

NAVY PETTY OFFICER  
MIKE MONSOOR



PO2 Mike Monsoor, a Navy EOD Technician, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously for jumping on a grenade in Iraq, giving his life to save his fellow SEALs.

During Mike Monsoor's funeral in San Diego, as his coffin was being moved from the hearse to the grave site at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery, SEALs were lined up on both sides of the pallbearers route forming a column of twos, with the coffin moving up the center. As Mike's coffin passed, each SEAL, having removed his gold Trident from his uniform, slapped it down embedding the Trident in the wooden coffin.

The slaps were audible from across the cemetery; by the time the coffin arrived grave side, it looked as though it had a gold inlay from all the Tridents pinned to it. This was a fitting send-off for a warrior hero.

This should be front-page news instead of the crap we see every day. It's amazing how many people showed up for the Steeler Superbowl parade and wouldn't it be nice to see that much interest in our returning war hero's.

Since the media won't make this news, I choose to make it news by forwarding it onto you guys. I am proud of our military and the men and women who serve in it. They represent the highest and finest values of this country.

Editor—Jim Lang

*(This article was sent to me by a Marine that I served with in Vietnam Eddie Benavidez.)*

Unopened claims letters hidden at VA offices

A new report about Veterans Affairs Department employees squirreling away tens of thousands of unopened letters related to benefits claims is sparking fresh concerns that veterans and their survivors are being cheated out of money.

VA officials acknowledge further credibility problems based on a new report of a previously undisclosed 2007 incident in which workers at a Detroit regional office turned in 16,000 pieces of unprocessed mail and 717 documents turned up in New York in December during amnesty periods in which workers were promised no one would be penalized.

Unprocessed and unopened mail was just one problem in VA claims processing mentioned by Belinda Finn, VA's assistant inspector general for auditing, in testimony before the House Veteran's Affairs Committee.

Auditors also found that the dates recorded for receiving claims, which in many cases determine the effective date for benefits payments, are wrong in many cases because of intentional and unintentional errors, Finn said.

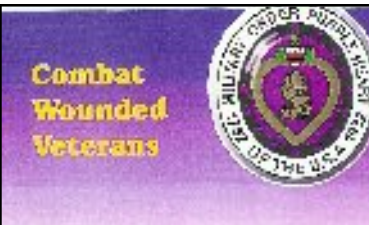
The worst case uncovered by auditors involved the New York regional office, where employees testified that managers told staff to put later dates on claims to make it appear claims were being processed faster. A review found that 56 percent of claims had incorrect dates, although no evidence was found or incorrect or delayed benefits payments. Finn said workers reported that this practice had been used for years.

SOME NEW PEOPLE OF INTEREST

We have a new Recreation Program Leader in Voluntary Services at the VA Healthcare System at Aspinwall who took over for the retiring Dave Tomayko and her name is Karen Cinnamon.

We also have a new Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Officer and her name is Kimberly Shatney and her office is in the Federal Building in downtown Pittsburgh, her phone number is 412-395-6252.

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



MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART  
CHAPTER 455

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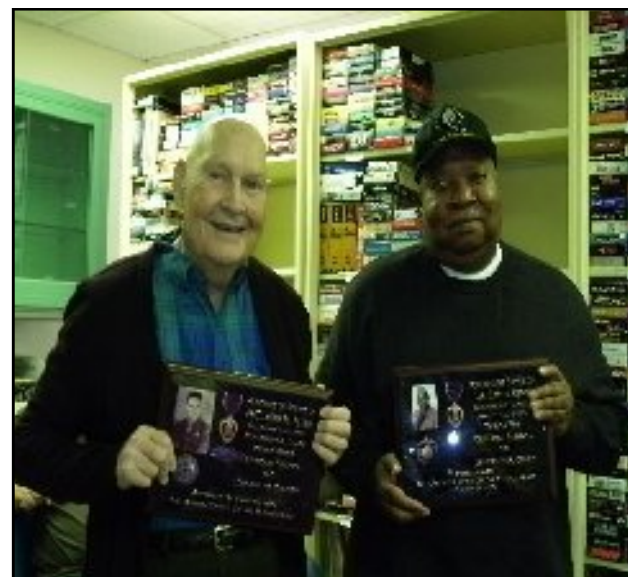
PURPLE HEART  
NEWSLETTER

EDITOR – JAMES LANG  
COMMANDER – JOSEPH SERENKA

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

A plaque was given to John Alden a War War II Vet, also John Abram a Vietnam Vet. The two veterans were wounded in action.

MEMORIAL DAY  
MAY 25, 2009



### WW II ARMY RANGER "His Story"



I've been asking for stories from our members about their war experience and I got this article from Bill Chessman about Army Ranger T/5 Larry Kushner.

Larry is an 84 year old member of PMSC I met at last Spring's Scout Shooting Camporee. I was visiting each site and found Larry helping out at the WW II Site. I have seen Larry at meetings occasionally but really did not know much about him. He is an unassuming person but you could tell he's been there and done that by the look in his eyes. We talked a little and I felt I should put together write-up about some of the experiences this gentleman had been through.

As many of his generation, Larry grew up during the Depression era. When the war began he enlisted in the Army and became a Ranger. He served in North Africa then the assault on Sicily. At Monte Casino, he was wounded on Dec. 16, 1943 and returned to the line in 1944 just in time to join the Battle of Anzio. He was one of the 760 Rangers that walked into the teeth of a 20,000 strong German counter offensive. Larry said "We left

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them 5,000 dead" although only six Rangers made it back to the line. Larry did not make it back to the line being that he was captured and spent the rest of 1944 and 1945 as a Prisoner of War in Poland. He managed to escape and ended up in several Allied hospitals.

He returned home worked as a truck loader in the Strip District and eventually owned a furniture business on the South Side. Larry's two sons keep in touch with him weekly. Larry said his health at 84 is always an issue but he's a survivor as we can see from his war experiences. It was great to meet this man and even though it was a cool March afternoon, there he was standing in a field talking to young men and women that two generations ago could have been him!

Larry's awards include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with 3 bronze service stars, World War II Victory Medal, Combat Infantry Badge 1st award, Honorable Service Label Button WW II, POW Medal, and the French Croix De Guerre medals that France and Belgium had issued in recognition of the services of Allied Forces in the liberation of the two countries during World War II.

Larry also is in good standing with Chapter 455 in which he is a life member.

### Persian Gulf Conflict Veterans Benefit Program

Under the statute and the regulations, an applicant for the Program is required to show that he is a qualified veteran in that he served on active duty in the Persian Gulf Theater of Operations during any part of the period from 8/2/90, until 8/31/91, and received the Southwest Asia Service Medal. In addition to establishing veteran status, an applicant shall show that he was a legal resident of the Commonwealth of PA at the time of qualifying service.

A veteran would receive the bonus at a payment of \$75 per month of qualifying active service up to \$525. For veterans who were POWs during the conflict or who died in performance of duty during the PGC or from service-connected wounds, diseases or injuries incurred during the Conflict, an additional payment of \$5,000 is authorized. For more information go to: [www.milvet.state.pa.us](http://www.milvet.state.pa.us).

### Little-Known Benefits Aids Veterans of Wars

Those who served during conflict are eligible for up to \$19,000 a year.

A little-known veteran's benefit for long-term care expenses is available to wartime veterans and their spouses. But the benefit is being overlooked by thousands of families, industry observers say.

The Special Pension for Veteran's Aid and Attendance pays up to \$1,644 a month, \$19,736 annually, toward assisted living, nursing homes or in-home care for veterans 65 and older who served at least 90 days and one day during wartime—stateside or overseas. Veterans and their spouses can receive up to \$23,396 annually and spouses of deceased veterans, \$12,681.

Yet, an estimated \$22 billion a year goes unclaimed, said Don Soard, a volunteer with Operation Veteran Aid in Oklahoma City. In 2007, only 134,000 seniors nationwide received the benefit, which was established in 1952.

"Literally hundreds of thousands don't even know about it," Soard said. "Due to incomplete information, many disqualify themselves on income or assets or find the paperwork too burdensome."

Soard helps families complete the necessary forms, so that approval comes in four to six months. The process is streamlined for vets who are blind or have memory issues and widows with medical needs, he said. Most applicants qualify and payments are retroactive, Soard said. The few who are denied on excessive liquid assets can seek financial advice to qualify, he said.

Soard started his volunteer mission two years ago, following the deaths of two family members who served in WWII.

"If they'd known about this benefit, they'd have a much better quality of life in later years, he said. "Without it, many vets are forced to go on Medicaid." <http://newsok.com/little-known-benefit-aids-veterans-of-wars/article/3344150>

### ROLLING THUNDER

carried it with pride and honor into the 21st century.

A 2008 Ultra Classic Harley will be raffled off 05/25/09 Memorial Day, at Thunder Alley, Washington, D. C.

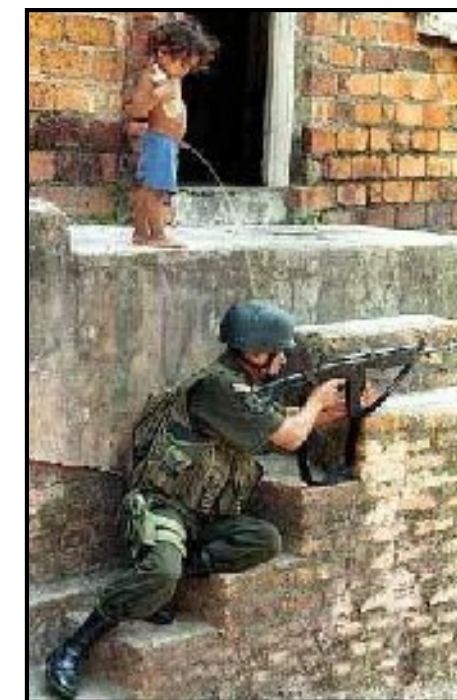
### VETERAN'S DISABILITY RATINGS

A board mandated by Congress to review disability ratings of wounded veterans is finally accepting applications after months of delays.

Congress created the Physical Disability Board of Review after investigations found inconsistencies in how the military assigns ratings. The board has been delayed since its creation in 2007. It wasn't until June 2008—months after the panel was to begin operating—that the Defense Department formally announced its creation.

"Even at this late date, it is still good news to hear that the board is finally taking applications," Vanessa Williamson, the policy director at New York based Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, said yesterday. "But unless they are doing active out reach to troops and veterans, those with wrongly decided claims will not even know that recourse is available."

### Soldier is well equipped but forgot his raincoat.



**ROLLING THUNDER'S  
"RUN TO THE WALL"**



It was a silent collective cry of American Prisoners of War (POWs) left behind that prompted Ray Manzo, Corporal U. S. M. C., to try in some small way to make things right. As the summer of 1987 approached, Manzo observed some veterans by the Reflecting Pool near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D. C. and asked them for help. His idea: Host a motorcycle run in the nation's capital to show the country and the world that abandoned American soldiers in Vietnam still mattered to their fellow servicemen and the country for which they sacrificed their freedom.

From that day on, things began to happen. Fellow veterans embraced his idea and began to help. There was retired Army Sergeant Major John Holland, head of the American Foundation for Accountability of POW/MIAs, Ted Sampley with Homecoming II Project at the Last Firebase vigil, retired Marine 1st Sergeant Walt Sides, president of the non-profit Warriors Inc, and Bob Schmitt who had a POW family member.

Walt Sides recalled how his first meeting with Manzo left a lasting impression. "I remember it was a pretty, sunny, warm day not long after Memorial Day in 1987. I can still see him walking up the steps towards us (Holland, Sampley, and Schmitt). He looked just like a Marine climb  
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-ing those steps," Sides claims, "kinda dumb looking, with a look that said: "Boys, I need some help." It's an old truth that a Marine can always spot a fellow Marine, no matter how out of uniform or far away.

Manzo explained his idea and asked, "Could we do a run of motorcycles for the cause?" According to Sides, "John Holland and I looked at each other and said: Let's do it!" And it was then the name "Rolling Thunder" was adopted for the Rally. Schmitt was staring in the direction of the Memorial Bridge while listening intently to Manzo's idea and simply blurted out, "It will be sound of rolling thunder coming across that bridge." The name stuck.

The fledgling group split up the work, contacting the park service, getting permits and printing flyers. It would take nine months for Ray Manzo's dream to become the Rolling Thunder Motorcycle Rally. And what better date for such an event than on Memorial Day, when America honors the sacrifices of its soldiers throughout its long history of liberty and justice for all? As the plan came together, even organizers were surprised by the widespread response the run inspired.

Rolling Thunder had somehow struck a chord in the hearts of veterans everywhere and from all walks of life. That first year it was hard to count the numbers roaring into D. C. from America's heartlands. "We thought 2,500 bikes on the first run was a whole bunch," Sides explains "Each run has gotten bigger and bigger." And as Rolling Thunder expanded, so did its support base. Where at first veterans had to stick their necks way out to demonstrate for their own, now many riders were civilian. Thousands of Americans came out to give very public thanks for the sacrifices of veterans like these, as well as those not yet accounted for.

Rolling Thunder 2005 brought an estimated half-million participants into the nation's capital. It might have started out as a limited engagement to focus attention on those accounted for after Vietnam, but it's become much, much more. Rolling Thunder picked up the banner of accountability its government dropped and  
(continued on page 3)

**SCOTLAND SCHOOL FOR  
VETERAN'S CHILDREN**



- \* Provide opportunities for student of PA veterans to develop lifelong learning skills.
- \* Challenge students to achieve full potential as responsible citizens with a respect for diversity in a growing global society.
- \* Offer a quality standards-based education within a safe, caring, residential community.

**Location and Facilities:**

- \* Scotland School is located in Scotland (Franklin County), Pennsylvania.
- \* The campus includes about 70 buildings spread over 183 acres.
- \* As of February 1, 2009, Scotland School has 288 students in grades 3 through 12.
- \* About 2/3 of the students at Scotland School are veteran's children, and 1/3 of the students are grandchildren, brothers, sisters, nieces or nephews of veterans.
- \* Thirty-five of the students have relatives on active duty and about half a dozen are children of parents who are deployed at this time.

**A Simple 'Thanks' Changes Vietnam Vet's Life  
(continued from page 4)**

The Commonwealth of Pa. budget proposal announced by Governor Edward G. Rendell on Feb. 4, 2009 includes **no funding** to continue operations of Scotland School after June 30, 2009.

**History:** In 1895, over a dozen of the remaining Civil War-era state schools and homes for war orphans were consolidated at what was known as the Pennsylvania Soldier's Orphans Industrial School and is now called Scotland School for Veteran's Children. From an institution whose students were war orphans, Scotland School has evolved into a residential school providing general elementary and secondary education to eligible children.

Operational responsibility for the School was transferred from the Department of Education to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs in 1996.

**Mission:** The mission of Scotland School for Veteran's Children is to:  
(continued)

On the way to their base, Willis said his men, touched by the gratitude, were "all bawling like babies" and praying for the full recovery of the wounded Marine.

"Any man who could see through his own incredible circumstances and still have the presence of mind to say 'thank you' still brings tears to my eyes," Willis said. "It made me want to be like him." Willis still doesn't know what happened to the young Marine.

Although Willis admits he doesn't "re-visit Vietnam a lot," he hasn't forgotten that experience. From that day on, Willis committed himself to thanking at least one person each day.

After Willis described his experience in Vietnam, singer Aaron Lazar of Broadway musical "A Tale of Two Cities" sang an original song titled "Carry Us Through," written by Kathie Lee and her collaborator, David Friedman. The lyrics expounded on the impact of the heart-warming, simple act:

## A Simple 'Thanks Changes Vietnam Vets Life

*An inspiring tale of a wounded Marine who displayed incredible gratitude.*



*Capt. Bud Willis tells the story of how a young Marine changed his life during the Vietnam War.*

"I can't tell the story without breaking up," Vietnam veteran Bud Willis, 67, said of one painful yet inspiring encounter in the Vietnam War. "That moment changed my life.

In 1966, late in his 14-month tour, Willis was assigned to provide air support for Marines by flying the wounded out of combat areas. An emotionally challenging job, he quickly learned to look straight ahead when picking up injured Marines.

"Some of the sights were overwhelming," Willis said the "Everyone Has a Story" series hosted by TODAY'S Kathie Lee Gifford. "I was just a young pilot with no medical experience. I certainly wasn't a hero, because everyone in my squadron was doing those kinds of jobs-because it was a moral obligation."

On one particular mission, Willis was ordered to pick up a Marine and take him to a specialized facility that treated life-threatening injuries. The young Marine, no more than 19 years old, was in critical condition. He was missing a leg, an arm, an ear and an eye. To ease the Marine's pain, the corpsman shot morphine into his remaining leg.

After dropping his passengers off at the local hospital, Willis saw the wounded Marine motion to the crew chief to lean forward so that he could tell him something over the deafening noise of the helicopters. The chief nodded, walked back over to Willis and took a minute to collect himself before relaying the message:

"Captain Willis, do you know what he said to me? He said to "tell the pilot, thanks for the ride."

(continued on page 6)

## CHAPTER 455 MEETINGS

Our meetings are held the last Wednesday of the month at the VA Hospital at Highland Drive at 10:00 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 room. After the meeting a lunch will be provided. If you need more information please call at 412-954-5165 and ask for Jim or Dan.

## CHAPTER 455 PHONE NUMBERS

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WEBSITE– www.chapter455.org

## DONATIONS FOR PLAQUES

We are asking our members if they would be interested in donating money for the Military Order of the Purple Heart Memorial Plaques which is listed in the Purple Heart Magazine for soldiers killed in action, and wounded in action, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan. We also honor veterans from other wars. The price of the plaques is \$37.50 and so far at our meetings we have been able to collect enough money to cover a few plaques we have already bought. As you know every day another soldier is killed or wounded and we would like to honor their families with a plaque. The few plaques we have given have been greatly appreciated.

I want to thank all our members who donated money toward the plaque fund and I want to give a special thanks to Conrad Black, Robert Bucholtz, Dom Cersosimo, Peter Cerussi Nick Combitchi, Raymond Fritz, Lou Gambogi, John Gochnour, Scott Havelka, Joe Kenney, Wayne Lamping, Harry McCracken, Joe Mlinac, James Pella, Joe Rukat, Joe Serenka, Sid Singer, Ed Vogel, John Wright, DAV Chapter 8, Italian War Vets, Jewish War Vets.

## BOOSTER'S - JAN. 1, 2009 TO DEC. 31, 2009

MIKE & VERONICA BLAZEVIK  
ALVIN COLES  
JOHN & CATHERINE COLLINS  
WAYNE DONALDSON  
CHARLES & IRENE HALL  
WILLIAM & LINDA HYSLOP

## SPECIAL BOOSTER'S

JOHN & CAROLYN ABRAM  
DAVE & JANET ALDEN  
JOHN & JOAN ALDEN  
EDWARD & SUSAN BARKER  
LT. & MRS. GEORGE BIGELOW  
CONRAD BLACK & MARILYN OBRIEN  
ROBERT & FLORENCE BUCHOLTZ  
VANCE & MARGARET CARTER  
DOMINIC & BETTY CERSOSIMO  
PETER CERUSSI  
HARRY CLARK  
JAMES & RENAE COSTABILE  
MICHAEL & MICHELE CUMMINGS  
GREG & BARBARA DAILEY  
JOHN & LINDA DENK  
HOWARD & EDNA EICHNER  
RAY & PEARL FRITZ  
LOU & GLORIA GAMBOGI  
JOHN & DONNA GOCHNOUR  
SCOTT & MAUREEN HAVELKA  
NICOLE & SHANNON HAVELKA  
EMIL HOSKO  
IRA C. HOUCK JR.  
JOHN & DOROTHY HRIBAR  
GEORGE HUMMER  
LENNY KASUBICK  
JOE & LOIS KENNEY  
BROCK KEPHART  
JAMES & JULEEN KEPHART  
LARRY KUSHNER  
WAYNE & KAREN LAMPING  
LOU & DOLLY LaCIVITA  
JIM & BETSY LANG  
MICHAEL LASKOWSKI JR.

MASSARO CORPORATION  
STEVE MASSARO

JOE MLINAC & DONNA MADEJA  
OLIVER McCLELLAND  
COL. ALEX & MOLLY McCLINCHIE  
HARRY McCracken  
DARRYL MERRISON  
JAMES PELLA & MICHELE HANSON  
MICHAEL & MICHELE RATWAY  
ERNIE & NANCY RIVERS  
STANLEY & MARY ROZANSKI  
JOE & KATHRYN RUKAT  
CHESTER & M. JANE SATTIAUX  
JOE & ANNA MAE SERENKA  
SID & BARBARA SINGER  
ROBERT & PEGGY SMITH  
MARK & NANCY SUTTON  
LARRY & MARY UPLINGER  
ROBERT & RUTH VANCE  
NICHOLAS VIGLIONE  
ED & JOAN VOGEL  
ED & CHERYL WERLE  
JOHN & PATTY WRIGHT

## UPDATE ON NEWSLETTER

We still need donations for the 2009 newsletter which will take us through the year 2009. The donations stay the same at \$6.00 which covers postage, ink, labels, seals, paper, and misc. You will be listed as a special booster if you donate \$10.00 or more.

I am also asking that if anyone would like to place an ad in the newsletter it will cost \$25.00.

In the upcoming newsletter I would like to put pictures and stories on how our members got their Purple Hearts, so please send in your information.

You will now be able to get the newsletter on the internet and other information about Chapter 455 at [www.chapter455.org](http://www.chapter455.org).

If I forgot to put your name on the booster list or if you need more information please let me know. I will be at the office at 8:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. on Mon. & Wed. during the month. ph: 412-954-5165.