

Disabled American Veterans



Chapter #18 Mailbag



D.A.V Chapter #18 402 N. Michigan Ave. Big Rapids, Michigan 49307 Volume XXXII NO 2 of 3

Commanders Corner

Spring has been rather confusing this year, Mother Nature has been teasing and taunting us with summer like weather, then she turns around and gives us a long stretch of below average temperatures. That has been after she made a real effort to flood many of us out with a deluge of rain over a few days. I hope everyone has endured the unusual spring.

I'd like to thank all the members that participated in our nominations and election process. The members have chosen to elect me as commander once again and I look forward to leading the chapter in our efforts to provide assistance to veterans and their families.

We have been busy with the state convention, memorial services for life member David Thorson, and Flag Day. Several comrades assisted with and performed at the Flag Day ceremony despite there being no spectators to observe. The member of the Elks BPO 974 did their annual ceremony as well as filling in for the American Scouts that were unable to attend.

I have completed Service Officer training and received my certification. Unfortunately, I am scheduled for a total hip replacement on July 1st so I won't be available for a couple weeks to meet with veterans to assist with claims and benefits. Once I'm cleared, I will be at the hall a couple days a week to meet and assist those who need assistance.

I have not received any information on any July 4th celebration, once I do, I will pass it on to our officers and members, so we are ready to participate. We are also in discussion on whether to have a booth at the county fair. We are planning on having the annual Cornhole tournament on Labor Day. Members are contacting local businesses for donations of prizes to be given to participants... Hopefully we have as good or better turn out so that we may have an adult and youth division for the tournament.

I have also started a new "meet and greet" event on the first, third, and fourth Thursdays for members of the community and veterans to come to the hall for coffee. I'm calling this, "Visit a Vet." This is a great opportunity for everyone to socialize, share stories and information. In conjunction with that I will be available afterward to meet with veterans and their families for assistance with claims and other benefits.

I wish everyone good health and best wishers. Hopefully we will see one another at our regular meeting, which is now on the **second Tuesday at 6:00PM.**

Chuck Rathbun Commander / Service Officer

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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 Feb, March, April . Attend our meetings on the second

Tuesday of each month learn how you can help, or you could have ideas on how to help Veterans and their families

"Together we can make a difference"

This year our Memorial Day went great as the Parade was at our hall at 11 am. There were many spectators as Ryan O'Shaughnessy was our speaker. Barbara McComb and Aletha Fullmer dropped the wreath over the bridge for the approximate 70k personnel we have lost at sea. The Big Rapids band, our local Scouts, and the Legion and VFW all did a wonderful job this year.



The ceremony at the Court house, the bridge then on to the Highland Cemetery is covers all branches and is very respectfully seen and done. Thanks to all who helped or had a part in Memorial Day.

Reggie Norris Sr. Vice Commander

Dr. Julie Hanson, OD



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Flag Day June 14, Chapter 18 was out again joined by Phil Currie of the local Elks. We did our ceremony and then with no scouts the Elk's center held the flags and explained each of our 8 flags.

Not many spectators, so we burnt all but three bags of flags. We were all worn out and ready for a shower. Join us next year.

Reggie Norris SVC.



July

4th Happy 250 I hope everyone enjoys the Fireworks.

9th Group for Veterans 1pm

13th to 18th Mecosta free fair. For-get-me-knots.

14th Chapter meeting 6pm.

23rd Group for Veterans 1pm

31st Group for Families 1pm.

August

11th Chapter meeting DAV hall 6pm.

13th Veterans group 1pm.

27th Veterans group 1pm.

28th Family Group 1pm

September

7th Labor day Corn Hole tournament registration 10 am. Starts at 12:30.

8th Chapter meeting night 6pm.

10th Veterans group 1pm.

24th Veterans group 1pm.

25th Family group 1pm.

RSVP required for all new attendee's. Contact me at dav18@gmail.com, address to Jenelle.

Disabled American Veterans Chapter 18

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A Quiet Life and a Secret

I want, in honor of America's 250th birthday, to share a story of a World War II veteran. I got to know Joe when I was doing home visits with the Veterans Administration's Home-Based Primary Care program. Over the course of two years, I also met his three adult children. Joe was obviously a wonderful father. At Joe's funeral, I cried when I saw them all together after the service—I felt terrible for a moment, as they all started crying when they saw me lose it. But the sadness also felt respectful and connected us in special way. They had shared their father with me.

Joe grew up in an Italian American family in upstate New York. His parents ran a grocery store on the lower level and Joe was raised with his sisters on the second floor. Like so many others of that era, he was drafted into the Army, coming of age when the war was well underway. He was assigned to the 28th Infantry Division, which I believe was originally a National Guard unit mainly comprised of Pennsylvanians that was activated in preparation for the invasion of Europe. Though his children believed that he was part of D-Day, I discovered that his unit did disembark at Omaha Beach, but not until October of 1944. The Division did soon become engaged in heavy and almost continuous fighting across France. It was not, as I will share below, a "lucky outfit".

I met Joe at home near South Haven. He was in his late 80's, still walking without assistance and active in volunteering at his church's bingo nights. Drawing on his Italian heritage, he was famous locally for his sandwiches that were sold to the bingo players. He gave me a tour of his vegetable garden, though on grass his balance was a bit tenuous. His greeting every time we met was, "What can I get you?" And he *meant* it—he wanted any guest in his home to feel welcome.

Joe might have been 5' 6" when in his prime. He couldn't have weighed much more than 120 pounds. He became an accountant after the war. That career seemed to fit him. He was mild mannered, gracious and mentally sharp. He was Service Connected for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, though had never received any treatment other than medication. When told that we might talk a little about what happened to him in the war, he was reluctant and quickly proffered, "I suppose you want to know if I shot any Germans." Informed that there were other things that I wanted to learn about his experience, he allowed that he had "...made of few of [the German soldiers] move, but I don't know if I ever actually hit one". That, of course, was a lie. Something I never asked about again until, years later, when he had an uncharacteristic anger outburst at a TV news program that he had been watching when I arrived one day. The news had been showing scenes from one of the latest wars. He, without really talking to me, asked out loud, "What the hell did we fight that war for anyway...It didn't solve anything." I helped with the remote to turn off the TV. It was one of our last conversations as his terminal cancer was its battle with him.

That day, spurred by what I assume was some end-of-life reflection, Joe did talk about breaching the Siegfried Line [West Wall] as the 28th crossed into Germany after Aachen had fallen to the Allies in fierce fighting. Because of his size and awareness, he had become a “scout” by then for his platoon. If memory serves, he was with the 109th Regiment of the 28th, which had become known for its unit patch as the “Bloody Bucket Division”. As Joe was to find out, the nickname was all too appropriate.

The incident he spoke of that day involved his role in breaching the highly reinforced German pillboxes along the Siegfried Line. Apparently impervious to even point-blank artillery fire, GI’s had to crawl up to the pillbox, avoiding the interlocking fire of German machine guns. A grenade was tossed into the pillbox aperture as the machine gun continued to fire inches away. If that ‘quieted things down’, then a satchel-like charge was quickly placed to force an opening in the entryway. Joe then led the breach into the pillbox, firing his rifle to ensure that the Germans were no longer a threat. This ‘finishing off’ of enemy soldiers is what Joe had never admitted to anyone.

What Joe was naturally so reluctant to ever share was a key moment on my clinical journey to dealing with a variant of PTSD, what is now called Moral Injury. I began to look for instances of this special type of shame and found it far, far too prevalent in the veterans I had the opportunity to work with for 15 years. Too simply, Moral Injury is an emotional haunting that often prevails long after there has been some internal peace with the trauma itself. The veterans become ashamed of themselves, causing them to ask, “What kind of person would do/fail to do/allow something like that to happen?” Something awful happens, not necessarily just killing of another human, that is perceived to be in the person’s control. Unfortunately, the self-judgment often lingers since it feels so shameful that one cannot share it. “If anyone know what I was really like...”

Unfortunately, this moral aspect of PTSD is far more common than most clinicians who work with veterans realize. The good news is that the VA, over the last ten years, has become much more aware of this condition. I am convinced that this is why the traditional PTSD treatments often only work for some veterans. Moral injuries seem hard to treat. They require deep trust in a therapist or other healers—other veterans are almost requirement. A spiritual component is key as it seems that the more compassionate and kinder the person is, the more that they are challenged by the ‘cure’...self-forgiveness.

[There is more to Joe’s story that I could share if readers are interested in hearing it. Please let Reggie know if you would like to hear what happened to Joe after the pillboxes. For length, I left out a good portion of his experience.]

Doc



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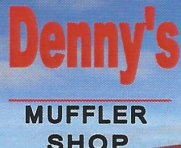
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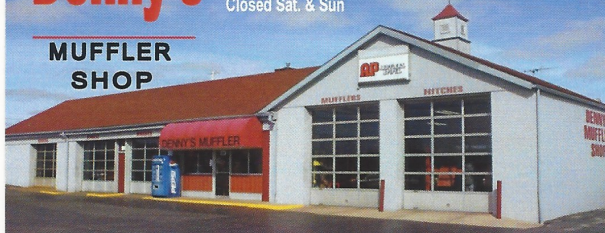
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The end is in sight, after 11 long weeks of around the clock training we have four events to compete in. During boot camp there are four platoons that make up a series. The series train in unison to one another.

At pugil stick training platoons compete against one another. Each platoon competes within the platoon to find the top three recruits. Then the top three from each of the four platoons compete against one another until one recruit has remained undefeated. As recruits lose, they are reprimanded by their drill instructors for their failure and embarrassment to the platoon.

On one of the last Sundays of recruit training the series has a boxing "smoker." Having boxed in the Golden Gloves and high school I volunteered to represent our platoon. Little did I realize with my weight and previous experience I would be matched up with a recruit from Colorado. To my demise, he was a six-time Golden Glove champion for the state of Colorado. We were the last bout of the day with lots of hype and excitement for the best fight of the day. I even heard a couple DI's placing a bet on the fight. When they introduced us they started with, "The fight of the day with the two most experienced fighters of the series." From platoon 2032, two-time Golden Glove city champion for Grand Rapids, Michigan, weighing 181 pounds, Pvt Rathbun. I don't recall my opponents' name; I didn't really hear it much after hearing he was the six-time state champion. I knew I was out matched when we talked while warming up and he told me he joined to be a member of the Marine Corps boxing team. Despite being out matched I was very pleased that I made it to the second round before they stopped the fight because he was pummeling me. I was pleased with my ability to block and avoid his punches but the DI who was officiating realized I could be severely hurt if he allowed it to continue. Myself and the recruit from Flint, who also lost his fight, were PT'd in the classroom by Sgt. Groves for the better part of an hour.

The next week we did final drill where the platoon and Senior Drill Instructor are graded and scored among the series platoons. Drill is marching and performing movements as a uniform group as well as the manual of arms. Each movement is on command and evaluated on both the execution and delivery. The following day we did our final PFT (Physical Fitness Test) which is made up of pull ups, sits ups, and a three mile run. Each has a maximum score of 100 points. Max sit ups are 80, pull ups are 20, and an 18 minute run will result in a perfect score.

I maxed out the sit ups and actually attempted to set the record with 140 just short of the company record, 20 pull ups and a run of 16:20. Our platoon had the best PFT score of the series.

We then did the PRAC (practical recruit application, course) which is a series of stations that test the knowledge of Marine Corps history, first aid, weapon maintenance, and other aspects of training such as the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), general orders, and combat operations. Lastly each platoon has a final inspection by the company commander. The entire platoon is inspected in their dress uniform with weapon. Each recruit is evaluated for his uniform, personal appearance, as well as the maintenance of his weapon and knowledge. The inspecting officer asks the recruit questions while checking his weapon and uniform.

The weekend prior to these final events recruits are given on-base liberty as well as parents being allowed to visit and spend time with their son. Each recruit is given a portion of their pay so that they may go to places such as the bowling alley, snack bar, theatre, or post exchange (department store).

The following Friday is graduation day for the series. Each Friday at both MCRD (Marine Corps Recruit Depot) San Diego and Parris Island a series of four platoons graduate from boot camp and are finally recognized as a U.S. Marine. The morning of graduation, recruits go to chow for the final time at the dining facility. They then return to the squad bay to complete packing. Once the entire platoon is packed up they once again get into formation and march with all their stuff (sea bag and clothing bag) to the parade deck and stage their stuff. From there they proceed to the theatre where family members are already seated inside. The entire group watch "The Sands of Iwo Jima" after a short video of what happens at recruit training. Once the movie is completed the relatives exit the theatre to go to the bleachers next to the parade deck while the recruits exit out the rear of the theatre. Once everyone is in place the series is paraded around the parade deck and then graduation is completed per customary ceremony.

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2026 XXXI issue 2 of 3

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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