MORTIS CAUSA

LAW TALK

"Tex" Stevenson
Judge
Advocate

GREETINGS COMRADES:

From The
Sgt.-at-Arms
R. Terry Waite

I wish to thank the members of the Department of Louisiana, Disabled American Veterans for electing me to the position of Sergeant-At-Arms. It will be a pleasure to assist this great organization to continue the 99th year of Fulfiling Our Promises to the Men and Woman Who Served.

I am still serving as Chapter Service Officer for the past few years has been trying at times. I admit that just knowing the veterans and their families I have assisted truly appreciate what this great organization affords me the opportunity to provide for them gives me great pleasure and satisfaction. In the future, I look forward to working to secure the benefits that we currently receive, continue the battle to secure more benefits for our female veterans. Additionally, I will continue to fight the battle for homeless veterans who, all too often, fall through the cracks through no fault of their own.

MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS THE FEMALE VETERANS AND THEIR DEPENDENTS, THIS GREAT ORGANIZATION, AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The Southwest Louisiana Veterans Home
Ancillary Committee -
Who we are and what we do

By Nelson Gautreaux, DAV Ancillary

A little more than 10 years ago, the Southwest Louisiana Veterans Home formed an Ancillary Committee of Veterans' Organizations (VFW, American Legion, DAV, VVA, Marine Corp, etc. and their Auxiliaries) to raise money to buy the things that the veterans wanted or needed for which the government would not pay. Among the things the Committee was able to provide for the residents (please do not call the "patients!" are well-stocked fishing ponds with a sidewalk all way around it and from the Home to the ponds, a fully-equipped camera system installed out by the ponds area where the residents can be monitored so that if something happened to them, they would be able to call them, and need help, they can push a button and then the Home is notified of help needed. A patio in the back for events and a garden where they can sit outside and enjoy their surroundings has also been provided.

In the Home itself, there are TV's and monitors in the great room where the residents can enjoy their Bingo games and whatever else is going on in there. We have also fixed a garden for the Alzheimer's residents' comfort and enjoyment. There is a tall fence providing security for the area, so they can go outside to enjoy the beautiful scenery days. In the Chapel is a "living tree" and when one of the residents graduate (they don't die), their name, date of birth, date of death, and branch of the service they were in is put on a gold leaf placed on the tree. These are just a few of the many things the Ancillary Committee has done to make the lives of our veterans easier.

The Committee is made up of persons from each Veterans' Organization and their Auxiliary. We meet every third Wednesday of the month. At each meeting, the Home brings to our attention more of the things we can provide to benefit the residents. From 2009 to 2018, we have raised $166,625.95 and spent on the Home to make it more comfortable for those who reside there. DAV members on the Ancillary Committee are State 1st Jr. Vice Commander Javis Tauzin from Chapter 2; Chapter 17 Commander Robert Saucier and Chapter 17 DEC Nelson Gautreaux; and Chapter 17 Auxiliary members PSC Mary Kay Dyer, Peggy Saucier, and Jo Ann Gautreaux.
Can video games help Army recruiting? Baton Rouge native helping make it happen

By George Morris, ADVOCATE Staff Writer - Aug 6, 2019

Photo 1 - Army Sgt. Christopher Jones, left, who grew up in Baton Rouge, talks with CBS This Morning reporter Tony Dokoupil about how the Army is using video games to connect with potential recruits. Photo 2 - Army Sgt. Christopher Jones, center, with Justin Wong, left, and LuLu "Ryze" Avila, provides commentary during the 2018 PAX West video game convention. An avid gamer, Jones coordinates a recruiting unit that uses video gaming to connect with potential recruits.

During his senior year at Woodlawn High School in 2003, Christopher Jones enlisted in the Army. As soon as he got his first barracks room following training, he bought a PlayStation2, GameCube and Xbox so he could play video games in his off time. Sixteen years later, he's still in the Army, but video games aren't his recreation. They're his job. Jones is part of the Army's ultimate 21st-century unit — the esports team. A sergeant first class, Jones is the noncommissioned officer in charge of 16 soldiers who, during their three-year rotation with the team at Fort Knox, Kentucky, exchange real weapons for virtual ones. The purpose is to help Army recruiting by showing gamers — and there are a lot of them in the 17- to 35-year-old demographic — that they may have more in common with soldiers than they think, Jones said. "We're showing the soldier behind the uniform," said Jones, who was born in Baton Rouge and lived in the area until joining the Army. "This is that one avenue to tell that story. We hold these different positions. We have the same passion. We love gaming just as much as everyone else. The difference is we are in a different profession. We come from the infantry. We come from aviation, military police, all kinds of different professions within the Army. But we share the same passion."

The team, which will be fully operational by Oct. 1, attends esports competitions and conventions, playing popular video games such as "Call of Duty," "League of Legends" and "Fortnite" against those who attend, and they get to meet face-to-face. At the PAX East exhibition in March in Boston, players lined up for more than an hour to take on the Army team. "They were blown away at the fact that our soldiers are very skilled, beating them at their favorite game," Jones said. "Everyone had a really great time because they're connected over an already established shared passion." Jones, 34, was a recruiter in Hammond last year when the Army Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation division had a "Street Fighter" video tournament at several installations. Because of his interest in video games, he was chosen to serve as a commentator during an event. It was successful enough that Maj. Gen. Frank Muth, commander of U.S. Army Recruiting Command, thought esports could become an effective recruiting tool. He selected Jones to manage the program. The Army is the only military branch that has a video game recruiting outreach, Jones said. From his own recruiting experience, Jones said he thinks it's a great idea. "When I talk about my hobbies, we start the conversation: 'I love video games,'" he said. "Wow! The Army lets you play video games? There's a whole lot of misconceptions that were broken by boots-on-the-ground level having that conversation."

The Army isn't the only victim of stereotypes, Jones said. Many video game enthusiasts don't fit the mold of an undersized nerd. "One of the soldiers who participates in the program is actually a special forces operator. He was actually a semiprofessional gamer before he joined the Army, and now he's Special Forces," he said. In his current role, Jones oversees the program, coordinating which events the esports team will attend, attending gaming conventions, and creating opportunities to raise the Army team's visibility. "The esports industry is about to be at a $3.5 billion industry," Jones said. "It's been big in Asia and Europe for a while, and it's really gaining steam here in North America. Yes, it's groundbreaking. It's definitely new, but, at my level, it definitely feels like a no-brainer."

Presentation of Charter to new DAV Ed Gary Memorial Chapter 52, Slidell, LA
At the Department Convention in May, we held our Women Veterans Forum. Thanks to our guest speakers who helped make this event happen, and thanks to all of you who attended and brought up issues of concern. I hope you got a lot out of the Forum. The Critiques you returned were very informative and helpful.

One of the highlights of this Forum was by the Alexandria VA Medical Center Women Veterans Program Manager LaShondra Brown-Dixon, who spoke about the hospital services for women and answered a lot of questions or concerns brought up. She also had numerous handouts/pamphlets for all the attendees. It was great to have her there and talk about what the VA was doing for our women veterans.

Another highlight of this Forum was by Alejandra “Alex” Juan from LDVA, who is the State Women Veterans Outreach Coordinator. She said, if you want to know about the events happening in Louisiana, you should sign up to be on the email list to get all the event announcements. Go to www.vetaffairs.la.gov, then to under “Stay current with updates and stories from Louisiana veterans”, enter your email in line provided and hit the “subscribe me” arrow. Also, Belinda Hill, the DAV National Women Veterans Interim Committee Member, handed out the new book on the women veterans’ study. You can view this book online at https://www.dav.org/wp-content/uploads/2018-Women-Veterans-Report-Sequl.pdf.

At the Department Convention, I asked all Chapter Commanders to appoint a Women Veterans Representative to help work on women veterans’ issues. While some names have been received, I would, again, request Chapter Commanders appoint a representative. Thank you to the ones who already have. And at the Department Convention, the Resolution, “Support Sustained and Sufficient Funding For Homeless Women Veterans With Services That Include Their Children”, was approved by the Convention to be forwarded to the State for possible legislation.

Our next Forum will be at the Department Convention on May 14th, starting on Thursday at 10 AM for two hours. If you know someone who would be a good guest speaker, I welcome your ideas and your suggestions. Also, I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the Mid-Winter Convention. It should be another good one at the Hotel Bentley in Alexandria. Fun night is “Fifties Night”.

There is still plenty of work to be done for all our veterans, but especially our women veterans. Thank you to all who help veterans’ every day to ensure they get the services they need. DAV has always been a family helping each other in need.
NSO Notes - From NSO Supervisor Beverly James-Wills

We have been receiving numerous questions with regards to disagreeing with and/or appealing decisions in the new Appeals Modernization Act (AMA), so this article is dedicated to answering the top 3 questions.

How Does the new Appeals Modernization Act (AMA) Work?
To answer this question, we must first look at the pre-February 19, 2019, appeals process. In the past VA used a single docket appeals system (the Legacy system). In the legacy system, claimants only had one option if they disagreed with a VA Rating Decision... file a Notice of Disagreement (NOD) and wait several years for the VA to review their prior decision. If the review resulted in a continuation of the denial, the claimant was issued a Statement of the Case and provided 60 days to file a substantive appeal (VAA) to the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA). The VAA provided the claimant with the options of a review with a hearing or a review without a hearing. Claimants who did not request a hearing were stuck in the same docket line with those claimants who requested a hearing. This system created a backlog for everyone, whether a claimant requested a hearing or not. AMA allows claimants to choose from three different review options, or "lanes", when they disagree with a VA Decision:

 Higher-Level Review Lane. This review is conducted by a more experienced rating specialist at one of the two Decision Review Operations Centers (DROC). One DROC is located here at Bay Pines FL, and the other DROC is in Seattle, WA. In this lane, claimants are not allowed to submit additional evidence in support of their claims. Instead, the DROC will issue a new decision based on the same evidence of record that was available at the time of the prior decision. The reviewer will evaluate the claim de novo (i.e. a fresh new look). The reviewer can overturn the previous decision based on several factors, including a clear and unmistakable error.

 Supplemental Claim Lane. This lane allows for the submission of new and relevant evidence. Claimants can also submit a supplemental claim with new and relevant evidence after receiving an unfavorable decision from the higher-level review process, or after receiving a denial from the BVA. If claimants do so within one year of the decision, their effective date will be preserved.

 Notice of Disagreement Lane (Appeal Directly to the BVA). Claimants can appeal their cases directly to the BVA following an initial decision from the RO, or any unfavorable decisions from the higher-level review lane or supplemental claim lane. There are three dockets at the BVA for claimants to choose: the direct docket, the hearing docket, and the evidence docket.

 Direct Docket – in this docket the claimants are not allowed to submit additional evidence in support of their appeal. The BVA will only look at the evidence that was in the claimant’s file when the appealed decision was made. The direct docket option will most likely result in the fastest decision among the three docket options.

 Evidence Docket – in this docket, claimants can submit additional evidence to the Board with their Notice of Disagreement (NOD) or up to 90 days following their NOD submittal. The evidence docket option will most likely result in the 2nd fastest decision among the three docket options.

 Hearing Docket – In this docket, claimants will have the opportunity to submit new evidence either at the hearing or within 90 days following the hearing. Since the hearing docket option will most likely result in the longest wait for a decision among the three docket options, careful consideration should be given to determine if this is the right option for you.

 Can I opt-out of the Legacy system and opt-into the new AMA?
If you’re stuck in the out dated Legacy system it is possible to opt-into the AMA System, however, you can only do so after receiving a Statement of the Case or a Supplemental Statement of the Case.

 What VA Forms are used in the AMA?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-0995</td>
<td>Decision Review Request: SUPPLEMENTAL CLAIM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-0996</td>
<td>Decision Review Request: HIGHER-LEVEL REVIEW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10182</td>
<td>Decision Review Request: BOARD APPEAL (Notice of Disagreement)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOP HAT BEATS TIDE HAT

From Smiley Anders’ column - smiley@theadvocate.com (An “Only in Louisiana” tale)

Richard Fosse, of Baton Rouge, tells a tale of two veterans. "Mr. Bob, a family friend, is 92 years old and a World War II veteran. Mr. Bob's brother Fred is 94 years old and he, too, is a World War II veteran. Bob and Fred often eat breakfast together at Russell's Marina Grill in New Orleans, and over time they realized that Fred always got better service than Bob. When Fred's coffee cup was half empty, a waitress was always nearby to refill his cup. But no one ever refilled Bob's cup. Once, a waitress even picked up Fred's breakfast tab – but she pointedly did not pick up Bob's tab. Finally, Bob and Fred put their heads together and solve the mystery. Fred always wears his World War II veteran cap when he goes out for breakfast, and Bob always wears University of Alabama hat. Bob started wearing his World War II veteran cap to breakfast instead of his Alabama hat, and guess what happened? The waitresses started refilling his coffee cup!"

Southern folks take our football very seriously, as most of you all know. Sometimes we have fun with it:

"Football is, after all, a wonderful way to get rid of your aggressions without going to jail for it." ~ Heywood Hale Broun~

"A school without football is in danger of deteriorating into a medieval study hall." ~ Frank Leahy~

"Football is not a contact sport. It is a collision sport. Dancing is a good example of a contact sport." ~Duffy Daugherty~

"If a man watches 3 football games in a row, he should be declared legally dead." ~ Erma Bombeck~

"Sharks are as tough as those football fans who take their shirts off during games in Chicago in January, only more intelligent." ~ Dave Barry~