

# The Voice of Experience VETERAN VOICE

35 cents

VOL. 1/ISSUE 24

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2013

## A roof over their heads

A chance donation turns into unofficial housing program for vets

By Patrick McCallister  
For Veteran Voice

John's a 67-year-old Vietnam veteran, with a 100 percent disability rating. He's not working, but was getting by all right. Until his landlord kept upping the rent. "They had already raised me from \$700 to \$750," he said.

The landlord then added a lease clause to put John on the hook for the first \$100 of any repairs, and was looking for another \$150 a month. John couldn't afford the increasing rent, and he didn't have money to shell out for a security deposit and two months of rent to get another place.

"I was at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of a high-pressure situation," John said.

The departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development have a term for vets in John's situation — "at risk." In

other words, circumstances have put them so close to the edge of homelessness that the smallest complications could have tragic endings.

He asked *Veteran Voice* to withhold his full name.

The Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1038, Indian River County, wasn't looking to give homes to veterans to like John.

"It just kind of came out of nowhere," Marty Zickert, chapter president, said. "It all started with a World War II vet who died and wanted his home to go to a veter-

an."

The family gave the home to the chapter, and it quickly set out to find a veteran to put in it with the help of the Indian River County Veterans Service Office manager, Joel Herman. That was about 18 months ago. Zickert said the chapter felt good that it was able to help a deserving veteran, and readied to move on to other projects.

"We got a newspaper article and all of a sudden I had 15 people

See ROOF page 3



Jim Rodgers

## A 20th century patriot

By Barney P. Giordan  
For Veteran Voice

*June 1945, the Pacific Theater, WWII, was in its final stage with the invasion of Okinawa.*

*Offshore, the battleship Tennessee was engaged in bombarding the island while under "kamikaze" aircraft attack. Seaman 2nd Class Jim Rodgers was there. This is his story.*

Jim was born Oct. 21, 1926 in Fairview, N.J., of a military family. At age 16 he made his first attempt at military service. At

his home state of New Jersey, he enlisted in Marine Corps and was sent to boot camp in San Diego. His age was discovered and enlistment terminated. This did not stop determined young man. At age 17 (1943), he again enlisted, but this time in the Navy.

After boot camp at Great Lakes Training Center, he was assigned as a gunner (40 mm) on board the *Tennessee*. Now a Seaman 2nd Class, he saw action in many

See RODGERS page 6



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## OUR MISSION STATEMENT AND OUR OBJECTIVE

Veteran Voice is a weekly publication designed to provide information to and about veterans to veterans and to the broader community. Veterans are an integral part of their Florida communities, which currently have individual organizations of their own, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Vietnam Veterans of America and many other groups with a narrow focus, but no convenient way to connect to a wider population of veterans and to the community in general within a limited geographic area, their community.

The mission of Veteran Voice is to publish a weekly source of information that will provide, in one place, a listing of resources available to veterans, articles about changes in policies or organizations affecting veterans and events of interest to veterans as well as articles about veterans of interest to the general public.

Veteran Voice LLC is organized as a partnership of experienced newspaper executives with an interest in veterans and in the communities of Florida veterans and friends. Veteran Voice is a start-up intended to address a perceived lack of information readily available to veterans on programs and policies affecting them and objective reporting of veteran affairs to the public. To our knowledge, and based on comments from leaders of local veterans organizations, there was no media or website currently meeting this need until the launch of Veteran Voice.

We hope you agree, and will support this publication with your subscription. Without subscriptions there will be a limited number of people we can help, without which this mission will not be realized. As part of our commitment to supporting local veteran communities, we will donate 10 percent of our profits each quarter to qualified veteran charities recommended by you, our readers and subscribers. Please let us know what you think by emailing [news@veteranvoiceweekly.com](mailto:news@veteranvoiceweekly.com) or mailing your comments to us at **1919 S.W. South Macedo Blvd., Port St. Lucie, FL 34984.**

## IMPORTANT NUMBERS ...

### County Veterans Service Officers

St. Lucie County, Donna Carlsen  
Phone: (772) 337-5670  
Fax: (772) 337-5678  
[veterans@stlucieco.org](mailto:veterans@stlucieco.org)

**Dorothy J. Conrad Building**  
(formerly the Walton Road Annex Bldg.)  
1664 S.E. Walton Road, Suite 205  
Port St. Lucie, FL 34952  
By appointment  
Mon., Tues, Thurs, Fri \* 8:30 am-4:30 pm  
Wed \* 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

**St. Lucie County Community Services Bldg.**  
(Corner of Avenue D and 7th Street)  
437 N. Seventh St., Fort Pierce, FL 34950  
Walk-ins  
Mon. and Fri. \* 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**Brevard Veteran's Services Office**  
2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way,  
Bldg. B, Suite 102, Viera, FL 32940  
Office: (321) 633-2012  
Fax: (321) 637-5432  
Mon., Tues. and Thurs., 8 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Wed. and Fri, 8 a.m.-noon  
Manager: Glenn McGuffie

### Indian River County

Joel Herman  
Vero Beach  
2525 St. Lucie Ave.,  
Vero Beach, FL 32960  
Ph: (772) 226-1499  
Fax: (772) 770-5038

**Sebastian Square**  
11602 U.S. 1, Sebastian, FL 32958  
Ph: (772) 589-6597 Fax: (772) 581-4988

### Martin County

Tony Reese, Veterans Service Office Supervisor  
Nick Ciotti, Veterans Service Officer  
(772) 288-5448

### Veterans Services Office

Martin County Community Services  
435 S.E. Flagler Ave., Stuart, FL 34994  
Office Hours: Mon-Fri, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

**VA Life Insurance Ctr.**, Phil., PA -  
1-800-669-8477

**VA Regional Office** - 1-800-827-1000

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**Pharmacy, VA Medical Center** -  
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# Celebrate, salute



Sebastian River Veterans Honor Guard members Ken Millard, left, and Jerry Peeler, also members of American Legion Post 189, march with the colors in the parade during Fellsmere Day Saturday, April 6. The day-long event commemorated the town's 102nd anniversary.

Staff photo by Tammy Raits

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## ROOF from page 1

(calling to donate homes),” Zickert said.

So far, the chapter has put six veterans at risk for homelessness into donated houses. Zickert will teach others how to get and give donated homes at a Florida State Council VVA meeting on Saturday, June 8. The meeting will be from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites, 5905 Kirkman Road, Orlando. Ben Humphries, state president, said anyone interested in learning more about starting donated-homes programs to benefit veterans is welcome to attend.

Zickert said the Chapter 1038 program isn't equipped to help veterans unless they have some means.

“A guy that's homeless and making \$500 a month is not going to qualify,” he said. “It's as simple as this. It averages \$500 to \$600 a month in lot rent.”

The donated houses have all been modular homes in developments. While residents in the developments own the modular homes, they must pay lot rent.

“Most of them are age-based, 55 and older,” Zickert said. “Most of them require \$1,500 to \$1,800 a month in income.”

Homelessness doesn't always look like homelessness.

Often it's crashing in a friend's

extra room far longer than either expected a “rough patch” to last. It can also be living in a motel paying a high weekly rent that prohibits saving up to get permanent housing. Homelessness-prevention experts say that in general, if an adult's or his or her spouse's name is not on a lease or mortgage, the person is likely in a budding stage of homelessness.

According to the National Coalition to End Homelessness, there were slightly more than 62,600 homeless veterans during a 2012 HUD point-in-time survey. That was about 7 percent less than in 2011, and a whopping 17 percent reduction from a 2009 survey.

The coalition reports that while veterans of all ages are homeless, the bulk of them served during the late Vietnam and post-Vietnam eras. Homelessness among veterans peaked with the housing crash and Great Recession in 2008. The VA estimated 131,000 veterans were homeless that year. It's made aggressive efforts to curb homelessness among veterans in recent years.

As Florida continues a slow climb out of the housing crash, Zickert said sales of modular homes in Indian River County are hurting. That often drives families to donate homes occupied by older members when they die, or move

See ROOF page 4

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Viera, FL 32940



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# Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 59 to encourage others to 'Wear Your Life Jacket to Work' Day

2013 National Safe Boating Week is May 17-24

## For Veteran Voice

STUART — Coast Guard Flotilla 59 announced today its support of “Wear Your Life Jacket to Work” Day on May 17. Flotilla 59 joins boating professionals and boating enthusiasts to heighten awareness of different life jacket types that are available, including inflatable life jackets, and demonstrate their comfort and versatility by wearing them to work.

The annual event, hosted by the National Safe Boating Council serves as a fun, educational element just prior to National Safe Boating Week, May 18-24, the official launch of the 2013 North American Safe Boating Campaign. Educating the boating public about the safety and comfort of life jackets has been a main focus on the North American Safe Boating Campaign.

“Wear Your Life Jacket to Work” Day will take place on May 17, wherever you are.

U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that drowning was the reported cause of death in 70 percent of recreational boating fatalities in 2011, and that 84

percent of those who drowned were not wearing life jackets.

The National Safe Boating Council is asking all participants to take a picture of themselves in their life jacket while at work and post it to the “Ready, Set, Wear It!” Facebook page ([www.Facebook.com/Ready-SetWearIt](http://www.Facebook.com/Ready-SetWearIt)) or submit directly to the NSBC at [outreach@safeboatingcouncil.org](mailto:outreach@safeboatingcouncil.org).

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 59 in Sandsprit Park has been serving the boating community on the Treasure Coast for more than 70 years. The Flotilla can be reached at 3443 S.E. St. Lucie Blvd., Stuart, (772) 288-0509; email address is <http://cgaux59.org>.

For the serious skipper and the weekend boater, there are more aspects of seamanship that can be learned from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary’s Recreational Safe Boating classes, taught each month at Flotilla 59’s facility in Sandsprit Park, Stuart.

Remember, boating season never ends on the Treasure Coast.

## ROOF from page 3

for medical reasons.

“They find us,” he said. “Every manager at those (modular-home communities) know we have this program going. When the family comes down and talks to them, all the managers make them aware that we have this program in place. Every one of the communities will lower the rent for six months to a year if it’s a veteran.” Humphries said he aims to get the state’s 20 VVA chapters to adopt variations of the home-donation program.

“I’m working on getting it spread through the state and introducing it (on a national level),” he said. “I’ve mentioned it numerous times to state presidents. Some are interested.”

John prides himself on helping other veterans. He’s a member of several organizations: the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans. He uses his involvement in them to find veterans who need

help and getting them to veterans service officers.

When he was facing his own crisis, John didn’t tell too many people. But he told the right one.

“The news got out through another veteran I helped out, and (Zickert) got in touch with me,” he said.

John tried to turn down the modular home Zickert had for him. He figured another veteran needed it more than he did.

“It has two bedrooms, two bathrooms,” he said. “It has a kitchen and living room, and the terms of the wishes of the deceased, it was offered to me fully furnished.”

Folks talked him into taking the place. In addition to receiving the donated modular home, John said Zickert worked out discounted lot rent for him. He declined to say how much the lot rent was discounted for him.

“I am deeply honored,” John said. “Apparently (the former owner) was a veteran. He was in the Marines. He served in the Pacific during World War II.”

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We are published weekly by Veteran Voice, LLC.  
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# 102 and holding



Staff photo by Tammy Raits

Charlie Long and Jim Heardon, members of Charles L. Futch American Legion Post 189 in Sebastian, march in the parade during Fellsmere Day Saturday, April 6. The day-long event commemorated the town's 102nd anniversary.



Staff photo by Tammy Raits

Bob Etman tools along the parade route in his 1928 Ford Coupe during the Fellsmere Day celebration earlier this month.

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**RODGERS from page 1**

Pacific operations including Kwajalein, Entwelok, Kovieng, New Ireland, Saipan, Marianna Islands, Guam, Tinian, Leyte. The *Tennessee* was involved in the sea battle of Surigao, in the straits of the Philippine Islands. This was the final defeat of Japan's sea power, and Jim was there.

During his tour, Jim learned to play the bugle, instructed by the ship's master bugler. The bugle in WWII was an important means of commands and communication. During combat offshore Okinawa, the *Tennessee* was under heavy attack from Japanese "kamikaze fighters." On forward deck, flames were endangering the ammunition storage area and Jim and his crew, including the master bugler, were extinguishing the dangerous flames. The crew moved back beyond the forward gun turrets for safety. Jim and another seaman were delayed in a last-minute try. Just as they left jumping behind the forward guns support, a wall of flame from a kamikaze hit came from amidships toward the bow gun emplacement, killing most of his gun crew including the master bugler. Had he been with them there would be no story to tell.

Jim reflects on many close

calls while aboard the *Tennessee* haunts him the most. It was while the *Tennessee* was anchored near Pearl Harbor for repairs that his work detail was assigned painting in the keel area of this large battleship. Jim was sent to acquire rope for hauling up from the bilges during painting. While he was away, the crew chief warned of the danger to paint vapor while painting and advised no more than 15 minutes' work time in the confined area of the ship's bottom.

When Jim returned, he went below to paint, unaware of the time element. While painting in a 6-foot space he would occasionally hear someone say "I'm going up." Not aware of the vapor danger, he painted on, feeling sleepy and eventually experiencing a narcosis oblivion!

"Where is Rodgers?" asked the bos'n when ordering the bottom hatches secured due to the misty fumes below. The work area was searched to no avail. An announcement was made on the ship's public address system. No response! Where is he?

A sailor who had gone below and searched four times without finding Rodgers insisted on one more search before the hatches were secured. Time was critical

**See RODGERS page 7**

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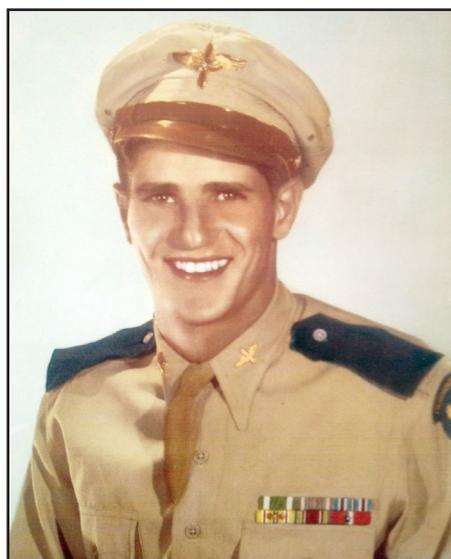
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# The many faces and uniforms of Jim Rodgers

Photos depicting various stages of Rodgers' military career, which began in 1943 in the Navy. Over the years, Rodgers also served in the Marine Corps and the Air Force.

Photos courtesy of Jim Rodgers



## RODGERS from page 6

as submarine activity had been reported to the bridge. "One more time," insisted the sailor.

OK, but be aware of the heavy vapor fumes now filling the bottom, was the answer. The unidentified sailor went below one more time without result until he stepped on the arm of Seaman Jim Rodgers, retrieving him to sickbay.

They all thought him dead. A report was being made when a sailor who was looking down at the body said he just noticed the eyelids just blinked. He was alive, to everyone's astonishment!

Jim was able to return to full duty. It wasn't until 39 years later at a WWII reunion that he learned his rescuer was crew member Pinky Tomlin. Jim recommended Pinky for his lifesaving efforts to the Secretary of the Navy. A letter of commendation was issued to Pinky Tomlin by Secretary of the Navy John Lehman. Jim will never forget this sailor saving his life when all else failed.

In April 1946, Jim was discharged as Bugler 1st Class with a 19 percent disability. He entered civilian life and earned a private pilot's license. In 1948 his military yearning led him to join the newly formed Air Force. As a sergeant, he served on the air crew for General Omar Bradley in Washington, D.C., discharged in 1952 and without a high school diploma he applied to and was accepted at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, receiving a two-year associate degree in civil engineering. He went on to the University of Florida, receiving a civil engineering degree. This wasn't enough for Jim Rodgers, as he received a master's degree in environmental science from Florida International University and a doctorate in public administration from Nova University. Remembering his first attempt at being a Marine, in 1955. He joined the Marine Reserves in Miami. Here, Jim used his engineering and musical abilities to accomplish many important acts. He was called on for national Marine project consultations as well as various Marine band and military funeral events. To say the least, he was well-known in South Florida and Washington, D.C. In civilian life, he held the title of chief building official.

Jim with his wife, Connie, retired to Indian River County in 2002. He is a member of Sebastian's American Legion Post 189 and VFW Post 10210, as well as Barefoot Bay's Marine Corps auxiliary. With his numerous military and civilian accomplishments, Jim Rodgers is a great addition to Indian River County.

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# Paris calling

**By Patrick McCallister  
For Veteran Voice**

The French are looking for surviving World War II veterans who saved their country from its darkest hour.

Melbourne's John Ervin was among 19 veterans France awarded the insignia of Knight in the Order of the Legion of Honor at an April 10 ceremony in Orlando. He said the French have shown their appreciation for his service starting from the August 1944 invasion of Southern France.

"It was the middle of harvest season," he said. "People were standing on the road, five, 10 deep, and they were giving us fresh grapes, vegetables and fruits. They were happy to see us."

Nathalie Cluzet-Bertot, press attaché at the Miami consulate, said the French still greatly admire the American service members who helped liberate their country from the grips of Nazi Germany.

"It's very vivid in French memory, because Europe was completely ravaged by two conflicts," she said. "We keep in our memories we had this tremendous loss of people, and also a very dark period we experienced in France."

Ervin, 92, is among a quickly shrinking pool of veterans that France has been seeking to honor with the insignias since 2004.

According to an Associated Press estimate, the once 16.1 million World War II veterans are dying at a rate of more than 1,100 a day. Only about 2 million are living, according to a recent report by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

No one has an exact daily death count, but the VA, AP and others have developed the same estimate by using long-form census data, VA data, and standard mortality tables. The VA estimates that America will have almost no World War II veterans by 2020. If the oldest lives as long



Florida World War II veteran Lee Raup is among more than 1,000 that the French government has awarded the insignia of Knight in the Order of the Legion of Honor. Raup received the honor earlier this year. France is seeking to give American service members who liberated the country from Nazi Germany the insignia.

Photo courtesy of Patrick McCallister

See HONOR page 9



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# Statement from Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on sexual assault prevention and response

**From the Department of Defense**

Last month, I asked the Department of Defense's Office of General Counsel to review Article 60 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) after a commander dismissed an Air Force officer's court-martial conviction for sexual assault, using the authority provided by Article 60.

That review, conducted in conjunction with military justice experts in the military services, the judge advocates general of the military departments, the service secretaries and service chiefs, is now complete. Today I am directing the Office of General Counsel to prepare legislation for Congress to amend Article 60 in two ways:

First, eliminating the discretion for a convening authority to change the findings of a court-martial, except for certain minor offenses that would not ordi-

narily warrant trial by court-martial. While convening authorities would no longer have the ability to dismiss charges for serious offenses like sexual assault, defendants would continue to have access to a robust system of appeal rights.

Second, requiring the convening authority to explain in writing any changes made to court-martial sentences, as well as any changes to findings involving minor offenses. The intent is to ensure that convening authorities are required to justify — in an open, transparent, and recorded manner — any decision to modify a court martial sentence.

These changes, if enacted by Congress, would help ensure that our military justice system works fairly, ensures due process, and is accountable. These changes would

**See HAGEL page 10**

## HONOR from page 8

as Frank Buckles — the last surviving American World War I serviceman — America will lose its last World War II veteran in 24 years, 2037.

Not surprisingly, Cluzet-Bertot said France has had its greatest success at finding WWII service members involved in its liberation in the Sunshine State.

"We have been fortunate here in Florida to recognize a lot of veterans," she said. "They retire here. Florida is on top of the list regarding this."

She said so far more than 1,000 Florida vets have received the insignia of Knight in the Order of the Legion of Honor. The Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, which is not related to the federal department, estimates there are 1.6 million veterans of all ages in the state. Florida is one of only four states with more than 1 million veterans.

Like many, Ervin headed to Florida after he retired. Raised in New Jersey, he studied chemistry at Rutgers. After graduating, he got married to Peggy and entered the Army. That was in 1942.

Ervin commanded Company A, 3<sup>rd</sup> Chemical Mortar Battalion, during the liberation of France. After 449 days in combat from Africa northward, he was never injured. "I never got a Purple Heart, because I never broke skin," he said.

Ervin got five more college degrees and did research and development for the Army until he retired in 1970. Peggy died about nine years ago. He wasn't looking to be awarded the insignia.

"It was my girlfriend that pushed me to do this," Ervin said of Clare Gower. "She's my best friend and longtime companion."

Cluzet-Bertot said WWII veterans can find out more about being awarded the insignia by visiting the consulate's website, consulfrance-miami.org. There's an application at the site.

"You send it to the French consulate and we (handle) all the red tape for you," she said.

Ervin was happy to receive his.

"I'm gratified that finally the French government gave us that honor," he said. "It's a delightful honor and it was a delightful ceremony."

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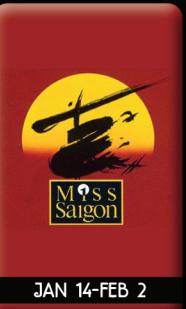
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**HAGEL from page 9**

increase the confidence of service members and the public that the military justice system will do justice in every case. The changes have the full support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the service secretaries. I look forward to working with Congress on these proposals and others to improve accountability for these crimes.

Despite the attention and efforts of senior leaders throughout the Department of Defense, it is clear the department still has much more work to do to fully address the problem of sexual assault in the ranks. This crime is damaging this institution. There are thousands of victims in the department, male and female, whose lives and careers have been upended, and that is unacceptable. The current situation should offend every single service member and civilian who, like me, is proud of their association with the United States military.

I am currently reviewing other options and actions to strengthen the department's prevention

and response efforts, and will announce those decisions and actions soon. Consistent with the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act, I will soon be naming individuals to sit on independent panels to review and assess the systems used to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate crimes involving sexual assault, and judicial proceedings of sexual assault cases. I will closely review their recommendations when complete.

I am committed to implementing measures that bring about tangible change and real results. Addressing the problem of sexual assault will remain a top priority for the department's leaders for as long as this crime continues to hurt our people and weaken the force.

Secretary of Defense  
Charles Hagel

Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Initiatives can be found at: <http://www.defense.gov/news/DoDSexualAssaultPreventionandResponseInitiatives.pdf>.

**CROSSWORD**

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**CLUES ACROSS**

1. Leave out
5. Salt water candy
10. Suffragist Carrie Chapman
14. Northeastern Pennsylvania
15. Be in accord
16. 6th Jewish month
17. Young sheep
18. Mary mourning Jesus
19. Wolf (Spanish)
20. A public promotion
21. A lyric poem
22. City of Angels
23. Annual
27. Cinctures
30. Military mailbox
31. One and only
32. Rushed
35. Press onward forcibly
38. Apprehends
42. Guinea currency to 1985
43. Master of ceremonies
44. Swiss river
45. W. Samoan monetary unit
46. Los Angeles team member
47. Native of Bangkok
48. One point E of due N
50. The self
52. Humiliated
54. Disposed to take risks
57. Atomic number 13
58. Foot digit
60. Three-toed-sloth
61. Chopped beef and potatoes
64. Spanish appetizers
66. Crust-like healing surface
68. Mild yellow Dutch cheese
69. Slides without control
70. Add alcohol beverages
71. Showing
72. Medieval merchant guild
73. Current units

**CLUES DOWN**

1. Applied over
2. Gettysburg Union Gen.
3. Inches per minute (abbr.)
4. The bill in a restaurant
5. Draw on
6. Currency exchange fee
7. 19th C. Polish composer
8. A festival or feast
9. Affirmative
10. UC Berkeley
11. Rapid bustling movement
12. Dining, coffee or game
13. Region surrounding ancient Troy
24. Rad squared
25. An old phonograph record
26. Sang in a Swiss folk style
27. Guided the car
28. Exclamation of surprise
29. A senate member
32. Very fast airplane
33. Myanmar monetary unit
34. Right angle building wing

36. Returned merchandise authorization
37. "Rubber Ball" singer Bobby
39. Express pleasure
40. Women's undergarment
41. 3rd largest whale
49. Exist
51. The 4th state
52. Expressed pleasure
53. Cutting part of a knife
55. Civil Rights group
56. Makes taunting remarks
58. = 100 paisa in Bangladesh
59. American steam engineer James
62. Golfer Snead
63. Type of health insurance
64. Thyroid-stimulating hormone
65. Point midway between S and SE
66. Patti Hearst's captors
67. E. British University river

**SUDOKU**

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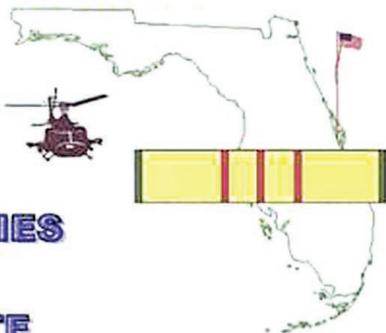
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