



ELDER UPDATE



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2014

NEWS BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ELDER AFFAIRS

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 6

HONORING FLORIDA'S VETERANS

*Charles T. Corley, Secretary
Florida Department of Elder Affairs*

For almost 100 years, our country has set aside a day to recognize and observe the sacrifices of those in uniform who dedicated their lives to preserving the democratic ideals that are the foundation of our country.

This Veterans Day, we honor those brave men and women who have served this nation in the U.S. military. Here in Florida, with more than 1.5 million veterans, we have the third largest population of this demographic group, with only California and Texas ahead of us. This number accounts for 12 percent of the state's population of those 18 and older. We have the largest population of World War II veterans in the nation with more than 164,000. There are more than 731,000 veterans over age 65 in Florida, including 27,000 women veterans age 65 and older. There are more than 160,000 women veterans in total, and the Sunshine State is home to more Vietnam-era veterans than any other wartime category with 498,000. More than 187,000 military retirees call Florida home.

We are so very grateful for the contributions and sacrifices of these dedicated members of the armed forces, and we recognize that all of our veterans have selflessly given of

themselves to this country. Some have paid the ultimate price – laying down their lives on battlefields across the world to advance the noble causes of liberty and justice in regions wrought with tyranny and oppression.

It is fitting that all Floridians honor America's military veterans, whose selfless service and sacrifice allow us to enjoy freedom and liberty. As Floridians and Americans, we can pay tribute to the example set by our veterans by giving more of ourselves to others. In doing so, we honor their service.

To our veterans, our country can never fully repay you for your courage, service, and sacrifices. Your service speaks to your sense of duty, honor, integrity, and courage, whether in wartime or in peace. While we can never do enough to say thank you, Florida can help and support you through outreach and advocacy. Information on federal and state benefits available to you and your family is available by visiting www.FloridaVets.org or by calling the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs at 850-487-1533.

Of course, one day of recognition is not enough to honor those of you who have served in our military, but we take the opportunity on November 11 to say thank you and to honor you, our nation's veterans.



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ELDER UPDATE

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**WORLD WAR II —
Special Edition**

Rick Burnham
Editor in Chief, *Elder Update*
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

If you are picking up the *Elder Update* for the first time, and if you didn't know better, you might think this is a newspaper geared strictly to the military. It's not.

But on this occasion – on Veterans Day, 70 years after D-Day – it is fitting to pause and reflect on the sacrifices Americans made during WWII. The men and women who fought for freedom during that tumultuous time have tremendous stories to tell, and they tell them with the same gusto they displayed seven decades ago – in war-torn bunkers, aboard mighty ships, at the controls of magnificent aircraft, and anywhere else they were needed.

We relay a few of those stories here, told by Floridians who witnessed firsthand the world at war. They are gut-wrenching tales of passion and courage, and our seniors put you right there in the action – during the Battle of the Bulge, on the deck of the *USS Saratoga*, in the midst of the Battle of Okinawa, on the hallowed grounds of Arlington National Cemetery, and more.

Everyone at the Department of Elder Affairs salutes those veterans who served our great nation during WWII. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to have many of these heroes call the Sunshine State home, and it is with great respect and admiration that we present a few of their stories here.

SPECIAL THANKS

Elder Update staff is deeply gratified by the many generous donations given recently by our readers. Your generosity and kindness are truly appreciated, and your donations will be used to ensure the continued production of *Elder Update*.

Lorraine McReynolds

Edith Johnson

Judith Cleckner

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Patricia Vernam

E. Irene Neese

Ella Ann Cochrane

**The Importance
of Networking**

Ashley Marshall
Communications Director
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

We talk a lot about the aging network in our field of work, but many people do not know the extensive system that makes up this network to serve the needs of older Floridians. As the State Unit on Aging, the Department of Elder Affairs is designated to “serve as the primary state agency responsible for administering human services programs for the elderly” (Section 430.03, Florida Statutes). We work through 11 Area Agencies on Aging/Aging and Disability Resource Centers, as well as with 52 Lead Agencies, community and faith-based organizations, and local service providers, to provide services and community-based care to help seniors safely age with dignity and independence. The Department also works with the Administration for Community Living/U.S. Administration on Aging within the federal Department of Health and Human Services, which funds home and community-based services for millions of older Americans through Older Americans Act money to the states.

While this system provides a comprehensive network that works together on behalf of older Floridians, we must also look to other states for best practices at times. So every year, the Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging (SE4A) hosts a conference to gather the aging networks of Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama. This year, Florida was the proud host state, and DOEA Secretary Charles T. Corley opened the conference, discussing emerging trends and the accomplishments across the Florida aging network. Department management and staff attended the conference and presented on various topics including the Florida Silver Alert Program, Exploring the AAA's role in elder rights advocacy, the state's Alzheimer's Disease Initiative, and best practices from the transition of Florida's aging network to statewide Medicaid Managed Care. Other interesting workshops included senior bullying, caregiver stress, transportation solutions, and caring for elders during disasters.

It was a wonderful opportunity to talk with counterparts at other state units on aging to learn from their experience with the issues we all face. Sharing our successful approaches to programs and service delivery and staying on top of emerging trends and needs are all critical to ensure that we are truly meeting the needs of those we serve.

IMPORTANT SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE: In order to comply with the United States Postal Service regulations guiding non-profit periodicals, we must regularly update our subscription list and provide proof of your request for our newspaper. To prevent an interruption or cancellation of your subscription, please complete the subscription request form on Page 20 or visit http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us/doea/elder_update_subscribe.php to complete your form online. Don't forget to include your phone number in case we need to contact you, and please sign and date it. We look forward to continuing to serve you!

Annuity Scams Can Drain Savings

*Drew J. Breakspear
Commissioner
Florida's Office of Financial Regulation*

Elder financial exploitation is a growing problem. Many senior citizens have worked for decades, paid off their homes, and saved money for retirement. However, these assets can make seniors a prime target for individuals who seek to financially exploit them. Seniors account for 13 percent of the U.S. population, and according to the Virginia TRIAD, a cooperative effort of law enforcement agencies and senior citizen organizations, seniors make up 30 percent of consumer fraud victims. Additionally, data from the National Adult Protective Services Association shows that one in 20 elder adults experienced financial mistreatment occurring in the recent past.

Floridians age 65 and older who are looking to invest should be cautious. Financial scams can drain senior citizens of their savings. A fraudulent annuity scam involves misleading investment practices targeted toward seniors. An annuity is a series of income payments made at regular intervals by an insurance company in return for a premium or premiums you have paid. Elder adults may be manipulated into purchasing an unsuitable annuity or replacing existing annuities with a new one simply for the scammer's financial gain.

Uninvited postcards, free luncheon events, and seminars can be used to entice potential victims. These mailers and presentations are often a guise to access your financial information. An examination of these events conducted by federal and state securities regulators showed that half included written material containing exaggerated or misleading claims, and 12 percent involved fraud.

There are warning signs. High-pressure sales tactics, such as "must invest now" or "this offer won't last long" are classic red flags. Extremely complicated investment products can also be a sign of fraud. If the promoter asks for your net worth, current investments, and banking information, walk away. Their business location can also be a clue. Fraudsters often use a P.O. Box address or "virtual" office.

You can help prevent financial fraud. Inquire with multiple professionals, and find one who understands your goals. Make sure you ask for written material that fully explains the investment product being offered, and always ask questions about anything you don't understand. Finally, remember to check the license of the person or company before doing business. Verify his or her license online with the Office of Financial Regulation or call us (850) 487-9687.

The best prevention is an informed investor. Help us make Florida's financial marketplace safer by doing research before committing to any investment.

Always Hire a Licensed Contractor

*Erin Reisinger
Florida Department of Business
and Professional Regulation*

Your home is one of the most important investments you make in your entire life. When renovating or repairing your home, make sure you hire a contractor licensed by the State of Florida. It's the smartest and safest way to protect your investment.

The Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) licenses and regulates contractors performing services that directly impact the structure of a building including roofing, plumbing, swimming pool installation and repair, and electrical work. A full list of services licensed by DBPR can be found online at www.MyFloridaLicense.com.

It is important to research contractors and verify that they are properly licensed with the department before hiring them to do repair work. Unlicensed activity occurs when a person who is not licensed by the state performs or offers to perform a job or service that requires licensure by DBPR. DBPR takes unlicensed activity very seriously because it threatens the safety of Florida's consumers and it takes away business from licensed professionals throughout the state.

Unlicensed activity is against the law, and it also poses various financial and safety dangers to consumers. One of those risks is that shoddy or incomplete work performed by an unlicensed individual is not typically covered by homeowners insurance. That means that if the work performed was substandard, insurance will not reimburse the individual for the money spent out of pocket to get the job done right. Therefore, it is crucial that professional licenses are verified with DBPR prior to any work being performed.

Other dangers of hiring unlicensed individuals include poor qualifications, poor quality work, possible criminal background of workers, and liens being imposed on the property. Scams in the construction industry, especially home improvement, are sadly widespread. Con artists pose as contractors and often target vulnerable people and take advantage of homeowners' need for urgent post-storm property damage repairs. Unlicensed persons often disappear after receiving payment and, unfortunately, DBPR has little jurisdiction to help homeowners get their money back from unlicensed individuals, or require the unlicensed individuals to finish or improve the work done.

DBPR offers the following tips to avoid unlicensed activity scams when hiring a contractor:

- Ask for a second opinion. Get three bids, check references, and get a written contract. By asking for a second opinion, you can verify that the first estimate or assessment by a contractor does not contradict.
- Ask for a formal quote and estimate. Do not commit to a contract, make a payment, or provide personal or financial information on the spot. Oftentimes, scams are committed by individuals who pressure consumers to make an immediate decision by greatly reducing the price. Be attentive to these high-pressure sales tactics and make informed decisions.
- Ask the individual for his or her license number. The license number must also appear on all advertising for the business.
- If you do not intend to do the repair work yourself and have been asked by someone without a construction license to pull the owner/builder permit, you are at risk of financial harm. If you pull an owner/builder permit for an unlicensed contractor to perform work on your property, you must deduct F.I.C.A. withholding tax and provide workers' compensation insurance.
- On any construction or repair job, don't pay more than 10 percent down or \$1,000, whichever is less, until the job is complete.
- When hiring a contractor for repair of an A/C unit, always verify your original warranty. Your current system may still be under warranty; most warranties are valid for 10 or 20 years.
- Beware of scams when individuals ask for all of the money up front, will only accept cash, or solicit door-to-door.
- Do not sign a certificate of completion until you are satisfied with the work done.

Consumers can verify professional licenses by name or license number online at www.MyFloridaLicense.com or by calling the DBPR Customer Contact Center at 850-487-1395. Complaints of unlicensed activity can be reported to the Department through the Unlicensed Activity Hotline by calling 1-866-532-1440.

ASK LANCE: *Your Questions Answered by a SHINE Counselor*

Choosing a Medicare Supplement Policy

Dear Lance:

I have had a Medicare Advantage plan for the three years that I have been on Medicare. I think I would like to switch over to Original Medicare during the Annual Enrollment Period (October 15 – December 7). I will also want a Medicare Supplement policy, but I do not know how to go about choosing one. Can you help me with this decision?

Baffled

Dear Baffled:

A Medicare Supplement policy, sometimes called a Medigap policy, fills in the gaps in coverage of Original Medicare. These can include the deductibles and coinsurances that Medicare does not cover. The plans are offered by private insurance companies, and some supplement policies offer benefits that Medicare does not cover at all. Medicare Supplement policies can only be sold to individuals who have Original Medicare. They do not cover prescription medications.

A Medicare Supplement is protection against unpleasant or potentially ruinous financial “surprises” that can arise if, for example, you need to see multiple physicians, need expensive outpatient diagnostic tests, or require hospitalization. There is an annual deductible of \$147 for Medicare Part B services plus 20 percent coinsurances that will be owed for the physician and outpatient diagnostic services. Part A has a \$1,216 payment, which will be due if you are admitted as an inpatient to a hospital. A Medicare supplement helps the beneficiary avoid some or all of these costs,

depending on which plan they choose. Without a supplement, your financial liability for the medical services you receive with Original Medicare has no limit.

Choosing a Plan

Medicare has designed 10 standardized Medicare Supplement plans. Each plan is designated by a letter such as A, B, and so on. All plans offer the same basic benefits but differ greatly in the other benefits they provide. You can see the benefits covered by each of the 10 plans by visiting www.medicare.gov and clicking the top tab “Supplements and Other Insurance,” or by calling Medicare at 1-800-633-4227 and requesting the booklet “Choosing a Medigap Policy.”

A Medicare Supplement plan that pays for all of a beneficiary’s possible out-of-pocket expenses has a higher monthly premium than one that has less comprehensive benefits. Some beneficiaries would rather pay a higher premium and have all possible expenses covered, whereas others would prefer to assume some financial obligations in return for a lower monthly premium. You should choose the plan that best meets your needs.

Choosing a Company That Offers the Plan You Want

There may be as many as 35 different insurance companies that offer the standardized plan you want. It is important to emphasize that all companies that offer a plan provide the same Medicare coverage benefits. If there are 25 companies that offer Plan F, for example, they all provide the same coverage benefits. The company

premiums, however, can vary significantly for this coverage; therefore, shopping is recommended. Selecting the company with the lowest premium for the plan you want is a very reasonable way to make a choice.

Be aware, that with few exceptions, a person who has had Medicare Parts A and B for six months or more will be required to answer questions about his or her medical history when applying for a policy. The company is not required to issue you a policy based on this information, and if you are accepted, they can exclude pre-existing conditions for a period of time.

It is highly recommended that you apply well in advance of the date on which you would like your coverage to begin. Do not cancel your existing Medicare Advantage Plan until you have been accepted by a company. You can apply to more than one.

I encourage you to make an appointment with a volunteer SHINE counselor who can assist you with this decision. They will talk with you about your needs and explain the differences among the standardized Medicare Supplement Plans. The counselor can also provide you with premium quotes from the Florida Department of Insurance Regulation, which has the rates for all insurance companies that offer Medicare Supplements in Florida. The counselor will do the rate shopping for you. With the SHINE counselor’s assistance, you can save time and be better informed in making your choices.



LANCE JARVIS

Lance is the co-Area Coordinator for the SHINE Program in Brevard County. He joined the program in 2009, volunteering his time to help Brevard County’s Medicare beneficiaries make informed health care insurance decisions.

If you have a question you would like the answered in our *Ask Lance* column, please email us at information@elderaffairs.org or send mail to *Elder Update: Ask Lance*, 4040 Esplanade Way, Tallahassee, FL 32399-7000, and look for a response in one of the next issues.

SHINE

(Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) is an award-winning volunteer-based program at the Department of Elder Affairs that provides information and free, unbiased counseling for people on Medicare,

their families, and their caregivers. Trained counselors provide personal and confidential assistance over the phone or at local counseling sites. To speak with a SHINE counselor, call our Elder Helpline toll-free at **1-800-96-ELDER** (1-800-963-5337).

The Military Beneficiary and Medicare Part D: "Do I" or "Don't I?"

Mica Bell and Pene Miller
SHINE Program
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

You have retired from the military and are enjoying Tricare benefits because of your service. As you approach 65 and begin receiving information about Medicare prescription coverage, you may ask how you can benefit from it.

Drug coverage through the VA is considered creditable, so if a veteran's drugs are covered, there is generally no reason to sign up for Part D. However, there are some possible reasons to enroll in Part D:

- Medicare Part D coverage and VA Prescription Drug benefits are completely separate programs and do not affect each other in any way. Veterans enrolled in both programs effectively have two prescription drug programs that they can use. VA drug benefits are accessed through VA physicians and VA pharmacies. Medicare Part D can be used through non-VA providers, and prescriptions may be filled at non-VA pharmacies. The VA generally provides comprehensive drug coverage at a low cost to veterans. In some cases, however, the out-of-pocket costs for a drug will be cheaper at a non-VA pharmacy through Medicare than through the VA. In these situations, veterans can save money by using their Part D coverage.
- If a veteran has Medicare Part D and qualifies for the Low Income Subsidy (LIS) program, he/

she will have minimal out-of-pocket costs when using Part D coverage. This is another reason for some veterans to use Medicare Part D coverage instead of VA drug coverage. Veterans who do not qualify for the LIS may pay less for medications if they obtain them through the VA instead of through Medicare. Neither Medicare nor the VA will pay for medications that the other program has paid for.

- If a veteran has moved to a geographical area that has limited access to VA facilities, that person may want to enroll in a Part D plan to maintain prescription drug coverage.
- Veterans who decide not to enroll in Medicare Part D may only obtain their medications through the VA or pay out of pocket.

Veterans should be aware that there may be a monthly premium when enrolled in a Medicare Part D plan. Veterans who have had continuous VA health benefits are not required to pay a late enrollment penalty for Part D at any later date.

To discuss the pros and cons of having Part D coverage in addition to VA prescription drug coverage, contact a SHINE counselor by calling the toll-free Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337). You may also visit our website at www.floridashine.org for more information. To find a local SHINE counseling site near you for personalized assistance, click on the "Counseling Sites" tab at the top of the web page.

SUDOKU

There is only one valid solution to each Sudoku puzzle. When you start a game of Sudoku, some blocks will be pre-filled for you. You cannot change these numbers in the course of the game. Each column must contain all of the numbers 1 through 9, and no two numbers in the same column of a Sudoku puzzle can be the same. Each row must contain all of the numbers 1 through 9, and no two numbers in the same row of a Sudoku puzzle can be the same. Each block must contain all of the numbers 1 through 9, and no two numbers in the same block of a Sudoku puzzle can be the same. Good luck!

	9		5		3		7	
7			1		2			9
	8	3					1	6
	6			7				9
		9					6	
	2			1				8
	1	8					9	2
9			8		6			1
	5		3		1		4	

Solution found on page 18.

Sudoku © Kevin Stone Printed from BrainBashers www.brainbashers.com

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Medicare Open Enrollment

OCTOBER 15 - DECEMBER 7

Don't miss these important deadlines:

OCTOBER 15 ANNUAL ENROLLMENT BEGINS

Annual Enrollment is the one chance most people with Medicare have to make a change in their health and prescription drug plans.

DECEMBER 7 ANNUAL ENROLLMENT ENDS

If you are going to make a change to your current coverage, do so as early as possible to ensure that you can get the prescriptions you need on January 1.

JANUARY MEDICARE DRUG AND HEALTH COVERAGE BEGINS FOR 2015

Also, the Medicare Advantage Disenrollment Period (MADP) is January 1 through February 14 of every year. During the MADP you can make changes only if you have a Medicare Advantage Plan, and those changes go into effect the first day of the following month.

If you need help comparing Medicare Part D plans or Medicare Advantage plans don't delay. Call a SHINE volunteer counselor today for **FREE** and unbiased Medicare counseling!

1-800-96-ELDER



VETERANS DAY MESSAGE

This Veterans Day, Ann and I join every Floridian in honoring the men and women of the United States military who have selflessly served our country throughout our nation's history.

With more than 1.5 million veterans across the state, Florida is home to the third largest population of veterans in the country, including the largest living population of World War II veterans. Many of us have family, friends, and neighbors who have selflessly served our nation and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude.

These heroes have made countless sacrifices for our country. Their service has protected our freedoms and allows us the opportunity to achieve the American Dream. We can never thank these brave heroes enough for their service, but we must take every opportunity possible to tell them that we have much reverence for their service.

I encourage you to take this Veterans Day as a reminder to recognize the brave heroes across the Sunshine State. Let's keep working to support our veteran men and women and make Florida the most military-friendly state in the nation.





A Word From Florida's First Lady

By Ann Scott
First Lady of the State of Florida

As a daughter, sister, and wife of military veterans, I have always had a deep appreciation for the brave men and women who serve in the United States military.

The military has been an important part of our lives since the very beginning of our marriage. The day after Rick and I were married, we moved 1,500 miles – from Kansas City, Missouri, where we met, to Newport, Rhode Island, where Rick served in the Navy on the *USS Glover*. It was difficult to be away from my family and friends while Rick was out to sea, but more than anything I was incredibly proud that my husband had chosen to serve our country.

He has said time and again that his service to our great country is among the most fulfilling experiences of his life.

Of course, Rick's own father served in the 82nd Airborne Division during World War II, which was the first airborne division of the U.S. military in 1942. They were so critical to our nation's strategy they

parachuted into Normandy to begin the famous D-Day invasion in 1944.

My father also served in World II, and both of my brothers served in the Navy. In fact, one of them retired in Jacksonville after more than 35 years of service. I also lost an uncle in the Battle of the Bulge. We certainly have a strong military presence in our family, and that's one reason why Veterans Day is so special to us.

But it certainly is not the only reason.

Those who serve our state and country are true heroes.

Rick and I understand the sacrifices that veterans and their families make every day to ensure we have the freedoms we enjoy in our great nation, and for that we are incredibly grateful. When you live and work in the state with more than 1.5 million veterans, you simply cannot help but feel their presence and appreciate all of their wonderful contributions.

Having visited with veterans and their families across Florida, and having seen firsthand the fortitude and strength they exhibit each and every day, it is clear our veterans are very special. From the Panhandle

to the Keys, Florida's veterans are working hard to make our state a great place to live, work, and play.

We can never fully repay our debt of gratitude to those brave men and women who served and protected our freedoms. As we continue to make Florida the most military-friendly state in the nation, we will continue to honor our veterans.

Rick and I are very proud of the veterans in our family, and we are equally proud of those who serve in our extended family – throughout the state of Florida. He and I would like to wish each and every one of you – along with your own families – a happy and healthy Veterans Day.



SHE WAS A MARINE

"It had been decided that the women in the Marine Corps would be called Marines, never another name such as Wave or WAC. We were Marines."

Rick Burnham
Editor in Chief, Elder Update

She knew of the battles going on, of course, and knew of the need for the country to come together in the face of evil. But for Sallie Amato of Orlando, WWII really began with a poster she saw in New York City -- one with a simple message.

Be a Marine. Free a Marine to Fight.

"I did become a Marine," said Amato. "I joined with the idea that I would become a trumpet player in the Marine Corps Band. I enlisted and went through boot camp at Camp Lejeune."

Unfortunately, Amato was never called upon to play the trumpet in the band. She was selected, however, to become a bugler and was assigned to field music

FIRST GROUP OF WOMEN MARINE OFFICER CANDIDATES 1943

From U.S. Marines
Official Marine Corps Photo # 10683

http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/HD/Home_Page.htm - www.tecom.usmc.mil (U.S. Marine Corps History website). Licensed under Public domain via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First_group_of_Women_Marine_Officer_Candidates_1943.jpg#mediaviewer/File:First_group_of_Women_Marine_Officer_Candidates_1943.jpg



school. It was as a bugler, from 1943 to 1946, that Amato found her mark in the U.S. Marine Corps.

"It is a wonderful discipline," she said.

Amato's responsibilities in the Marine Corps were mostly administrative, she said, serving as a courier to transport paperwork to and from different locations.

"I would describe it as a messenger unit," she said. "When orders or other information had to be delivered from one office to another, I was that person."

But at different junctures of the day, the raising of the flag early in the morning, for example, she would perform her bugler duties -- a responsibility that affected everyone else on the installation.

"We had to get them up in the morning, send them to chow, and play taps at the end of the day," she said.

She was also hand-selected to perform taps during the funeral of a fellow female Marine at Arlington National Cemetery. She remembers it as being an extremely solemn event.

"She had been killed accidentally while on leave with her family, and they were given permission for her to be interred in Arlington," she said. "It was very emotional for all of the fellow women Marines who attended because we were a rather small group."

That particular event stands out in her mind from WWII, as does the conversations with male Marines who were returning home from the fighting overseas.

"During my time at Camp Lejeune, I had the opportunity to meet and become acquaintances with male Marines who were returning from places in the Pacific," she said. "They had stories to tell that were hard to believe -- that they were able to endure it and

still talk about it. There were some very frightening situations."

After the war, Amato took advantage of her GI Bill and earned a degree from Radford College -- formerly the women's division of Virginia Tech. She studied home economics and science there and used her education to teach students at schools in the Orlando area after she and her husband moved there in 1952.

They would eventually have four children of their own, along with three grandchildren and one great grandchild.

She tells them of WWII. It was a very unusual time, when everyone had a job, and everyone was very proud to be doing it.

"It was not just those who were wearing uniforms," she said. "It was all the support and the letter writing. People showing that they cared. All of those things made as much a difference in the long run as maybe the fighting did. People sacrificed their lives, but there was a lot of sacrifice at home -- people giving up those things they were used to and having to do without."

It is all a bit overpowering for a young person to conceive, she said.

"It is hard for them to visualize that it all happened," she said. "I think it is difficult for young people to imagine that, unless they have really experienced it in the movies or television. They do not see women in those situations. Not their grandmother."

Their grandmother -- the Marine.

"It had been decided that the women in the Marine Corps would be called Marines, never another name such as Wave or WAC. We were Marines."

Air Corps Vet Recalls Love of Flying

*Oh! I have slipped the
surlly bonds of earth,*

*And danced the skies on
laughter-silvered wings;*

*Sunward I've climbed, and
joined the tumbling mirth*

*Of sun-split clouds, — and
done a hundred things*

- John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

Rick Burnham
Editor in Chief, Elder Update

Ray Shewfelt's first flight in an airplane was hardly noteworthy. His father's boss – a pilot in the U.S. Army's 108th Observation Squadron – took the young boy up for a ride during an annual summer camp, where his father trained as a sergeant major with an infantry regiment. The entire flight lasted a mere 30 minutes.

As brief as it was, however, that half-hour flight sparked a career of flying, one that included numerous aircraft and spanned three wars – in addition to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Much of Shewfelt's childhood and early adult life was spent in Odessa, Fla., about 25 miles north of Tampa. It was there he got married, and it was there that he heard the call of a nation in need.

"In 1942 and '43, the Air Force Air Corps was building up," he said. "They started running short on men and realized they would have to reduce the requirements from two years of college to the high school level, and they also started accepting married men," he said. "When the requirements were such that I could meet them, I went down and took the battery of tests at the post office, and that was the beginning."

Shewfelt served throughout much of Europe in World War II, but the initial stages of his career were spent training in areas around the Southeast-



Ray Shewfelt stands in front of a P-51 Mustang fighter, the aircraft he flew for much of his service time in WWII. Shewfelt named the P-51 he piloted "Little Larry" after the son who was born while his father was in Europe.

ern United States. He was indoctrinated into the world of the fighter pilot in Tifton, Ga., and received gunnery training at Eglin Field in Florida. Then there was ground school in Tallahassee, and, finally, fighter training in Fort Myers. It was there that he learned about "formation flying."

"The key to success of fighter operations was the ability to operate in a formation," he said. "We flew the so-called 'Finger Four' formation. We got a lot of that plus gunnery training."

By the time he arrived in England, he was ready for the "Cadillac of fighters," the P-51 Mustang.

"Back in those days, the Cadillac was the utmost of automobiles too," he said. "Well, the P-51 was equal to all the German and Italian fighters. There is a lot to consider when comparing different aircraft, but the P-51 was truly the Cadillac of fighters."

Shewfelt named his aircraft "Little Larry" after his only son who was born after his father left home for the war. Aboard "Little Larry," Shewfelt was assigned a particularly hazardous job in the skies over Germany, France, and Czechoslovakia.

The weather in Europe was horrendous, he said, making military missions – particularly bombing missions – a risky venture. Seeing this, the U.S.

Army Air Corps sent three scouting units to assist in that regard. Their mission was to fly out ahead of the bombers to assess both the weather conditions and the potential enemy reaction. Shewfelt was assigned to the second of the scouting units.

"Our job was to relay information back to the bomber force coming behind us," he said. "We relayed back the weather conditions over the target so that they knew whether they could bomb their primary targets or whether they should divert to a secondary or abort the mission and return."

The job exposed Shewfelt and his comrades to the fire of enemy aircraft, which were more numerous in the latter stages of 1943 and throughout 1944.

"The jets were becoming more operationally effective," Shewfelt said. "Hitler knew the importance of airpower."

Shewfelt was stationed in England when he got word that the war had ended, and his attention quickly changed to the young family waiting for him back in Florida.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Kamikaze Attacks All Too Vivid for Sailor

Charles H. Wiggins, of Sebring, Fla., was an 18-year-old seaman serving his country aboard the *USS Wisconsin* during World War II. The ship was sailing with the 3rd Fleet in the far western Pacific, under the command of Adm. "Bull" Halsey. Wiggins was a member of the Second Division, which manned the No. 2 16-inch turret, but as conditions changed during the last months of the war, he was assigned to various lookout watches.

He recalls in vivid detail his assignment as "Zenith lookout," during the final weeks of the struggle to bring the war with Japan to a victorious conclusion.

"My lookout assignment placed me on top of the fire control station, which was one level above the bridge in the superstructure," he said. "This is the place from which all the firing of the ship's guns was controlled."

Wiggins' job was to lie flat on his back and, using a special pair of goggles, continually search the skies for enemy aircraft. Of particular concern were planes "diving out of the sun," a favorite trick of Japanese pilots looking to strafe, bomb, or crash into the ship before evasive action could be taken. From his vantage point, Wiggins had an unobstructed, panoramic view of the sky, the sea, and all the other ships in the fleet formation.

He was also fully exposed to all the action.

The aircraft carriers were in the center of the task force, surrounded by the battleships and cruisers, with the destroyers on the outer perimeter. The carriers were the Japanese's primary target because the carrier-based planes were giving their home islands a terrible pounding, he said.

On one memorable day, everyone on the ship had been on full alert for most of the afternoon. Enemy planes had begun to appear on the radar. Carrier-based aircraft had already engaged a number of kamikaze pilots trying to get to the task force.

As the sun neared the horizon, Wiggins called his superiors on his battle phone to ask if the Zenith lookout could be secured, as it normally was as sundown approached. The goggles he wore were "ill-fitting," producing a "terrific headache." He was given an emphatic "No! Remain at your post."



WWII USS WISCONSIN

Photographed by Lt. Barrett Gallagher, USNR.
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Within a few moments, the fleet came under attack.

The enemy came in low, just above the water, and Wiggins observed a carrier off the port bow take a direct hit from a suicide plane. A large plume of thick, black smoke and orange flame shot upward. Wiggins observed another enemy plane heading for another carrier just up ahead. A U.S. plane was right behind, its guns blazing. The Kamikaze erupted in flames and narrowly missed the carrier, splashing into the ocean about a quarter mile away.

The gunfire and flak from all the ships were heavy and intense, Wiggins said.

"Under those chaotic conditions, with attacking enemy planes flying so low over the water, some of our ships would inadvertently fire into others in the formation while trying to down a Kamikaze in between," he said.

It was a terrifying experience for a teenager, he said.

"I find it impossible to describe the feeling of fright, desperation, and terror that flooded over me as I lay there," he said. "All my survival instincts screamed for me to jump up and run for cover, but I dared not leave my post."

Wiggins rolled to his side just in time to see a Kamikaze, in flames, just skimming the water off the port side, about 2,000 yards away. It was heading directly for the *USS Wisconsin*. The port guns blazed, but the "flaming devil" closed fast. He appeared to be heading directly for the bridge of the ship. Wiggins was petrified.

"I truly felt, 'This is it. I die here and now,'" he said.

The guns kept firing, and Wiggins could see the Japanese pilot was struggling to keep his craft airborne until it reached its target. In the final seconds, the flaming plane hit the water with a terrific splash, about 100 feet or so short of the port side of the *Wisconsin*.

And then, just as fast as it had begun, the attack was over. The *Wisconsin* had survived another onslaught of the Kamikaze, but others were not so fortunate.

"Some of the carriers had received heavy damage," Wiggins said. "They had also lost several fighters."

In a few weeks, the war came to an end with the dropping of the atom bomb. The ships of the 3rd Fleet sailed triumphantly into Tokyo Bay to accept the Japanese surrender.

Battle of Okinawa Still a Vivid Memory for Marine

Rick Burnham
Editor in Chief, Elder Update

Norris Buchter enlisted in the Marine Corps on July 27, 1943, and he left for basic training at Parris Island, S.C., less than a month later. He would be gone from home for the better part of three years.

For slightly more than three months in the middle, he fought in the Battle of Okinawa. And it is those 101 days that he remembers the most out of World War II.

“It is like etching in my mind,” said Buchter, of Holiday, Fla. “It is a hard thing to ever forget.”

Buchter was a field lineman for the Sixth Marine Division, a critically important job in maintaining the flow of communication to and from the front lines.

“We ran wire to the different companies in the different battle areas – when we could get through,” he said. “When we couldn’t get through, they had to use radios, which were not very dependable. So we

ran to the destination with a magneto crank phone. We would attach wires to it and bring it back to the switchboard.”

If the battle was not too fierce, Buchter and the other linemen were able to get back. Otherwise, they stayed with the company until they could get back. Unfortunately, the battles on Okinawa – a long and slender island just off the southern tip of Japan – were among the fiercest of the entire war.

Three days after arriving on the island, the Sixth walked into a trap – an area surrounded on three sides by mountains. Japanese forces had selected it because of its strategic advantage, and they remained silent and still atop those mountains until the Americans were in range. And then they opened fire.

“That lasted for five or six days, and at one time, we were not making much progress,” he said. “They eventually got some of us out of there, and we went back and into a town. Outside of that town was a small pathway – about wide enough for a

horse and wagon – and we went up that pathway. It was so dark we could not see our way. Each man had his hand on the shoulders of the man in front of him.

“We dug in at the top of the hill, and the next morning we moved in on the flanks of the Japanese forces.”

When the battle was over there, the Sixth moved on to another significant test – the Battle of Sugarloaf Hill. And once they had completed that, they pushed on to the point where the island had fallen to the Allies.

For their efforts, the members of the Sixth Marine Division received personalized certificates of appreciation from President Harry Truman.

“Not many people received those,” Buchter said.

The Sixth Marine Division was soon disbanded, becoming the only unit to be formed and disbanded overseas – never serving a single day in the United States.



For slightly more than three months, Norris Butcher fought in the Battle of Okinawa. And it is those 101 days that he remembers the most out of World War II. “It is like etching in my mind,” said Buchter, of Holiday, Fla. “It is a hard thing to ever forget.”

Okinawa Marine Cave Demolition

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Vet Trio Recalls Events of World War II

Rick Burnham
Editor in Chief, Elder Update

Ninety-year-old Fred Mickler finds a familiar seat inside the “Loping Gopher Deli,” hidden away on the grounds of Advent Christian Village in Dowling Park, a retirement community nestled along the banks of the Suwannee River. He is soon joined by Ed Siergiej, 89, and later by George Buie – the elder statesman of the table at 93.

It is July 4th, and much of the banter and décor in the small cafe reflects it.

On this day, however, the three men have gathered to discuss a time when celebrations of the nation’s independence took a backseat to hostilities that threatened the freedom of all mankind. For Mickler, Siergiej, and Buie, the memories of those days – of World War II – are still vivid and clear 70 years later.

They are memories as distinct as the men who tell them.

One was a U.S. Army Airborne private, battling German forces, along with frigid conditions, during perhaps the most famous battle of the entire war. One was a U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer who survived a series of seven kamikaze attacks over six hours aboard the *USS Saratoga*. The third, a U.S. Army Air Corps lieutenant, saw his unit overwhelmed by a series of crashes while attempting to perfect the relatively new art of aerial bombing.

Siergiej was only 18 in September 1943 when the nation took him from the halls of Western Connecticut State University to join the fight. Fifteen months later – with the Allies slowly closing in on victory – Adolph Hitler staged a surprise attack, a last, desperate gasp of sorts, targeting a 75-mile line of American forces in France. Realizing the gravity of the situation, U.S. Army General Dwight Eisenhower called for reinforcements from different units already on the continent, including Siergiej’s 17th Airborne Division, which was close by in England.

The stage was set for the Battle of the Bulge.

Ed Siergiej, 19 at the time, found himself in a frozen foxhole on Christmas Day 1944, alongside the company mail clerk, during the infamous struggle. His unit took numerous casualties but turned back the German offensive in a manner that prompted words



(L-R) George Buie, Ed Siergiej, and Fred Mickler all live at the Advent Christian Village in Dowling Park.

of praise from then British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

"This is undoubtedly the greatest American battle of the war and will, I believe, be regarded as an ever-famous American victory."

But it was a costly victory. Thousands were either killed in action or wounded, Siergiej said.

"A lot of frozen feet." The frostbite Siergiej suffered at the Battle of the Bulge later earned him a Purple Heart, one of numerous decorations he received during World War II.

Months later, Siergiej again found himself on the cusp of history, participating in “Operation Varsity,” what was to become the largest airborne operation in history to be completed on a single day and in one location. English gliders would take them behind enemy lines, where they would battle German forces for control of land considered strategically important because of its proximity to the Rhine River.

In preparation, Siergiej said, the troops participated in a training exercise – one which included his own unit. Siergiej was pulled from the exercise at the last minute, however, for an administrative assignment.

“They were looking for someone who could type,” he said.

The glider that carried his unit would crash in that exercise, killing the whole platoon.

Operation Varsity eventually took place, and Siergiej was one of thousands of Allied troops suddenly on the ground in Germany. One of his first tasks there was to conduct a perilous resupply mission.

“The big problem with airborne is when they land, they have to reorganize, because they do not always land together or in the right places,” he said. “I was asked to drive a jeep across a mined field to resupply a unit with hand grenades. I drove the jeep, by myself,

across a whole open field, and fortunately was able to locate my company. I got it through safely.”

The perils were similar for Buie, a meteorologist from Clarksdale, Miss., stationed aboard the *USS Saratoga*.

“That was the first ship to fire a 21-inch gun in WWII,” he said. “I was safer aboard that thing than they were back home.”

On Feb. 21, 1944, those guns were put to the test. From 5 p.m. until 11 that night, seven Japanese kamikaze pilots made the *Saratoga* their final destination, and 123 U.S. crewmembers lost their lives.

Buie might have been one of those if not for a simple character flaw: admittedly, he was a bit cocky. It all began with the signal of “general quarters,” meaning an attack is imminent.

“You were supposed to run, and if I would have I would have been killed,” he said. “But I was too cocky to run, so I walked. So when the first plane hit, I was able to jump behind a tractor on the flight deck. Had I run, I would have been catching on fire like the rest of them. It just wasn’t my time.”

That experience has never left Buie, and likely never will. The heat from the fires melted many of the U.S. aircraft on the flight deck, he said. And the overwhelming smell from the charred remains of his fellow sailors seemed to be everywhere.

“It took me years to get over that,” he said. “One time I came home and my wife had made cookies, and it smelled like that. I went crazy. I had to throw them all away. That does not go away easy. It took quite a few years to get over.”

Buie has kept a very tangible memoir from that fateful day at sea: a picture of him and his crewmates holding up a Japanese flag, snatched from the burning debris aboard the *USS Saratoga*.

He would eventually serve 29 years in the U.S. Navy – the last seven as a commissioned officer.

Not every war story is a tale of combat. In fact, Mickler's experiences in the war pale to those of Siergiej and Buie in such terms. It is equally compelling, though, for a different reason. It is a love story, set against the backdrop of World War II.

Mickler, of Madison, was 19 and a freshman at Vanderbilt University before heading off to fight for his country as a bombardier of a B-24 Liberator. Shortly before his training began, however, he returned to North Florida, and a friend introduced him to young Beverly Patterson of Monticello. The couple went out only once or twice before he departed for the war, but it was more than enough. Fred was smitten with the girl he had just met. Head over heels.

World War II took Mickler to many faraway places – stateside and overseas. When he was not flying – and oftentimes when he was – his mind was on the young lady back home. An angel, really. His heart was on fire.

Fred wrote Beverly a letter a day for the duration of his World War II experience, oftentimes detailing the rigors of training brand-new aircrews on warfare waged from the skies. Amid Fred's persistent wooing of Beverly were frequent references to the war effort – including an account of the hazards of flying, written Jan. 13, 1945, from Mountain Home Air Base, Idaho:

“Two more bombardiers who went through advanced bombardier school with me have been in accidents. One was in a crackup in Tucson, but wasn't injured badly. Two members of his crew were killed, however. The other had to bail out of a ship in distress along with the rest of his crew. His parachute harness wasn't tight enough and the jolt he received broke three of his ribs.”

And then, less than a month later, he offers a more deadly account:

“Another plane from this field crashed about two weeks ago into a mountain and killed all nine men who were aboard it.”

Never really knowing what letter might be his last, Fred kept on writing. In March, two months before her graduation from high school, he offered a simple request:

“Please fall in love with me, kid. You may as well start now.”

Bev responded that yes, she had fallen for the young man from Madison. But her zeal for writing did not quite match that of Fred's.



Retired Navy Captain Robert Roberts poses for a photo with retired Air Force Brigadier General, Wilma Vaught.

Centenarian Speaks of WWII Challenges

Rick Burnham
Editor in Chief, Elder Update

Ask Navy Capt. (Ret.) Robert Roberts the key to longevity and happiness, and you might get two different answers. The public side of the man was on full display April 17, during a party to celebrate his 100th birthday. Asked the secret to his success, he answered without hesitation and received laughter and applause from the dozens of well-wishers standing by.

“Love all the girls.”

In mid-September, however, at a ceremony to honor veterans in the Orlando area, his answer was a bit more serious.

“Walking – I walk quite a bit,” he said. “My doctors insist on it. It helps my blood pressure stay normal.”

Keeping that blood pressure in check during the frantic days of World War II must have been challenging, considering Roberts' participation as a Naval aviator in nearly every major battle in the Pacific – including Okinawa, Iwo Jima, Saipan, and the South China Sea – where he was shot down.

“I have been shot down, bombed, and strafed,” he said.

Roberts remembers well the early morning hours of that first day – the moment he found out the nation was at war.

“I had stayed up bowling with a friend the night before, until about 2 a.m.,” he said. “They woke me up two hours later, at 4 a.m., and said ‘We are at war.’ I didn't get anything to eat for about three days, and no sleep!”

To make matters worse, he said, his Navy unit was faced with fighting the Japanese with sub-standard, outdated equipment.

“All of our gear was World War I. It was horrible.”

Roberts persevered though, missing only the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway, two major events that cost him many friends.

“Just about all my classmates from flight school were killed in those two battles,” he said. “I lost a lot of friends in World War II.”

Roberts has seen many friends go in his civilian life as well, most notably his first wife to an aneurism, and his second wife to Parkinson's disease.

“That is all part of life,” he said.

On July 2, Governor Rick Scott presented Capt. Roberts and hundreds of other Orlando-area vets with the Governor's Veterans Service Medal.

Everyone at the Department of Elder Affairs salutes Capt. Roberts for his service to the nation and offers a hearty congratulations on celebrating his 100th birthday!

AIR CORPS VET RECALLS LOVE OF FLYING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

“I was eager to get home and get acquainted with the son my wife had presented me with,” he said. “I got home five days before his first birthday.”

Shewfelt arrived in New York and promptly placed a call home to let his wife Leila know he was on his way. There was no answer, though, so he called again upon arriving in Jacksonville. Once again, there was no answer at the Shewfelt home. A bus ride to Tampa got him close, but, once again, the phone just rang and rang.

He took a taxi from the bus station to his home, and practically ran to the door and knocked. His wife answered, having just washed her hair.

“I was getting worried,” he said. “They had changed the phone number, and I did not know it.”

He pauses momentarily, thinking back to that day – the first day he laid eyes on his son, Lawrence Clark Shewfelt.

“What a homecoming that was!”

Ray Shewfelt would go on to serve his country as a pilot trainer during the Korean War, and as the pilot of much heavier aircraft – including the B-52 – in the Vietnam War. And then there were the tension-packed days of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

“It was not a shooting war, but it was as close as you can get to it.”

Shewfelt, who lives at Oak View Assisted Living at John Knox Village, near Orlando, will be 94 in December. He wears hearing aids and has great difficulty seeing as well.

“They won’t let me fly anymore,” he jokes.

He remembers in vivid detail the days when he could – the days when he slipped the surly bonds of Earth.

“I liked it from the first time I did it,” he said. “I liked to fly.”

The Adventures of the Mighty Chowanoc

By Frank Cavale
Ormond Beach, Fla.

While attending one of the recent D-Day ceremonies and filled with patriotic fervor, my 90-year-old brain inevitably wandered to the theater of operations where I had spent a couple of years aboard my ship, the *USS Chowanoc*, a sea-going tug.

Once, while helping to save the *USS Honolulu* from sinking after it had been torpedoed, we received an urgent order to proceed ASAP to the rescue of a destroyer which had hit a mine and was in imminent danger of sinking. When we arrived, we could see that the situation was perilous: the ship’s stern was down so low that it was even with the surface, and wavelets lapped onto the fantail. It seemed poised to tip over and slide, stern first, to the sea bottom.

When I heard the story of how the ship got to that point, I felt sick. The mine explosion blasted a huge hole in the ship’s port quarter, opening into the engine room. A never-ending torrent of water poured through and overwhelmed the 22 men working there. Those who survived the explosion tried to escape up the ladders leading to the main deck where there were watertight doors. If they could make it through those openings, they’d be saved. But the water was rising faster than they could travel, and it would burst through the open doors, adding more weight and tipping the balance, resulting in loss of the ship.

The captain immediately saw the danger and ordered the watertight doors shut and “dogged down” tightly,

leaving the men trapped inside the engine room with no hope of avoiding a horrendous death by drowning. Sadly, the men were lost but the vessel was saved.

After the *Chowanoc* was tied up alongside the destroyer, we sent our salvage crew, including divers, to the site of the mine blast to ascertain the damage and devise a plan to repair the damage and restore the ship to operational status.

First, the 22 corpses were retrieved for proper burial.

Next, the blast hole had to be closed. Steel strapping plates were welded into place, starting at the bottom of the hole. It was the first time I learned that welding could be done underwater. Successive plates were added, building a wall extending upward to the surface. When a plate broke the surface and presented a few inches of “freeboard” that kept any more water from entering the hull, pumping operations were begun to get the water out of the ship.

Then, repair crews had the monumental task of drying out the engine room and refurbishing the machinery. Following all of that, the destroyer became operational again, in limited fashion.

One light note: the destroyer had two ice cream machines. Whenever they made ice cream for their crew, they sent over a large supply for us. When we finally separated and went on our way, they made us a gift of one of the machines in gratitude for our work.

Army Vet Recalls Germany’s “Buzz Bombs”

Joseph Alesi is age 93, “going for 99,” and a veteran of the Battle of the Bulge. But one of his most vivid memories of World War II happened before that infamous struggle even began.

It was 1944, and the 190 men of Alesi’s company were living in a schoolhouse in the middle of Sprimont, Belgium. It was a picturesque setting, he said, complete with cobblestone streets and a village square. An accordion player stood in that square and played his songs.

At the time, Alesi said, the Germans were sending buzz bombs over Belgium regularly.

“If the buzzing of the bomb went past you, you were safe,” he said. “If it stopped buzzing above you, it was coming down!”

It was a momentary period of rest and relaxation, and Alesi was taking full advantage of it in a tavern across the square from the schoolhouse when a buzz bomb flew overhead. Suddenly, the buzzing stopped, and Alesi stopped what he was doing. The bomb landed a block away and exploded, turning buildings into rubble and sending residents of the small town scrambling.

“I quickly ran out to help with any casualties,” he said.

Though the events of that day happened more than 70 years ago, Alesi, who now lives in Hollywood, Fla., said he still remembers everything about it.

“I can close my eyes and relive it, the entire square with the tavern and the accordion player, and the songs he played.”

Army Spouse Recalls War's Effect on Husband

By *Ida Schwerzel*
Clearwater, Fla.

With Veterans Day approaching, I'm reminded of my husband Harold, who was a veteran of World War II. He served four-and-a-half years in the Army. He spent one-and-a-half years of that term overseas in the combat zone. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge, on Normandy Beach, and in Patton's Run.

He had entered the service as a young, happy-go-lucky, unencumbered person who loved to go sailing.

When he returned home, he was a burdened husband with a son and many responsibilities. He had no job skills – he had been a stock boy when he was drafted.

Harold did not have any visible wounds when he returned home, but he had the horrible images of the war that were trapped in his mind and gave him no peace. He rarely smiled, was very quiet, and had reoccurring nightmares. Many a night I'd be awakened by the rattling of our bed and Harold reliving one of his experiences. He would never tell me what happened. But I'd find him with his back against the headboard, his legs drawn up to his chest, and his arms and hands covering his head.

Another time, he was actually going through the motion, furiously, of digging a foxhole.

Another time he was flat on his face, pushing his body into the mattress and covering his head.

I would have to shake him to awaken him. He was always drenched in perspiration. I would change the sheets, and he would take a shower and put on clean pajamas.

He would not talk about his experiences. I begged him to see an Army psychiatrist, but he refused. He said, "They will put me in the nut house and I'll never come home again, just like my buddy."

He made me promise not to tell his family about his nightmares. He didn't want them to think that he was a weakling.

Sometimes a relative would ask, "What's the matter with Harold? He's not like he used to be." I'd say, "That's because he's been through a lot."

My brother Mario taught him to be a plumber's helper, and, later, he became a master plumber just like Mario.

It didn't happen overnight. All the while we were still coping with his nightmares.

This one time I awoke and saw Harold rocking back and forth on the side of the bed, sobbing. He was wide awake. I put my arms around his shoulders and told him he couldn't go on like this. I pleaded with him to talk to me to unburden himself. He finally did. It was a blessed turning point in our lives.

The words just flowed from his mouth. He remembered his first day in combat when they encountered two enemy soldiers in the underbrush along the path. His buddy told him, "You get the one on the right and I'll shoot the guy on the other side." Harold quickly lowered his rifle, but he couldn't pull the trigger. He froze. His buddy shot both of them. Harold ended up throwing up.

He said all he could think of was "man wasn't intended to be hunted and shot like an animal."

His buddy said, "Harold, this is not maneuvers. This is the real thing. This is the war zone. It's kill or be killed."

He then told me how he and another soldier were marching in enemy wooded territory. This is where they had to be very cautious as there always were suicidal snipers waiting to kill as many as possible

of "the enemy" (our Americans) before they were shot dead.

When he turned to warn his buddy he heard an explosion. The headless body of his buddy was standing for a second and then fell to the ground. They couldn't even retrieve his body.

Always the sight of blood that one never got used to.

He told about the time his company had captured a town and found innocent civilians dead. There were two bloodied bodies: a mother with her body covering her child to make a futile attempt to shield her.

Then there were the grotesque corpses. The stench of death and always the guilty feeling that he was part of the killing and destruction.

These are the horrible memories he'd been living with for over four years. His remembering and being able to talk about his experience finally brought him some peace. From that night on, he finally had fewer and fewer nightmares. I thanked God. My husband was never a weakling. He was a strong survivor. He had the strength to endure and overcome many obstacles in his life.

The build-up of Omaha Beach: reinforcements of men and equipment moving inland

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**VET TRIO RECALLS WWII
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13**

“She wrote me faithfully every two weeks,” he says with a smile. “She had a lot of boys to keep happy.”

Fred’s April 13, 1945, letter to Bev included a plea for more letters from her, and revealed a bit about his training schedule as well. It also marked an important passing for the nation.

“Hello Charm – Could I bribe you into writing more often? I flew last night as scheduled, and dropped my first 10 bombs. Am free until Sunday afternoon when we fly again. Too bad about the President, wasn’t it?”

Fred was referring to the death of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt on April 12, while in Warm Springs, Ga.

Fred was at sea on Aug. 16, 1945, when he began a greeting to Beverly with “Little One – The War has ended!!”

Beverly kept all the letters Fred sent her from the war – more than 700 in all. In the end, it proved therapeutic. Later in life, with six Mickler children in the fold, Beverly began to exhibit signs of Alzheimer’s disease, which was later confirmed by medical officials. The diagnosis was not entirely unexpected – Beverly’s own mother had suffered from the disease decades before. But it was still a stunning blow to a proud family.

Eventually, Fred and Beverly moved to Dowling Park, where she could get much-needed medical assistance. They remained there for several years, and would regularly welcome friends and family – including their children and grandchildren.

Sometimes she’d remember them, sometimes not, but Fred would always be by her side, explaining who was who. He even took time to read some of the letters they passed back and forth so long ago, when the world was at war.

Just like the guy did in the movie “The Notebook,” Fred’s personal favorite.

Beverly passed away Sept. 26, 2008, with friends and family members at her side. The six children of Fred and Beverly Mickler each have copies of the letters.

EDITOR’S NOTE: *We have learned that George Buie has recently passed away. Everyone at the Department of Elder Affairs offers our heartfelt condolences to the Buie family, and to Mr. Buie’s extended family at Advent Christian Village.*

The Experience of the Rifleman

*By Israel R. Schulman
Port St. Lucie, Fla.*

The rifleman fights without promise of either reward or relief. Behind every river there’s another hill, and beyond that hill, another river. After weeks or months in the front line, only a wound can offer him the comfort of safety, shelter, and a bed!

At the age of 21, I entered the Army on Feb. 8, 1943, as a replacement rifleman for the 29th Infantry Division and received five weeks of advanced infantry training in Salina, Kansas. I was then shipped out to the European Theatre of Operation. There, I saw combat in the towns of Kreuzrath, Birgden, and Hatterath, located in Germany.

Moreover, I participated in the successful daring dawn (4 a.m.) revenge raid in the town of Schierwaldenrath, in order to destroy this village, because the enemy wiped out Co. “K.”

Incidentally, on the night of Nov. 15, 1944, I was put on an outpost with nine other riflemen dug in foxholes in diamond formation in front of Co. “C”’s defensive line. During the night, a combat patrol of 10 Germans infiltrated our area. They tossed a grenade into the closest foxhole, killing the two GIs. As soon as I heard the grenade explosion, I opened rifle fire with my foxhole GI. For some unknown reason, the rest of the riflemen disappeared to the rear, leaving us helpless!

My life and the life of my comrade were then on the line, so we kept shooting it out with the Germans and kept reloading. As time passed, which seemed like an eternity, our ammunition ran out and we also went to the rear. Giving the correct password to our own soldiers in the back saved us from being thought as the enemy and being slain.

We later learned that the fire fight had killed one German. Furthermore, we also found out three of the American soldiers who ran to the rear were also killed when they dropped a rifle grenade with the pin removed. All I can say, God spared our lives.

Incidentally, on Nov. 16, 1944, we made a big push with six tanks and us walking alongside of the tanks. A few minutes later I was wounded. I waited until

darkness set in, and then I crawled to the battalion aid station. There I was given medical attention and sent to a hospital.

By the way, I would like to give you an idea what an infantryman’s life was like on the front lines. When I reached my combat outfit I already had my rifle. I was given three bandoleers, several grenades, water to fill my pouch, and a box of K-rations. The only thing I kept from this box was toilet paper and a large bar of hard chocolate, eight inches long by an inch and an eighth. This was my meal daily for four months. When I couldn’t get any more K-rations due to heavy warfare, I would ask the German farmer for some fruit.

Incidentally, I could not wash or shave while I was on the front line. While in combat, you had to watch that you didn’t step on a mine. If you lived day to day you were lucky, because your life wasn’t worth a cent. I prayed every time I hit the ground. There were no atheists over there! All I can say is that war was hell, bloody and dirty.

I was awarded the Purple Heart, Infantry Badge, Bronze Star, EAME Campaign Medal, WWII Victory Medal, Germany Army of Occupation Medal, Good Conduct Medal, and the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross Medal.

The Purpleheart is one of many medals earned by Israel Schulman during his time as a rifleman with the 29th Infantry Division.

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The rifleman fights without promise of either reward or relief. Behind every river there’s another hill, and beyond that hill, another river. After weeks or months in the front line, only a wound can offer him the comfort of safety, shelter, and a bed!

The WWII Disaster No One Knew About

In the dark of the night on April 28, 1944, a convoy of eight “Landing Ship, Tanks” (LSTs) cruised the English coast on a secret wartime mission. The LSTs brimmed with tanks, ammunition, gasoline, and 4,000 soldiers in combat gear. They were headed for a practice landing on the English beach of Slapton Sands. This was to be a dry run for D-Day, the invasion of France.

But it was not to be. German torpedo boats intercepted the convoy and calamity struck in the English Channel.

Petty Officer Joseph Sandor, a ship fitter from North Braddock, Penn., saw one of the LSTs in the convoy unexpectedly explode.

“A huge fireball erupted and the crews were abandoning ship,” he said. “I did not know at the time, but I was eyewitness to one of the worst American military disasters of World War II, and one that was hidden for 40 years.”

The LSTs were cruising “blindly,” Sandor said, because they were given incorrect radio frequencies. An escorting British destroyer apparently did not show up. As a result, the convoy was accompanied only by a smaller British ship. To make matters worse, he said, many of the men who jumped from the burning ships drowned because of improperly worn life jackets.

Sandor, who currently lives in Sunrise, Fla., with his wife Clara, quoted an officer from a rescue ship, speaking to *American Heritage* magazine in 1985. “We arrived at the scene at daybreak, and the sight was appalling. We saw there were hundreds of bodies of American servicemen in full battle gear, floating in the sea.”

Allied leaders feared the attack would tip off the Germans to the plans for the June 6, 1944, invasion, so Operation Tiger became a hushed-up event. In fact, Sandor said, Exercise Tiger remained a secret long after the war’s end.

“It wasn’t until 1984 that the public – myself included – became aware of the full dimension of the disaster,” he said. “As the Pentagon declassified documents, the news media began to reveal the 40-year-old secret. I was astonished to see the television show ‘20/20’ detail the tragedy.”

Sandor came through the attack unscathed. A German torpedo narrowly missed LST 496 – his ship. Six weeks later, though, he would not be so lucky. Two mines blasted the ship, and LST 496 – fully loaded with troops and equipment – was sunk. The ship’s complement of officers were either killed or injured. Seventy-five percent of the enlisted on board were casualties, not counting the U.S. Army soldiers on board.

“All I felt was going into the air from the blast and then tasting salt water,” Sandor said. “When I came to, I was picked up by a destroyer escort. Pain still plagues me today, at the age of 91.”

A monument to those who died during Exercise Tiger now stands on Slapton Sands, and the surviving personnel from LST 496 gather for yearly reunions.

“Seventy years later, the sights and sounds remain vivid to me,” Sandor said. “The roar of the engines of the torpedo boats, the gunfire from the LSTs zigzagging to avoid torpedoes – with orders not to pick up anyone – and the survivors yelling. The men who lost their lives were so very young. I think of them often.”

Lend Lease Program Highlighted Cooperation Between Soviets, U.S.

Dolores Samons Harvell’s father, Joseph Albert Samons, didn’t talk much to her about his ordeal in Iran during World War II, only sharing his experiences with the “intense heat of the summer and the snakes.”

Joseph Samons was assigned to the U.S. Army’s 660th Port Company, assigned to the Persian Gulf Command, at the Port of Bandar Shahpur. The PGC was established as part of the American U.S.S.R. Lend Lease Program, established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin – at the historic Teheran Conference of 1943.

Under the Lend Lease Program, Russia was one of a number of countries that would receive American ammunition and equipment to fight the Germans. Information found online by Harvell indicates Stalin’s reluctance to speak to the people of Russia about Lend Lease, although he did mention it at the 1945 Yalta Conference, commending Roosevelt and calling the program “remarkable” and a vital achievement “in the formation of the anti-Hitler alliance.” Lend Lease material is thought to have accounted for almost 10 percent of all that used by Russia in World War II.

Harvell said her father and other workers at the Port of Bandar Shahpur slept during the day and unloaded ships at night, when it was cooler (temperatures in the daytime were usually about 110 degrees in the shade). She added that many of the workers – including her father – were deathly afraid of falling into the water, where highly-venomous sea snakes moved about.

Due in large part to the aggressive efforts of his daughter, Samons was posthumously awarded 50th and 60th commemorative medals by the Russian Government. The medals represented the 50th and 60th anniversaries of the end of WWII, known as the “Great Patriotic War” in Russia. Harvell retains letters signed by both Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin.

“So, those we befriended in the harsh winter of 1944 while being decimated by the Germans are now our enemies,” she said. “Just goes to prove war doesn’t settle anything. There is always going to be a power struggle somewhere. When will we ever learn?”



TANK MEMORIAL SLAPTON SANDS FOR SX8242

In memory of a training exercise in WWII that went disastrously wrong with much loss of life. The tank was recovered from the sea.

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THE LETTER

January 20, 1945
Somewhere in the Philippines

Dear Miriam,

Of course I haven't written to you in quite a while now, so I'll try to make up for it with this letter. I just pulled out my typewriter to let you know what's cookin'. So, finish your supper, leave the dishes, sit down on the couch, and relax; I've been on an important invasion of one part of the Philippines, and I'll try to give you a blow-by-blow description of it.

The boat ride from my last station to the beach-head landing was fairly exciting. Being part of a convoy that stretched for miles, farther than the eye can see, made me wonder how the home front produces such miracles. It was really breathtaking. The naval and air protection provided by Uncle Sam gave me a feeling of security. Gosh, I was sure glad to leave the jungles of New Guinea. What a boring existence that was.

While onboard ship, heading for the Philippines, I witnessed the most beautiful and picturesque sunsets I have ever seen. It gave me such a peaceful feeling, while my ship skimmed along the calm, blue waters of the Pacific. One would never think of war under these surroundings, but I knew my destination was of a grim nature. One day, I saw some of our planes chase other Japanese planes, and I mean chased! Every time the Japanese would attempt an air raid, the terrific barrage of Ack-Ack fire would teach them to know better. One night I was awakened by a tremendous flash of flame which shot up into the sky in the distance. A naval battle was in progress! It was pitch black and the ships couldn't be seen. Our destroyers were throwing up flares and star-shells, lighting up their next target. They immediately started shelling, and all of a sudden, two explosions. The horizon was painted with a large ball of fire. It reminded me a little of the fireworks at Coney Island, only much more impressive.

On the eve before the designated S-Day (same as D-Day), the Navy bombed the shores continually all night. It was music to my ears and I didn't mind a bit. I knew that this was the "softening-up" process. My ship was too far out for me to see the actual shelling, but the sky at the horizon would glow as salvo after salvo found its mark. The tremendous fires filled the heavens with smoke. A pleasant sight? You bet, for us. I just clung to the rails and listened to the blasting.



The way I see it, there are three phases all soldiers go through during an important operation. As I said previously, you'll have to use some imagination in addition to what I am about to tell you. The first phase is from the time the soldier leaves his boat, until he hits the beach. He's scared as hell at the "unexpected." Any sane person would be. A few fleeting thoughts now run through his mind; a little jesting to keep up morale, and a good look at a snapshot or two in his pocket. He has to get on the beach and stay there. There is no turning back.

The second phase of the operation is from the time the soldier hits the beach until the fireworks subside. Naturally, he is still stunned, but feels that the worst is over. After a while, he is convinced that his foxhole is his best protection from artillery fire and bombings. So far, I'm still holding my own, and feel pretty good.

The last phase is the period after the fireworks subside. The quietness in the air leaves an empty feeling in contrast to what has gone on before. In observing the shrapnel all around, I wondered how the miracles of "Lady Luck" work. I found myself sleepy and very tired from very little sleep; clothes and body filthy after not having removed them for days, a stubby beard to annoy me, and etc. This is part of what the soldier has to put up with. Now, however, everything is quiet, the food isn't so bad, I bathe every day, and I feel like a new man.

Right now, I am situated near a small town. The Filipino people were overjoyed at seeing us and our equipment come pouring in. These people and their homes are a perfect example to show the destruction of war and its effects on the population. Very few houses were left standing. The Filipinos were half-starved, their clothing torn and tattered, and practically everything was taken from them by the Japanese. These people are a proud and intelligent race. Many of them speak English very well and they understand, and are willing to learn more

about, the American ways of life. They are, by far, the most polite and courteous folks I've ever met. To all of us, they salute and say either "Good morning sir," or "May I do this please, sir?"

I don't know when you will receive this letter or when I'll be able to write again, but I want you to know that I am in very good health and frame of mind. I haven't received any mail for a long time, so I have something to look forward to. I'll close now with my best regards to your folks. I'm hoping you keep on writing to me. It's good to hear from you.

Butch

Editor's Note: We understand that Nov. 2 marks Miriam and Butch Friedman's wedding anniversary. From everyone at the Department of Elder Affairs -- Happy Anniversary!

SUDOKU SOLUTION

1	9	2	5	6	3	4	7	8
7	4	6	1	8	2	5	3	9
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4	2	5	6	1	9	3	8	7
6	1	8	7	5	4	9	2	3
9	3	4	8	2	6	7	5	1
2	5	7	3	9	1	8	4	6

Honoring Veterans for 25 Years

Mike Prendergast
Executive Director
Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

Florida has earned a reputation as the most veteran-friendly state in the nation. As our agency's silver anniversary comes to a close, I've been reflecting on the benefits, services, and support we've historically provided Florida's veteran community to earn that accolade.

During World War II, 16 million Americans served in uniform, including 248,000 servicemembers from Florida. Following the war, returning veterans and their families came to the Sunshine State in greater numbers, attracted by low tax rates and the climate. They used the GI Bill to advance their education, raise families, and help propel the middle class to new prosperity. Our Korean and Vietnam veterans soon followed.

The State of Florida recognized the need to provide basic support to these returning veterans and began providing outreach services in 1944. Years later, Florida voters overwhelmingly approved a Constitutional Amendment in November 1988 to expand the state's support of veterans and their families by creating the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Today, FDVA is the premier point of entry for Florida veterans to access earned services, benefits, and support. A network of award-winning state veterans' homes has been added since our establishment. Now celebrating our 25th anniversary, FDVA serves the nation's third largest veterans population with more than 1.5 million veterans, including more than 730,000 who are age 65 and older.

Our impact is profound. We play a significant role in the direct infusion of more than \$15.7 billion annually for veterans into Florida's economy through federal compensation, education, and pension benefits; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' medical services; and military retired pay.

As an Army combat veteran who served on active duty for more than 31 years and rose through the ranks from private to colonel – the son of a World War II Veteran and the grandson of a World War I Veteran – and now the father and father-in-law of Army veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom, I'm proud to lead this fine organization.

I'm fond of quoting General George Washington, who knew the importance of taking care of our nation's veterans of all ages.

He said, "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they

perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."

The men and women of FDVA uphold his belief that taking care of our nation's veterans is the noblest of callings.

On this Veterans Day, let us never forget our veterans and their families, through whose selfless service and sacrifice we enjoy freedom and liberty. We honor your service.

Benefits and Services

Property Tax Exemptions

- Veterans who are rated as having a service-connected, permanent, and total disability are exempt from property tax on their homestead property. The benefit applies to surviving spouses as well, as long as the veteran had the benefit when they passed.
- Veterans who have service-connected disability ratings of 10 percent or greater are entitled to an additional \$5,000 property tax exemption. The benefit applies to surviving spouses as well, as long as the veteran had the benefit when they passed.
- Any partially disabled veteran who is age 65 or older, any portion of whose disability was combat-related, and who was honorably discharged, may be eligible for a discount from the amount of ad valorem tax on the homestead commensurate with the percentage of the veteran's permanent service-connected disability.

State Veterans' Homes

- The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs operates and maintains a network of 120-bed State Veterans' Nursing Homes in Daytona Beach, Land O' Lakes, Pembroke Pines, Panama City, Port Charlotte, and St. Augustine. All but one facility care for veterans with dementia/Alzheimer's disease.
- A seventh state veterans' home is now in the planning stages.
- The Department also operates and maintains an assisted living facility for veterans in Lake City.

Benefits and Fee Waivers

- Florida veterans can add a "V" for Veteran to their driver license or state identification with proof of their veteran status.
- Florida State Parks grant free lifetime passes to veterans with service-connected disabilities and Gold Star Parents. Honorably discharged veter-



ans can receive a 25-percent discount on annual passes.

- Veterans who have a 100 percent service-connected disability rating are exempt from driver license fees and may receive a free Disabled Veteran license plate.
- Veterans who have a 100 percent service-connected disability rating are exempt from county and municipal building license and permit fees when making improvements to their residences to make the building safe or handicapped accessible.
- Veterans who have a 100 percent service-connected disability rating can receive free hunting and fishing licenses. Active Duty and retired servicemembers can purchase a Military Gold Sportsman's License for \$20.

If you would like to find out more, a consolidated list of earned benefits available to Florida's veterans, their families, and survivors is available on the department's website at www.FloridaVets.org.

You may also visit FDVA on Facebook at www.facebook.com/floridaveterans.

Our free mobile application, offered in the Android and Apple markets, integrates with the new website and offers veterans reminders and updates about services through push notifications. For additional information, you may also call (727) 319-7440.



Orange County Office on Aging Develops Elder Ambassador Program

*Janine Rogers
Volunteer & Community Services
Florida Department of Elder Affairs*

The Orange County Office on Aging recently developed an Elder Ambassador program to allow residents the opportunity to use their skills and talents to become ambassadors for their community by raising awareness about local resources for elders. This volunteer-led program was created by the Orange County Commission on Aging and the Orange County Neighborhood Preservation & Revitalization Division.

Residents who are interested complete an application, undergo a background screening, and are interviewed. Once accepted into the program, ambassadors will be required to complete a 12-hour training program that will help them gain the knowledge necessary to lead educational seminars. Ambassadors are also required to volunteer a minimum of 25 hours annually for a period of two years.

If your community is interested in establishing an elder ambassador program, contact Mimi Reggentin at 407-836-6563 or via email at mimi.reggentin@ocfl.net.



*Janine Rogers
Volunteer and Community Services
Florida Department of Elder Affairs*

In June 2003, the Florida Legislature designated the first week of December as Intergenerational Week in Florida. Intergenerational programs and activities bring together different generations to share experiences and to develop an appreciation of the contributions each group brings to our communities. During the week of December 1-5, 2014, we celebrate people of diverse backgrounds, ages, and experiences.

The Department's Office of Volunteer and Community Services supports intergenerational programs and activities around the state of Florida through the Communities for a Lifetime Initiative. In 2014, two communities were recognized for their efforts through Generations United and the MetLife Foundation. Each year, they honor communities around the nation for their extraordinary intergenerational programming.

An intergenerational community is defined as having one of the following characteristics:

- Provides adequately for the safety, health, education, and basic necessities of life for people of all ages;
- Promotes programs, policies, and practices that increase cooperation, interaction, and exchange between people of different generations; and
- Enables all ages to share their talents and resources and support each other in relationships that benefit both individuals and their community.

The City of Parkland (Broward County) was honored with the 2014 Best Intergenerational Community Award. Through its Parks and Recreation Department, the City of Parkland uses surveys to identify the needs of its local retirement community to

develop programs that meet the needs of its older population, and it recruits local elementary, middle, and high school students as volunteers to participate. The city also has an intergenerational committee and a proclamation that states that the city will provide these programs. For additional information about the City of Parkland's intergenerational programming, contact the city's parks and recreation department at 954-757-4105.

Although the City of Miami Gardens (Miami Dade County) did not receive the 2014 Best Intergenerational Award, they were chosen as a national finalist. The city's Elderly Affairs Committee is responsible for the city's intergenerational activities. In partnership with local schools, businesses, and charitable and faith-based organizations, the city hosts an intergenerational fashion show and an intergenerational health empowerment series to promote healthy food choices and activities.

The city was also a recipient of the Department's Communities for a Lifetime 2013-2014 Support Project for Elders funding. In partnership with Barry University nursing students, the Jessie Trice Community Health Center, and local schools, the city developed an exotic fruit and vegetable garden with an intergenerational focus. Individuals ages 8 to 75 were involved in this effort that also included classes on health and nutrition. For additional information on the City of Miami Gardens' intergenerational programming, contact Hilary Marshall, Assistant to the City Council, at 305-914-9010, ext. 2793.

The 2015 Best Intergenerational Community application process is now open. You can download an application at <http://gu.org/OURWORK/Programs/BestIntergenerationalCommunities.aspx>. Generations United is an organization that supports collaborative efforts, programs, activities, and policy to support youth and older adults. Staff can be reached at 25 E Street NW, 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001 or call 202-289-3979.

WE'RE STAYING PUT. THANK YOU.

*Cory Livingston
Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist
Florida Department of Elder Affairs*

It was one of those happy family dinners with everyone gathered around the table, laughing and sharing stories. Until son-in-law Bryan cleared his throat and said, "Mother Shelton, your beautiful daughter, Sarah, and I have been thinking. Your living alone out here in the middle of nowhere has us concerned for your safety. Why not sell this little farm and move to Jacksonville so that you are nearer to us? There are some lovely condos on the beach."

Silence.

Mother Shelton took the linen napkin from her lap and laid it firmly on the table next to her plate. This had always been a signal that she was about to speak and that all other mouths should remain closed.

A hush fell over the dining room.

"What in the wide, wide, world of sports are you two thinking? I've lived in this house for 30 years, raised my children here, and won this house and the land in a rather tedious divorce. And, I'm not alone. This house is Grand Central Station most every day of the month."

She took a breath and continued, "The bug lady comes once a month to check for roaches and other critters. We have coffee and chat. The UPS man always toots the horn when he drives up in

the yard. He's a nice young man. If I don't meet him at the back door, he calls me on the phone to make sure everything is okay. Mr. Pete mows the pasture once a month. Donna and June stop by to share the latest tales of our small town. If I don't show up at the grocery store by 9 a.m. every Saturday, the manager calls me to see if I'm okay. Talk about your Neighborhood Watch, I have it and I'm perfectly safe."

She stopped. Briefly.

"Besides, in this small town I know the best place to get a steak. Jane has done my hair for the last two decades. Heck no, I'm not moving."

She replaced her napkin and took a sip of water.

Like Mother Shelton, the majority of older adults want to "age in place." According to a 2010 AARP survey, nearly 90 percent of those over age 65 want to stay in their residence for as long as possible, and 80 percent believe their current residence is where they will always live.

Nicholas Farber and Douglas Shinkle, in a December 2011 article from the Public Policy Institute said, "During a lifetime, people develop connections to place and form relationships with neighbors, doctors, hairdressers, and shopkeepers. They become intimately familiar with the route to downtown, the rhythm of summer concerts at the band shell park, the best places to get a coveted burger, and personalized greetings. These associations, of value

to both the individual and the community, cannot be quickly or easily replicated in a new environment. In essence, the connections can play a pivotal role in successful aging."

Aging in place may involve moving furniture to allow for a clear pathway through all rooms, but it doesn't have to mean moving to a different location.

When I last talked to Mother Shelton, she'd allowed her son-in-law to install

motion-activated lights on the outside four corners of her house. He also strategically placed night lights throughout the interior of her home. He put timers on several lamps in her home so that they would turn on at different times – to help Mother Shelton see her way to the kitchen in the early hours of the morning without having to fumble for light switches. His first focus was on improved lighting. Next week, he'll begin helping his mother-in-law install safety features in her bathroom.

"During a lifetime, people develop connections to place, and form relationships with neighbors, doctors, hairdressers, and shopkeepers. These associations, of value to both the individual and the community, cannot be quickly or easily replicated in a new environment."

ELDER UPDATE

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Let There Be Lights!

Three wise choices for holiday lights in Florida's state parks

Cherie Graves
Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Holiday lights have long been a tradition, candles being our illuminant of choice for our first Christmas trees. Fortunately, the invention of electric lights made holiday decorating safer and easier. Appropriately, Thomas Edison was the first to create a strand of lights – which he strung outside his lab during the holiday season of 1880. Two seasons later, Edison's good friend Edward H. Johnson hand-wired a string of red, white, and blue light bulbs to create the first strand of electric lights especially for a Christmas tree.

The single strand of lights on Edison's lab created a wondrous site back in 1880 when riders of the rail passed the novelty, but we Americans know how to out-do ourselves.

Nearly 30 years later, a teenager named Albert Sadacca, whose family owned a novelty lighting company, convinced his folks that if they made and sold colored lights, the public would buy them. The boy was right.

We've progressed from one light strand in the whole country to strings of lights in nearly every house on the block. And we don't keep the light indoors, nor do we limit the lighting to firs – we string lights around palms and pine, among hedges and shrubs, through porch railings, and up on the rooftop.

Florida winter traditions may not include sleigh rides, but the traditions most assuredly include lights – in our homes, on our lawns, along our streets, and at our malls. And if you venture beyond your neighborhood to catch the holiday spirit in the form of winter lights, several state parks provide light shows that would make Thomas Edison proud.

Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park Camellia Christmas

Stroll along the candlelit walk and enjoy the holiday music provided by local musicians. Enjoy some hot cider and cookies. This event is the perfect introduction to the season and a fun way to share the holiday spirit with friends and family. The historic Maclay House will be open and filled with lovely fresh arrangements created by local garden club flower show judges. You can also bid on festive holiday wreaths and decorations, donated by local merchants to benefit the state park.

When: Dec. 5, 6-9 pm
Where: Tallahassee
Fees: Free, donations accepted
Contact info: 850-487-4115



Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park

The park will be decked out for the holidays with thousands of twinkling lights and Christmas decorations during this multi-evening event sponsored by the Friends of Homosassa Springs Wildlife Park. Stop by for an evening of entertainment and refreshments. While at the park, enjoy Sebastian's Winter Wonderland, a spectacular synchronized light and sound show.

When: Dec. 19 – 24 and Dec. 26
Where: Homosassa Springs, 75 miles north of Tampa on US 19 and 90 miles northwest of Orlando
Fees: Suggested donation -- \$5 for adults, \$3 for children
Contact: 352-628-5343

Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park Festival of Lights

Take in the lights at the annual Festival of Lights, where more than five million lights bedazzle oaks, an antebellum museum, a gingerbread village, a candy cane forest, and Santa's runway. The park's centerpiece, the 200-foot-tall Carillon Tower, illuminates the night and brings in holiday cheer. Named a Top 20 Event in the southeastern United States, this display of lights is worth the drive.

If you go, stop by Craft Square for hot cocoa and popcorn. Stay awhile for craft demonstrations, a bonfire, marshmallow roasts, and holiday songs.

When: Dec 5 – 31 (excluding Dec. 25) 8 a.m. – 9 p.m.
Where: White Springs
Fees: \$3 per person
Contact: 386-397-4331

To find other events in your state parks, visit FloridaStateParks.org, or call 850-245-2157.

Sources:

Library of Congress Science Reference Services, www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/mysteries/christmaslights.html, and Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks, www.FloridaStateParks.org.

SOMEDAY IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

Michael W. Grochowski
Regional Commissioner
U.S. Social Security Administration

For many people, Someday is an elusive day on the far-off horizon—always close enough to see, but too distant to touch.

Perhaps Someday you plan to go skydiving. Or enter a hot-dog-eating contest. Maybe Someday you plan to ride a mechanical bull. Or travel around the world. Or visit all of America's national parks.

Someday, you may want to retire. If you are mid-career, Someday you may need to start planning for retirement. Even if you are just now starting your career, Someday you're going to want to see what your future benefits will be and check your earnings for accuracy.

Well, get ready, because Someday has arrived. Open a "My Social Security" account at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount, and you'll see what we mean.

Millions of people have already opened an account, taking advantage of the benefits of my Social Security. Why are so many Americans opening accounts? Because my Social Security is fast, easy, and secure. It's a convenient way to check your earnings record, get up-to-date, personalized estimates of retirement, disability, and survivors benefits, and access your Social Security Statement. With a my Social Security account, you can plan for your retirement and get help figuring out how to save for your future. If you already receive benefits, you can manage them online by starting or stopping your direct deposit, changing your address, and getting an instant proof-of-benefits letter.

Someone opens a new account just about every six seconds. Considering there is only one skydive every 16 seconds, opening a my Social Security is even more popular!

That elusive Someday that you thought might never come is here now. You'll find it at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

Access to information regarding elder services and activities is available through the Elder Helpline Information and Referral service within each Florida county. For the hearing or speech impaired, all Elder Helplines can be accessed through the Florida Relay by simply dialing 711 from anywhere in the state.

Information & Referral
1-800-96-ELDER
(1-800-963-5337)

Florida Area Agencies on Aging (Counties Served)

Northwest Florida Area Agency on Aging, Inc.
5090 Commerce Park Circle
Pensacola, FL 32505
850-494-7101 • 1-866-531-8011
(Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Walton Counties)

Area Agency on Aging for North Florida, Inc.
2414 Mahan Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32308
850-488-0055 • 1-866-467-4624
(Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, Wakulla and Washington Counties)

Elder Options
100 SW 75th Street, #301
Gainesville, FL 32607
352-378-6649 • 1-800-262-2243
(Alachua, Bradford, Citrus, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hernando, Lafayette, Lake, Levy, Marion, Putnam, Sumter, Suwannee and Union Counties)

ElderSource
10688 Old St. Augustine Road
Jacksonville, FL 32257
904-391-6600 • 1-888-242-4464
(Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, St. Johns and Volusia Counties)

Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas, Inc.
9549 Koger Boulevard North
Gadsden Building, Suite 100
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
727-570-9696
(Pasco and Pinellas Counties)

West Central Florida Area Agency on Aging, Inc.
8928 Brittany Way
Tampa, FL 33619
813-740-3888 • 1-800-336-2226
(Hardee, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee and Polk Counties)

Senior Resource Alliance
988 Woodcock Road, Suite 200
Orlando, FL 32803
407-514-1800
(Brevard, Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties)

Area Agency on Aging for Southwest Florida
15201 N. Cleveland Avenue,
Suite 1100
North Fort Myers, FL 33903
239-652-6900 • 1-866-413-5337
(Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hendry, Lee and Sarasota Counties)

Your Aging Resource Center
4400 North Congress Avenue
West Palm Beach, FL 33407
561-684-5885 • 1-866-684-5885
(Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and St. Lucie Counties)

Aging and Disability Resource Center of Broward County, Inc.
5300 Hiatus Road
Sunrise, FL 33351
954-745-9567
(Broward County)

Alliance for Aging, Inc.
760 NW 107th Avenue, Suite 214
Miami, FL 33172
305-670-6500
(Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties)

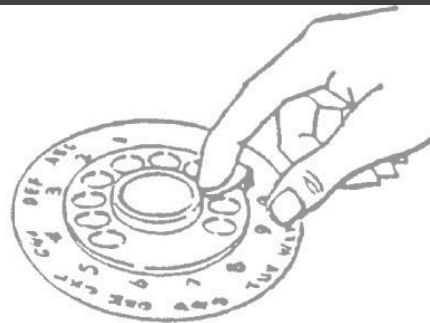
If you need information about, or referral to, a service provider outside Florida, call the national Eldercare Locator Service at 1-800-677-1116. An information specialist will assist you Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. – 11p.m. Eastern time. For people with Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDDs), all Elder Helplines, as well as the Eldercare Locator Service, can be accessed through Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8771.

FLORIDA ELDER HELPLINE DIRECTORY

Please call the telephone number below in your area for information and referrals.

Alachua.....	800-262-2243	Lee.....	866-413-5337
Baker.....	888-242-4464	Leon.....	866-467-4624
Bay.....	866-467-4624	Levy.....	800-262-2243
Bradford.....	800-262-2243	Liberty.....	866-467-4624
Brevard.....	407-514-0019	Madison.....	866-467-4624
Broward.....	954-745-9779	Manatee.....	800-336-2226
Calhoun.....	866-467-4624	Marion.....	800-262-2243
Charlotte.....	866-413-5337	Martin.....	866-684-5885
Citrus.....	800-262-2243	Miami-Dade.....	305-670-4357
Clay.....	888-242-4464	Monroe.....	305-670-4357
Collier.....	866-413-5337	Nassau.....	888-242-4464
Columbia.....	800-262-2243	Okaloosa.....	866-531-8011
DeSoto.....	866-413-5337	Okeechobee.....	866-684-5885
Dixie.....	800-262-2243	Orange.....	407-514-0019
Duval.....	888-242-4464	Osceola.....	407-514-0019
Escambia.....	866-531-8011	Palm Beach.....	866-684-5885
Flagler.....	888-242-4464	Pasco.....	727-217-8111
Franklin.....	866-467-4624	Pinellas.....	727-217-8111
Gadsden.....	866-467-4624	Polk.....	800-336-2226
Gilchrist.....	800-262-2243	Putnam.....	800-262-2243
Glades.....	866-413-5337	Santa Rosa.....	866-531-8011
Gulf.....	866-467-4624	Sarasota.....	866-413-5337
Hamilton.....	800-262-2243	Seminole.....	407-514-0019
Hardee.....	800-336-2226	St. Johns.....	888-242-4464
Hendry.....	866-413-5337	St. Lucie.....	866-684-5885
Hernando.....	800-262-2243	Sumter.....	800-262-2243
Highlands.....	800-336-2226	Suwannee.....	800-262-2243
Hillsborough.....	800-336-2226	Taylor.....	866-467-4624
Holmes.....	866-467-4624	Union.....	800-262-2243
Indian River.....	866-684-5885	Volusia.....	888-242-4464
Jackson.....	866-467-4624	Wakulla.....	866-467-4624
Jefferson.....	866-467-4624	Walton.....	866-531-8011
Lafayette.....	800-262-2243	Washington.....	866-467-4624
Lake.....	800-262-2243		

Elder Helpline Can Assist Non-English Speakers



By calling the Elder Helpline, Florida's elders can access information and referral services through a translation service. Telephone interpreters provide live, on-the-line assistance by translating from English into as many as 148 different languages.

Are you worried that an elder relative or friend may be the victim of abuse? You can report known or suspected cases of abuse by calling Florida's Abuse Hotline at **1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)**.

104 Years Old and Still Laughing

Rick Burnham
Editor in Chief, Elder Update

Mary Brown may not have all the faculties she had earlier in life. Her ability to get around is somewhat hampered, and her hearing is not nearly as good as it once was.

But her sense of humor is definitely intact.

Brown, a resident at The Gardens at Depugh Nursing Center in Winter Park, just outside of Orlando, turned 104 Sept. 8, and she celebrated the milestone among family, friends, and nursing center staff. Five days later, she watched television while awaiting an afternoon meal.

And what were they bringing her?

“Something I don’t want,” she said with a chuckle.

For the record, Mary enjoys seasoned rice, grits, sausage, and, occasionally, chicken. She says God and Jesus are with her constantly.

“They have taken care of me,” she said. “I am not sick. I don’t hurt. I don’t have pain or nothing.”

Brown was originally born in Georgia but moved to the Orlando area early in life. She said the government lists her as being born in 1910, but that her mother and father told her she was born in 1911.

Regardless of when Mary Brown was born, everyone at the Department of Elder Affairs wishes her continued good health and many more happy years to come.



Florida Senior Games: 25 Years of Competition for Athletes 50 and Over

Nick Gandy
Florida Sports Foundation

Now in its 23rd year, the Florida International Senior Games continues to adapt to the ever-changing sports world to provide athletes age 50 and over opportunities to compete on a variety of levels.

When the 2014 Florida International Senior Games and State Championships are contested, Dec. 6-14 in Lee County and the City of Cape Coral, one new sport will make its debut, and three sports will offer non-ambulatory divisions.

Fencing, one of five activities that has been featured at every one of the modern Olympic Games, will be held for the first time, Dec. 13-14, at the North Fort Myers Community Park. The event is expected to draw competitors from the Veterans Fencing Division across the state – and even the nation.

“Florida is a great state for Senior Games-age fencing participation,” said Brian Harper, sports director. “There are senior fencers in just about every city scattered around the state – Tallahassee, Orlando, Miami, West Palm Beach, Gainesville, and the southwest Florida area as well.”

Harper pointed out that fencing is a sport that lasts a lifetime and one that can even be picked up at any age. “The sport is so much fun that if you’ve been fencing all of your life, you just keep on fencing. I’ve known people that have picked up the sport at 40 and are having a wonderful time.”

Three other Senior Games events, Athletics (Track and Field), Cycling, and Swimming, round out four of the five sports to be in every modern Olympic Games.

The addition of Bowling, Horseshoes, and Shuffleboard non-ambulatory divisions provides multi-sport and recreation opportunities for individuals with a disability. Athletes competing in the non-ambulatory divisions in Lee County also have the opportunity to qualify for the National Senior Games in those divisions.

“While the original intent of the National Senior Games non-ambulatory divisions came through the desire to service VA’s Golden Age Games athletes, the overall goal is to make the National Senior Games more inclusive to all athletes with disabilities,” said Florida Sports Foundation Sr. Vice President, Stephen Rodriguez, who also serves as the Chair of the National Senior Games Association Board of Directors.

“The Florida International Senior Games & State Championships are mirroring the opportunities of the National Games providing athletes qualifying opportunities to advance to the national level.”

Another first for this year’s State Championships will be a Tallahassee family bringing their competitive spirit to Lee County. While there have been several occasions where a father and son, and even a mother and son, have competed together in the last few years, the Butler family (mother Shirley – who

goes by Sam; father Pete, Sr.; and son Pete, Jr.) will compete in three different sports.

During the 2014 calendar year, more than 10,000 senior athletes age 50 and older will compete in a program of the Florida Senior Games. Approximately 2,500 senior athletes are expected to compete during the nine days of events in Lee County.

Sports and events of the State Championships include Archery, Bag Toss, Basketball Shooting, 3-on-3 Basketball, Billiards, Bocce, Bowling (Individual and Team), Croquet, Cycling (5K & 10K Time Trials and 20K & 40K Road Race), Fencing, Golf, Horseshoes, Pickleball, Powerlifting, Race Walk/Power Walk, Racquetball, Road Race (5K and 10K), Shuffleboard, Swimming, Table Tennis, Tennis, Track & Field, and Volleyball.

Len Ferman, a Jacksonville distance runner who set a state record in the 1,500-meter track event last year as a 50 year old, said in a recent Florida Times Union article, “There are two kinds of Florida Senior Games competitors — serious athletes who relish a chance to compete against people in their own age group, and not-so-serious athletes who look at the games as a chance to keep in shape and have some fun. There’s plenty of room for both.”

For more information about the 2014 Florida International Senior Games & State Championships, including online registration opportunities, which are open until November 21, visit www.flasports.com. You may also call 1-866-354-2637. Entry fees vary by sport.