TRICARE Prime contract area through portability without loss of enrollment. If you are a Medicare-eligible enrollee, you may only transfer or join other designated provider programs.

8. What are my health plan options available under TRICARE?

For eligible beneficiaries, the TRICARE program offers a triple-option health care plan.

* TRICARE Prime is the managed care option offered by the Department of Defense. It integrates military and civilian health care into a single delivery system. Beneficiaries who choose this option agree to a one-year enrollment. Enrollees selecting this option choose a Primary Care Manager (PCM) (see question 32 for definition) to provide or arrange for their health care needs. The TRICARE Prime option offers additional wellness and preventive care services.

* TRICARE Extra is similar to TRICARE Standard but offers discounts to patients when they use TRICARE network providers. This option allows beneficiaries to receive their care from civilian network providers at a reduced cost compared to TRICARE Standard. There are no claim forms to file —just pay your reduced copay after satisfying the deductible. You may use a combination of the TRICARE Extra and Standard programs at any time, depending on whether you choose physicians inside or outside the network. There is no enrollment requirement for this program.

* TRICARE Standard is a fee-for-service option that is the same as the standard CHAMPUS benefit. Beneficiaries using this option have the greatest choice of civilian physicians, but at a higher cost. The cost of having this choice includes a deductible, plus a percentage of subsequent charges, called copayments or copays. Enrollment is not a requirement to participate.

9. Which option is the best choice for me if I don't live close to an MTF?

If you are able to enroll in the TRICARE Prime program, this would be the most cost-efficient option for you. If there is not a Prime program serving your area, you can still save money by participating in the TRICARE Extra program by using a civilian network provider. TRICARE Service Centers (TSC) have lists of TRICARE Extra network physicians. If TRICARE Extra is not available in your area, you will have to utilize TRICARE Standard.

10. Which is the best of the three TRICARE options for a retiree who lives in two different parts of the country?

For a retiree with two residences, because of the new "Portability Rules" they will still have the triple option available and can choose the best option for themselves. The

only change is that if they choose Prime they will be able to disenroll and reenroll twice in the same year as long as their second re-enrollment is in the original region. For those individuals desiring more flexibility they may want to elect to utilize either TRICARE Extra or Standard.

To Be Continued!

Service Connection of Dental Conditions for Treatment Purposes

Effective June 8, 1999, The Department of Veterans Affairs announced in the Federal Register, final rules— VA will consider certain dental conditions service-connected for treatment purposes if they are shown in service after a period of 180 days. 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) section 3.381 is changed:

Your dental treatment records must be on file at the VA regional office. If have never filed a claim for disability then have the VA regional office request your medical and dental records from St. Louis. Next, go to the VA Medical Center and fill out VA Form 10-1 OEZ, Application for Health Benefits and check the block "DENTAL". If you have access to Adobe software (if not download for free at <http://www.adobe.com>), I have attached the form as a PDF file.

If you have your dental record, I recommend that you visit your regular dentist and ask for a review and a statement to indicate which teeth would be eligible for treatment. The following rules apply:

- a. Teeth noted as normal at entry will be service-connected if they were filled or extracted after 180 days or more of active service.
- b. Teeth noted as filled at entry will be service-connected if they were extracted, or if filling was replaced, after 180 days or more of active service.
- c. Teeth noted as carious (cavity) but restorable at entry will not be service-connected on the basis that they were filled during service. However, new caries that developed 180 days or more after such a tooth was filled will be service-connected.
- d. Teeth noted as carious but restorable at entry, whether or not filled, will be service-connected if extraction was required after 180 days or more of active service.
- e. Teeth noted as non-restorable will not be service-connected, regardless of treatment during service.
- f. Teeth noted as missing at entry will not be service-connected, regardless of treatment during service.
- g. Teeth extracted because of chronic periodontal disease will be service-connected only if they were extracted after 180 days or more of active service.

The 180 day period is based that the Academy of General Dentistry recommends that a patient visit a dentist at least every six months. Also it is more likely than not that caries or pathology which become apparent within the first 180 days of service pre-existed that service.

For more information about The Retired Sergeants Major and Chiefs Association; checkout: <http://www.tucomm.net/-trsmca>

National Mail Order Pharmacy Program

The Department of Defense (DoD) has contracted with Merck-Medco Managed Care to provide eligible military beneficiaries with a mail order service for maintenance prescriptions. If you or a family member take a medication long-term, you may want to consider using the National Mail Order Pharmacy (NMOP) program, which conveniently delivers your prescription to your home or temporary stateside address — often at a cost savings to you.

Eligible beneficiaries include:

- All active duty uniformed service members worldwide.
- All TRICARE-eligible beneficiaries residing in the Continental U.S.
- All overseas TRICARE-eligible beneficiaries with APO or FPO addresses.
- All Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Medicare-eligible beneficiaries.
- Uniformed Services Family Health Program enrollees.

All eligible beneficiaries must be in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). However, they may be enrolled in TRICARE Prime, Extra, or Standard.

If you have other health insurance than TRICARE, you will not be able to use NMOP. Legally, DoD cannot be the primary payer for medical services, including prescriptions. TRICARE-eligible beneficiaries may submit a claim with an explanation of benefits (EOB) to TRICARE as second payer for amounts their primary health insurance does not cover.

The NMOP program is for long-term maintenance prescriptions; it delivers up to 90 days' worth of non-narcotic and up to 30 days' worth of narcotic medications. If you need medications such as antibiotics or pain relievers to treat an emergency condition, have your local pharmacy fill your prescription. NMOP offers a broader selection of medications than most military pharmacies can provide. The NMOP plan offers essentially all non-injectable prescription medications TRICARE or DoD policy allows. Selected self-administered injectable medications and those commonly administered in the home also are available. A short list of medications is designated DoD-"non-preferred." If your prescription is for such a medication, Merck-Medco will contact your provider and usually request a change to a "preferred" alternate medication DoD considers as offering significant clinical or economic advantages over the "non-preferred" medication. If your provider agrees it is clinically appropriate, NMOP will fill your prescription with the "preferred" alternative. If your provider does not agree, NMOP usually will fill your prescription as written.

NMOP must comply with the same generic substitution policy military treatment facilities have implemented for the past 15 years. To ensure its health care is effective, DoD uses only those generics the Food and Drug Administration rates as therapeutically equivalent. If a generic equivalent is not available, NMOP will dispense the branded medication at no additional cost. For a complete list of available

medications, contact Merck-Medco, or visit its website: <<http://www.pec.ha.osd.mil/NMOP/NMOPhome.htm>>.

While the program is available to active duty members at no cost, each non-active duty beneficiary's prescription requires a modest co-payment, but no deductible fee. The cost per prescription is:

- * Active duty family members - \$4.00 per prescription
- * Retirees and their family members - \$8.00 per prescription

The flat co-payment may be more cost-advantageous to you when compared to the 20-25% share you must pay when filling a prescription under TRICARE Standard, especially for a 90-day supply. You can get more information or start using NMOP by calling Merck-Medco Customer Service at 1-800-903-4680 to request a registration form. You register only once. For your first mail-order prescription, mail the prescription, completed registration, and co-payment (if for a non-active duty recipient) to Merck-Medco Managed Care. If your doctor has authorized refills, you will receive refill slips with your prescription.

Merck-Medco Customer Service hours are:

- * Weekdays, 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., Eastern Time
- * Saturday, 8:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m., Eastern Time
- * Sunday, 9:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m., Eastern Time

A registered pharmacist is available for emergency consultation 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You also may contact the health benefits advisor at any military treatment facility.

Please note: The National Mail Order Pharmacy will enter all of the prescriptions it fills for drug interactions. However, it will NOT have a record of scripts filled by other DOD or civilian pharmacies. It is ALWAYS a good idea to tell you doctor and pharmacy about other prescription medications.

USO NEEDS YOU!

The USO Puget Sound Area serves thousands of Armed Forces personnel and their family members each year. To maintain this level of service, we need additional volunteers - ***we need you!***

Volunteers manage all aspects of the USO center; assisting military personnel and their families at Sea-Tac International Airport as they arrive and depart from duty stations. Typical volunteer duties include reception, providing information and referral, maintaining the food and beverage counter and visiting with guests. If you enjoy variety and helping people, this is the job for you.

4-hour shifts are available around the clock at Sea-Tac Airport and two 6-hour shifts are staffed at McChord Air Force Base. Training and free parking are provided.

For information and a volunteer packet, call (206) 246-1908 or e-mail usopsa@aol.com today.

Unprecedented Hike in VA Health Care

An additional \$1.7 billion was added to the Veterans' Affairs (VA) Health Care budget last week, making it the largest funding increase in the history of VA health care. After Congress identified a shortfall in the Administration's budget proposal, the Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) and other veteran's organizations joined House VA Committee Chairman Bob Stump (R Ariz.) in calling for increased funding to meet veterans' health care needs. The full Appropriations Committee approved the increase and the funding bill will reach the full House floor next week. FRA National Executive Secretary (NES) Chuck Calkins said, "VA health care is in dire straits. We're hopeful this funding increase will help alleviate that crisis and allow VA to expand its services to our country's veterans."

Proposal to Eliminate Category 7 Veterans

While extra funds have been earmarked for health care, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) wants to limit the number of veterans served by VA. OMB Director Jacob Lew has proposed discontinuing VA enrollment for Category 7 veterans, i.e. veterans who have no service-connected disabilities, have income and net worth above the annual statutory threshold, and who agree to pay specified copayments for health care services. Category 7 veterans currently enrolled in the system would continue to receive care according to Lew's proposal, which is designed to preserve the quality of care for higher priority poor and service-disabled veterans. FRA will be monitoring this issue closely.

Retirees Court Case Dismissed

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit has upheld a decision by a lower court to dismiss the civil suit filed in December of 1996 by the Coalition of Retired Military Veterans (CORMV). CORMV contends that "free lifetime medical care for military retirees" was promised in exchange for joining and remaining on active duty through retirement. By claiming that such medical care was deferred compensation, and therefore the retirees' property, CORMV argued that denial of those services constituted the unlawful taking of property. The courts dismissed the case, stating that there is "no statute or regulation" that granted the retirees a right to the health benefits they claimed, and advised CORMV to pursue this matter in Congress rather than in the courts. "FRA has long-warned Sailors, Marines, and Coast Guard members that there is no law protecting their benefits," said NES Calkins. "FRA supports a bill (H.R. 355) sponsored by Representative Gary Condit (D-Calif.) that would provide military retirees with all benefits promised when they joined the service." CORMV is considering further appeals.

Reminder

Effective Monday 19 July 1999 the ISC Seattle ID Card & Vehicle Decal Desk hours of operation will be as follows:

Monday - Friday	8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Saturday & Sunday	8:00 AM to 11:30 AM & 12:30 PM to 3:00 PM

Volunteers are NEEDED in the Retiree Office at Pier 36. This office, like a volunteer fire department will only come to your aid if the community it serves, supports it by becoming personally involved. We need you! Please give us a few hours each month.

"Communicate With Your Elected Officials" Guidebook Available

In April, the Fleet Reserve Association announced its release of "Communicate With Your Elected Officials," a useful handbook for contacting members of the 106th Congress. This free guide is available upon request and includes a directory of members of the U.S. House and Senate, phone numbers for Congressional committees, and tips for communicating with members of Congress by phone, mail, fax, or e-mail. The pamphlet also includes an overview of the legislative process and outlines federal, state, and local elections and officials. To receive your free copy of this useful directory, contact FRA at 1-800-FRA-1924 or e-mail your request to news-fra@fra.org. Written requests can be sent to Fleet Reserve Association, 125 N. West Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2754.

Good News

The Coast Guard policy regarding the Uniformed Services Family Health Plan (USFHP) has been changed. The following is a quote from a recent message sent from the Commandant. "The policywhich prohibited new enrollment in the USFHP's for retirees and most active duty families, is cancelled effective 30 September 99. All USFHP eligible CG beneficiaries may exercise their USFHP enrollment option commencing 1 October 99." Members of your council took an active role in getting this policy reversed. If you have any questions regarding this change contact the PACMED USFHP office at (206) 621-4568.

American Legion Sues VA

The Department of Veterans Affairs has been sued by the American Legion as a result of its recent decision to cease assisting veterans in developing their requests for disability compensation at the beginning of the claims process, according to published reports. The VA action was taken as a result of recent appeals courts ruling. The thrust of the American Legion suit is to block implementation of the VA decision which, they claim, only serves to make the claims process more difficult for veterans.

HR 2966 - Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act

President Signs FY2000 Defense Authorization Act. Senate Leadership Supports Additional Health Care Improvements .HR 2966 - Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act. On September 28, Rep. Ronnie Shows (D-MS) introduced H.R. 2966 to honor the lifetime health care commitment that service representatives and Department of Defense leaders have made to service members over the last century to encourage them to pursue careers of 20 years or more. The bill was designed to facilitate freedom of choice by providing Medicare-eligible members of the uniformed services the opportunity to enroll in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP-65) or to remain in TRICARE, indefinitely. Members who entered the uniformed services prior to June 7, 1956 (the date the space available limitation was included in law) would be entitled to fully paid lifetime health care upon retirement.

TROA Rep. Shows' staff in developing the legislation over the last couple of months and enthusiastically supports his

initiative in introducing it. Rep. Shows recognized TROA's role during the floor speech he delivered when he introduced his bill.

"I want to acknowledge the efforts of four organizations that have been instrumental in crafting this legislation: The Retired Enlisted Association, The Retired Officers Association, the National Association for Uniformed Services, and the Class Act Group of Military Retirees."

As we work to promote HR 2966 on Capitol Hill, we need to keep in mind that the major hurdle to overcome is the cost of the initiative, which could be approximately \$2 billion per year (based on Congressional Budget Office cost estimates of similar legislation last year). That will present a formidable obstacle in the current environment and is what stymied progress on less expensive legislation in previous years, forcing TROA and The Military Coalition to support demonstration tests of FEHBP-65 — to prove that the cost of this initiative has been overstated.

Regardless of progress on HR 2966, we will need to intensify our focus on expanding the scope of the FEHBP-65 test next year to be certain that the 66,000 beneficiaries approved by Congress are, in fact, enrolled in the FEHBP-65 demonstration. Because DoD's ultra-conservative plan to offer only 66,000 beneficiaries the opportunity to enroll in FEHBP-65 is unlikely to produce 66,000 participants, we need to convince DoD to expand the test to two additional sites and to offer additional Medicare-eligible service members the opportunity to enroll during next year's open enrollment period (November-December 2000). Authority exists for this purpose, but additional legislation is needed to go beyond that limit.

Early next year, FEHBP-65 enrollment data should be available to help us make the case to Congress for further expansion. Because cost has been the primary objection to extending health care coverage to Medicare-eligible's, TROA continues to believe that, while we must keep the pressure on across a range of initiatives, the most productive route to success lies in keeping the pressure on to expand the FEHBP-65 demonstration to more sites as quickly as possible until worldwide eligibility is achieved.

In addition to Rep Shows' HR 2966, there are two other bills that will help pave the way toward our health care equity goal. Rep. Duke Cunningham's (R-CA) HR 113 would remove the limits on the number of enrollees, sites and geographic areas specified in the current FEHBP-65 test authority. Rep. Jim Moran's (D-VA) HR 205 would extend the FEHBP-65 option to every Medicare-eligible uniformed service's beneficiary worldwide.

TROA members and others can significantly help our efforts by contacting your representatives and asking them to cosponsor HR 2966, HR 113 and HR 205. Similarly, refer your senators to these bills and ask them to sponsor companion legislation in the Senate.

In Passing

On Coast Guard Day, August 4, 1999, CWO4 Frank W. Thompson crossed the bar and was laid to rest in Sequim, WA. Frank was an Emeritus Founding Member of the Coast Guard Retiree Council Northwest. More than that, he was a good officer, an example worth emulating and a friend. I served during some rough times of my life with Frank and he gave far more than he ever expected. The fleet is diminished with his loss. His memory, for this sailor, will be one of a decent and honorable man who cared enough to give of himself regardless of the task at hand. He was a true son of the Coast Guard. -- The Editor -- CWO Wills



The COAST GUARD RETIREE COUNCIL NORTHWEST is interested in sending out their newsletter via e-mail versus delivery by the U.S. Postal Service to save money. If you are willing to receive your copy of this newsletter by e-mail, please complete the below permission slip and return it to our office.

Mail the below "tear off memo to:
 COAST GUARD RETIREE COUNCIL NORTHWEST
 USCG Integrated Support Command Worklife (Retiree Council)
 1519 Alaskan Way South, Bldg. 1
 Seattle, Washington 98134

- Yes I am interest in receiving the RETIREE NEWSLETTER by e-mail in the future. I have included my home e-mail address below.
- Yes you may make my home e-mail address available to other USCG retirees. *(If you do not give this permission, we will only use the e-mail address for the Newsletter. Under no circumstances will your address be given out for commercial use.)*

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City, State, Zip _____

My Email Address is _____

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