

The Voice of Experience VETERAN VOICE

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Veterans have own court in Brevard

Mary Kemper

STAFF WRITER

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Drug treatment courts have been around a while. Many may be familiar with the TV show “Last Shot with Judge Gunn Drug Court,” where those falling afoul of the law via drug abuse can get treatment, and thus become productive citizens.

But for returning veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq, those courts won’t work — at least, not very well, according to a Brevard County judge.

Why? Two things: PTSD and traumatic brain injury, or TBI. All too often, troops come home and commit crimes, because of underlying problems.

Judge John Murphy is a highly decorated, 30-plus-year Army veteran who served in special operations, retiring at the rank of colonel from the 3rd Special Forces Group.

He oversees Brevard County’s Veterans Treatment Court, a new concept in helping vets avoid the stigma of criminal records.

Murphy is a graying, bespectacled, well-dressed man in his 60s — well-spoken and matter-of-fact, as you’d expect of a judge. Before being elected to the bench in 2006, he practiced law in the firm of Betten, Murphy and Weiss in Melbourne, of which his father is a partner.

He is slim and fit, as you’d expect from a former Special Forces officer.

Indeed, in his military career, he



Source: Wikimedia Commons

U.S. soldiers treated for traumatic brain injury, representatives of the National Intrepid Center of Excellence, representatives with the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund and military leaders participate in a groundbreaking ceremony at Fort Campbell, Ky., June 13, 2013. The site is the third in a series of nine NICoE Satellite Centers to be built around the country, and will be designed to diagnose and treat traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress.

was known as “the special-ops judge.” And when he speaks about the Veterans Treatment Court, he makes his case directly and to the point.

The judge explained the program and how it works at a meeting of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce’s Veterans’ Resource

Committee last week in Viera. Attendees included not only press, but also advocate groups, like Volunteers of America. Everyone wanted to know more about the Veterans Treatment Court and how they could help.

In many ways, crimes committed by vets are unique in their caus-

es. Murphy said the problem is big, and getting bigger.

“Tens of thousands of (returning) veterans suffer from PTSD, including nightmares, flashbacks, family strife and other problems,” Murphy said. “All too often,

See COURT page 4

How are you coping with PTSD, either yourself, or your family?

Send your thoughts to:
info@veteranvoiceweekly.com

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 or mailing your comments to us at **1919 S.W. South Macedo Blvd., Port St. Lucie, FL 34984.**

IMPORTANT NUMBERS ...

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St. Lucie County, Wayne Teegardin
Phone: (772) 337-5670
Fax: (772) 337-5678
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

VA Medical Ctr, W. Palm Beach -
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Pharmacy, VA Medical Center -

1-800-317-8387

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Stuart VA Clinic - (772) 288-0304

Okeechobee County

Veterans Services office

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Fax: (863) 763-0118.

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St Lucie County PTSD Clinical Team (PCT) Outpatient Program

126 S.W. Chamber Court,
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Phone: (772) 878-7876

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Fort Pierce, FL 34947
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Port Saint Lucie, FL 34986
Phone: (772) 344-9288

Stuart Community Based Outpatient Clinic

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Stuart, FL 34997
Phone: (772) 288-0304
Fax: (772) 288-1371

Vero Beach Community Based Outpatient Clinic

372 17th St., Vero Beach, FL 32960
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Writer becomes honorary Vietnam vet

Mary Kemper

STAFF WRITER
mkemper@veteranvoiceweekly.com

“For once, you’re on the other side of the story,” joked one Vietnam veteran to Patrick “Paddy” McCallister.

That’s because McCallister, 46, a staff writer for *Veteran Voice*, was the story.

He was inducted into Viet Nam Veterans of America Chapter 1041, Martin County, Tuesday (Feb. 4) as an honorary member — an event he considers “a tremendous honor,” and the culmination of many years of closeness with Vietnam veterans.

Though not a veteran himself, his ties with Vietnam veterans began with a terrible injury in his younger years. **(Editor’s note: Please see McCallister’s column, Page 4 of this edition.)**

In accepting his induction, he told a very tragic story calmly and quietly. When he had finished, the assembled veterans gave him a standing ovation, and McCallister was visibly moved.

Born in Georgia and raised in central Florida, he is a tall man, with short, curly hair and keen blue eyes. Normally talkative,

with a dry wit, he was subdued at the meeting. Later, he admitted to feeling very strong emotions for which, he said, “I cannot find the words.”

On hand to help welcome McCallister into the chapter was Ben L. Humphries, president of the Viet Nam Veterans of America Florida State Council, the office of which is in Vero Beach.

“As much as he (McCallister) has been doing for the vets — he’s so close to this chapter — we’re just trying to give recognition where it’s due,” Humphries said.

“He’s just a fine guy.”

George Mittler, president of Chapter 1041, kept teasing McCallister off and on as Mittler went around the room greeting members. “It’s about time you got here, Mr. McCallister!” he said. “It’s ‘Paddy!’” McCallister shot back.

Joking aside, the way Mittler and other vets spoke with him made it clear McCallister is extremely well-liked and appreciated by what are now his “brothers,” as he said.

“What I didn’t say in my column was that my heart had actually



Staff photo by Mary Kemper

George Mittler, left, president of Viet Nam Veterans of America Chapter 1041, Martin County, and Ben L. Humphries, right, president of Viet Nam Veterans of America Florida State Council, welcome Patrick McCallister after his induction into the chapter as an honorary member.

See HONORARY page 8

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COURT from page 1

they self-medicate with drugs or alcohol, which manifests in DUI charges and family stress. Of course, the longer it is untreated, the worse it will be.

“With TBI, many vets don’t know they have it. Brain injuries include cognitive problems and self-control issues, leading them to commit crimes,” he said.

Some sobering numbers:

“There are 22 million veterans in the United States,” Murphy said. “Of those, 1.6 million are from Florida.

“There are 229,000 vets in jails and 400,000 on probation. And 10 percent of the entire prison population is veterans.”

One in four vets has substance abuse issues, or 1.8 million, he said.

Suicide is one of the worst results for suffering vets, Murphy said.

“There is one suicide per day in the active services,” he said. He pointed out that women veterans commit more suicides than men.

And here’s the major reason why:

“Up to 33 percent of all veterans are at risk for PTSD or depression,” Murphy said.

“Up to 320,000 have TBI. One in five vets have symptoms of either disorder.

“Clearly, we have a big problem looming.”

A big part of that “big problem”: downsizing of troops’ units taking place while they have been deployed.

The Department of Defense has been looking for ways to cut costs across the board. One way is to

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cut personnel — while they are away fighting in combat zones, and can’t defend their jobs back home.

“These troops come back from deployment only to find their jobs have disappeared,” Murphy said. “So this leads to two more things adding to the stress of PTSD and TBI — unemployment and homelessness.”

Up to 18 percent of all veterans, and 21.6 percent of younger veterans, are unemployed, he said.

“I’ve gone out on searches for homeless veterans,” he said. “We’ve found them living in the woods, living in tent communities. This is something people aren’t aware of.”

Getting smiles from the meeting attendees, Murphy said, “I will say that ordinary homeless people’s communities — well, let’s just say that you’re not supposed to mess with your mess kit, if you know what I mean.

“The military campsites had no mess kit issues.

“That just shows you there is plenty of pride worth saving.”

The existing court treatment programs are “not up to the job” of treating veterans, he said.

“Many won’t be eligible. So we felt it was up to us to take the issue head-on.”

If you’re a veteran in Brevard County suffering from PTSD or TBI, and you’ve gotten in trouble, you’ll be helped by the Veterans Treatment Court — but you won’t

be given a “get out of jail free pass,” Murphy said.

“We are here to help vets, but our keyword is ‘accountability,’” he said.

There are 13 Veterans Treatment Courts in Florida, 12 of which are in Brevard County. All operate on the same guidelines of making sure vets do what they’re expected to do under the treatment program. But Murphy emphasized that the court exists because people care about the vets.

“The first thing I do, when I talk to them, is ask them about their service — where they served, what they did. Then I thank them for their service,” he said.

“Just that one thing makes their eyes light up and brings them pride, and shows me they are ready and willing to turn their lives around.”

However, he said, vets must do their part, and maintain their treatment schedules. Part of the Veterans Treatment Court program includes random drug testing, and mandatory treatment dates. To help vets achieve this, the Veteran Treatment Courts have one thing other treatments don’t: Mentors.

Mentors are key to the program’s success.

“It’s vets willing to help other vets,” Murphy said. “We try to match mentors with returning vets by service, war experience, gender and so on, but right now we need more to achieve our one-on-one goal.”

Mentors help vets in trouble to attend court dates, treatment appointments, navigate benefits, cope with housing and many other issues. They are the “boots on the ground” to help suffering veterans at a very confusing and troubled time, Murphy said.

A suffering veteran may be overwhelmed by his or her problems, and not know where to turn. Someone who shares their service experience may be the difference between drowning in trouble or getting help and getting back to productive life, he said.

“Mentors are the key difference between VTC and the regular drug courts,” he said. “Without them, VTC won’t work.”

Creating a judicial treatment program also couldn’t be done without the cooperation of the state Attorney General’s Office and Public Defender’s Office, Murphy said.

“They’re the most important component,” he said. “And the cooperation in Brevard has been phenomenal.”

Also assisting in the effort has been the county Probation Department, and the federal VA. A network has been developed among the various agencies to liaise with each other to make sure

vets get the treatment they need, medically, but more importantly, a good resolution of their criminal offenses, he said.

“Let me tell you this: A great many veterans winding up with charges for crimes get administrative discharges, which results in them leaving service with no benefits (including treatment for mental-health issues like PTSD).

“(The VTC) mission includes making sure their charges get dismissed after treatment, when appropriate, based on the fact that they were misdiagnosed before they left service.”

Obviously, he said, serious felonies such as murder would not apply. Currently, the Veterans Treatment Courts work with misdemeanors such as drug offenses and DUIs; down the road, Murphy said, the program will evaluate whether lower-class felonies can be part of the program.

The results of Veterans Treatment Courts are astounding.

“Up to 75 percent of VTC clients remain arrest-free after treatment,” Murphy said. “We’ve had 25 graduates with no recidivism.

“However, 20 veterans were revoked — that is, they went to criminal court deciding against treatment — but they will wind up with us anyway.”

How that worked was when those vets went to sentencing for their crimes, the judge ordered them to receive treatment through Veterans Treatment Courts — which they could have undergone in the first place, Murphy said.

“So, basically, they can’t get away from us,” he said, receiving appreciative laughter from the audience.

The benefits of going through Veterans Treatment Court are clear.

“We eliminate trials, for one thing,” Murphy said. “And we’ve found that for every \$1 spent, \$4 is saved in court costs.

It eliminates lengthy and costly trials, and helps prevent vets from showing back up in the system.

“Once they go through treatment successfully, and charges are dismissed, they’re back on their feet, reconnecting with their families, their friends and their community.”

Brevard County has taken the lead in successfully transitioning suffering vets back into life.

“The Brevard VTC has been working well since June of 2011,” Murphy said. Since the program

“We eliminate trials, for one thing,” Murphy said. “And we’ve found that for every \$1 spent, \$4 is saved in court costs.”

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“After what our veterans have gone through, they deserve a helping hand from the court system, rather than being stigmatized for the rest of their lives.”

Judge John Murphy

was initiated, “there has been an outpouring of help from many, many community organizations. And it’s growing.”

There are a total of 102 drug courts in Florida, only 13 of which are Veterans Treatment Courts. And 12 of those are in Brevard County, mostly due to Murphy’s efforts. “But we’re lagging behind,” he said. “We need many, many more (VTCs).”

Getting vets back as productive members of society — complete with jobs — has already been addressed at Patrick Air Force Base.

Capt. Jarvora Duncan, chief of the military personnel section at Patrick Air Force Base’s B45th Force Support Squadron, has the task of connecting veterans with not only job opportunities, but housing, benefits, health care and many other issues. At the meeting, he talked about what is ahead for vets — suffering and non-suffering — in a changing landscape.

Namely, DoD downsizing.

It’s not an easy job. Duncan has been assigned the task of overseeing job cuts.

“I’ve been referred to as the ‘grim reaper,’” he said, to rueful laughter among the meeting attendees. But his job is, indeed, grim.

“About 1,700 troops (at Patrick AFB) will be affected in the job cuts. All ranks are being cut, from enlisted on up to highest officer rank,” he said.

This includes 200 officers, and 500 enlisted members, he said, who would probably be looking to find a job in Brevard County.

One audience member said it out loud: “So who’s hiring?”

“We’re planning job fairs, and we’ve been sending mass e-mails out to those affected,” Duncan said. “There’s also going to be mandatory transition training going on in individual units.

“Some people will leave voluntarily,” he pointed out. “We hope to have numbers on how many plan to stay in the community soon. Some will stay in the Reserves, but many others will be at loose ends.”

Including vets suffering from PTSD or TBI. It’s a safe bet that many of the veterans getting ready to transition back into civilian life in the Melbourne area will be sufferers.

Those wishing to learn more about veterans helping other

veterans cope with PTSD, TBI and other issues can visit maketheconnection.net, and click on the “conditions” tab.

No one knows yet the true scope of how badly combat affects people. The experts on PTSD have correlated veterans with firefighters, police and others in their studies, while studies of TBI are ongoing. The upshot: Until scientists account for the unique problems troops face, veterans are likely to fall under the radar of proper treatment – and commit crimes.

Brevard’s VTC is a huge step in the right direction.

Today’s vets have had to do their jobs under enormous pressure.

Murphy noted that too many troops have had “at least 10 rotations” of duty in combat areas.

“Ten,” he said. “You can imagine how hard that is, what the toll it takes.”

Would you be willing to become a mentor to help a vet in need? Murphy says that mentors are key to helping vets transition.

“Right now, we do ask that mentors have already served themselves,” he said.

“We know that military spouses and others can help, and we welcome that, but when being a mentor, there is no substitute for someone who has served.”

For those interested, Murphy recommends visiting an actual session of VTC.

The next scheduled session is Feb. 12, at Courtroom 3C, Brevard County Court.

“That’s the best way you can understand what these vets are going through,” he said.

“There will be people there to network with to take the next steps.”

“The Brevard (VTC) has been working well since June 2011,” Murphy said. “There’s been an outpouring of positive feedback that’s just been phenomenal.

“After what our veterans have gone through, they deserve a helping hand from the court system, rather than being stigmatized for the rest of their lives.”

For more information on programs overseen by the Veterans Resource Committee of the Melbourne Regional Chamber of Commerce, contact Justin Anderson, Veterans Resource Committee liaison, at melbourneregional-chamber.com.

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Air shows on runway

Patrick McCallister

FOR VETERAN VOICE

patrick.mccallister@yahoo.com

The 2014 spring airshows are firing up their engines.

The airborne action launches with the annual TICO Warbird AirShow, March 14 to 16. That'll be at the Space Coast Regional Airport, 355 Golden Knights Blvd., Titusville.

"One theme, and we have a couple, is honoring the Tuskegee Airmen," Ron Davis, public relations officer of the Valiant Air Command Warbird Museum, said.

The museum hosts the annual airshow. The Tuskegee Airmen are a legendary group of black pilots who flew and fought during World War II.

The National Museum of the US Air Force has much history about the airmen at its website, www.nationalmuseum.af.mil. But there's living history in Titusville: Hiram Mann. He makes frequent appearances at the Warbird's functions, and is the subject of the book, "Tuskegee Airman Fight Pilot: A Story of an Original



Original source: U.S. Air Force

See SHOWS page 7 Tuskegee Airmen - Circa May 1942 to Aug 1943 Location unknown, likely Southern Italy or North Africa.

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Korean vets chapter wants you

FOR VETERAN VOICE

The Korean War Veterans Association Chapter 106 is looking to increase its membership.

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A. Service was within Korea including territorial waters and airspace at any time, Sept. 3, 1945 to present, or

See KOREAN page 9

SHOWS from page 6

Tuskegee Pilot Lt. Col. Hiram E. Mann.”

“We’re going to have at least (Mann), and we hope a couple of the Tuskegee Airmen with us,” Davis said.

As America prepared for the possibility of war in 1940, Congress enacted the Selective Training and Service Act. It partially eased racial discrimination in the military and opened the way for blacks to train for the Army Air Forces. The Tuskegee Institute, founded in 1881 by Booker T. Washington, got involved with training them. It was the only school where the black pilots trained during the war.

“Led by (Capt. Benjamin O. Davis Jr.), Tuskegee’s first group of five men graduated as USAAF fighter pilots on March 7, 1942,” the Air Force museum’s website reads. “The 99th Pursuit Squadron added personnel and trained for a year before finally being sent to North Africa in the spring of 1943. They were attached to the 33rd Fighter Group at Fordjouna, Tunisia.

“Flying P-40 Warhawks, the 99th first saw combat on June 2, 1943, as the Allies secured the Italian island of Pantellaria. The unit scored its first aerial

victory against the Luftwaffe on July 2 when Lt. Charles B. Hall shot down a Focke Wulf Fw 190 on his eighth mission.”

There was much criticism leveled at the black airmen, but they stayed in the skies. Mann will probably have a lot of stories for those who want to hear them at the airshow.

The airshow will be opened 8:30 to 5 p.m. all days.

“We start flying at about 12:45 in the afternoon (all days),” Davis said.

This year is the 70th anniversary of Operation Overlord, more often called D-Day. The airshow’s doing a tribute.

“The other thing we’re going to do — our flagship, the TICO Belle, a 1942 Douglas C-47 transport, it’ll open the airshow as always. We’re going to drop some air troops dressed in full (World War II) regalia. She’s going to be doing the same mission she did on D-Day.”

The Belle is one of the nearly 12,000 Allied planes in the sky over France on June 6, 1944. The skydivers will do a static line drop, just as the men in her on D-Day did.

“The idea is in six or seven seconds to get 15 paratroopers out that door,” Davis said.

That’s how about 18,000 paratroopers arrived in France on

D-Day.

Also on deck for the show is the GEICO Skytypers.

“They fly very close formations,” Davis said. “They write messages in the sky with engine smoke.”

There’s lots more. For example —

“A fella named Matt Younkin,” Davis said.

Younkin’s claim to fame isn’t flying aerobatics. It’s flying them in a 1943 Beechcraft Breech 18, a plane never made with aerobatics in mind.

“It’s sort of like me showing up with a ‘37 Ford at the drag races,” Davis said.

Air acts are exactly what you expect at an airshow. Davis said there’ll be something new on the ground this year.

“We have a full up carnival for kids,” Davis said.

The Vero Beach Air Show will take off with the Blue Angels on May 10 and 11. That’ll be at the Vero Beach Municipal Airport, 3400 Cherokee Drive.

More about the TICO show is on the web at www.nbbd.com/festivals/warbird. Information about the Vero Beach Air Show is at www.veroairshow.com. To find out more about the Blue Angels, visit www.blueangels.navy.mil.





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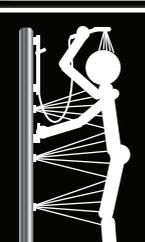
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Accepted as a brother born out of time

“You’ve seen Death. We’re brothers.”
Remember those words. They’re important.

On Tuesday, Feb. 4, the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1041, Stuart, gave me one of the greatest tributes of my life: an honorary membership in the VVA.

So, why’s it important to a guy who was 6 when direct American involvement ended in Vietnam?

On June 4, 1983, at about 5:30 p.m., a bomb I’d made exploded a couple meters from me. The detonation warning came too short to do anything but throw the explosive and try to shield my older brother from the coming blast.

In a blink, I went from a foolish, hurting, angry teenager to a young man fighting for his life. Shrapnel to the chest that broke off some rib. In *Veteran Voice*, that’s all the explanation needed.

After a deafening thump there was no sound besides a growing ringing. My vision was obscured — like looking through an emptied glass soda bottle. It quickly faded altogether. Powder burn to the right side of my face was what



Patrick McCallister

probably took it. The shockwave had crushed and twisted three fingers and a thumb.

I was dying. At 16, my life was emptying out of me. I was dying in a dark, lonely world with only a loud ring to keep me company. Before I lost my sight, I’d seen my body covered in red, my chest ripped, and my fingers mangled. I can behold it in my mind with as much clarity as the first time

**“Brother!” he called.
I stopped. Thought to keep going. Then turned to the approaching footsteps. There stood a guy with the green, yellow and red badge of knowing pain on his hat, or shirt. Somewhere. His age was right on for being a Vietnam War veteran.**

**“No,” I said. “I’m way too young to be a Vietnam veteran.”
He looked deeply into me for a moment.**

“You’ve seen Death,” he said. “We’re brothers.”

I’d seen it with my temporarily unblinded eye. I frequently do.

I paid a blessedly small price for survival. My sight returned to apparent normal. My hearing took a loss, but I can hear well enough to get quotes right. I have enough of my fingers that I can type for a living. There’s no permanent, debilitating heart damage anyone’s detected.

But I paid a price.

At times I’ll feel the explosion. Sometimes it’s a background sensation, barely perceptible. Other times, it’s like the damned thing is happening. Like one day in 1987.

For some reason I can’t figure out, I opted to go see a Vietnam War movie. It’s not like anyone’s going to encounter an up-close-and-personal explosion in a Vietnam movie, right? Well, that scene came. It was almost incidental to everything else happening on the screen. A soldier grabbed something booby trapped.

Then BOOM!

It was 1987 for most everyone else in the theater, but not for me. It was 1983. I was back at

my home on the St. Johns River. I was back at the moment when I’d meet Death. As far as my mind was concerned, I’d just been hit by another explosion.

I grunted and vomited into the popcorn box in my hands. I snapped up, rushed for the exit, and tossed my embarrassment — a soiled box of popcorn — into the trash along the way out. As I crossed the lobby, his voice boomed.

“Brother!” he called.

I stopped. Thought to keep going. Then turned to the approaching footsteps. There stood a guy with the green, yellow and red badge of knowing pain on his hat, or shirt. Somewhere. His age was right on for being a Vietnam War veteran.

“No,” I said. “I’m way too young to be a Vietnam veteran.”

He looked deeply into me for a moment.

“You’ve seen Death,” he said.

“We’re brothers.”

Those words thundered in my brain. We were connected, he and I.

See MCCALLISTER page 9

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— Rev. Roszon and Vivian
Robert’s son and daughter-in-law

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HONORARY from page 3

stopped,” McCallister said.

“The doctor who saved my life was himself a Vietnam medical veteran who had experience with removing shrapnel and treating those kinds of injuries.

“I owe Vietnam vets my life — literally.”

In addition to writing for *Veteran Voice* (since November 2012), McCallister also writes for sister publications *Your Voice News & Views* (since January 2013), as well as for *The Veteran*, a VVA publication, and *Paraplegia News*, a publication of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. In addition to writing about VVA Chapter 1041, he has written extensively about several other area chapters.

Chapter 1041 is an active one. Coming up on March 1 will be its 3rd annual Sporting Clay Fun Shoot, at the South Florida Shooting Club in Palm City. The event, which will feature breakfast and lunch, prizes and

a raffle, will help raise money so the chapter can fulfill its motto: “Veterans Helping Veterans — Leaving No One Behind.”

In fact, membership in the VVA is growing appreciably, according to Humphries.

“We’ve got 26 chapters now, and by June we’ll have 28 or 29,” he said. “Over the last year, we’ve added 800 members.”

Humphries said he tries to visit each chapter in the state at least once a year — and if he can’t visit them, one of his vice presidents will.

On visiting Chapter 1041, he said he was “honored to take part” in welcoming McCallister into the VVA fold.

For McCallister, becoming an honorary member of Chapter 1041 is putting an official seal on what has been a long relationship. Now, it is his own “band of brothers.”

For information on Chapter 1041’s shooting event, contact Steve Dame, (772) 323-4710, or Michael Lazarus, (772) 631-4706, or visit www.vva1041.org.

KOREAN from page 7

B. Service was outside of Korea, June 25, 1950 to Jan. 31, 1955.

Our current aim to help all veterans who are in need of assistance in all types endeavors. We provide funds for the homeless, for transportation of disabled vets to the VA Clinic, education seminars for our school children, and a prime contributor to the Fisher House Foundation, a network of comfort homes where military and veterans' families can stay at no cost while a loved one is receiving treatment. The facility serving the West Palm Beach VA medical center is located at 7305

N. Military Trail, Route 122 in West Palm Beach.

We need the help of any concerned citizens with a legitimate interest in the affairs of the Korean War Veterans of America and wishes to support our aims. These persons can be provided an associate membership.

Chapter 106 meets on the third Tuesday of each month at the Disabled American Veterans building on 11560 S.W. California Blvd. in Port St Lucie. Come join us at 10:30 a.m. Look forward to meeting your fellow veterans and enjoy lunch on us. For more information, call Harold Trieber (561) 568-9347.

MCCALLISTER from page 8

Maybe he was judging by the bright blue spots on my face back then — an unmistakable testament to my brush with a powder-based bomb. Maybe he was judging from my reaction to the movie scene. Maybe those who've narrowly escaped from Death's fierce, harsh grip really are brothers who can recognize each other when they look for it.

"You've seen Death. We're brothers."

He threw his arms around me, a young man who'd cried only once or twice in the previous seven or eight years. I started balling. I was carrying a life-taking pain and didn't even know it. He pulled me close and I nestled against his strong shoulder and sobbed.

Was the man an angel sent to help heal a young lad struggling with an event none of his peers could yet grasp? Maybe. I've wondered. What I know is from that moment I've felt the greatest affinity for Vietnam veterans. One had taken a part of my pain to share his strength with me.

I don't remember his name, if I ever learned it. He became every Vietnam veteran to me.

I've clowned with leaders in the Vietnam Veterans of America that they should make me an honorary member for all the stories I've written about them. When George Mittler, president of the VVA's 1041, Stuart, called to tell me I was getting that very honor —

I don't have words for the emotions.

I'd never told any Vietnam veterans this story before the night I was made an honorary member of the VVA. None that I can recall, at least. It's to my shame that I've never told them about their brother helping a hurting youth who'd seen Death. Now I have. Now I have, brothers.

And I thank each and every one of you for holding me that night.

Patrick "Paddy" McCallister writes weekly for Veteran Voice.

Membership in the VVA is open to all veterans who served in Vietnam from February 1961 to May 1975, and all veterans who served from August 1964 to May 1975. Meetings are on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. They're held at Sewall's Point Town Hall, 1 S. Sewall's Point Road. To learn more about the VVA Chapter 1041, visit www.vva1041.com.

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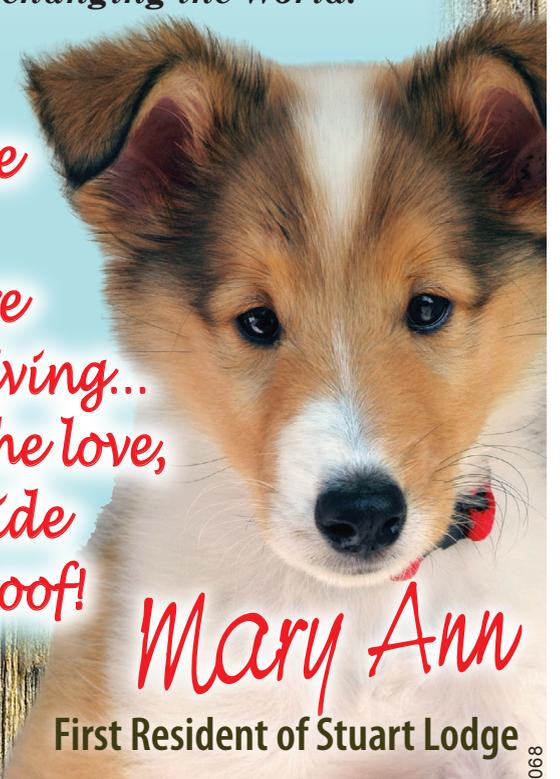
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Staff photo by Mary Kemper

Donna Carlsen, center, recipient of the Four Chaplains Legion of Honor award Feb. 2 at St. Lucie Catholic Church, is congratulated by members of the Jack Ivy Detachment of the Marine Corps League, Port St. Lucie, following the award ceremony. From left are Dan DePagnier, who is also chairman of the United Veterans of St. Lucie County; member Dick Lusighan; Carlsen; John Berry, junior vice commandant; and Greg Mann, sergeant-at-arms.

Port St. Lucie vet honored with Four Chaplains award

Mary Kemper

STAFF WRITER

mkemper@veteranvoiceweekly.com

On Feb. 2, 1943, there were four men, all Army chaplains, on the troop transport ship USAT Dorchester, headed to Greenland, along with 900 others on board.

A German U-boat torpedoed the ship, and she sank. When she went down, the four chaplains went with her — and into history.

Their legacy continues to this day, as can be seen in a memorial in Sebastian that was dedicated Feb. 15, 2012.

The legacy also includes an award, called the Legion of Honor, given by the Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation. It is given once a year to someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty to help his or her fellow veterans, without regard to faith, race or creed.

This year, on Sunday (Feb. 2), the Four Chaplains Legion of Honor award went to Donna Carlsen of Port St. Lucie.

It was presented at St. Lucie Catholic Church, Port St. Lucie. A gathering of at least 100 participated, representing friends, family and representatives of veterans' groups from all of the armed forces.

The former veteran services coordinator for St. Lucie County, Carlsen served in the Army as a truck driver from 1992 to 1999, including a tour in Somalia.

She is blonde, slim and fit, and she is outspoken and friendly. She has an energy that is immediately felt — restless, focused, "on to the next thing."

She has held an astonishing

number of simultaneous positions, all of which are veteran-oriented.

A short list:

- The WorkForce Board
- Operation Enduring Freedom
- Disabled American Veterans (she is the post commander of Chapter 113)
- Member, American Legion
- Member, United Veterans of St. Lucie County
- Participant and organizer, One-Stop Job Fair

When Carlsen was veteran services coordinator, her job involved connecting veterans with the benefits that, many times, they didn't know they were entitled to. At times, she said, it was a tedious task, and she had to be patient with clients who were argumentative at times, and at other times lost and bewildered.

"I'll tell you why she received this recognition," said Daniel DePagnier, chairman of the United Veterans of St. Lucie County.

"It's because of all her service to veterans when she was with the county," DePagnier said.

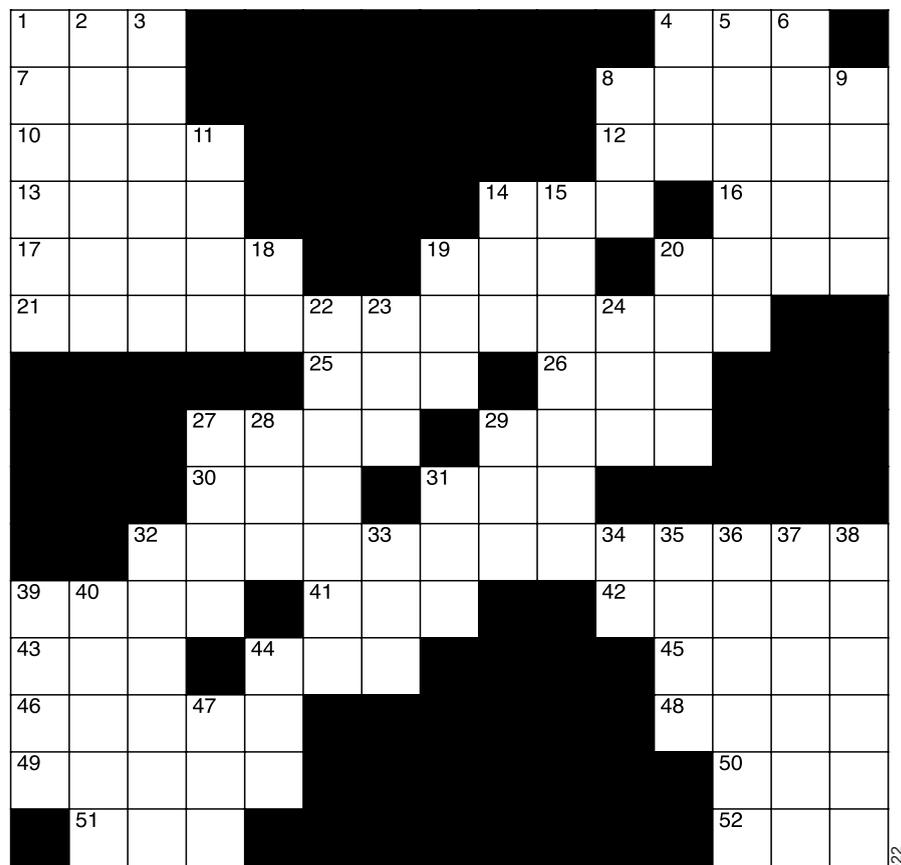
"It was tremendous. She helped more people than you could ever count."

DePagnier said that in order to become eligible for the award, the Four Chaplains organization accepts applications from all organizations, at the regional level, able to put forward a nominee, overseen by a central committee. As many as 25 different veterans' organizations send in applications, he said, which can include more than one designee.

"Donna was our clear designee."

See CHAPLAINS page 11

CROSSWORD



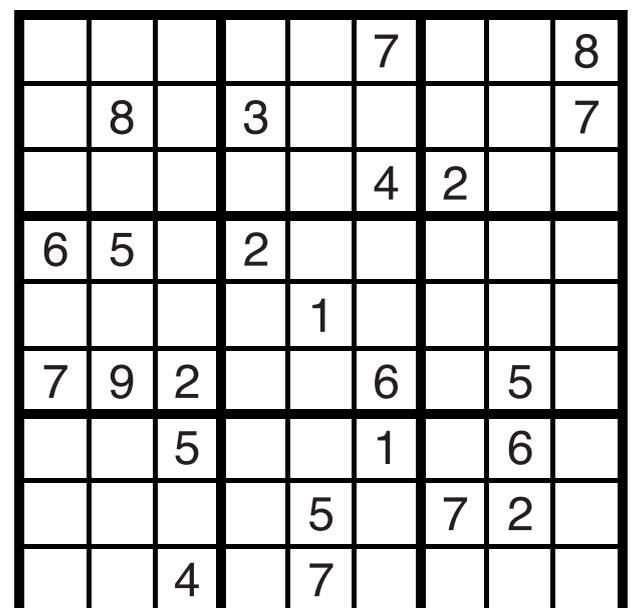
CLUES ACROSS

1. Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
4. Licenses TV stations
7. Brain wave test
8. Rowing fulcrum peg
10. Arabian Gulf
12. 55121 MN
13. Trash & tin
14. Actress Farrow
16. Egg of a louse
17. Lesion
19. A Scottish cap
20. Poi vegetable
21. Illness from neurosis
25. Moving truck
26. Gallivant
27. Millisecond
29. Trigonometric function
30. Pinna
31. Loud noise
32. Small auto accidents
39. Thin wire nail
41. Many subconsciousness
42. Rocket scientist Werner Von
43. Albanian currency
44. Sum up
45. Grapefruit & tangerine hybrid
46. SE Asia palm genus
48. Drew off fluid
49. Severe & cruel
50. Before
51. It never sleeps
52. Used to be United ___

CLUES DOWN

4. Residential mortgage authority
5. High quality French brandy
6. Gilbert O'Sullivan song
8. Steeped beverage
9. Prefix used in anatomy, biology
11. Nanosecond (abbr.)
14. Mayan language
15. Create mentally
18. Atomic #45
19. 2000 pounds
20. Oceanic rise or fall
22. Did to excess
23. Pouch or baglike structure
24. Browning of the skin
27. A fitting reward (archaic)
28. Diego, Francisco or Anselmo
29. Cognate
31. Physicians
32. Duplicity
33. Doctor of Education
34. E. Canadian province
35. Beat thoroughly
36. \$10 gold coins
37. Monarchs or dictators
38. Duke: O'The Silver Fox O
39. Dull claptrap
40. Showed old movie
44. Express pleasure
47. Reciprocal of a sine

SUDOKU



CHAPLAINS from page 10

No doubt," he said.

In order to be nominated, a person has to be judged to have gone "above and beyond the call of duty" when serving veterans, according to The Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation on their website, fourchaplains.org.

DePagnier said Carlsen "saved many lives, through her efforts at connecting a whole lot of veterans with the vital services they need."

Her efforts to help veterans cope with the maze of benefits available to them — in many cases, medical issues — that they might not have known about helped save their lives, DePagnier said.

The story of the Four Chaplains gives a clue to just how important a mission it is to help fellow vets.

In 1943, it was dangerous, to say the least, for troop ships to travel from the United States to Europe. Nearly 2,000 vessels were sunk, with losses of lives in the thousands, and cargo estimated in the tens of millions of dollars.

When the German submarine U-223 torpedoed the Dorchester, only 230 of the 904 men aboard the ship were rescued. It was but one incident in so many. In those days, if you lived to cross the Atlantic, you were lucky.

What made it different is what the four men chose to do as soon as the Dorchester was hit.

"The four chaplains ... were among the first on deck, calming the frightened men and handing out life jackets.

"When they ran out, they took off their own and placed them on waiting soldiers without regard to faith or race. Approximately 18 minutes from the explosion, the ship went down.

"They were the last to be seen by witnesses; they were standing arm-in-arm on the hull of the ship, each praying in his own way for the care of the men." *immortal-chaplains.org*.

The men were friends from way back — they met at the Army Chaplains School at Harvard University, where they prepared for assignments in the European theater, sailing on board USAT Dorchester to report to their new assignments.

The four chaplains were:

- George L. Fox, a Methodist minister, of Lewistown, Pa., who lied about his age to serve in World War I, served in the medical corps and was highly decorated. After he earned his divinity degree in 1942, Fox volunteered to serve as an Army chaplain. He began active duty on Aug. 8, 1942, the same day his son, Wyatt, enlisted in the Marine Corps.

- Alexander Goode, Jewish, originally from Brooklyn, N.Y., a rabbi who had originally applied to become a Navy chaplain in January 1941, but was not accepted. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, he applied to the Army,

receiving his appointment as a chaplain on July 21, 1942. Goode went on active duty and was selected for the Chaplains School at Harvard, where he made friends with the other three men.

- Clark Poling, of Auburndale, Mass., a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, had decided to enter the Army, wanting to face the same danger as others. His father, who had served as a World War I chaplain, told him chaplains risk and give their lives as much as other soldiers — and with that knowledge, he applied to serve as an Army chaplain, accepting an appointment as a chaplain with the 131st Quartermaster Truck Regiment, reporting to Camp Shelby, Hattiesburg, Miss.

- John P. Washington, Catholic, of Newark, N.J., who entered the priesthood in 1935. Between that year and 1941, he served in three parishes in New Jersey. Shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack, he was appointed a chaplain in the Army.

Notable recipients of the Legion of Honor awards include presidents Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Celebrities who received the award include Bob Hope, John Glenn, Mickey Rooney, Martha Raye, James Michener, Marian Anderson, C. Everett Koop, Tommy Lasorda and Shirley Chisholm, "as well as deserving military personnel, veterans, and civilians from all walks of life," according to fourchaplains.org.

How does it feel to be in such company?

"I'm honored. Humbled. And very grateful," Carlsen said.

During her tenure as veteran services coordinator, Carlsen estimated she was able to help "more than 12,000 people."

"When I started, the database had 6,000 people in it. When I left, there were 23,000 — and that's just veterans," not their families and children, she said.

The award ceremony is mandated by the Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation to take place on or near the same date as when the four men went down with the ship. A reading of their story is also required, so that their story will never be lost, according to fourchaplains.org.

The name of the recipient is required to be kept secret. Carlsen herself had no idea she was receiving the award until after the reading of the four chaplains' story.

When her name was called, Carlsen burst into tears, amid loud applause.

Master of ceremonies Vince LaValle, chairman of the United Veterans of Port St. Lucie, said, "It couldn't have gone to a better person."

Carlsen said she will continue doing whatever she can, wherever she is, to help veterans.

"I will continue to respectfully serve those who have honorably served," she said.

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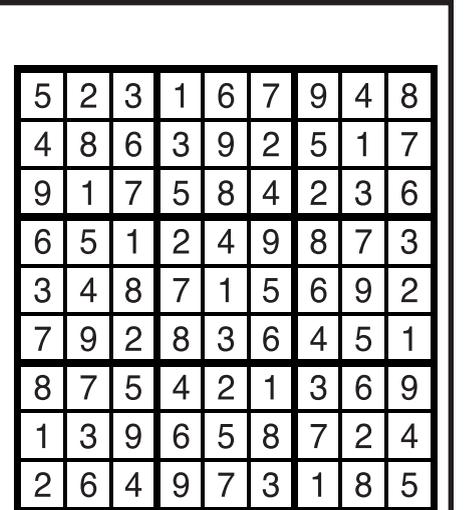
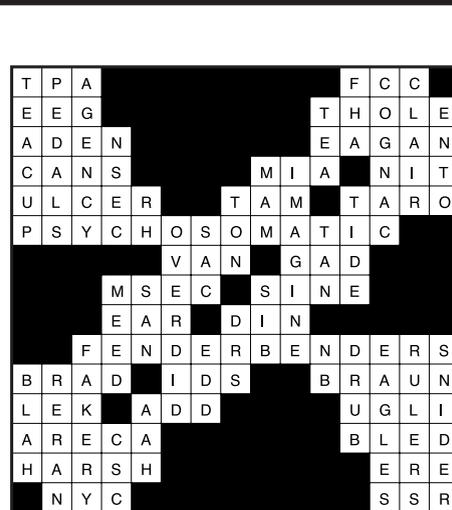
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