



RETIREE



TIMES

A publication of the
Vandenberg Air
Force Base Retiree
Activities Office, 30
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CA 93437 Phone :
(805) 606-5474

SPRING 2001

Vandenberg AFB Calif.

Vol. 1 No. 2

Retiree Center Blessed

By COL. MYRNA-LYNNE WHITNEY

30 SW/CVR (Individual Mobilization Augmentee) – Retiree Project Officer

On behalf of Colonel Lanning, 30th Space Wing Commander, Colonel Strathearn, 30th Space Wing Vice Commander, our Central Coast military retirees, and myself, I would like to thank Major General (sel) Lorraine K. Potter, Air Force Chief of Chaplain Service, and Lieutenant Colonel Gary Bomberger, 30th Space Wing Chaplain, for the very generous \$350 donation to the Vandenberg Joint Retiree Center.

The theme of the General's address, entitled "Living Together in Unity," aptly related to two basic aspects of the Center. First, the Retiree Activities Office espouses "jointness" and our volunteers represent all the military services as do the customers who they serve and who use the facility. Second, the retirees and all "Team Vandenberg" members worked "together in unity" not only to create the Center, but also to ensure that it continues to grow and prosper. The generous donation will be used to obtain several needed items such as wall display magazine racks and bookcases.



Lt Col Gary Bomberger, 30th Space Wing Chaplain along with Capt. John Shipman and the Chapel Staff, present Col Myrna-Lynne Whitney, 30th Space Wing Vice Wing Commander's Individual Mobilization Augmentee with \$350 "mock-up" gift donation check.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!

16 NOVEMBER 2001

RETIREE APPRECIATION DAY

Yes, military retirees we already are starting to plan for Retiree Appreciation Day 2001.

For those of you who participated in 2000, we hope to see you again and be sure to spread the word among your fellow military retirees.

Major General Richard Murray (Ret.), President of the National Association for Uniformed Services (NAUS), will be one of our guest speakers again this year.

And, the other speaker will be **Chief Master Sgt (Ret.) Mark Olanoff**, National Legislative Director of The Retired Enlisted Association.

General Murray plans to invite some TRICARE experts to answer your questions, as "TRICARE for Life" goes into affect 1Oct 2001. Watch for more information as the date gets closer.

Beaches and Coastal Areas Open

While Surf, Wall and Minuteman beaches remain closed until further notice, approximately eight miles of coastline on Vandenberg AFB are available to beach goers.

Brown Beach offers 3.75 miles of rocky coast and low-tide sandy beach. To reach Brown Beach, drive west on 13th Street. Turn right on El Rancho Road and travel north. Pass the Minuteman Beach (closed) access.

Turn left at Oculito Road, past Launch Facility-9 and park on the bluff west of Launch Facility-6. Beach access is a short, steep hike through the prominent cleft in the coastal rocks.

Seal Beach has 2.75 miles of rocky coast south of Purisima Point. Travel west on Tangair Road over the railroad bridge. Turn left onto Spur Road. Follow Spur Road until the pavement ends at Space Launch Complex 576E,

then veer left onto the gravel road. A portable bathroom is in prominent view at the parking area. From the Parking area it is a 200-yard walk to the beach.

Boathouse Beach offers 1.5 miles of beach access along Vandenberg's southernmost shore. To reach Boathouse Beach, drive south on Arguello Road from the South Vandenberg Gate. Turn right on Bear Creek Road. At Coast Road, turn left.

Turn right where Coast Road forms a T intersection at Space Launch Complex-6. Travel south to the posted and locked railroad-crossing gate and veer left. To check out the gate key, visit Outdoor Recreation at Building 11154D. The gate at Sudden Road is approximately one mile down Coast Road on the right.

(Adapted from Space & Missile Times)

RETIREE TIMES

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Commander 30th Space Wing

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Vice Commander 30th Space Wing/RAO Coordinator

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Non-advertisement content is compiled from various sources by the Vandenberg Retired Activities Office. Even though reasonable effort has been made to assure the accuracy of the contents, no guarantee of such accuracy is made nor should be assumed. Direct questions on the various topics to the agencies and phone numbers listed in the articles. All photographs, unless otherwise indicated are RAO or Air Force Photos.

Publication deadlines are the 15th of March, June, September and December. The Retiree Activities Office reserves the right to edit all submissions for style and space. Send submissions to 30SW/CVR, 747 Nebraska Ave., Suite A200, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-1461 or via facsimile to (805) 606-0437. The phone number is (805) 606-5474. Email may be addressed to <retirees.office@vandenberg.af.mil>.

LA AFB Parking Closed

The Winter 2001 edition of the *Retiree Times* contained an article describing the availability of long-term parking at Los Angeles AFB where you could leave your car when departing from Los Angeles Airport. We regret to inform you that on Friday, February 16 we received word that the parking area is no longer available. The base has begun construction of a \$15M clinic and the former parking area is now being used for staging of construction supplies and equipment. The clinic will be followed by a \$7M fitness center. Beginning next year a new Base Exchange complex will be started. Therefore, the parking area will be unavailable for the foreseeable future. Please accept our apology for any inconvenience the closure of the parking area may have caused. (61st ABG/CD)

MONTHLY MEETING SCHEDULE

The **third Thursday** of each month at 1 p.m. in the Retiree Center, Bldg 10364 – Base Exchange area, across from the Four Seasons' store – retirees gather to hear guest speakers, socialize, and enjoy cookies and coffee. The schedule through December is as follows:

APRIL

19 April — Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP)

MAY

17 May – Veterans Affairs

JUNE

21 June – 30th Space Wing Judge Advocate – wills and other services

JULY

19 July – Organizing/preserving personal information (i.e., important documents, photos, medical and personal family history)

AUGUST

16 August – “Living to 102” — body, mind, and spirit

SEPTEMBER

20 September – 30th Security Forces Squadron – home and travel security

OCTOBER

18 October – CEO Lompoc Hospital – health care issues

***NOVEMBER — RETIREE APPRECIATION DAY – FRIDAY – 16 NOV
Pacific Coast Club**

***DECEMBER – HOLIDAY POTLUCK LUNCHEON – THURSDAY – 13 Dec – Retiree Center**

- **Denotes different date than 3rd Thursday of the month and for Appreciation Day different location.**

These are proposed topics and more information will be given in flyers, the base newspaper, “Space & Missile Times,” and KUHL 1440 AM radio station. Or, call the Retiree Center (805) 606-5474.

RETIREE ACTIVITIES CENTER NEEDS YOU!

By Col Myrna-Lynne Whitney

30th SW/CVR (Individual Mobilization Augmentee) – Retiree Project Officer

Military retirees, widows and widowers of military retirees, we need your help in running the Center. Volunteers operate “**YOUR CENTER**” and without adequate staffing we may have to cut back our hours and activities. In the last two and half years, the Retiree Activities Office has grown from a “closet” in Building 11777 to a lovely, spacious comfortable Center. With two very successful Appreciation Days “under our belt,” knowledge of the Center is spreading, therefore, more and more folks drop in to seek help or just to visit and they all comment how much they “appreciate our being there.”

Right now, we have 25 dedicated volunteers, with one very dedicated “resident” full-time volunteer, Bob Eastwood – who some day will have to leave us for regular employment. Mr. Eastwood has done an outstanding job in organizing and establishing the administrative details of the office; also, he provides training and serves customers. Another hardworking, totally dedicated volunteer is Earl Gustafson who is responsible for this very newspaper that you are now reading, “the Retiree Times.” Another long-time volunteer is Mrs. Marylou Boyle who has worked diligently to establish the Central Coast chapter of the National Society of Military Widows. As a result of the chapter, we have some very special ladies – Pat Gehres, Faye Gillis, Mary Hale, Betty Hoffman, Hope Howard, Monica Jurosky, Pat Nuth, and Elfrieda Wittwer — just to name a few — who are helping us out. There are other selfless folks who currently help or have given of themselves in the past – Esten Carper, Ed Williams, Jake Jones, Rhonda Canon, John Stone, Jim Swartz, John Konop, Wray Stitch, Al Starkey, Sherm Hansen, Dick Barkley, Chuck Brown, John McGraw, and Mildred Lundin – to these individuals and those who have helped, but not individually recognized — I say “thank you.”

Where do you fit into this picture? Should your name be on the list? Remember your active duty days when to make an organization successful everybody had to “pitch in” and work together? A “**TEAM EFFORT**” is necessary for us to survive and prosper. The active duty “**Team Vandenberg**” folks have given us a lot, but now it is time to maintain ourselves; and, the folks who are now “serving” cannot do it alone. Not only do we need people to volunteer to work in the office, but also we need an individual to serve as the Center Director.

Society of Military Widows

By Faye Gillis
Society of Military Widows Secretary

On December 6, 2000, a new club came into existence at Vandenberg AFB. This is the Central Coast Chapter of the Society of Military Widows (SMW). Theresa Alexander founded the national non-profit organization in 1968. The purpose being to protect the interests of women whose husbands died either while on active duty or retired. In 1984, SMW joined forces with the National Association for the Uniformed Services. This gave a broader and stronger base for protecting the benefits and other entitlements of the military widows by giving us a strong lobby in Washington and making us more visible to our elected representatives, ensuring future needs would also be addressed.

Another goal of the SMW is

to see that widows remain welcome and important members of the military community. This is something that has been enthusiastically endorsed by Colonel Steve Lanning, Commander of the 30th Space Wing. We wish to thank him and all the base personnel for this support.

The local SMW Chapter meetings are held at 2:00 p.m., the second Wednesday of every month. The location is the Retirees Activity Center on Vandenberg AFB. The Center is located directly across from the Four Seasons store. We cordially invite all widows to participate. This is not just widows of Air Force personnel but all branches of the service. We will, to a certain extent, be affiliated with the retirees' center for the channeling of

information for the benefit of both organizations. Some of the SMW members have volunteered assistance to Mr. Robert Eastwood, the acting office administrator of the Retirees Activity Office, with staffing and clerical duties.

We want to make sure all the ladies know what resources are available to them on Vandenberg and the central coast. Also, any questions or concerns you may have are important to us and we would like being aware of them. Another aim of the SMW is to plan social activities for our members such as plays and trips. So please, support the organization and join us at the next meeting, Wednesday, April 11, 2:00 p.m. Hope to see you there!



STAFF SGT. JANICE CANNON

Marksman celebrates 85th birthday at Rod & Gun Club

BY TECH. SGT. BUZZ RITCHIE
30th Space Wing Public Affairs

From 25 yards away, the bull's eye on the Rod and Gun Club's pistol range looks about the size of a pea. Maybe smaller.

But George Valentine consistently punches .45 caliber holes through the target's 10-ring. He's fired 10-shot groups so small they can be covered with a nickel.

His skill with a service pistol has made him one of the relatively few Air Force shooters who have earned the Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge from the Department of the Army's Civilian Marksmanship Program.

The veteran marksman keeps his 14-karat gold Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge and his Air Force Excellence-In-Competition Pistol Shot Badge framed together with a 1981 letter from then director of the Civilian Marksmanship Program Army Col. Jack Rollinger.

Valentine celebrated his 85th birthday in February at Vandenberg's Rod and Gun Club. A retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, he still shoots competitively during the club's "half of 2,700" pistol matches, an event that requires shooters to fire 135 rounds of ammunition using two different handguns.

Born in Pennsylvania in 1916, Valentine attended Syracuse University on a football scholarship. He graduated in 1939 with a degree in chemistry and was drafted by the Army. His military career began following his commissioning from Army Officer Candidate School in June 1942.

After his retirement from the Air Force while stationed here in 1975, he continued to compete in pistol matches. He eventually qualified for the distinguished badge by earning 30 points in regional and state championship pistol matches. Shooters earn three points for a first-place finish, two for second, and one point for third place.

ROD & GUN CLUB INFORMATION

■ Vandenberg's Rod and Gun Club holds a number of shooting events for members and guests, including skeet, sporting clay, trap, and pistol matches.

The club's operating hours are Tuesday and Thursday from 4 to 8 p.m.; Wednesday and Friday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.; and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For information about programs at the club, including shooting matches and hunter safety courses, call 606-4560.

The Civilian Marksmanship Program promotes firearms safety training and rifle practice for all qualified U.S. citizens with special emphasis on youth. The U.S. Congress created the CMP. The program's original purpose was to provide civilians an opportunity to learn and practice marksmanship skills so they would be skilled marksmen if later called on to serve the U.S. military. Over the years, the emphasis of the program shifted to focus on youth development through marksmanship.

Sighting down the barrel of a Model 1911 Colt .45 pistol, retired Air Force Lt. Col. George Valentine takes aim at the bull's eye 25 yards away. Valentine, who turned 85 in February, earned the Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge and Air Force Excellence-In-Competition Pistol Shot Badge 20 years ago.

Pacific Coast Club Welcomes New Manager

Solicits Comments from Retirees

The Vandenberg AFB collocated club's new manager, Ms. Giuseppina "Josie" Cooper arrived on base March 19th. She replaces former manager, Mr. John Pelley. Cooper comes to the area from Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Georgia where she was also involved in Air Force club management.

Cooper is very interested in the opinions of the retiree community. To this end the *Retiree Times* is soliciting your help in providing information toward improving the accessibility and level of services offered by the club. Please look for a tear-out questionnaire elsewhere in this issue. You may also respond by letter or email.

The Pacific Coast Club Advisory Committee holds its

meeting on 17 April at the club. Therefore, it is important that you respond to the survey as soon as possible and provide your input before that date. The event is an open meeting and you are invited to attend as an observer. The officers section meets at 1130 and the enlisted section at 1400. Lt. Col. Wray Stitch (Ret.) is the officer representative to the committee and Chief Master Sgt. John R. Stone (Ret.) is the enlisted representative.

Many in the retiree community may not be aware of the wide variety of services that the Pacific Coast Club can provide to its members. In addition to meal service, the club has facilities for receptions and parties celebrating a myriad of occasions. Among these are wedding receptions,

retirements, service organization meetings, promotions, birthdays, wedding anniversaries etc. Less formal occasions could include breakfast or luncheon meetings of bridge players, computer user groups and informal meetings of a wide variety of other affinity groups.

Club management and the 30th Services Squadron are looking forward to receiving comments and opinions of retirees regarding the ideas expressed above and any other that might come to mind. Please take the time now to express your feelings regarding club services, dues structure and other factors affecting your decision to become a member.

(Ms. Jo Ann Creel and Mr. Mark Maxfield contributed to this article)

TRIPS, TOURS AND CRUISES

Vandenberg Leisure Tours is in Building 10122, the Services Center, located near the corner of California Blvd. and Washington Ave. It offers a wide variety of excursions to suit every taste. In addition, the tour office lists favorable rates at hotels and motels in the vicinity of Southern California theme parks and Los Angeles Airport. Active duty, retired military, and civil service personnel, government contractors, families, and guests are eligible to participate. The office publishes the "Tripletter" listing upcoming events. You can learn more about opportunities by calling 805-606-7976 and asking to be placed on the mailing list. The address is P.O. Box 5459, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-0459. For complete information on the following upcoming trips, contact the tour office:

Apr 28-May 9 Hawaiian Islands Cruise, \$1,574 to \$1,774
 May 6-9 Yosemite, 3 nights, \$289 per person sharing
 May 13-16 Las Vegas, 3 nights, \$135 per person sharing, single add \$70
 May 20-22 Catalina, \$175 per person sharing, single add \$70
 Jun 10-16 Northern California, Monterey, Eureka, Redding, Fairfield, Napa Valley
 \$445 per person sharing, single add \$270
 Jun 26-Jul 3 Islands of the Pacific Northwest, \$1,825 per person sharing
 Jul 7 Monterey for a Day, \$35
 Jul 14-17 San Diego
 Jul 27-28 Laguna Pageant of Masters and Getty Museum
 Aug 11 Roaring Camp and Big Trees
 Aug 23-5 Sep Scotland & Ireland, Edinburgh Tattoo, Loch Lomond, Dublin etc., \$3,095 per person
 sharing/single add \$490
 Sep 12 Lion King, Pantages Theatre, transportation and orchestra seating, \$110 per person
 Sep 16-19 Las Vegas
 Sep 23-26 Catalina
 (Tripletter)



Pacific Coast Club Survey

How often do you come to Vandenberg AFB?

What programs would you like to see the Pacific Coast Club offer?

Are you a member? _____ Please tell us why you are, or are not, a member.

The Pacific Coast Club is currently looking at restructuring dues. What do you feel would be a fair price for dues in relation to your pay grade and place of residence?

Can we contact you? Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Mail your opinions to: 30th Services Squadron
 Attn: Pacific Coast Club
 1036 California Blvd.
 Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437

Or if you like e-mail: mark.maxfield@vandenberg.af.mil

Save Tricare Receipts

The FY 2001 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA 2001) directed some changes in the FY2001 TRICARE benefits that cannot be implemented until TRICARE contracts are changed. In addition added funding must be appropriated. Once additional funds are available, claims will be paid back to October 1, 2000.

Current TRICARE beneficiaries (those under the age of 65) are being advised to save all receipts, claims and billing statements for services and benefits that have been incurred since last October 1st. You will need this documentation to seek reimbursement later from the TRICARE contractor for your

TRICARE region once additional funding is approved.

Senator Pete Domenici (Rep.-NM), Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, is seeking \$1.2 billion in supplemental health funds for the FY 2001. This emergency funding measure would pay the bills for the new health programs authorized to begin in FY2001 for both active duty and retiree beneficiaries.

Examples of new benefits affected by the funding delay are: (1) Reduction of the retiree "catastrophic cap" on family health care expenses from \$7,500 to \$3,000. When cumulative TRICARE deductibles and co-payments for family exceed the catastrophic cap, TRICARE

pays 100% of the family's deductibles for the rest of the fiscal year. This is particularly important to beneficiaries with large health care expenses from hospitalizations or other causes; (2) TRICARE coverage for school required physicals for TRICARE-eligible children ages five through eleven and (3) Travel reimbursement for TRICARE Prime beneficiaries referred to specialty care providers located over 100 miles away from their primary care physician.

For further information contact the Health Benefits Office at the 30th Medical Group, Vandenberg AFB. Additional information is available on the TRICARE website www.tricare.osd.mil.

(TRICARE website and TROA)

Retiree Activities Office

Building 10364, Base Exchange Area
Office Hours: Tuesday through Friday -
1000 to 1400
Closed Saturday, Sunday and Federal
Holidays

Hospice Care for Military Retiree Families

The Hospice Foundation of America (HHA) has announced the publication of "Hospice Care and the Military Family: A Guide to the TRICARE Hospice Benefit." The brochure reflects HFA's ongoing commitment to provide accurate and timely information about hospice and bereavement

services to members of the armed forces and to their families. HFA intends to place copies of the brochure into the hands of as many active duty and military retirees as they can. The announcement goes on to say hospice care is vastly underutilized because people do not know about it.

Individual copies are available free of charge by writing HFA at 2001 S St., NW, Suite 300, Washington DC 2009 or calling 800-854-3402. There is also a downloadable version of the brochure at website www.hospicefoundation.org.

(NMAA)

Update DEERS Registration

Retirees who are not sure their Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) records are correct should update with their correct address and any changes in family status such as marriage, divorce, birth or adoption.

Home addresses are important because the address on file with DEERS is used to send out information on health benefits. Additionally, if a new spouse or child is not enrolled in DEERS, health benefits could be denied.

There is no way to automatically track retirees and family members registered in the DEERS database. It is the retirees or eligible family member's responsibility to update the system. A claim may also be paid by mistake because DEERS

has no record of divorce or death. With an incorrectly paid claim, the government is required by law to request reimbursement, regardless of who is at fault.

Inaccurate or expired data in DEERS could be cause for denial of prescription drug coverage through the recently enhanced TRICARE Senior Pharmacy Program (effective 1 April 2001) and the TRICARE for Life Program effective 1 October 2001.

Retirees may update DEERS and verify Medicare eligibility by going to Customer Service at the Military Personnel Flight in Bldg. 11777, Rm. C-114 (606-2276) or

Faxing changes to (831) 655-8317, or

Mailing changes to the DEERS Support Office,

ATTN: COA, 400 Gigling Road, Seaside, CA 93955-6771; or

Calling the toll-free numbers for the DEERS Support Office, 1-800-334-4162 (California only), 1-800-527-5602 (Alaska and Hawaii), and 1-800-538-9552 for the rest of the United States.

DEERS address changes **only** may be made on-line at <https://www.tricare.osd.mil/DEERSAddress>; or

E-mailing changes to addrinfo@osd.pentagon.mil.

DEERS Support Office hours of operation are 6 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Pacific Time, Monday through Friday.

Breakers Dining Facility Reopens

The Breakers Dining Facility reopened January 24, 2001. The installation has undergone a 19-month, \$2.5 million renovating. The traditional serving line has been converted to a system that permits ala carte and buffet service. The dining area presents several individual rooms with separate themes.

Retirees who have taken advantage of dining at the Air Education and Training Command facility at the 381st Training Group in Building 9190 on Nevada Avenue may now use the Breakers. Serving hours are as follows:

Weekdays:

Breakfast 5:00 to 8:00 a.m.
Lunch 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Dinner 4:30 to 7:00 p.m.

Weekends:

Brunch 6:00 to 11:00 a.m.
Dinner 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

(Adapted from Space & Missile Times)

COMPUTER TRAINING CLASSES PROJECTED

The Retiree Center is arranging to have some basic computer training made available for those who may be interested. We have six computers in our computer room and we are going to line up some instructors. If there are any folks out there with computer training skills who can give us some time, please contact the Retiree Center at (805) 606-5474. When we have the program set up, we will get the word out so that people may schedule their training sessions. **MORE TO FOLLOW!**

MEDICAL RECORD RETIREMENT

Medical records are screened for treatment dates every year. If a retiree and their family member(s) are not treated for a period of two years, their medical records are retired to the National Archives at St. Louis, Mo. for a period of fifty years. If one family member receives care, the entire families' records should remain at the Medical Treatment Facility (MTF).

In the event a medical history is required after the records have been retired, the MTF can retrieve the records or copies of any applicable medical history for St. Louis. Please keep in mind, that legally, only the adult patient can have access to their medical records and request this information, not simply the sponsor.

You may also request this information yourself by writing to the following addressees. Make certain your requests contain full names, the sponsor's full social security number, place

of last treatment and the approximate date(s) of treatment. If you are requesting specific information be as exact in your request as possible with date(s) and place of treatment and physicians names if possible.

For the Sponsor:

National Personnel Records Center
9700 Page Ave.
St. Louis MO 63132-5100

For all Dependents:

National Personnel Records Center
111 Winnebago St.
St. Louis MO 63132-4199

The website is www.nara.gov/regional/stlouis.html.

(From 30th MDG)

MEDICARE PART A WITH TRICARE

Tricare will be the second payer when hospitalization is covered by both programs. Some services may be covered by one program and not the other. The following is a general view of coverage when the services are covered by both Medicare and Tricare.

When a beneficiary is hospitalized in a Medicare-approved facility, Medicare pays the allowable amount and Tricare pays the deductible and any cost share for the first 150 days of hospitalization. The beneficiary pays nothing.

After 150 days, Tricare becomes the primary payer, covering 80 percent of the Medicare allowable amount in network hospitals and 75 percent in non-network facilities.

The beneficiary is responsible for the remaining 20 or 25 percent not to exceed \$3,000 per family per fiscal year.

When a beneficiary is admitted to a skilled nursing facility after three days or more of acute

hospitalization, Medicare pays all approved charges for the first 20 days. From the 21st through the 100th day, Medicare pays all but \$99 per day. Tricare pays \$99 per day on the beneficiary's behalf. The beneficiary pays nothing.

After 100 days of skilled nursing care, Tricare will pay 75 percent of the Medicare allowable charges and the beneficiary is responsible for the remaining 25 percent, not to exceed the catastrophic cap.

In the rare event that a beneficiary does not meet Medicare's three-day hospitalization requirement, Tricare becomes the first payer and the patient is responsible for the deductible and cost share up to the \$3,000 maximum.

The beneficiaries are responsible for the co-payments and deductibles up to \$3,000 per family per year. The year runs from 1 October to 30 September for accounting purposes.

(Adapted from FRA)



Mrs. Ann Fox, tax adviser, from 30th Space Wing Staff Judge Advocate Office, briefed retirees on tax procedures at the February retiree meeting. For a second year, Mrs. Fox told retirees that they can have their taxes prepared for "FREE" by the Base Legal Office. For more details retirees may call (805) 605-3668; or, visit the legal office in Bldg 10577, first floor.

JOIN THE FUN AND BE INFORMED!

Mark your calendars for the **third Thursday of each month** and participate in the retirees' monthly meetings at the Joint Retiree Center, which is located in the Base Exchange complex – across from the Four Seasons' store. Guest speakers are invited to talk on subjects of interest to retirees and the meetings start at **1:00 pm**. Every quarter there is a potluck which begins at noon. The captions and photos give you an idea of the topics covered during the last quarter. See the upcoming events listed in this newspaper. For more information, please call the Joint Retiree Center, (805) 606-5474 – OR, better yet – drop in and visit us when you are on the Base.

REUNIONS

NAVAL WEATHER SERVICE ASSOCIATION May 23-27, San Diego, Calif., Contact: Robert Roberson, 530 E J St., Chula Vista, Calif. 91910-6415, (619) 421-5888.

CARIBOU (C-7A) ASSOCIATION Sep 4-7, Las Vegas, Nev., Contact Bill Avon, (330) 878-7451, web www.c-7acaribou.com, e-mail veteran1@tusco.net

USS ORISKANY (CV, CVA-34) Sep 30-Oct 2, Silverdale, Wash., Contact: Don Gossard, (360) 377-7582, e-mail cva34@oz.net.

USS SALISBURY SOUND (AV-14) Oct 11-13, Branson, Missouri, Contact: M.L. Bruce, 813 Branding Iron S.E., Albuquerque, N. Mex., 87123, (505) 293-3841, e-mail brubru@nm.net.



Col Al Newton, Commander 30th Medical Group, talked with retirees on "TRICARE for life" issues at the March retiree meeting. Col Newton, Ms Bonnie Robles, and Ms Pauline Triebenbacher, TRICARE representative – Region 9, held a Q & A session. Over 100 retirees participated in the meeting. A video of the event will be available for your viewing, in the lounge, at the Joint Retiree Center For more details contact the Joint Retiree Center at (805) 606-5474.

LONG-TERM CARE FOR RETIREES

September 19, 2000, President Clinton signed the Long-Term Care Security Act (H.R. 4040) into law (P.L. 106-265), authorizing government group long-term care (LTC) coverage for active and retired service members and federal civilians, plus their family members and survivors.

Because the government will be negotiating for a large, relatively healthy beneficiary pool, experts expect premiums will be 15-20% lower than most commercial plans. Participants will be required to pay 100 percent of the premiums.

But it likely will be October 2002 before beneficiaries can sign up to start their coverage, because of long lead times needed to solicit bids from insurance companies, finalize contracts, print publicity materials, etc.

Help Wanted

Volunteer needed. Must be proficient in, or willing to learn Adobe Pagemaker page layout computer program. Call the Retired Activities Office at

(805)-606-5474

TRICARE SENIOR PHARMACY PROGRAM

Beginning April 1, 2001, uniformed services beneficiaries 65 years of age and over will have one of the best pharmacy benefits available in the United States to older Americans. The TRICARE Senior Pharmacy Program, provided by the 2001 National Defense Authorization Act, authorizes eligible beneficiaries to obtain low-cost prescription medications from the National Mail Order Pharmacy (NMOP) and TRICARE network and non-network civilian pharmacies. Beneficiaries may also continue to use military hospital and clinic pharmacies.

The TRICARE Senior Pharmacy Program replaces the Base Realignment and Closure pharmacy benefit and the Pharmacy Redesign Pilot Program with a very robust benefit. Please read through this article to learn how the program works and how each option saves you money on prescription medications.

This pharmacy program is open to uniformed services beneficiaries age 65 and over. However, you must be registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS), and the new benefits may require you to be enrolled in Medicare Part B. Beneficiaries who will be 65 before April 1, 2001, do NOT have to enroll in Medicare Part B. Those who turn 65 on or after April 1, 2001, MUST be enrolled in Medicare Part B in order to use the mail order and retail pharmacy benefits.

The Department of Defense encourages everyone to carefully consider enrollment in Medicare Part B so they will have comprehensive health care and will be eligible to take advantage of other TRICARE health benefits that will begin October 1, 2001.

You can continue to get available medications at no charge through military treatment facility pharmacies. Simply present your written prescription to the pharmacist, or follow procedures established by your MTF.

For prescriptions you take regularly, such as medication to reduce blood pressure, or to lower cholesterol or treat diabetes, a convenient TRICARE Senior Pharmacy option is the National Mail Order Pharmacy (NMOP). Through this program, you simply mail your health care provider's written prescription along with your payment, and you can receive up to a 90-day supply of most medications. (For some medications there are applicable quantity limits).

After the military treatment facility, NMOP is the least expensive option for both you and the government. To fill your prescriptions, you will also need to register with the NMOP by completing and sending in a registration form, which you can obtain by calling toll free, 1-800-903-4680. In addition, you must ensure that the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) has your current address. To update your address in DEERS, the number to call for California is 1-800-334-4162, or visit the Web site at <https://www.tricare.osd.mil/DEERSAddress/>.

Prescription drugs purchased through NMOP are only \$3 for up to a 90-day supply of generic medications, or \$9 for up to a 90-day supply of brand name medications. Credit card payment is encouraged and is one of the easiest ways to pay for prescriptions obtained through NMOP. For additional information, or to download registration forms, please visit the Web site at

www.merckmedco.com or call Merck-Medco member services, toll free, at 1-800-903-4680.

The TRICARE network pharmacies are retail pharmacies that have contracted with TRICARE to serve its beneficiaries. If you need a prescription filled immediately, such as an antibiotic or a pain medication, visit one of these approved network pharmacies.

You can receive up to a 30-day supply of medication at a time for each prescription. You pay only \$9 for a 30-day supply of brand-name prescription drugs, and \$3 for a 30-day supply of generic prescription drugs

- more than with NMOP, but far below the retail price. Simply present the pharmacist with your written prescription and military ID card. For a list of TRICARE network pharmacies in your area, contact the TRICARE service center nearest you or visit the Web site at http://www.tricare.osd.mil/pharmacy/retail_network.htm

Non-network retail pharmacies are the most expensive option. Eligible beneficiaries usually receive reimbursement of 80% of the full retail price for medications, after you have met the TRICARE annual deductible amount (\$150 per individual, \$300

per family). In most cases, you must pay the full retail price at the pharmacy and then file a claim for appropriate reimbursement.

The reimbursement form is called the CHAMPUS Claim: Patient's Request for Medical Payment (OMB No. 0720-0006). The form is available from a health benefits advisor at a military treatment facility, or by mail from TRICARE Management Activity, 16401 E. Centretech Parkway, Aurora, Colorado 80011-9043. For additional information on filing claims, visit <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/claims/>.

MEDICARE, PART B ENROLLMENT

Enrollment in Medicare Part B is not permitted year round but only for a limited period at the beginning of each calendar year. The open season for enrollment in Medicare Part B runs from January 1 annually through March 31 annually. It is critical that military retirees, eligible family members and survivors over the age of 64, be enrolled in Medicare Part B to be eligible for the TRICARE-for Life program which becomes effective 1 October 2001. Those becoming 65 years of age during

the year should enroll at the earliest permitted opportunity, usually up to three months before the 65th birthday. If you are not sure you are enrolled you should check your Social Security Health Insurance Card. It should indicate that you are entitled to Medicare Part B with the phrase "Medical Insurance" and the effective date (the month you reached age 65). You can further confirm your enrollment by checking your Social Security Benefit statement to verify a deduction

(\$50.00 in 2001) is made for Medicare.

To enroll in Medicare Part B, call 1-800-772-1213 or contact your local Social Security office. Enrollment during the annual open season guarantees your eligibility for Medicare Part B effective 1 July of the enrollment year. A delay in enrollment in Medicare Part B will preclude your use of the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy Program of the TRICARE-for Life Program.

ATOMIC WEAPON TEST VETERANS

On July 10, 2000, P.L. 106-245, the "Radiation Exposure Compensation Act Amendments of 2000 (RECAA 2000)," was enacted making widespread changes to the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) passed earlier on October 15, 1990. The original Act provided for compassionate payments to individuals who contracted certain cancers and other serious diseases as a result of their exposure to radiation released during above-ground nuclear weapons tests or as a result of their exposure to radiation during employment in underground uranium mines. Implementing regulations were issued by the Department of Justice (DOJ) on April 10, 1992, establishing procedures to resolve claims in a reliable, objective, and non-adversarial manner, with little administrative cost to the United States or to the person filing the claim. Revisions to the regulations, published in the Federal Register on March 22, 1999, served to greater assist claimants in establishing entitlement to an award.

The RECAA 2000 establishes new claimant populations, additional compensable diseases, lower radiation exposure thresholds, modified medical documentation requirements and removal of certain disease restrictions. Original claimants were miners, millers and transporters of uranium ore.

Included now are so-called "Downwinders" (persons living downwind from above-ground nuclear weapons tests at the Nevada Test Site) and "Onsite Participants" at Nevada, Pacific, Trinity and South Atlantic test sites. While it is unlikely any retirees were involved in the production of uranium ore, many service members, when on active duty could have been included in the latter two

categories. Each category requires similar eligibility criteria: exposure to radiation and existence of a compensable disease.

For Downwinders, the RECAA 2000 specifies a payment of \$50,000 to an individual who was physically present in one of the affected areas downwind of the Nevada Test Site during a period of atmospheric nuclear testing, and later contracted a specified compensable disease. The claimant must have lived or worked downwind of atmospheric nuclear tests in certain counties in Utah, Nevada and Arizona for a period of at least two years during the period beginning on January 21, 1951, and ending on October 31, 1958, or, for the period beginning on June 30, 1962, and ending on July 31, 1962.

The designated affected areas are: in the State of Utah, the counties of Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Kane, Millard, Piute, San Juan, Sevier, Washington, and Wayne; in the State of Nevada, the counties of Eureka, Lander, Lincoln, Nye, White Pine, and that portion of Clark County that consists of townships 13 through 16 at ranges 63 through 71; and in the State of Arizona, the counties of Apache, Coconino, Gila, Navajo, and Yavapai.

In the case of Onsite Participants, the RECAA 2000 specifies a payment of \$75,000 to individuals who participated onsite in a test involving the atmospheric detonation of a nuclear device, and later developed a specified compensable disease. The claimant must have been present "onsite" above or within the official boundaries of the Nevada, Pacific, Trinity, or South Atlantic Test Sites at any time during a period of atmospheric nuclear testing and must have "participated" during that time in the atmo-

spheric detonation of a nuclear device.

After such physical presence as either a Downwinder or Onsite Participant, the claimant must have contracted one of the following specified diseases: leukemia (other than chronic lymphocytic leukemia), lung cancer, multiple myeloma, lymphomas (other than Hodgkin's disease), and primary cancer of the thyroid, male or female breast, esophagus, stomach, pharynx, small intestine, pancreas, bile ducts, gall bladder, salivary gland, urinary bladder, brain, colon, ovary, or liver (except if cirrhosis or hepatitis B is indicated).

Uranium ore production workers have differing compensation rates, exposure criteria and compensable diseases. Specific information can be obtained from the DOJ. At last report, 1,849 claims have been approved and \$96M in awards have been made for Downwinders and Onsite Participants. While Congress has only funded about 10 percent of the amount of claims already approved to date it would be prudent for any military retiree qualifying for compensation to submit a claim as soon as possible. It is likely that those with approved claims will be first in line as money becomes available.

For claim application forms, write to the U.S. Department of Justice, Radiation Exposure Compensation Program, P.O. Box 146, Ben Franklin Station, Washington, DC 20044-0146 stating the type of claim. Forms may also be requested at website <http://www.usdoj.gov/civil/torts/const/reca/forms.htm>. The phone number for assistance is 800-729-7327. Email may be sent to civil.reca@usdoj.gov.

(Source: Dept. of Justice)

COMMISSARY FOCUS GROUP

By Chief Master Sgt. John R. Stone, Retired
30th Space Wing Retiree Affairs Office

I attended a meeting of a focus group convened to discuss commissary benefits on 8 March. Commissary Director Randy Epps chaired the meeting. The focus group consisted of three active duty spouses, four retirees and one active duty member. The ultimate goal of the meeting was to improve the Commissary benefits. Several ideas and suggestions were made.

Overall the panelists stated they were happy and satisfied with the service. They felt the commissary personnel were friendly and that it was easy to shop in the commissary at Vandenberg. When I mentioned that sometimes I had trouble finding items, Epps said that two people had been assigned as floor walkers too assist handicapped shoppers and lost-husband shoppers like myself.

If you have suggestions please write them out and drop them in the suggestion box located near the drinking fountain as you enter the commissary. If you have a complaint please take it directly to management. They will be more than glad to help you. **YOUR COOPERATION CAN ONLY MAKE IT BETTER**

French Certificate of Honor

In a statement issued December 4, 2000, the French Embassy announced that The Ambassador of France to the United States, H.E. Francois Bujon de l'Estang had informed the acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs, The Honorable Hershel W. Gober, that the French authorities are issuing a certificate to recognize the participation of all American and allied soldiers who took part in the Normandy landing and contributed to the liberation of France.

In part, the statement goes on to say, "The certificate is meant to express the gratitude of the French people to the soldiers who participated in the Normandy landing and the liberation of France, on French territory and in French territorial waters and air space between June 6, 1944 and May 8, 1945."

For qualifying veterans residing in the area targeted by the Vandenberg AFB *Retiree Times*, Consuls General of

France in San Francisco and Los Angeles will issue the certificate on behalf of the French authorities. State Veterans Affairs Offices and veterans service organization in cooperation with the Consulates General of France will identify eligible veterans and review and certify applications. Certificates will be prepared and presented at ceremonies if appropriate.

The certificate applies only to living veterans and will not be issued posthumously. To apply, veterans must submit a copy of documented proof of their service along with an application form. The application form, instructions and sample copy of the certificate are available on the website <http://www.info-france-usa.org/news/statmnts/ww2/index.htm>.

Complete the application form in block letters and print legibly. Attach copies of any document showing proof of service in the area described above

between the dates indicated. Do not send original documents as they will not be returned. Do not telephone Consulates. The review of applications will take some time and veterans or their representatives will be contacted if more information is required.

Applications may be submitted through a veteran's service organization or directly to the appropriate Consul General. For ZIP Codes above 93400, send the application form and supporting documents to "French Consulate/Thank-You-America, 540 Bush Street, San Francisco, CA 94108." If your ZIP Code is under 93400, send the application material to "French Consulate/Thank You America, 10990 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 300, Los Angeles, CA 90024." For those without access to the website, the Retired Activities Office can provide you with the necessary application form and instructions.

(Embassy of France website)

DOES YOUR FUTURE INCLUDE "DOT.COM?"

Coming soon to the Retiree Activities Center — we will have access to the internet so our visitors will be able to come in and obtain needed information from various sources. For those of you who do not have access to the internet, this will be a way for you to obtain the latest information on TRICARE, travel, and anything else that you might need to know. Right now we are in the process of having the phone line installed and obtaining the service. If all goes well, we hope to have everything up and running in May 2001. Contact the Retiree Center at (805) 606-5474 for more details.

HEALTH CARE BENEFIT CHANGES EXPLAINED

By Janene Scully

Santa Maria Times Staff Writer

An hour long explanation of expanded health care benefits, such as prescription coverage, for military retirees and spouses over 65, eased many doubts about upcoming changes.

Col. Alan Newton, 30th Medical Group commander, outlined the changes for a standing-room-only crowd, including one man who proclaimed the new program should save him money.

"It's almost too good to be true," one woman said.

About 100 people crammed into the Retiree Activities Center at Vandenberg Air Force Base Thursday (March 15th). The meeting was videotaped for those unable to attend.

The national Defense Authorization Act, passed by President Bill Clinton in the fall, extends the military's Tricare health and pharmacy benefits to retirees and spouse over age 65.

The pharmacy program, which began April 1, includes access to prescription drugs at military facilities as well as retail pharmacies in local communities plus a mail-order option for those age 65 and older: Most local pharmacies appear in the Tricare Senior Pharmacy directory, officials said.

A 30-day supply of generic drugs would cost \$3, while brand-name drugs will cost \$9. A mail-order option offers the same price for 90-day supplies.

Retirees asked Newton whether the program would cover drugs they take for assorted ailments.

"There really is going to be nothing you can't get that I'm aware of unless it's experimental," Newton said.

The sometimes-tense meeting, which veered off health care occasionally, had its lighter moments, including one elderly man asking whether Vandenberg's pharmacy stocks Viagra.

Newton assured the crowd that it does, but warned military doctors can prescribe only six pills for a month's supply.

Vandenberg representatives reminded veterans and spouses to ensure that Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System information is up to date. While those who turn 65 before April 1 do not have to enroll in Medicare Part B, people who turn 65 on or after April 1 must be enrolled in Part B to use mail-order and retail pharmacy benefits.

The Defense Department is ironing out details on the second part of the senior health care program.

Beginning October 1, military retirees over age 65 become eligible for Tricare benefits.

"Passing the law's one thing; putting it into nuts and bolts action is another thing," Newton said adding the Tricare program would cover what Medicare does not.

Vandenberg officials plan another meeting this summer to explain that portion of the health care program.

Newton urged military retirees over age 65 to keep supplemental insurance programs for at least six month beyond the October 1 start-up as a precaution.



Mr. Donald Casebolt, nurse practitioner, from the Lompoc Community Based Outpatient Clinic, addressed military retirees at the January retiree meeting in the Joint Retiree Center. Mr. Casebolt advised retirees on the services available to them at the clinic located at 1111 E. Ocean Ave, Suite 8, Lompoc, CA. For details retirees may call (805) 736-7767.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The Vandenberg Retired Activities Office currently maintains the mailing list for this newsletter in-house. It is based on input from the Air Force Personnel Center and the DEERS. However, input is also received directly from retirees and surviving spouses. Changes submitted directly to the RAO result in a more up-to-date mailing list. Please submit all corrections, changes of addresses, notice of deceased addressees etc. to the RAO as they occur. The mailing address of the RAO is near the address label on the back page of the *Retiree Times*. You may also send e-mail to retirees.office@vandenberg.af.mil.

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Attention All Retirees

As a reminder, you are required to remove and surrender all DoD & AF Vehicle Registration Identification from your vehicles upon normal expiration, if you become disqualified for AF private vehicle registration, if your registration privileges are terminated or revoked, or if you dispose of (Sell) your vehicle. For further information or questions please call ext. 6-1853 comm: 805 606-1853. Thank you for your support, Your Pass and Registration Section.