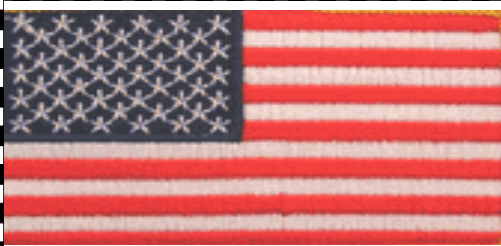


# Disabled American Veterans



## Chapter #18 Mailbag



D.A.V Chapter #18 401 N. Michigan Ave. Big Rapids, Michigan 49307 Volume XXXI NO 2 of 3

### ***Commander's Corner***

**Special Meeting; Saturday May, 31 1 p.m. At our hall 402 N. Michigan. Purpose Merger with Chapter # 39.**

It is with great pride and appreciation that I have accepted the position of Commander of our Chapter. I had been away from the chapter for quite some time due to a misunderstanding with a comrade. That is now in the past and I am honored to have been elected to lead the Chapter once again.

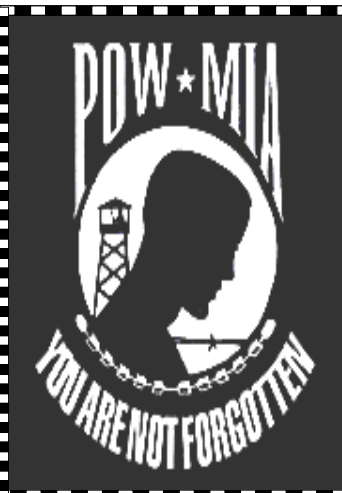
After we completed elections and installation, it was proposed by Past Department Commander Tony Rubio that our chapter merge with his chapter. Members of Chapter 39 Inland Lakes would transfer to Chapter 18 Big Rapids. Additionally, all assets and properties would also be transferred to our chapter. Both chapters are, and have been, struggling with active members and Department leadership feels both chapters would benefit from the merger.

The Department Adjutant was present and will facilitate the administrative process as well as assist the Commander and Chapter Adjutant with the member transfer and distribution of assets from Chapter 39. Any member who would like to express their thoughts about this action please email Commander Rathbun at [dav18mi@gmail.com](mailto:dav18mi@gmail.com).

I would like to end by expressing my admiration and appreciation to Past Commander Reggie Norris for his hard work, dedication, and motivation that has kept Chapter 18 moving forward in a trying and difficult time in our nation's history. I also look forward to working with him as we proceed in the efforts of providing assistance to Veterans and their families in our community. I want our members to adapt and support the moto "Lets Pay it Forward" for our Veterans and communities.

Enthusiastically,  
Chuck Rathbun  
Commander

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## EDITORIAL

We, the Newsletter staff, very Heartily encourage each of our readers to Patronize those business establishments which you see advertised throughout our newsletter. They have shown their support for disabled veterans in their community by choosing to place their ads with us. When you shop at any of these establishments, let them know you saw their ad in the DAV newsletter and that we appreciate their support for chapter # 18.

**"Thanks from the Mailbag staff"**

### An official publication of Big Rapids Chapter #18

Disabled American Veterans, Big Rapids Michigan It is published at regular intervals throughout the year. The purpose of #18's MAIL BAG is to promulgate and disseminate throughout our membership, information from our national and state offices pertaining to the services and benefits which are available to all veterans and their families, as well as to keep them abreast of the many activities and programs of our own chapter #18's past, present, and future. Articles authored by our own members or their families are encouraged and will be accepted for consideration at:

#### #18's MAIL BAG c/o D.A.V CHAPTER #18

402 N. MICHIGAN AVE. BIG RAPIDS, MI 49307

**Nominations, Election and**

**Installation of Chapter#18 Officers**

**will be conducted March, April and**

**May. Attend our meetings on the second**

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Pictured below are the 2025-26 Chapter officers, Left to right is our Chapter Commander Chuck Rathbun, Sr Vice Commander Reggie Norris, Jr. Vice Commander Dave Thorson, and Chaplain Ryan Oshaughnessy. Please join us make our officers welcome.

I want to thank our members for all the well wishes and support, The lose of my wife is hurting and will forever. I was just informed from Mark Brecka. (American Legion) Ordered a tree being planted in Jennifer's name. This act of kindness touched my heart. Thanks to my brothers and sisters in the Legion.

Our Chapter has it's future and we are making it. For the past 92 years our chapter has worked hard to keep going and we are trailblazers not afraid to try new idea's, and I am proud of that. The ideas have to be within the laws of our Charter and Bylaw's. We hope to see our members at our Flag Day event and We are hoping to have a Corn Hole tournament during the Labor Day festivities in Big Rapids. Hoping a Bake Sale. Lets help Veterans and their Family's together.

Reggie Norris



Dr. Julie Hanson, OD



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## MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH ARTICLE

Throughout life, there are many things that can cause stress and anxiety in people. For men, specifically, the things that can be stressors or triggers for anxiety vary and evolve as they age. The range can be from first date jitters to familial issues and societal expectations. But with the burden of maturity, fatherhood, race, professional achievement, and socio-economic status, this can be a burden on a man's mental health. Where does a man find psychological replenishment? Friendships are tricky. Some men experience male friendship as a battleground where each guy is out to prove himself, to win respect. There's a lot of top-dog-bottom-dog, comparing who makes more money, who has the newer car, who has the prettier wife. Anxiety and depression are now finding a parking spot in a man's brain. As a starving writer, I don't worry about stuff like that. I accept my poverty. According to Men's Health Magazine, half of men suffer from insomnia. For me, I walk around the house worrying about losing weight and what I will do when I win the Lottery: Maserati or Ferrari? Still some mental health conditions have physical symptoms including changes in appetite and energy, aches and pains, digestive issues. Sure, some guys are strong, silent, competitive, and emotionally restrictive, but our inner emotions always find ways to be expressed.

Unfortunately, men hide much of their real selves due to fear of rejection, risking vulnerability, transparency, and fear of labeling. Enter liquid therapy aka elbow therapy, going to a bar to get happy or drunk. So, what are men worried about? Men look to other men for identification while men's behavior is predicated on the perceived expectations of other males. Ask a man who was his role model growing up. Guys who suffer the most are "the rocks," the macho guys who strongly maintain the most narrowly defined and traditional ideas about masculinity. For some guys, growth choices are the most difficult to make because it means a shift in lifestyle. However, if Mr. Macho has children, the children look to Daddy to share his feelings, open up, and be vulnerable. Trouble sets in if Daddy Macho doesn't know how to reveal his inner emotions. This is where each male needs to take an emotional leadership role. If a man has difficulty expressing himself or show tenderness to his son or daughter, he needs to clarify his basic beliefs about himself.



man needs to be is a state of psychological readiness and realize that feelings build trust; silence creates suspicion. What will you pass onto your kids? Men have difficulty describing what happened to create certain negative emotions, what caused grief and how to find a solution. According to Anxiety and Depression Association of America nearly 1 in 10 men experience depression or anxiety but less than half of them will seek treatment. The association also found that nearly four times the number of men die by suicide than women every year. However, men are less likely to have received mental health treatment than women in the past year, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Some common symptoms of men include anger, irritability, aggressiveness, changes in mood and energy level, difficulty concentrating, feeling restless, or on edge, misuse of alcohol, drugs, or both, sadness, or feelings of hopelessness. If you can read this article, you are having a good day, whether you believe it or not. Count your blessings. 988 Mental Health Emergency Hotline: Calling 988 will connect you to a crisis counselor regardless of where you are in the United States.

#### About the Author:

Hilary Valdez is a freelance Writer living in Tokyo, Japan. He is an experienced Mental Health professional and Resiliency Trainer. Valdez is a former Marine and has worked with the military most of his career and most recently worked at Camp Zama as a Master Resiliency Trainer. Valdez now has a private practice and publishes books on social and psychological issues. His books are available on Amazon and for Kindle.

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## Platoon 2032

Once the receiving barracks turns the platoon over to the drill instructors the real training and education begins. We march, fairly organized, but still having tennis shoes and trousers unbloused. *Blousing your trousers is done by placing an elastic band around the top of your boots and tucking the bottom of your trousers under the band.* So, we still appear as a herd of receiving barracks recruits but somewhat organized and not quite as shabby.

We stop in front of a tall three-story building that you can clearly see is a barracks with squad bays on each end with a stairway for each side of the building. The platoon stopped and are told which barracks to go to once they receive the command to "fall out." The drill instructor tells us that we are going to the third floor barracks up the stairway directly in front of us. Staff Sargent (SSgt) Medina, our receiving DI, tells us to go to the barracks and come stand at attention in the area inside the door. He then calls us to attention and give the command "FALL OUT."

Sixty-nine young men race to the stairs and ascending as quickly as possible carrying a sea bag to the barracks on the third floor. They race into the very large room that is lined on both sides by metal bunk beds (*racks*) and a footlocker at the end on the inward part of the room, stopping behind their sea-bag at attention. A lean, sharply dressed Marine, wearing a patten leather duty belt, walks out of the office. He then tells us he is our Senior Drill Instructor, Gunnery Sargent (GySgt) Cole. Then introduces the other three DI's as they come out of the "duty hut"; SSgt Woodall, Sgt Van Zanardi, and Sgt Groves. He then tells us the area we are in is the classroom. He then tells us to quickly find a rack and place our seabag on the footlocker and stand at attention next to our footlocker. He asks if we understand and everyone yells, "Sir yes sir." He tells us that was weak and to try again. We then yell as loud as we can, "Sir, yes sir." He the yells, "Do it, now move."

Every one of us picks up our seabag and heads to a rack, places his seabag on the footlocker at the end of the rack, and stands at attention. The drill instructors are going up and down the center of the squad bay yelling at recruits to hurry up. Anyone hesitating or making any type of mistake is immediately loudly and forcefully instructed to do as they were instructed. Once everyone is at attention, the senior DI tells us to move back to the classroom and stand at attention. Again, he asks us if we understand, we yell, "sir, yes sir." He tells to try again and we again yell at the top of our lungs, "sir, yes sir." He then yells, "MOVE."



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Once in the classroom (the area directly outside the DI's office or duty hut), we are explained that when given the command to set on the floor, set Indian style the with your right leg over the left. He then yells, "READY, SEAT." We instantaneously drop to the floor and assume the correct seating position. The DIs then proceed to explain to us that there will be disciplinary activities that will be called Physical Training (PT). The first one they explain is a *side straddle hop*, in the civilian work it's called a jumping jack. They then select a recruit to demonstrate. The DI asks the recruits name, then tells him to get on his feet.

Private (PVT) Holland jumps to his feet and stands at attention. One of the DIs tells him to begin, he responds, "No." The two junior DIs, Groves and Van Zanardi go ballistic, screaming at him asking if he is refusing and to begin. He continues to refuse, and they yell at him that he is going to jail. They then take him into the duty hut and shut the door.

The senior DI hands out 5x8 cards and pencils to each recruit. Once everyone has a card and pencil, he instructs us to, on the front write your name, last name first, then our last name. On the next line write our social security number. On the back write the names of any family members that had served in the military, including their full name, rank, and what they did. We all do as we were instructed and told to hand our cards to the front. The DIs collect the cards and begin looking over them. Each DI looks at a card and either goes to the next or addresses the recruit with any questions. On my card I listed my grandfather who was in the Army, my father who served in the Navy, and (my biggest mistake) my great uncle who is a retired Marine. I also listed that he retired as the Battalion Drill Master at MCRD San Diego. Well Sgt Groves read that and called my name. He asked me if the information on my uncle was correct, then proceeded to explain to me that he and I were going to have a wonderful time in the next 26 weeks. He then ordered me to the front of the classroom and to begin doing push-ups. He PT ed me for at least 20 minutes doing push-ups, mountain climbers, and set-ups alternately as he commanded. Once he had me stop, he stated that he knew my uncle and that we would play lots of games when he had duty.

To be continued...

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2025 XXXI issue 2 of 3

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

### **2025-2026 Chapter #18 Officers & Chairperson**

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