



S*M*A*R*T



Diego Cruisers Newsletter Third Quarter 2011

[Remember to pass this newsletter to your significant other](#)

Prez Sez
Bud Fagan

Again, the time is flying. As we approach our Fourth Quarter Meeting and Muster, it's appropriate that we look at some of the goals we discussed and how well we moved toward those goals. It is safe to say that with the exception of recruiting we did pretty well so I won't mention those other goals except to compliment the members on our support to the VA Hospital. The number of wheelchair bags that were cut during the Second Quarter Muster was very impressive. The sewing ladies will have their own significant goal. Please see Rita's note later in the newsletter.

We need to come to grips with recruiting. Brad, who serves on our recruiting committee along with Don Hess and myself, informs me that he spoke with exactly six prospective members after approaching ten people. Of the six, only two espoused an interest in SMART. Although given printed email contact information, neither of the two followed through and both declined the offer of a follow-up. Of the six spoken to, three claimed to know something about SMART. Looking at the demographics of those contacted, it became immediately obvious that if they towed a trailer full of sand toys, they simply weren't interested in our type of fellowship – yet. That last little word is interesting. We all know that interests change as we progress through this adventure called life. So don't become frustrated or lose interest in speaking with people about SMART. A second or third approach, without being a pest, may generate sufficient interest. By-the-way, all the people Brad spoke with were camped either at Admiral Baker or the RV Parks we visited during our musters. He generally approached only those with some indication on their rigs or clothing that suggested a military background.

It pains me to remind everyone of Ed Kirstahler's sudden and unexpected death on August 25th. Ed was a long-time SMART and Diego Cruiser's Chapter member. He and his memory remain a member of our family. Please keep his family and longtime friend and companion, Marge Bray, in our prayers and thoughts. Let's encourage Marge to continue participating in our functions.

Remember the Fourth Quarter Muster at Circle RV in El Cajon. This is our Christmas Muster and the Chapter Officers will partner the Trail Boss duties. See the application and revised agenda attached to this newsletter.



Noun 1. trail boss – a foreman in charge of a cattle drive.

Lead our Diego Cruisers chapter cattle to one of our great 2012 musters. Sign up early and select a destination.

Muster Master Report

Brad Wynne

We are still looking for Trail Bosses for the 2012 musters. Sign up early and help select the location you favor. Speaking of the 2012 musters, we are negotiating with Palm Canyon RV Resort and Hotel and the Laughlin RV Resort in Laughlin, NV for our First and Second Quarter Musters. Laughlin has a great deal advertised in the RV Journal. We can thank Dusty for that tip.

Several people commented on the site charges for our latest musters. I spoke with managers at Circle RV and Oak Creek. The price is what it is and for that we can thank the Sunrise Power Line construction crews. As long as the RV parks can maintain their high occupancy rates, they have little incentive to offer us more

favorable rates. The construction crews are looked at as cash cows. Often the companies pay the charge direct and that saves the park significant administrative cost.

Mary, at Oak Creek, mentioned she was interested in adding value to groups using her facility. She understands the cost is a concern. She has a relationship with a local winery and can assist us in setting up a wine and cheese tasting party. Of course, there will be a charge and I will investigate details. She also wants to cater meals. Her typical charge is \$12 per person.

This is important only in that Trail Bosses have additional means to reduce their work load or do something different. Please recall that it is the Trail Boss's decision on how the muster is organized. To standardize those arrangements would soon lead to a stereotyped muster that would soon become boring.

Those that attended the amazingly successful Third Quarter Muster at Oak Creek RV Resort owe a giant Bravo Zulu and thank you to Jim and Jo Ann Cornelius ably assisted by VP Hess and Arlene. Their event management was superb and the food even better.

We didn't plan afternoon games on the lawn due to the anticipated heat but used the time productively toward cutting wheelchair bags.

Secretary's Corner
Frances Leonard

Minutes of 3rd Quarter Diego Cruisers Meeting
At Oak Creek RV Resort
August 31, 2011

Call to Order: President Bud Fagan called the meeting to order at the 3rd Quarter Muster at Oak Creek RV Resort Park in El Cajon at 11:00 A.M.

Salute to the Flag: Members joined in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag led by the President.

Invocation: The Invocation was led by Frances Leonard.

Introduction of Guests, Prospective Members, National/Regional Officers, Members of other Chapters: None were present.

Roll Call: Secretary Frances Leonard called the roll. Those present were: Bradbury, Cade, Cornelius, Derenburger, Fagan, Hess, Jackson, Leonard, McConnell, Newell, Platter, Shockley, Skidmore, Wilkins, Wynne.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting: Jim Cornelius moved that the Minutes be approved as printed in the Newsletter. The motion was seconded and carried.

Reading of Correspondence: There was none.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Don Skidmore gave the following report:

06/07/11 Beginning Balance \$2105.75

Receipts:

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Donations | \$350.00 |
| 50/50 Luncheon | <u>39.00</u> |
| | \$389.00 |

Expenses:

| | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Deposit Circle RV | \$100.00 |
| Yarn for VA | <u>189.04</u> |
| | 289.04 |

08/31/11 Ending Balance \$2205.71

The Treasurer suggested that the donation given be designated to wheel chair bags and lap robe expenses. Roberta Wynne made the motion to designate the donation to wheel chair bags and lap robe expenses. It was seconded and carried. We have been giving half of the 50/50 sales at both the luncheons and the musters to the wheel chair bag fund.

Report of Committees:

Muster Master: Brad Wynne reported he has the Circle RV applications and agendas ready.

For the First Quarter 2012 he contacted several camp grounds in the Borrego Springs area and only one responded; the Palm Canyon RV Park.

Southern Cal Club is going there in November. The Springs at Borrego RV Park is going up on their prices. By a show of hands, the group would like to go to Borrego Springs in January or February.

Newsletter. The last Newsletter went out late due to problems beyond the control of several of the officers.

Sunshine: Mary Rhoden was not present. Ed Kirstahler passed away suddenly on August 22. No one had an address for Marge Bray. Bud Fagan will get that and pass on the address and the information for the Web Site for his memory page being set up by the family. The Celebration of Life will be September 9 at 2 P. M. at Humphries in Chula Vista. Bud will ask Mary to send cards to Ed's family and to Marge. Bud will invite Marge to continue coming to the luncheons. He will also inform Frank McAninch and other former members who would remember Ed.

Retail Sales: Roberta Wynne has the box of SMART items if anyone wants to purchase anything.

Web Master: Brad and Bud are working at reorganizing the Web Site. Most people could not currently download the web site because it was too large for most computers. All the years of history and pictures are in one file. They will organize it so one year can be reviewed at a time.

Wheel Chair Bags: Rita Newell reported that we have sent 21 bags to the VA Hospital. The "sewers" are waiting for more bags. We have material now so we plan to cut out 50 or more this week. Also several lap robes have been crocheted.

Jo Ann Cornelius reported that she received donations of material from two places out of several she contacted. She sent card of thanks to the firms who donated.

Storage: Bud Fagan reported the Chapter's storage shed at his house is sinking and needs repair. Several men volunteered to come remove all the items and take the building off, level and reinforce the foundation, and restore the building. The women want to sort through and get rid of items no longer used by our chapter. We have funds to cover the expense.

Next Muster: The Chapter Officers will be the trail bosses for the 4th quarter muster at Circle RV in El Cajon . Bud stated that at this muster we usually select officers for the next year; however when the current officers were elected they were asked to serve for two years. He polled the officers to see if they could continue serving and they agreed they could.

Report from National: There are not many new members, the gains and losses balance out and the membership stays about the same. We need to try to recruit new members.

Announcements: Earl Newell brought home grown tomatoes to share with everyone. Rita reported that Gene Krivanek is recuperating at home from a fall and broken ribs. He is still very sore.

Joann Cornelius reported she will return \$5.00 to each person because they had more money than they needed for the food for this muster. And they were able to get Bud's camp fee returned since his rig is disabled and he could not stay. Joann thanked Don and Arlene Hess for being assistant trail bosses.

Mary Platter offered out thanks to the Cornelius' and Hess for conducting a great muster. The group joined in applause of appreciation.

Luncheon: Suzanne Bradbury reported she has 20 reservations for the September luncheon at Admiral Baker Club House. They do the buffet just for us as they no longer do a buffet in the restaurant. They require 40 people normally before they will make a buffet. She is expecting they may say at any time that they will no longer do one for us. Rita has found an Oriental Buffet in Kearney Mesa and also they have a sister location on Point Loma. Either of them will do a \$10 buffet, including tax and tip. Suzanne will check further on accommodations and report back to us. Others suggested more places to check.

Good of the Order: There were no further comments.

Adjourn. Don Skidmore moved we adjourn. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted: Frances Leonard, Secretary

Luncheons

Suzanne Bradbury

Unfortunately the Tuesday, October 4th luncheon was canceled due to insufficient numbers. However, it is status quo at Admiral Baker. We continue to search for the 'perfect place' in the event we must move. If anyone has additional suggestions we should investigate, please let me know.

Wheelchair Bags

Rita Newell

Would you believe that 139 wheelchair bags were cut out and are ready to give the gals who sew them for us? Thanks to everyone at the last muster for their effort to continue this worthy cause of the Diego Cruisers.

The Evolution of the Veterans Wheelchair Bag

Jo Ann Cornelius

(Contributions by Rita Newell and Art Guengrich)

It was around 1992 that one of our member's wives, Jo Ann Cornelius, working as a volunteer at the VA Hospital, noticed that the wheelchair bound people were having a hard time handling their wheelchairs while trying to keep their medical records, X-rays and other personal items on their laps. It is unknown who came up with the idea of a bag that would hang on the back of the chair handles and carry these items so that their arms would be free to traverse the hospital halls. Many changes took place before the present design that our chapter uses was settled on.

Of the early people that were involved, Jo Ann Cornelius started the project and then turned it over to Cindy Stram (deceased), bringing all the material, bias tape, and other items to the chapter musters. A day was set aside to assemble the bags for sewing. David Schmidt, Earl Whaley (deceased) Irwin Pascoe and several of the chapter wives were involved with sewing the bags. Eventually, they were either tired of sewing or arthritis set in the fingers and they dropped out. In 1998, Irwin and Deleen Pasco (deceased) became the chapter chairmen.

Through the efforts of our "Roaming Ambassador" Dennis Boudreaux (deceased) we were given free material samples from his daughter's home interior design business. Through our chapters 50/50 donations we purchase the other items needed for completing the bags.

Our efforts were brought to the attention of Television Station KGTV -10 in 2005. We were featured on the evening news at the VA Hospital showing the assembled bags being present to the Administrations by our chapter members. As of 2011 we have delivered over 2000 bags to the VA hospital in La Jolla and hundreds of lap robes which is an additional project we have taken on.

At the beginning of the project three high schools were contacted and consented to have the students work on the bags under the supervision of their teachers. We furnished the "kits" with all materials needed and pieces cut and ready to sew. Due to the lack of students interested in learning to sew, those Home Economic classes were discontinued. The project became inactive for a short time.

Now the history becomes entwined with the laprobe project. Pat Donahue received permission from the Miramar Brig for prisoners to knit or crochet laprobes. One of the ladies sewing the wheelchair bags for us also belonged to a knitting group. That group began making laprobes for the VA Hospital. One of the members of the group had a relative working at the Brig and during a discussion, it was mentioned that the prisoners needed something to do on the week ends. Perhaps they could make laprobes too. Pat contacted the Brig and found this project would be welcome.

It is a very worthwhile project and really appreciated by our wheelchair bound veterans. The Diego Cruisers are proud to support this work.

2010 DIEGO CRUISERS MUSTER and EVENTS CALENDAR

| Muster / Activity | Dates | Location | Contact Name | Notes |
|--|---------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| | | | Contact Information | |
| 2011 | | | | |
| Monthly Luncheon | 1 st Tuesday Monthly | Admiral Baker Golf Club | Suzanne Bradbury 619 225-0342 sbradbry@aol.com | |
| National Muster | 21 to 26 SEP 2011 | Oklahoma Exposition Center, Shawnee, OK | Check Traveler for details. | |
| Diego Cruisers 4th Qtr. Muster | 28 NOV to 2 DEC 2011 | Circle RV, 1835 East Main, El Cajon, CA 92021 | Chapter Officers | Applications to Don Skidmore |
| SoCal 4 th Quarter Muster | 7 to 11 NOV | Palm Canyon Resort, Borrego Springs | Check SoCal website, http://www.socalsmart.org/ | |
| SoCal Del Mar Beach Group | 11 to 14 DEC | Del Mar Beach, Camp Pendleton | Own Arrangements Del Mar Beach Campsites, Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base, CA Reservations: 760-25-2134 | UNOFFICIAL |
| 2012 | | | | |
| SoCal Muster | 21 – 29 Jan 2012 | | | |
| Diego Cruisers 1st Qtr. Muster | 13 – 17 FEB | Palm Canyon RV Resort , Borrego Springs | TBD | TBD |
| Mexico | 12 – 26 MAR 2012 | Puerto Penasco, Mexico | Roy Allen | UNOFFICIAL |

| Muster / Activity | Dates | Location | Contact Name | Notes |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--|---------------------|--------------|
| SoCal 1Q2012 Muster | 15 – 19 Mar | Jojoba Hills Resort, Aguanga, CA 92536 | See SoCal website | |
| SoCal 2Q2012 Muster | 7 – 11 May | San Onofre Beach | See SoCal website | |
| SW Regional Muster | 2 to 6 APR 2012 | Shangri La RV Resort, Yuma, AZ | TBD | |
| National Muster | SEP 2012 | Goshen, IN | Check Traveler | |
| Updated 10/03/11 | | | | |

Presumptive Illnesses Recognized the US Department of Veterans Affairs

--Agent Orange--

Brad Wynne

Editor's Note: Internet links are shown in this article. They are taken directly from the VA and other websites. For those reading the emailed or web version of this newsletter, hold the "Ctrl" key down and left click on the link. Assuming you are connected to the Internet, you should be taken directly to the appropriate page. Reproducing all the data the VA presents is well beyond the scope of this newsletter article.

Veterans may be eligible for disability compensation and health care benefits for diseases the VA has recognized as related to exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides. Public law and the VA presume certain diseases are related to qualifying military service. These are called "presumptive diseases." With respect to diseases related to Agent Orange, the VA recognizes certain cancers and other health problems as presumptive during military service.

In simpler terms that means if you were in the theater, you were presumed to be exposed to Agent Orange (or other similar herbicides). If at any time following your presumed exposure you contacted one of the listed disease, you are covered by the VA.

Part of the United States' strategy in Vietnam was to conduct an herbicide program to remove foliage providing cover for the enemy. This practice occurred between 1962 and 1971. Defoliation operations occurred throughout Vietnam and possibly along the Laos and Cambodia borders with Vietnam. Agent Orange was the most widely used of the herbicide combinations sprayed. Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam were tested or stored elsewhere, including some military bases in the United States. That means some military connected exposure to Agent

Orange may have occurred outside Vietnam or on ships or aircraft transporting the agents.

For the purposes of disability compensation, VA presumes that Veterans were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides if they served:

- [In Vietnam](#) anytime between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975 (includes brief **visits ashore** or service aboard a ship that operated on the **inland waterways** of Vietnam. Check VA's list of [U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships that operated in Vietnam](#)).
- [In or near the Korean demilitarized zone](#) anytime between April 1, 1968 and August 31, 1971

These Veterans do not need to prove that they were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides to qualify for disability compensation for diseases related to Agent Orange exposure (also called "presumptive diseases"). Within the last year, the VA added additional diseases to the list. The revised list is reproduced here:

- **Acute and Sub-acute Peripheral Neuropathy**
A nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and motor weakness. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of exposure to herbicides and resolve within 2 years after the date it began.
- **AL Amyloidosis**
A rare cancer disease caused when an abnormal protein, amyloid, enters tissues or organs. It may occur as a secondary disease to rheumatoid arthritis, multiple myeloma, osteomyelitis and others.
- **Chloracne (or Similar Acneform Disease)**
A skin condition that occurs soon after exposure to chemicals and looks like common forms of acne seen in teenagers. Under VA's rating regulations, chloracne (or other acneform disease similar to chloracne) must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of exposure to herbicides.
- **Chronic B-cell Leukemia**
A type of cancer which affects white blood cells.
- **Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)**
A disease characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to respond properly to the hormone insulin.
- **Hodgkin's Disease**
A malignant lymphoma (cancer) characterized by progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen, and by progressive anemia.
- **Ischemic Heart Disease**
A disease characterized by a reduced supply of blood to the heart, that leads to chest pain.
- **Multiple Myeloma**
A cancer of plasma cells, a type of white blood cell in bone marrow.
- **Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma**
A group of cancers that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue.
- **Parkinson's Disease**
A progressive disorder of the nervous system that affects muscle movement.

- **Porphyria Cutanea Tarda**

A disorder characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of exposure to herbicides.

- **Prostate Cancer**

Cancer of the prostate; one of the most common cancers among men.

- **Respiratory Cancers**

Cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus.

- **Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma)**

A group of different types of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues.

Children of exposed veterans with spina bifida may qualify for compensation, health care, and vocational training. Surviving spouses, children and dependent parents of Veterans who were exposed to herbicides and died as the result of the disease listed above may be eligible for benefits. These benefits include Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, education, home loan and health care benefits.

The VA also presumes **amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)** diagnosed in **all Veterans** with 90 days or more continuous active military service as related to their service and not necessarily related to Agent Orange exposure.

So called Blue Water Veterans, those serving on ships off the coast of Vietnam and never placing a boot on shore may be covered as well. With some exceptions, one addressed below, you must actually prove you were exposed to Agent Orange.

Blue Water Veterans with [non-Hodgkin's lymphoma](#) may be granted service-connection without showing inland waterway service or that they set foot in Vietnam. This is because VA also recognizes non-Hodgkin's lymphoma as related to service in Vietnam or the **waters offshore of Vietnam** during the Vietnam Era.

Here are actions that members may take to protect not only themselves but also their families.

1. Ask your doctor if any of your chronic conditions is among the list of diseases presumed to be linked to the presumptive list.
2. If you or your medical care provider does not know and you believe there is a chance of exposure, submit a claim using VA form 526b. This is a very simple, short form. Visit one of the local VA offices and hand them the completed form. You may also mail it to the VA Regional Office whose address is shown below. If you are able, attach your evidence to the form. You need only document that you served in Korea or Vietnam during the vulnerability periods and a diagnosis of one of the qualifying illnesses.

With respect to qualifying diseases, physicians may use different terms that could be synonyms of one of the qualifying diseases. Make sure your doctor understands that using the exact terms used by the VA will ease both yours and the VA's administrative burden processing your application.

If you need assistance applying for VA compensation you have several options:

1. VA resources. The VA maintains a website that is full of information. So much information that it is sometimes overwhelming. If this is the case, contact one of the many regional VA offices in and around San Diego. Most are listed at the bottom of this article.
2. The VA provides office space for many of the veteran's service organizations (VSOs) that assist veteran's in processing claims. In most cases those providing assistance are very well trained and experienced volunteers. The primary service organizations are the VFW, American Legion and DAV.

See the following list (The list is not prioritized and is a mix of Government and non-government organizations often referred to as NGOs.):

- County Veterans Service Office, 734 West Beech St., San Diego, CA 92101 619 531-4545
- North County Veterans Service Office, Oceanside Veterans Healthcare System Clinic, 1300 Rancho del Oro Road #1c-138, Oceanside, CA 92056
- 5560 Overland Avenue, Suite 310, San Diego, CA 92123
- VSO Offices at the SD VA Regional Office, 8810 Rio San Diego Dir., 1st Floor, San Diego, CA 92108
 - The American Ex-Prisoners of War (619) 400-5342 (*Specializing in ex-POW issues*)
 - The American Legion: (619) 400-5301
 - The American Veterans of WWII (AMVETS): (619) 400-5303
 - The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA): (619) 400-5306 (*Specializing in Blinded Veterans issues*)
 - The California Department of Veterans Affairs (619) 400-5309 (State Agency)
 - The Disabled American Veterans (DAV): (619) 299-6916
 - The Military Order of Purple Hearts (MOPH): (619) 400-5317
 - The Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA): (619) 400-5320 (*Specializing in Paralyzed Veterans issues*)
 - The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW): (619) 400-5322

The VA now has representatives at Naval Base San Diego (32nd Street), on the dry side above the Commissary and NEX. The VA website refers you to the Fleet & Family Support Center for additional information. This is dated information and relates primarily to service members leaving the Navy. The VA office is located in Bldg. 270 on Dolphin Alley in the same building as the Navy Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) and the Triwest offices. These are the buildings on the hill overlooking the NEX and Commissary. The VA is on the second deck. There is a working agreement with NMCRS that they will make a first floor office available to the VA and their clients experiencing difficulty with stairs. This is primarily an Intake Site, Pre-Discharge Center but they will assist any veteran with base access.

You may call them at 619 230-0393. Alternatively, contact the San Diego Regional Office at 800 827-1000 for an appointment at any of the local area VA offices.

There is a lot of information in this article and it may be confusing. The primary points raised in the article are:

1. Many illnesses are VA compensatable when presumed due to Agent Orange defoliant exposure.
2. Making a claim for these illnesses is simple and requires only a one page form and the three pieces of evidence mentioned above.
3. If you are unsure of the documentation required, simply fill out the form, mail it in and the VA will identify any additional information they require.
 - You may attach a note requesting specific and additional assistance. The VA will provide that assistance.
 - Mail the form to our local VA Regional Office, 8810 Rio San Diego Dr., 1st Floor, San Diego, CA 92108.
4. A complete application package generally consists of
 - VA form 526b, available from the Internet
 - A copy of your most recent DD214 (Be sure to use the copy that is a full page with the discharge codes near the bottom.)
 - Your medical diagnosis
 - Evidence you served in a theater where herbicides were used (or were exposed in other ways).

Remember that boots on the ground means just that. In most cases it simply means were on the ground, in the theater for an undefined period, not that you did a full tour in country.

Alternatively, visit one of the VSOs. If you believe you require VSO assistance, go to them first. It is an easier process for all parties if you follow the protocol of the agency providing assistance. It may take months to process a claim but the effective date is the date your application first reaches the VA.

There is one giant caution in this process. Most of us occasionally see TV advertisements from law firms offering to process cases and claims involving several of the listed diseases, particularly **Mesothelioma**. If you believe you have a disease that is potentially service connected, do not sacrifice between 33 and 51% of your benefit to a for profit law firm that provides the same service the American Legion, VFW, DAV and even the VA provides at no cost.

The information sources for this article include the websites and printed information from the US Department of Veterans Affairs, the California Department of Veterans Affairs, and the County of San Diego Veterans Services. Additionally, Bill, from the Hill AFB VA office, provided an initial briefing on presumptive illnesses recognized by the VA. Roy, a Vietnam veteran from the Naval Base San Diego VA office, reviewed much of this information for appropriateness. I appreciate their assistance.

For information on the Fourth Quarter 2011 Muster, select the “Next Muster Sign-Up” button on our website go directly using this link: http://www.diegocruisers.com/Next_Muster.html

Please note that the agenda has been revised with some new information.