



THE WORD



Volume 7: Issue 1

January 2013

*The Official Newsletter of the Black Marine Reunions
We Served, We Endured, We Persevered
1942 - 2013*

Purpose:

This Newsletter provides information about Black Marines, to Black Marines as Black Marines see it.

Topics are:

- ***“Muster”*** *To give account for all persons on the Mailing List!*
 - *Illness, Deaths, etc.*
- ***“Events”***, *Provide notice of scheduled events relative to Marines!*
 - *Reunions, Meetings, Conventions, etc.*
- ***“Notes from the members”***
- ***“Sea Stories and downright Marine Lies”***
No jokes, because we just don’t know any! (Smile)

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***2013 Black Marine
Reunion Reminder***

Registration for the 2013 Reunion ends March 1, 2013.

Reunion payments must be received by **(March 1, 2013)**.

It is important that payment is received by this date to ensure an accurate head count for the Hotel to plan for food and banquet rooms. Also, the Reunion Planners must begin to finalize their planning efforts and meet contracts with vendors and suppliers. For those who may have misplaced your invitation letter you can visit our website www.blackmarinereunion.com and download/or read details regarding the reunion.

We ask that you help us in finalizing the planning so that we can be successful in showing you a Louisiana Goodtime in New Orleans. **(The Big Easy)**

This will be our 5th Reunion but most of all it will be our first Decade as an Organization.

If you have not registered for the reunion, please take the time and complete the form and submit it before March 1, 2013.

The Gator

***News from the Membership
and Other Sources***

Thoughts for 2013

As I was lying in bed pondering the problems of the world, I rapidly realized that I don't really give a rat's hiney. It's the tortoise life for me!

1. If walking is good for your health, the postman would be immortal.
2. A whale swims all day, only eats fish, drinks water, and is fat.
3. A rabbit runs and hops and only lives 15 years.
4. A tortoise doesn't run and does nothing, yet it lives for 450 years. And you tell me to exercise?? I don't think so.

I'm retired. Go around me.

God grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked, the good fortune to run into the ones I do, and the eyesight to tell the difference.

Now that I'm older here's what I've discovered:

1. I started out with nothing, and I still have most of it.
2. My wild oats have turned into prunes and all-bran.
3. I finally got my head together, and now my body is falling apart.
4. Funny, I don't remember being absent-minded.
5. Funny, I still don't remember being absent-minded.



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6. If all is not lost, where is it?
7. It is easier to get older than it is to get wiser.
8. Some days, you're the dog; some days you're the hydrant.
9. I wish the buck stopped here; I sure could use a few.
10. Kids in the back seat cause accidents.
11. Accidents in the back seat cause kids.
12. It's hard to make a comeback when you haven't been anywhere.
13. The only time the world beats a path to your door is when you're in the bathroom.
14. If God wanted me to touch my toes, he'd have put them on my knees.
15. When I'm finally holding all the cards, why does everyone want to play chess?
16. Its not hard to meet expenses . . . they're everywhere.
17. The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth.
18. These days, I spend a lot of time thinking about the hereafter . . . I go somewhere to get something, and then wonder what I'm hereafter
19. Funny, I don't remember being absent-minded.

Smile!!! Now doesn't that feel better to have such a great attitude to begin the year?

Tax Preparation Help

There are two programs run by the IRS that can help active duty military members and their families and all seniors with preparing their Income Tax returns.

The first is the VITA Program, which generally offers free tax help to people who make \$51,000 or less and need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals in local communities.

The second is the TCE Program which offers free tax help for all with priority assistance to people who are 60 years of age and older, specializing in questions about pensions and retirement issues unique to seniors. IRS-certified volunteers who provide tax counseling are often retired individuals associated with non-profit organizations that receive grants from the IRS.

For more information on these programs go to this IRS [website www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) to find a VITA/TCE site.

Source: TREA: The Enlisted Assn. News For The Enlisted

VA SSA and IRS Cut Red Tape for Veterans and Survivors

Last week the VA announced it is cutting red tape for veterans by eliminating the need for them to complete an annual Eligibility Verification Report (EVR). VA will implement a new process for confirming eligibility for benefits, and staff that had been responsible for processing the old form will instead focus on eliminating the compensation claims backlog.

Historically, beneficiaries have been required to complete an EVR each year to ensure their



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pension benefits continued. Under the new initiative, VA will work with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to verify continued eligibility for pension benefits. VA estimates it would have sent nearly 150,000 EVRs to beneficiaries in January 2013. Eliminating these annual reports reduces the burden on Veterans, their families, and survivors because they will not have to return these routine reports to VA each year in order to avoid suspension of benefits. It also allows VA to redirect more than 100 employees that usually process EVRs to work on eliminating the claims backlog.

"Having already instituted an expedited process that enables wounded warriors to quickly access Social Security disability benefits, we are proud to work with our federal partners on an automated process that will make it much easier for qualified Veterans to maintain their VA benefits from year to year," said Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security.

"The IRS is taking new steps to provide critical data to help speed the benefits process for the nation's Veterans and Veterans Affairs," said Beth Tucker, IRS Deputy Commissioner for Operations Support. "The IRS is pleased to be part of a partnership with VA and SSA that will provide needed data quickly and effectively to move this effort forward."

All beneficiaries currently receiving VA pension benefits will receive a letter from VA explaining these changes and providing instructions on how to continue to submit their unreimbursed medical expenses.

Source: NAUS Weekly

Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act

Sponsored by [Rep Joe Wilson](#), South Carolina

Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act - Repeals certain provisions which require the offset of amounts paid in dependency and indemnity compensation from Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities for the surviving spouses of former military personnel who are entitled to military retired pay or who would be entitled to retired pay except for being under 60 years of age.

Prohibits, requiring repayment of certain amounts previously paid to SBP recipients, in the form of a retired pay refund.

Repeals the optional authority of (and instead requires) the Secretary of the military department concerned to pay an annuity to a member's dependent children when there is no eligible surviving spouse.

Directs the Secretary concerned to restore annuity eligibility to a surviving spouse who earlier agreed to transfer such eligibility to a surviving child or children of a member.

Source: NAUS Weekly

New Co-Pays for TRICARE Pharmacy Customers

New co-payments for prescription drugs covered by TRICARE will go into effect soon. The Fiscal Year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act requires TRICARE to increase co-pays on brand name and non-formulary medications that are not filled at military clinics or hospitals.

There is no increase to co-pays for generic medications. Increases will be effective sometime in February, depending on when system changes can be made, and the



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publication of a required Federal Notice. TRICARE Pharmacy co-pays vary based on the class of drug and where beneficiaries choose to fill their prescriptions. The co-pay for generic medications stays at \$5 when a prescription is filled at a network pharmacy. There is no co-pay when generic prescriptions are filled through TRICARE Home Delivery. The new co-pay for a 30-day supply of a brand name medication purchased at a retail network pharmacy will be \$17, up from the current \$12. Beneficiaries using TRICARE Home Delivery will pay \$13 for brand name drugs, up from \$9; however, the Home Delivery price is for a 90-day supply.

The greatest change in co-pays applies to non-formulary medications. The \$25 co-pay for these drugs increases to \$44 at retail pharmacies and \$43 through Home Delivery. The TRICARE Uniform Formulary is a list of all the medications TRICARE covers. For fiscal 2014 and beyond, the new law directs that co-pays increase annually by the same percentage as retiree cost-of-living adjustments. In years when a COLA increase would total less than a dollar, it will be delayed a year and combined with the next adjustment so increases will always be \$1 or more.

Pharmacies at military hospitals and clinics will continue to provide medications with no co-pays. Visit <http://www.tricare.mil/Costs/PrescriptionCosts.aspx> for more details. (Courtesy of TRICARE

Source: TREA ENLISTED ASSN

New VA IG Report Says VA Routinely Overpays Veterans

According to *USA Today*, a new report out by the Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of the Inspector General claims that VA overpaid 12,800 veterans \$943 million from 1993 to 2009. Claims examiners have repeatedly failed to seek follow-up exams in situations where veterans temporarily receive a 100% disability rating while undergoing surgery or recovering from tough illnesses such as cancer.

The VA recognizes that there is a problem and says that they are working to correct it; the House Veterans Affairs Committee plans to hold a hearing on the issue next month. The problem stems from the fact that claims examiners often fail to seek a follow-up medical exam to determine if the veteran's condition has improved and the temporary 100% disability rating should be reduced, according to reports. When the follow-up exam is not performed, veterans who improve or recover can receive hundreds of thousands of dollars in compensation over a number of years for a level of disability they no longer have.

Further, the 100% rating legally bars the VA from recouping overpayments that inspectors say have occurred, according to the VA. One of the reasons these failures are taking place, according to the IG's report, is the workload for claims examiners. The VA currently has a roughly 900,000 claim backlog.

According to the VA, fixes were put in place last July to help ensure follow-up exams are scheduled. In addition, the claims process is to become fully automated this year and claims examiners will automatically be alerted that exams may be necessary. VA claims examiners handled 1.1 million



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compensation requests last year and took an average of 260 days to complete cases.

TREA: The Enlisted Association will continue to monitor this important topic.

VA Paperless Claim System

This week the VA announced the nationwide transition to paperless processing of veterans' disability claims at its regional benefits processing offices is underway. VA is aggressively building a strong foundation for its new electronic claims processing system, called Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS).

As of December 2012, 18 VA regional offices have implemented the new system and are beginning to process newly received compensation claims in an entirely digital format. The VA is on track for full deployment of the system to the remaining 38 regional offices in 2013.

“For our Veterans, VBMS will mean faster, higher-quality and more consistent decisions on claims. We recognize that too many veterans are waiting too long to get the benefits they have earned, and that is unacceptable. This is a decades-old problem,

and we are implementing a robust plan to address it,” said Undersecretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. “For our employees, VBMS will be a more user-friendly system that offers better access to decision-level information, rules-based calculators, and automated tools that help them process claims more consistently.”

VBMS was pilot-tested at select regional offices between 2010 and 2012, with improvements and greater functionality added to system software releases throughout the testing period. In pilot programs, the new system cut the time to process claims nearly in half. The most recent version of VBMS software allows VA claims representatives to:

- establish veterans' claims entirely in a digital environment as “e-folders,”
- receive, store, and view veterans' submitted claim documents electronically,
- identify and track the evidence VA needs from beneficiaries and other outside sources,
- quickly direct claims electronically among regional offices to better match VA's workload with available workforce capacity.

Source: TREA: The Enlisted Association



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Pictured above: Black Marine Reunion member, Gunnery Sergeant Dwight Hall, Retired with Original Montford Point Marines Sergeant James Huger and Sergeant Major Freeman, Retired.

Recently over 400 Montford Point Marines received the Congressional Gold Medal for being among the first blacks to serve in the U.S. Marine Corps; the last branch of the U.S. military to allow blacks to serve. The Montford Point Marines are the Marine Corps' equivalent to the Air Force's Tuskegee Airmen. They are the pioneers who broke the color barrier in the US Marine Corps. They faced much discrimination and harsh treatment while paving the way so that other blacks like me can now serve proudly in the US Marine Corps. The Montford Point Marines were presented with the Congressional Gold

Medal by **President Barack Obama** during a ceremony at the White House in June 2012.

Well Ironically, I had the distinct privilege of meeting Dr. Huger (former Sergeant) and Retired Sergeant Major Freeman at the 237th US Marine Corps Birthday Ball at the Rosen Center on 3 November, 2012. They both were honored guests at the Central Florida Marine Corps Birthday Ball this year. Sgt. Maj Freeman was the oldest Marine present at the young age of 90. He is the one wearing his Congressional Gold Medal in the photograph. I was humbled and awed to be in



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their presence and I was able to thank both of them for their sacrifice and the doors that they opened for me. I thanked them for the opportunity that I now have because without them, I could not have achieved the things that I did while serving in the United States Marine Corps. As they looked at my stripes and my distinguished shields, they both told me how proud they were of me and thankful to see a Marine of Color wearing the Distinguished Shields as they had never seen a black Marine with one. For a long time after they served, blacks were still not allowed to shoot on the US Marine Corps Rifle and Pistol Teams. It was truly an honor to be inspired and to inspire them and allow them to see that all the sacrifice and hard work that they endured were not in vein.

To all Montford Point and Black Marines who paved the way; Semper Fidelis, I am eternally grateful.

I am proud to have served in the United States Marine Corps.

SEMPER FIDELIS.

Dwight B. Hall



TAPS & Sick Bay

All Marines Present and Accounted for Sir / Mam!

1. MGYSGT. James A. Brewer Sr. (Original Montford Pointer) DOB: July 25, 1928, Passed on January 11, 2013, Served in USMC, From 1946-1972
Cremation on Monday, January 14, 2013.
Interment, March 2013
Riverside National Cemetery
22495 Van Buren Blvd
Riverside Ca. 92518

2. 1stSgt John A. Chavis was called home December 27, 2012 he was a board member of Montford Point Marine Association Chapter #8 in LA. Funeral Services were held Tuesday, January 8, 2013 at Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church

Members that remain in Sick Bay are:

Sick Bay:

- 1. GYSGT. Maddie Williams – Bazile** is currently at home recovering from foot surgery and is house bound. She welcomes calls to keep her entertained and keep her mind off her limited mobility. Her phone number is 504-465-0122.
- 2. MGYSGT Alvin Richmond** of Michigan is now at home and continues to improve. He was in good spirits when I spoke with him. He has a positive attitude and determines to continue get better. We are asking that you send prayers and hope for a speedy recovery. I ask that you call him and have a chat. 586-286-9994. ***He’s looking forward to being with us at the reunion in June.***



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3. GYSGT. Jimmy Jones had an episode with his heart failing that caused him to be hospitalized just before Christmas. Because they could not determine what caused him to pass out they took a precautionary step and installed a Pace Maker and put him on observation while he regains his strength. I have spoken to him a few times since the event and he is getting along as well as can be expected. Give him a call and check in on him 252-752-7196.

Reunion Souvenirs

To purchase reunion souvenirs go to www.blackmarinereunion.com and on the Home Page click on eShop which will link you to the items available for purchase. Click on the item (s) and follow the instructions.

Remember when the merchandise are all sold out we will direct you to the manufacturer for additional merchandise. If you have difficulty making a purchase contact, Bobby Wallace direct at 352-259-2435 or thegator1630@comcast.net

Websites of Interest to Visit

Our [Web Master](#) for “Black Marine Reunions”, [Winston Walker](#) has branched out on a new venture doing “weddings and portraits”. Visit his new website at www.imagesbywinston.com.

If you live in Georgia near Lithonia, GA go visit him or visit his website.

Give him the support that he has provided us the Black Marines.

ACES Museum honoring Black and

minority veterans of World War II and their families

<http://www.acesmuseum.org/main.html?src=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.acesmuseum.org%2Findex2.html>

Montford Point Marine Association:
<http://www.montfordpointmarines.com>

Veterans Benefits, News and Information:

Visit this website for information regarding veterans!

<http://www.veteransnetwork.org> or <http://www.veteransnetwork.net>

Dave Culmer is Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Veterans Foundation.

Bill Dozier has a new website that promotes electronic smokeless cigarettes. Go to www.nationalsmokeless.com

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www.ganoderma.com

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