

# The BEXAR GROWL

Volume 11 Issue 3

April 2005

## OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS BEXAR APA 237



### Items of Special Interest

- Read about the Navy Memorial Plaque to be presented during the reunion. The story is our cover article.
- Mail Call is on page three. One letter is a request for information and another a rebuttal to a letter in the last issue.
- Gene Aittala has lots of information on Veterans' issues on pages three and four.
- Page five is a Plaque Replica Order Form for anyone who is interested in the USS Bexar plaque.
- A Navy Log Enrollment Form is on page six.

## NAVY MEMORIAL PLAQUE A REALITY

Visitors to the United States Navy Memorial in Washington, DC will soon find a plaque honoring all who proudly served onboard the USS Bexar. The Bexar Plaque will be part of the Memorial Commemorative Wall inside the Naval Heritage Center, along with over 200 other plaques commemorating the crews of Navy ships and units past and present.

The plaque project was initiated at the Seattle meeting of our Reunion Group. It became a reality because of the generous donations received from many of our group members. Formal dedication of the Plaque

will be made when the USS Bexar Reunion Group visits the Memorial next September.

If you would like to have a replica of the Plaque, you may order one directly from the United States Navy Memorial. The cost is \$125.00 per replica. An order form is included in this newsletter.

For those of you who are not already enrolled in the Memorial's Navy Log, an enrollment form is also included.

Thank you to all the Shipmates whose generous support made the Plaque possible.

Jon Mullarky

## 2005 BEXAR REUNION DATES SET

WASHINGTON, D.C.

**SEPT. 22-25**

CRYSTAL CITY COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT (ARLINGTON, VA)

# Not-For-Profit Ship's Store

Through the efforts of some of your shipmates this enterprise has come to fruition. For items indicated, necessary minimum purchases all have been made and sold to obtain these low prices. Now you all may individually order direct.

BUMPER STICKER (4" by 11")



Cost: \$4.00 (includes shipping)  
Check or M/O payable to:  
Photovision, Inc.  
and notated USS BEXAR  
Mail to:  
Photovision, Inc.  
P.O. Box 313  
Riverton, N. J. 08077

EMBROIDERED PATCH (3")



Cost: \$3.25 (includes shipping)  
Check or M/O payable to:  
John Flynn  
And notated USS BEXAR  
Mail to:  
John Flynn  
P.O. Box 23518  
Washington, D.C. 20026



## TAPS

The Growl was notified of the following shipmates' deaths since the last newsletter was published. Our deepest sympathy goes to the families and friends of the deceased.

*Tony Baker*  
Date of death not reported

*Capt. Griffen*  
Date of death not reported

*S. Pickens*  
Date of death not reported

*James Taylor*  
Date of death not reported

*Charlie Waybright*  
Date of death not reported

*Billy Spain*  
(1957-61) QMSN/QM3 N Div  
Died June 24, 1995

*James Cardwell*  
(1958-59) RMSN OR Div  
Died July 2, 1996

*Howard Hysinger*  
(1957-60) BMC 1st Div  
Died November 11, 2004

*John Stauss, Jr.*  
(1950-52) BTR1/c B Dov  
Died December 10, 2004

*Robert Gosman (1952-60)*  
Died November 27, 2004



## WELCOME MAT

The following shipmates were located since the last newsletter was published. Welcome Aboard! We hope to see you at the next reunion. You are invited to become an active member of the association. **At the request of your association, we will no longer publish the addresses and phone numbers of the new shipmates.** If you would like to have an address, please contact ML&RS at our address below.

*Joseph Janik*

*Dodd Miller*

*Robert Tipton*  
(1952-54) SN Deck

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Funds available after 01/05 issue  
**\$2161.03**

Funds received since 01/05 issue  
**\$65.00**

Total available for 04/05 issue  
**\$2226.03**

Funds expended for 04/05 issue  
**\$ 436.40**

**(Mailed to all crew members this time only)**

**Balance remaining for 07/05 issue \$1789.63**

Please send your \$5.00 subscription for the newsletter to ML&RS at our address below.

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828-256-6559 (fax)

*"Our reunions work so you don't have to"*

### E-mail correspondence to:

*Office manager:*  
dinamlrs@charterinternet.com  
*Newsletter items:*  
karenmlrs@charterinternet.com

**WWW.MLRSINC.COM (web site)**



## MAIL CALL

Dear Dina,

My memory recalls that in 1959 the USS Bexar was astern of the USS Wahoe County LST-1165 and had two sailors washed overboard. Two officers attempted to rescue them and also drowned. Do I have the correct ship?

*Editor's note: No name was on this e-mail (and the e-mail I sent asking for a name came back as an unknown address), so we don't know who sent it, but if you have any memory of this incident, please let ML&RS, Inc. know and we will print it in the next issue of the Bexar Growl.*

### REBUTTAL TO MR. GEORGE A. NOLAN

When individuals make an accusation, it would be of great help to the readers of The Bexar Growl if they knew just what the point of the accusation was. Mr. Nolan failed to do just that. Perhaps he might have the courtesy to take the time to do just that.

If reporting the facts that are public record is making a political statement, you will have to forgive me for reporting the facts.

As Veterans and Military Retirees, we are political statements. If you stay up-to-date on Veterans' and Retirees' issues, you will find there is always something going on in the Senate and House that somehow has an affect on us. The biggest issue that affects all Veterans is VA health care.

Thank you,  
Gene Aittala, USN Retired  
2105 Springdale Dr SW  
Hartselle, AL 35640-3868

## RETIREE AND VETERAN ISSUES

BY GENE B. AITTALA

### FOR RETIREES, THIS TRICARE NOTE: AT TIMES, DOCTORS MAY ORDER BRAND-NAME DRUGS.

**Q?** Why does Express Scripts require people to take only generic drugs? I've heard generics are not as good as the real thing. I'd be glad to pay \$9 for brand names rather than \$3 for second-best. Why does my doctor have to go through a song and dance for me to get good medicine?

**A!** As part of a cost containment effort, the Defense Department has required dispensing of generic equivalents in place of brand-name drugs.

The FDA requires generic drugs to have active ingredients identical to those of the brand name drug in their chemical makeup, strength, effect, method of administration, and indications.

Some Doctors may believe it is medically necessary for their patient to take only a brand-name drug. In such cases, according to a letter from Express Scripts dated Dec. 28, all the doctor needs to do is call the Tricare Retail Pharmacy Programs Prior Authorization number toll free at **866-684-4488** to request authorization for the drug to be dispensed to the patient.

The letter says the authorization request must be approved before the brand-name prescription is filled. If it is not, the patient will have to pay full price for the drug. That amount cannot be reimbursed. **The above article is a consolidation of a newspaper article in part that appeared in the "Navy Times."**

If you are a Military Retiree you may find the above information of interest.

### VA HOME LOANS:

VA home mortgage limits have increased by 39%. The new maximum mortgage now available under the government program is now \$333,700; this is

a 39 % increase over the previous cap. This new rate applies anywhere in the United States, but it's particularly helpful in high-cost areas. For more information on this and other VA home loans contact the VA directly.

### REPRESENTATION IN CONGRESS:

Retirees and Veterans seem to lose ground with each passing year. Currently only 25% of the House of Representatives and 31% of the Senate have served in the Military. With each election of new Congresspersons and Senators we Veterans and Retirees must take the time to be in touch with our elected officials. We must educate them on Veteran and Retiree issues. Most of all we must let them know that we will not just quietly go away.

We must continue the fight. If you are a member of some Veterans organization, join up and become active in the organization. Too many Retirees and Veterans just sit on the side lines and do nothing. But, they show up on payday. This has been very true with the Disabled Veteran Tax (Concurrent Receipt) issue.

Fighting the inequities our government has imposed on Veterans and Retirees does not come cheap. By joining a Veteran organization, the dues you pay helps to continue the battle for equally and justice for Veterans and Retirees to be on par with other Federal Retirees.

There is clout in numbers. Since individually, Veterans and Retirees, do not have the big dollars to put in the war chest of your Federal elected officials, we must rely on Veterans groups to lobby on our behalf. Most do a very good job.

### INCONSISTENT VA COMPENSATION LEVELS UPDATE 01:

During Senate hearings on the new VA Director Jim Nicholson's confirmation he acknowledges that Veterans in different states are awarded different levels of compensation. Knight Rider's Washington Bureau has made available information that allows Veterans to compare each of the 55 VA regional area's

*(Continued on page 4)*

### BEXAR GROWL SUBSCRIPTION

To determine whether or not your subscription to the Bear Growl is current, please look on the address label of the envelope in which this newsletter came. If you have paid since Sept 04, you will have a "Yes" after the ship name. If you have a "No," then you have not paid and will not receive the newsletter again until we receive your subscription. All subscriptions begin and end on Sept 1st of any given year. Send your subscription to ML&RS, Inc. at our address on page two. Please be sure to state that it is for the Bexar Growl.

(Continued from page 3)

performance to other nationwide. Knight Rider is the second-largest newspaper publisher in the United States and is a communications company engaged primarily in newspaper and internet publishing. It also operates the Real Cities Network of local news and web sites in more than 105 markets nationwide. To see how the compensation you may be receiving stacks up against others go to [http://www.realcities.com/mld/kwashington/news/special\\_packages/veterans/10915802/1103390.htm](http://www.realcities.com/mld/kwashington/news/special_packages/veterans/10915802/1103390.htm). This site provides data comparing the region selected with the nationwide average in the following areas.

- .. Percentage of cases granted
- .. Error rate on the benefit rating
- .. Average monthly disability payment
- .. Percentage of Veterans waiting one (1) year or more for a decision
- .. Average days pending appeal
- .. Veterans satisfied with the process
- .. Veterans who said their claim was handled fairly
- .. Veterans who appealed decision
- .. Veterans who said the VA was not at all helpful
- .. Disability levels for ailments in 20 major areas ranging from "Adjustment Disorder" through "Tinnitus"

[Source: NCPOA msg dtd 6 MAR 05]

## DEFENSES FINANCE and ACCOUNTING SERVICE (DFAS)

Military Retirees whether you routinely use myPay or DFAS web page only occasionally you should note a DFAS web address. The new web page is [www.dod.mil/dfas](http://www.dod.mil/dfas) is effective as of March 5, 2005. For those of you who do not prefer to use the internet you will always be able to reach DFAS at this toll free number 800/321-1080.

## BILLS OF INTEREST UPDATE

**S. 337** (Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-SC): Guard and Reserve Readiness and Retention Act of 2005 would amend title 10, United States Code, to expand health care benefits to all members of the Guard and Reserve and their families, and to revise the age and service requirements for eligibility to receive retired pay for non-regular service.

**S. 407** (Sen. Tim Johnson, D-SD): Keep Our Promise To America's Military

Retirees Act would allow military retirees and their dependents the option to enroll in the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan (FEHBP); waive Medicare Part B premiums for retirees who entered the service before December 7, 1956 and provide drug reimbursement at TRICARE network rates to beneficiaries who do not have access to a pharmacy in the TRICARE retail network. **S. 407** is the Senate compliment of **H.R.602**. For more information on this class action lawsuit filed on this issue go to [www.classact-lawsuit.com](http://www.classact-lawsuit.com).

**S. 438** (Sen. John Ensign, R-NV): This bill would repeal the Medicare outpatient rehabilitation therapy caps on Medicare Part B. Currently there is a cap of \$1,500.00 annually.

**S. 484** (Sen. John Warner, R-VA): This bill would allow certain insurance premiums such as Tricare Prime enrollment fees, Tricare Standard supplemental insurance, Tricare dental and Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan (FEHBP) premiums to be paid with pre-tax dollars.

**S. 558** (Sen. Harry Reid, D-NV): This bill would authorize full concurrent receipt (Elimination of the Disabled Veteran Tax) of retired pay and veterans' disability compensation for all disabled retirees who were eligible to retire independent of an disability rating by the VA. This is the Senate counterpart to Rep Bilirakis' H.R. 303.

**H.R. 515** (Rep. Lane Evans, D-IL): Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act of 2005 is a bill to amend Title 38, United States Code, to provide for an assured adequate level of funding for veterans health care.

**H.R. 772** (Rep. Jim Matheson, D-UT): Combat for College Bill would allow activated reservists who accrue two (2) years of non-consecutive active duty within five (5) years of Sept 11, 2001 to qualify for full educational benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB). Currently, reservist who serves at least two (2) years of continuous active duty are eligible for 80% of active duty MGIB benefits. H.R. 772 recognizes that many Guard and Reserve members have been called up repeatedly since 9/11, but breaks in active service deny them the opportunity to qualify for the active duty MGIB.

**H.R. 836** (Rep. Charlie Norwood, D-CA): This bill would increase TRICARE Standard Reimbursement Rates to be the same, or similar as possible, as the reimbursement rates and cost sharing requirements under the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Plan provided under the Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan.

**H.R. 916** (Rep Phil English, R-PA): This bill is the House counterpart to **S. 438**.

**H.R. 994** (Rep. Tom Davis, R-VA): This

bill is the House counterpart to **S. 484**.

To track cosponsor ship, current status and other and other information on selected bills of interest you can use Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) web site at: <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/bills/>. Also you can use the Disabled Veterans of America (DAV) web site at [www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org).

{Source MOAA update of March 15, 2005}

## VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HAND BOOK

The 2005 edition of "Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents" is now available for reading and downloading on the VA web site [www.valaw.org/files/fedbenpdf](http://www.valaw.org/files/fedbenpdf). The 119 page book can be ordered online at the U.S. government bookstore in April, the cost is \$7.00. Go to <http://bookstore.gpo.gov/>.

[Source: Mo Veteran's Party and [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) March, 2005]

**All of us know that without Veterans there would be no United States of America.**

### DISCALIMER:

The information and opinions contained in the article are the views and opinions of the writer and are not to be considered as an official source of information. If you have questions or wish to express your views you can contact me at [www.GBAittala@aol.com](mailto:www.GBAittala@aol.com) or by telephone at 256/773-6283.

Thank you.  
Gene Aittala, USN Retired



Patch replica submitted by  
Jon Mullarky