

Veterans Affairs Office of Lexington County



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VET NEWS

November 2008

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NOVEMBER Dates To Remember

- Nov. 2nd Daylight Savings Time Ends
(set your clocks back 1 hour at 2 A.M.)
- Nov. 4th **Election Day**
- Nov. 9th Lexington County Veterans Parade 3 P.M.
- Nov. 10th U.S. Marine Corps Established (1975)
- Nov. 11th Veterans Day-
All County Offices **Closed**
- Nov. 11th Signing of WWI Armistice (1918)
- Nov. 27th Thanksgiving Day
All County Offices **Closed** 27th and 28th



QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"Always vote for principle,
though you may vote alone,
and you may cherish the sweetest
reflection
that your vote is never lost." -

John Quincy Adams

Monument Nears Fundraising Goal

As the Batesburg-Leesville Armed Forces Monument enters the homestretch of construction, the project has raised over \$17,000 of the roughly \$21,000 needed to complete the project. The final number is not yet known as final cost estimates are being secured.

With the foundation of the wall already poured, the monument is ready to take shape and be ready for the public in November to coincide with Veteran's Day. A specific date for the dedication **has not yet been set** as it will be coordinated with other Veterans' Day celebrations in the area.

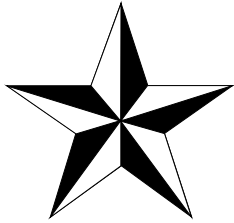
From article written by Jay Hendrix
Twin-City News, October 2, 2008

Did you know...

America's MOST decorated soldier from ANY international war was born in South Carolina? He was! No one has received more decorations than one **Staff Sergeant Joe R. Hooper**. Joe Hooper was born August 8, 1938, in Piedmont, S.C (later moved to Washington State). He received more combat decorations than Alvin York did in World War I or Audie Murphy in World War II. He was the **most highly decorated soldier of the Vietnam War**. During two combat tours, he earned 37 medals, including the Medal of Honor, two Silver Stars, six Bronze Stars and eight Purple Hearts. The Army credited him with killing 115 North Vietnamese.

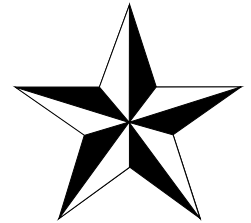
Freedom Isn't Free

LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS' PARADE



Sunday, November 9, 2008

North Lake Drive and South Lake Drive in
Downtown Lexington



**PARADE BEGINS AT 3:00 P.M.
COME HELP HONOR OUR VETERANS !!**

Grand Marshalls: Vietnam Veterans

**A memorial service will be held at the Veterans'
Monument following the parade**

SPONSORED BY:

LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
LADIES AUX. MOPH CHAPTER 402
AMERICAN LEGION POST 7
VFW POST 8738
TOWN OF LEXINGTON

VETERANS DAY—NOVEMBER 11, 2008

Veterans Day originated as “**Armistice Day**” on November 11, 1919, on the first anniversary of the end of World War I. Congress passed a resolution in 1926 for an annual observance, and November 11th became a national holiday beginning in 1938.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed legislation in **1954** to change the name to Veterans Day as a way to honor those who served in all American Wars. The day has evolved into also honoring living military veterans with parades and speeches across the nation. A national ceremony also takes place at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, where the President typically places a wreath.



VET CENTER OPEN HOUSE SCHEDULED



- ⇒ **Monday, Nov. 10th**
- ⇒ **2 to 6 P.M.**
- ⇒ **Find Out about Vet Center services available for our combat veterans**

- ⇒ **Honor our veterans' service to the nation**
- ⇒ **Food and Fellowship**

*The Columbia Vet Center is the readjustment counseling service provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs—and is located at **1513 Pickens Street in downtown Columbia.** Their phone number is **803-765-9944.***





SPOTLIGHT ON OUR VOLUNTEER VAN DRIVERS

PART FIVE IN A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS

ED GAVIN

[Mr. Gavin has been a Lexington County DAV van driver since 2006.]

Q: Where are you from originally?

A: Saugus, Massachusetts (Boston suburb)

Q: If not a native, what brought you to Lexington County and how long have you lived here?

A: After retiring to Virginia in 2001, we moved to Lexington in 2002 to be with our son Todd and his family.

Q: Tell us about your family.

A: My wife, Mary Jane, and I have two sons, Todd and Tom, and four grandchildren, three of them granddaughters, and one grandson.

Q: Are you a Veteran?

A: Yes, an Army Veteran, having served from 1961 to 1964, prior to the Vietnam War.

Q: What is your current or former occupation, if retired?

A: I was an account manager for American Electric Company in Roanoke, Virginia.

Q: What are your hobbies and interests?

A: I enjoy cooking, boating and fishing on Lake Murray. I also follow all the Boston sports teams.

Q: What would be your most memorable van driving experience?

A: I cannot think of just one experience, but of the many stories these folks tell, some are off-the-wall and I don't believe any of them.

Q: Please share something our readers might be surprised to know about you:

A: I am one of eleven children, and have five brothers and five sisters. (one brother died)



Mr. Gavin, at December's van drivers luncheon

Favorite Southern Expression?
"Y'all come back."

Favorite Historical Quote?
"Give me liberty, or give me death!"

Favorite Military Quote?
"Do not fire 'til you see the whites of their eyes." (from Battle of Bunker Hill)

Mr. Gavin's birthday is November 23rd. ... Please join us in wishing him a very HAPPY BIRTHDAY !!!!!

DRIVERS STILL NEEDED

Due to the increasing demand for DAV van transportation, drivers are still needed. If you could serve in this way, whether for one day a week, or one day a month, please call our office at **785-8400** to receive an application.



FREE VIETNAM TRIP DRAWING OFFERED BY VFW – Purple Heart Recipients Eligible



If you received a Purple Heart for being wounded in Vietnam, you could be one of nine lucky vets to win VFW's "Return to Vietnam" trip. This in-country tour, scheduled for **April 24-May 7, 2009**, will visit Hanoi, Saigon, Chu Lai, Cu Chi, Hue, the DMZ, Hoi An, Marble Mountain and China Beach. Airfare, accommodations and meals are **included**.

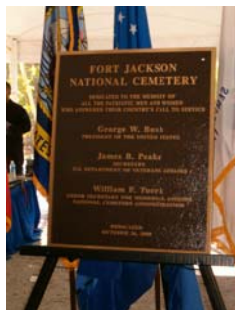
Don't miss this chance to revisit battle sites and to share your experiences with fellow Vietnam vets. Entries must be received prior to **Jan. 15, 2009**. Winners will be notified by email or mail in late January. To claim the trip, winners must send a copy of their Purple Heart documentation to VFW National Headquarters by Feb. 15, 2009, and their passport by March 1, 2009. (If you do not have a passport, please apply immediately.) **Previous VFW-sponsored trip winners are not eligible.**

To enter via the Internet, go to <http://www.vfw.org/index.cfm?fa=news.newsDtl&did=4763> to download an entry form.

*** You may also receive an entry form from our office at 605 West Main Street, Lexington, SC 29072 or call 803-785-8400 to have an application mailed to you.—Ed.

Send entries to:
Membership Director
VFW National Headquarters
406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111

FORT JACKSON NATIONAL CEMETERY DEDICATED



Hundreds attended the dedication ceremony of Fort Jackson National Cemetery on Sunday, October 26, 2008. The new 585-acre national cemetery, located at 4170 Percival Road in Richland County, is expected to serve veterans' needs well into the next century.

Other VA cemeteries located in South Carolina include those in Beaufort, Florence and Anderson.

The VA anticipates burials to begin in late 2008. For more information about VA's National Cemetery Administration, call the cemetery staff toll-free at **(866) 577-5248**. To make burial arrangements, call **(800) 535-1117**.

Lexington County Veterans Affairs County Service Officer **Gary Baker**, right, was in attendance. He is pictured here with **Mr. Dieter Klose**.



Dieter Klose, Roger and Delores Rucker also attended the dedication.



INFO BY THE NUMBERS

- 92**—Number of acres in the first construction phase at the Fort Jackson National Cemetery
- 5,649**—Number of full-casket grave sites in first phase
- 100**—Years of burials anticipated at the cemetery
- 170,000**—Veterans and eligible family members in the Midlands who will be served by the cemetery

[Source: *The State Newspaper*, October 27, 2008]

DEDICATION OF STONE VETERANS PAVILION WALL OF HONOR

The Stone Veterans Pavilion is hosting a dedication of their Service Medallion / Flag / Wall of Honor in November.

The event is scheduled for **Wednesday, November 19, 2008 at 2:00 P.M. at 2200 Harden Street** in downtown Columbia.

The public is invited to attend.



NON SERVICE CONNECTED PENSION CHECKLIST



LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE (803) 785-8400

Please find attached a checklist and all forms you will need to file a claim for Non Service Connected Pension Benefits. Veterans with low income may be eligible for monetary support if veteran had 90 days or more of active military service, at least one day of which was during a period of war. The discharge from active duty must have been under conditions other than dishonorable.

Payments are made to qualified veterans to bring their total income, including other retirement and/or Social Security Income, to a level set by Congress. Pension with Aid & Attendance income limits are **\$18,654.00** per year for a single veteran or **\$22,113.00** for a veteran with one dependent. Un-reimbursed medical expenses may reduce countable income (Medicare premiums, supplemental insurance, and cost of care at a facility). The Housebound income limit is \$13,664.00 per year for a single veteran or \$17,126.00 for a veteran with one dependent. The limit for a veteran who is **not** in need of Housebound or Aid and Attendance is **\$11,181.00** per year or **\$14,643.00** for a veteran with one dependent. A veteran cannot have high net worth. The VA shall deny payment of pension to a veteran when the corpus of the estate is such that under all circumstances, including consideration of annual income, it is reasonable that some part of the corpus of such estate be consumed for the widow's maintenance.

Widows may also qualify if the veteran had the required wartime service and the widow meets the net worth and income limits. The annual pension income limit is \$7,498, but increases to \$9,164 for housebound and \$11,985 for aid and attendance.

Please gather together all information checked on the enclosed checklist, sign all forms where highlighted, and call our office for an appointment. **Please note:** Veteran (or widow) signs all forms. If the veteran (or widow) can not sign he/she will need to X and get two witnesses' signatures along with witness addresses. If someone holds veteran's or widow's POA - the veteran or widow still needs to sign all forms.

It is **your** responsibility to tell the VA if one of the following happens: your income changes, you gain a dependent, your net worth increases (cash, bank accounts, investments, real estate except your home unless you sell your home,) or you move.

IMPORTANT: Lexington County Veterans Affairs is a county office; we are trained and accredited by the American Legion. **This office does not decide VA claims. To check the status of a claim, call the VA Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000.**

Documents that have a check () will be needed to support your request for VA benefits. (***determined prior to this mailing**)

1. DD-214 (Report of Separation)
2. Certified copy of marriage license (if more than one marriage, certified copy of Divorce or Death Certificate for each).
3. Certified copy of Death Certificate (if seeking widow's pension)
4. Certified copy of Birth Certificate for dependent children
5. Social Security Award letter for all persons in household
6. Earning Statements for all persons in household (gross earnings)
7. Other Annuity or Retirement Income (gross amount)
8. Dividends and Interest
9. Amount of Stocks, Bonds, and Bank Deposits
10. Value of Real Estate (other than home)
11. Name of Hospital or Drug Insurance Company and Amount of Premium
12. SSI Amount (if in receipt)
13. In the case of a vet/widow who requires the daily personal health care service of a skilled provider without which they would require hosp/nursing home care, a Dr. statement is needed to include nature of disabilities, i.e. cancer, heart condition, etc.
14. In the case of an individual in assisted living or nursing home, a statement is needed on the facility's letterhead. The statement needs to include, but is not limited to: (1) Date of Entry, (2) Level of care required (skilled or intermediate), (3) Nature of Disabilities, i.e., cancer, heart condition. This statement must be signed by "an officer" of the corporation, and must include cost per day, plus doctor's and laundry service.
15. Voided Check to checking or savings. (If granted VA will direct deposit 1st of each month)



SAILOR SENDOFF THANKSGIVING MEAL PLANNED

Below is an appeal letter on behalf of the upcoming 1st Annual Sailor Sendoff Thanksgiving Meal, planned for the weekend prior to Thanksgiving. Details on how to participate are given in the letter. **Could you help in this effort?**



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
TASK FORCE MARSHALL
171ST INFANTRY BRIGADE
(BLACKHAWKS)
5395 LEESBURG ROAD
EASTOVER, SOUTH CAROLINA 29044

09 October 2008

Dear Sir or Ma'am:

Task Force Marshall and several local Veterans' Organizations will be hosting its 1st Annual Sailor Sendoff Thanksgiving Meal. The purpose of this event is to recognize our sailors that will be deploying before the Thanksgiving Holiday. This event will allow all trainees, trainers, cadre, various veteran's organizations, and families to participate and enjoy a Thanksgiving Meal before deployment. It also helps to strengthen the relationship between the public, serving Soldiers of Fort Jackson, Navy Sailors and the local Veterans of South Carolina.

It is our goal to be able to provide every Sailor a Thanksgiving Meal. In order to facilitate this meal we are asking for community sponsorship. All participating sponsors will receive recognition from the 171st Brigade Commander.

Thank you for taking the time in reading and considering the deploying Sailors. For more information or questions regarding this action, please contact SSG Natasha Ramirez @ (803) 806-1023.

If you are able to help us in this quest, it will be most appreciated. Checks for donations should be made payable to **OMSRD, INC.** showing **TFM Thanksgiving** on the "for" line. You may contact me at **(803) 739-2774** or on my cell **(803) 467-4482**. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carol Davis, COO
Operation Military Stress Relief Dolls, Inc.
P.O. Box 3356
West Columbia, SC 29171

It's All About The Troops



MILITARY STRESS RELIEF DOLLS a.k.a. “DANGIT DOLLS”

This is a summary of the history of the dolls, as told by Carol Davis, founder.



“Operation Military Stress Relief Dolls” is a project that happened by accident. Many years ago, someone gave me a “Dang-it Doll.” I came across it four years ago and decided to make some for my family and friends as gag Christmas gifts. I sent 2 to my grandson who is in the Air Force and was stationed in Aviano, Italy and 1 to a family friend who was stationed in Balad, Iraq with our National Guard Unit out of Mc Entire Air Base. I was sure my grandson would scream “Grandma, why are you sending me dolls?” But instead, He wanted to know if he and the people in his unit sent me some money, would I buy them some more. I told him no, that I had made them and would be happy to make a few more, after all, how many could it be, 5 or 10 maybe? I asked how many wanted one? He said “Everyone”. I got the same response from Larry, in Balad. “Everyone” totaled over 800 dolls. I think my joke backfired and the joke was on me. I decided, if my silly dolls brought that much joy to our service men and women, I would make sure that all who wanted one would have one. And that is how “Operation Military Stress Relief dolls”, also known as “Dang-It Dolls”, was born. As friends and family heard about the project, they offered to help by donating material, stuffing, yarn, decorations and their time to help make the dolls.

On Friday, January 21, 2005, we sent our **first** shipment of 170 dolls to Aviano AFB in Italy, and two weeks later, we sent 250 dolls to the “Catfish” unit of the SC Army Guard in Balad. This is a labor of love for all of us involved and is an ongoing project. As long as our men and women need them, they will have the dolls. It is just our way of sending a little piece of home to them to let them know we are behind them and love them.

Here is the “Dang-it Doll Mantra”, which is attached to each doll given out:

When your day is stressful
And you want to scream and shout,
Here’s a little “DANG-IT DOLL”
That you can’t live without.
Grasp it firmly by its legs
And find a place to bang it
And as you whack its stuffing out
Yell, “DANG-IT, DANG-IT, DANG-IT!”

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As of the latest troop deployment, we have made over 22,000 dolls. [Speaking as one who has seen the reaction of those receiving these dolls, this is a worthy endeavor.—Ed.] If you would like to take part in this effort, visit their website at www.militarystressreliefdolls.com to find out how.

All
strapped
in and
ready to
roll.



Even our four-legged heroes
enjoy these dolls!



Say “hello” to my
little friend!



**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**
605 West Main Street, Suite 101
Lexington, SC 29072
(803)785-8400

PRSRRT STD
U S POSTAGE PAID
LEXINGTON, SC
PERMIT NO. 90

**NOVEMBER OUTREACH
PROGRAM DATES**

Please note: There will be NO outreach sessions in the month of November. Please call our office if you need assistance.

TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Lexington Main Office: 785-8400
From Batesburg/Leesville: 332-8400
From Chapin: 941-0231

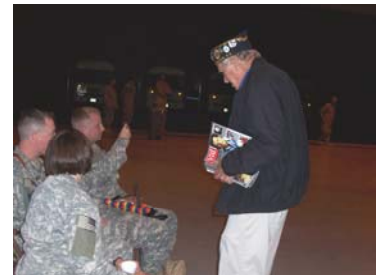
TROOP SENDOFF... IN THE WEE HOURS OF THE DAY



Glenda from Har-dee's passes out warm biscuits to the grateful troops



Mr. Redd Reynolds, mingling with the troops



"Thank You Dinners" Offered by Golden Corral

On **Monday, November 17, 2008**, from 5 to 9 P.M., all 485 Golden Corral Restaurants across America will offer any person who has served in the United States Military a **free** thank you dinner or buffet and a beverage! (The National Guard and Reserves are included.) No identification is required.

This will be the **eighth annual** "thank you" dinner for our nation's heroes from Golden Corral restaurants, who have provided over 1,835,000 complimentary meals to military personnel over the history of the event.



2 A.M. POWER NAP