



The Sumner Sentinel ©

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After 16 Years, Congress May Finally Rectify A Putrid Disservice To Blue Water Navy Vets

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By Roger Chesley, The Virginian-Pilot

Noxious fumes from a 16-year-old decision by federal bureaucrats are finally beginning to dissipate for the Navy's so-called "Blue Water" vets. They may be on course to again receive benefits for their exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

Shame on officials at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for placing sailors in this predicament in the first place. A 2002 decision by the agency cynically elevated funding over science, making it tougher for vets to get health care decades after that misbegotten war.

It was as if too many of these sailors were still breathing, and the feds didn't want to be on the hook to assist them. That ploy broke faith with our service members, who were harmed by the stuff our own country dumped on them.

A belated congressional reprieve emerged in late July.

The U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill restoring coverage for diseases tied to exposure from the herbicide. House members voted unanimously for the bill.

That's rare in the highly charged, partisan arena Congress has become, and it's an indication lawmakers knew just how badly they needed to act. They also provided a way to pay for the coverage.

The bill next goes to the Senate, where Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga. and chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, has said he'd prioritize the legislation.

It's none too soon for the tens of thousands of Blue Water vets still alive, or for the spouses who may survive them and be eligible for benefits, too.

"We were certainly heartened" by the unanimous vote, John B. Wells told me Monday. He's executive director of Military-Veterans Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that's been fighting to restore benefits.

Wells is a retired Navy commander who was a chief engineer on several ships. He says he has documented proof of Agent Orange's presence in Nha Trang Harbor, 20 years after the war.

Here's some background:

Blue Water vets didn't set foot on Vietnamese soil, where the spraying of the herbicide defoliated the forest cover used by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces.

Still, Agent Orange washed out to sea.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . .

Greetings Everyone

I hope this message finds everyone doing well. It has been quite an eventful year of weather, so far. In Thailand the rain trapped eleven boys and their leader in a cave; the East Coast has been hammered, with torrential rains causing lots of flooding; African dust invading Texas; record hot temperatures in Texas and around the country; tragic wildfires in the West, even shutting down Yosemite National Park.



Frank DiBello

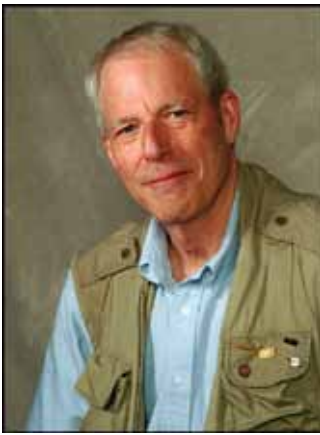
Hopefully none of us were impacted directly.

Glad to hear a certain chaplain celebrated his 79th birthday on July 22 with family and friends. ALSO, glad to hear our Editor has completed his rehabilitation and is doing better.

Branson Reunion is coming together; looking forward to this Reunion in The Most Patriotic City in the USA. There is so much to do there, so check out your interests on the Internet. I suggest you allow a few days extra stay so that you can take in some of the many attractions in the area. Connie and I plan to devote a day to Springfield, Mo. to visit the Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium, spanning 350,000 square feet and more than 1.5 miles of trails. Wonders of Wildlife takes you on a journey through immersive habitats that entertain and educate, while sharing the story

See President, Page 3





By Don Hayden TM3 (1961-62)

When I think about even a low level teckie like myself (compared to millennials) being able to hold a tablet or cell phone in my hands and watch a movie I think of days gone by where I would have scoffed to think that possible.

When I was a lad of about eight and spent my summers with my uncle and grandmother, I got to see a movie once a week when this big truck would roll into town and back up to an open lot next to the feed store.

The store had an “L-shaped” brick wall which was painted white to project the movie onto and the open lot would be filled with folding chairs.

Large sheets of canvas covered access to keep non-payers out.

The switchboard office (more about this later) was inside the movie so the operator go to see the movie for free.

I think we grumbled about having to pay 15 cents to attend the show.

But it didn't matter what it was - a western, a romance, a mystery, whatever.

About once a month we'd get to go to a bigger town and could be a little more choosy about to watch.

I don't have to go back to my childhood to realize what a boon the cell phone is - just back to my newspaper days - especially The Tulsa Tribune (an afternoon edition).

Most stories were published around noon which meant calling stories in by whatever means you could find (usually a pay phone).

Wow.

With a cell phone you could just go to a park, put it on speaker phone and dictate a story.

When I was that kid I was talking about earlier, it was all “party.”

However you could determine if a call was for you depending on how many rings there and what

duration they were.

If the phone rang three long times, it was for my uncle (Frank) and grandmother. If it was two longs and two shorts, it was for my other uncle (Delmar).

If you wanted to make a long distance call you would make a really long ring (hand crank); the operator would ask who you wanted to call and she would make the connection.

I have one of those dinosaurs - all the contacts shown on a piece of paper on a little shelf below the mouthpiece.

President of America's most significant conservationists, throughout

Continued from Page 1 history. Google WondersofWildlife.org (all one word) for all the Info and pictures. For directions and more Info, call 888-222-6060.

If you haven't already made your reservations, please consider doing it early so that Pete and I can negotiate better pricing on our reunion as well as planning any activities. If you wait until the last minute, you hurt our bargaining powers. If you have to cancel, the Hotel gives you ample time to cancel without penalties.

Take care and Fair Winds and A Following Sea to all.

Agent Orange

Continued from Page 1

There, Navy vessels sucked in potentially contaminated water and distilled it for use aboard ships. The process concentrated the toxin.

We now know, of course, that Agent Orange is linked to serious illnesses, including Type 2 diabetes, prostate cancer, ischemic heart disease and psychological problems.

Despite all of that, the VA in 2002 started denying ailing Blue Water Navy vets compensation for Agent Orange exposure.

It said – with a straight face – that the placement of a comma in the original legislation made a distinction between those who served on the ground in Vietnam, and those who served elsewhere.

That's akin to thinking the herbicide would magically dissipate at the water's edge. Or that its appearance in water would somehow neutralize it.

Let's remember: The United States sprayed millions of gallons of this stuff during the Vietnam War. Agent Orange didn't discriminate between U.S. servicemen or Viet Cong fighters, civilian peasants or warriors.

The herbicide continues to exact a toll decades after the war's end.

Yet, the VA has continued to make certain individuals jump through hoops to prove they were harmed by the herbicide.

The House has done its part, and I hope the Senate will follow. That's little comfort for the vets who have suffered for years – both from the pernicious defoliant, and the VA officials who contemptuously denied them help.

Jon C. Randall - Vietnam Combat Veteran and Sumner shipmate was exposed to the effects of Agent Orange

Over the years, "little things" took place in my body, things that were supposed to work that fell apart. Removal of my Gall Bladder, my wife's miscarriage of my only possible child, explosions

and flashes in my eyes and head when laying down to sleep, the loss of all teeth, and a host of other things. <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/conditions/index.asp> (copy and paste)

In Feb 2010 I had a major heart attack on top of a telephone pole working for AT&T in Wisconsin. When I woke up was met by my supervision in the recovery room.

A co-worker who was a Vet suggested that I contact the VA and try to get things done there in Milwaukee.

In November I had lung cancer and on Christmas Eve had 2/3ds of my right lung removed. Up to this point, all surgeries were done by civilian doctors as the VA fought it all the way.

It was there that the VA listed me as possible Agent Orange but wouldn't cooperate or try to help.

But the VA won't give him benefits because he never set foot on Vietnam's shores.

"They turned me down. They said I didn't have boots on the ground,"

Another Sumner Vietnam casualty-Joe Dravick-has been through the same song and dance.

Some studies have shown it's possible these veterans were exposed through their ships' drinking water. A 2002 Australian study found that the distillation process used aboard American and Australian Navy ships could have enriched some harmful chemicals in the herbicide.

Amanda Maddox, spokeswoman for Sen. Johnny Isakson, R- Ga., chairman of the Senate's Veterans' Affairs Committee, said he'd "prioritize" the legislation for committee consideration.

If and when bill does pass the Senate it still has to be approved by President Donald Trump and signed into law.

USS ALLEN M. SUMNER SHIP STORE ORDER INVOICE

Qtn.	Description	Price
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	Scrambled Egg patches <u>for Officers only Commanger & Above</u> /with hat purchase	Free
	White Golf Shirt Embroidered w/Ship Patch (Circle Size - S, M, L, XL) Add \$10 for 2XL/3XL	\$25.00
	White T-Shirt w/Ship on Front (Circle Size - S, M, L, XL)	\$20.00
	All Sweatshirts (Circle Size - S, M, L, XL)	\$25.00
	Sumner Ship's Patch (Specify Sui Generis or Woody Woodpecker)	\$ 5.00
	Sumner Hat/Lapel/Tie Tac Pin	\$ 6.00
	Sumner License Plate bracket/holder	\$ 5.00
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	Zippo Ziplite battery pack (Flashlight Replacement for Unused Lighter	\$ 2.50
	Sumner Commemorative Challenge Coin (Approximately 1½ inches in diameter)	\$10.00
	US Navy Tabletop Drink Coasters (6 for \$20.00)	\$ 5.00
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	MIA/POW money clip	\$ 6.00
	Petty Officer window sticker	\$ 1.00
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	For additional items go to www.dd-692.com Click the "reunion" tab then the "Ship Store" line	
Total Enclosed		

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 (A/C) _____ PH # _____ E-Mail _____

Send Orders To:
 Sumner Assn.
 301 Park Lane
 North Syracuse, NY 13212

See Next Page for New Shipping Charges for Ship's Store Items

Receiving Hard Copies of the Sumner Sentinel

Note to shipmates, wives and widows, especially those with an “L” designation on their address label:

Hard copies of the Sumner Sentinel are only mailed to those with an “L” designation on their address label (unless they have an E-Mail address) or to those members whose dues are current and who have no E-Mail address.

All other members will receive issues electronically.

Alternatively, anyone may view/print issues by going online to www.dd-692.com and clicking on the “Reunion” tab.

This helps save the association’s printing costs.

Each year (in the November-December and January-February issues), hard copies will be mailed to everyone reminding them that dues are due (except those who have renewal dates for several future years).

If you don’t want to keep receiving it, let the editor, whose address is on the back page, know.

Thanks, The Editor

REUNION ASSISTANCE FUND

Are YOU a former Sumner shipmate ?

Have YOU ever wanted to go to one of our Annual Reunions ?

For those shipmates who are in need of financial assistance, the Association has created a Special Committee to help YOU out. The funds available come from donations of the Sumner crew in the hope YOU will join us.

The Fund is managed in strict confidentiality and no one other than the Committee will ever know of these transactions.

If interested and to find out more about the Fund, please contact one of the following Committee Members:

Dave Robson DAVE@DD-692.com

(904) 287-7854

Jose Garcia JOSE@DD-692.com

(305) 431-3027

Dale Surber DALE@DD-692.com

(727) 480-3646

To donate to the Fund and assist your shipmates, make your contributions (any amount is greatly appreciated) by check and send to:

USS AM Sumner Reunion Association

301 Park Ln.

North Syracuse, NY 13212-2143

Mark the check and/or envelope “for the Reunion Assistance Fund”

New shipping charges associated with ship’s store purchases

Up to \$10.....	\$ 4.00
\$10.01 to \$25.00.....	\$ 7.00
\$25.01 to \$50.00.....	\$ 8.00
\$50.01 to \$75.00.....	\$10.00
\$75.01 to \$100.00.....	\$12.00
\$100.01 to \$200.00.....	\$14.00
\$200.01 to \$300.00.....	\$16.00
\$300.00 and over	\$20.00

Checks made payable to Sumner Reunion Association.

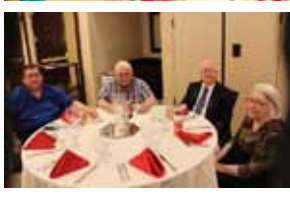
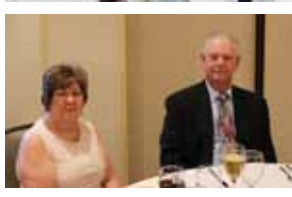
Did You Know?

The oldest camera was sold at the auction in Vienna in

2007, setting all-time overall record and having become the most expensive camera ever sold at auction. This rarity was called “Daguerreotype Susses Freres” was sold for nearly 800,000 U.S. dollars. The starting price was 100 000 euros.

PHOTO GALLERY REUNION MEMORIES VOL. II SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

*By
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