

VSO INFORMATION

SURVIVOR'S BENEFITS

As there seems to be an increasing interest regarding "survivor's benefits" I have been requested to focus some attention on this subject. The Veterans Administration has several such benefits of which if I were to feature in detail in one edition of *Thunder Run*, the editor would pull his hair out. Good thing we live in different states. So I thought it best to simply provide a summary of sorts for said benefits I believe are of interest to the members and spouses of the 11th ACWC.

Here goes.

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation or DIC VA form 21P-534EZ

A benefit for a surviving spouse if the veteran dies from a service-connected disability. This is a monthly disbursement, currently about \$1,500.00/month, and it is tax free. Further "IF" the veteran was 100% total and permanent for ten years or more, the cause of death does not need to be service connected.

Survivors Pension VA form 21P-534EZ

A financial benefit for a surviving spouse, of a war time era veteran, if the cause of death was not service connected. However- this benefit is often referred to as financially sensitive. Meaning- there is a financial threshold for an applicant to meet. Currently, the monthly benefit for a survivor is about \$800.00. If there is household income above that level, the applicant is not eligible. So, if the spouse has Social Security of \$1,800.00 month, the spouse is not eligible AND if another person lives with the spouse and has income, that is also considered as above the threshold. Note here: there are deductions and other factors that are considered for each applicant which would lower the total income amount. This benefit is one that really needs the assistance of a VSO.

Interment at a National Cemetery

A surviving spouse may be interred at a National Cemetery with the veteran in the National Cemetery System which includes the gravesites, a headstone or marker, opening and closing the grave and perpetual care. Many National Cemeteries have columbaria or gravesites for cremated remains.

Financial Burial Benefits VA form 21P-530

Reimbursement for non-National Cemeteries.

Dependents Educational Assistance VA form 22-5490

Eligibility standard: the veteran must have been 100% permanent and total at time of death.

VA Bereavement Counseling 202-461-6530

This is a service available at all VA Medical Center Clergy services. The above telephone number is for the national call center. Calls are forwarded to the nearest VA facility.

Civilian Health And Medical Program

Health Care at VA for survivors.

A benefit for a surviving spouse to receive health care at the VA medical center. The caveat for this- the veteran must have been at 100% perma-

nent and total at the time of death. Commonly called Champ VA. There are several "qualifiers" for survivors under and over 65, and Medicare parts A and B.

I have been invited, or drafted, to provide a presentation during the 38th Reunion. The manner in which this invitation was delivered made me laugh a bit. Since I live in the Chicago metropolitan area and Grand Rapids is simply a brief drive, I have no excuse not to attend. Hence, just as I did on May 19, 1969, I enlisted for the 38th Reunion. Further the above summary will be expanded upon in conjunction with an overall review of how to develop a claim for benefits. A side bar here. I may not remember many of the guys from F Troop but there are a few although the names are lost in the cobwebs. I do remember our senior medic was from Appleton Wisconsin, another medic from Downers Grove, Illinois, our 1SG, Willie Johnson (KIA 3/5/70) and Troop Commander William Bailey. Anyway- see ya there!

DD FORM 214

Thought I would share some information a bit different with members this edition. A previous article focused on the importance of keeping copies of your DD 214 available, especially if your family needs to have those. The accompanying article is courtesy of Wikipedia and is rather interesting. Many veterans are not aware of tech history, how to request copies and how to request corrections. One source to obtain a DD 214 not indicated in the article is, archives.gov/military. Trust you will enjoy reading this.

The DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, generally referred to as a "DD 214", is a document of the United States Department of Defense, issued upon a military service member's retirement, separation, or discharge from active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States (i.e., U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Space Force, U.S. Coast Guard).

History and usage

The first DD Form 214s were issued in 1950, replacing the older "WD AGO" (War Department Adjutant General's Office) Forms and the NAVPERS (Naval Personnel) discharge documents. These documents had existed since 1941. In earlier versions of the form (1 November 1972) it was called a "Report of Separation from Active Duty"; the current title dates from 1 July 1979.

DD Form 214 is the capstone documentation of completed military service, representing the complete, verified record of a service member's time in the military (Active, including Reservists on active assignments). Among the most important details is the character of service (Honorable, Dishonorable, General Under Honorable Conditions, etc.), which greatly affects veteran benefits and can have long-term reputational impact. Other important data includes the servicemember's awards and medals, highest rank/rate and pay grade held on active duty, lengths of service (including total time, sea time, overseas service, and prior service periods), job specialty, and a record of training and schools completed. Job specialty documents primary and secondary qualifications, such as Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC), Navy Enlisted Classification (NEC), Navy officer designa-

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3rd Quarter, 2023

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