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1. **CONTACTS:** To help you obtain information about claims or other needs:

- **VETERANS CRISIS LINE:** Veterans and loved ones can call (800) 273-8255 24/7 and then press 1 with total anonymity to speak to a professional counselor. A Houston Vet Center counselor, **James Bailey**, is available in Don Montoya's office on Thursdays for veterans and their families. Call Don's office at (979) 532-1311 for an appointment to see James Bailey. See forms on my desk for information.
- **Dwight Winkler**, 2254 CR 291, East Bernard, TX 77435; (979) 335-4464; lerwinkdd@aol.com
- **Don Montoya**, Wharton County Veterans Service Officer, 1017 N. Alabama Road, Wharton, TX 77488; (979) 532-1311, don.montoya@co.wharton.tx.us; **NEW OFFICE HOURS:** M, TUES, THUR (Wharton), 8:00a.m.-12:00 noon & 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.; FRI (Wharton), 8:00a.m.-12:00 noon by appointment only & 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. (Administrative time); On WED (El Campo library), 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
- **Vanessa Hicks-Callaway**, (Congressman **Blake Farenthold's** Veteran Advocate), (361) 894-6446, Vanessa.Hicks-Callaway@mail.house.gov
- **Matt Minor**, (Texas State Representative **Phil Stephenson's** Veteran Advocate), (281) 232-7900, Matt.Minor@house.state.tx.us
- **VA COMPLAINT HOTLINE:** New VA complaint hotline number is (855) 948-2311. Be courteous and be able to answer WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY about "wrong doing at the VA." *Veterans are manning the hotline now.*
- **NEW VA PHONE NUMBER TO CALL 1-844-698-2311;** This new national toll-free number is a go to source for Veterans and their families who do not know what number to call at the VA. It is identified at the VA as **myVA311**.

2. **JOKES**--#1 Tankers (Source: DW), #2 Zombies & #3 Golf (Source: American Legion Magazine, August 2017, page 64), #4 HAVE YOU HEARD? (Source: Retiree Activities Bulletin, August 1, 2017, page 93).

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3. **BABE RUTH, LOU GEHRIG and MOE BERG** (Source: Retiree Activities Bulletin, August 1, 2017, pages 61 & 62).
4. **SENIOR TREK (TRAVEL, RECREATION, EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE)**: A new senior citizen's program is being started by Mid Coast Medical Clinic of El Campo with **Carol Wootton** as the Senior Program Coordinator. TREK will offer luncheons, activities, informative talks, and travel for senior citizens in and around Wharton County. Plans are underway for a historical trip to Castroville and a Murder Mystery Dinner at the Railroad Cafe in Rosenberg. Contact Carol at (979) 533-2390, or carol.wootton@yahoo.com or **Donna Mikeska** at El Campo Memorial Hospital at (979) 578-5261, or dmikeska@ecmh.org. Leave your name, address and phone number. (Source: Wharton Journal Spectator *Progress* 2017, page 19)
5. **BRUTAL BATTLES OF VIETNAM**: This new book contains 480 pages and 700 pictures covering 100 military actions of the deadliest engagements from 1965-1972 in Vietnam. Famous battles such as Khe Sanh, Hue, and the Ia Drang Valley and numerous firefights that you should have but never heard of finally get their long overdue recognition. Special features, fascinating side-bars, helpful maps, numerous charts, a listing of the war's most highly decorated veterans, splendid illustrations, and the most in-depth combat chronology ever compiled complement the riveting chapters. I have some order forms on my desk or call (800) 821-2606 or www.vfwstore.org. The book is \$29.95 plus \$8.00 shipping and handling. (Source: VFW Magazine, August 2017, page 30)
6. **PBS SERIES ON VIETNAM**: On September 17, 2017, the Public Broadcasting System or Service (PBS) will be showing a series on the Vietnam War that has been in the works for many years. Check your PBS times for the first episode. The series is by **Ken Burns**, a well known historian. Go to <http://www.pbs.org/video/3001104790> for a 25 minute preview of the series. (Source: Retiree Activities Bulletin, August 1, 2017, page 86)
7. **VA SECRETARY TO DECIDE ON NEW PRESUMPTIVE DISEASES**: As reported by **Tom Philpott** for *Stars and Stripes* on August 3, 2017, **VA Secretary Shulkin** has announced he will decide "on or before" November 1, 2017, whether to add to the Agent Orange presumptive list **bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinson-like symptoms**, without diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. **Hypertension (high blood pressure)** and **stroke** also might be embraced, or ignored, as part of the current review. **Bob** posted this information on our www.VVA1069.org web site on 8/7/2017. See **my** VVA Benefits presentations of April 13, 2016 and May 11, 2016 for more information on these **possible** presumptive diseases. (Source: VVA Web Weekly, August 4, 2017)

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8. **VA CLAIM FILING MADE EASY:** Presentation for the 8/31/2017, [Victoria Veterans Summit](#).

Filing a claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) can be a complex process or you can follow the steps below to make it an easy process. This presentation assumes that a veteran or family member of a veteran (claimant) has a legitimate reason for filing a claim with the VA. If the claimant goes to www.benefits.va.gov/, "Applying For Benefits", there are nine benefits listed and 15 different forms listed that should be filed with the VA. This presentation will deal with filing a disability compensation claim with the VA although STEP ONE below is essential with "ANY" VA claim.

STEP ONE: The claimant should carefully choose a person or organization (VSO) to represent you when you are going to file a claim. The VSO'S EXPERIENCE is essential. Ask what a POWER OF ATTORNEY (POA) will allow your representative to do on your behalf. COMMUNICATE regularly with your representative. GET A COPY of all documents used in your claim. Place the documents in a SAFE, EASILY ACCESSIBLE LOCATION.

STEP TWO: Your VSO will file VA Form 21-0966, titled "Intent To File a Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC" (Mar 2017). If your representative faxes the form, it will be accompanied by the "Centralized Intake Coversheet" and sent to Janesville, Wisconsin, the VA Claims Intake Center. If you have a eBenefits premium account, you can upload the documents on that web site. If your VSO mails the document, be sure it is sent certified return receipt requested and you can track the information as to when it is received.

STEP THREE: Your VSO will then help you complete VA Form 21-526EZ, titled "Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits" (Feb 2016). Your military and VA records can be used in completing the form. Again, keep a copy of all documents that are submitted to the VA. The information can be sent the same way as in STEP TWO. You will submit pages 7-10 of VA Form 21-526EZ and ITEM 26 on page 10 indicates you DO or DO NOT want the claim considered for rapid processing.

STEP FOUR: You generally have one year from the time you submit VA 21-0966 (see STEP TWO) to complete the submission of evidence in support of your claim if you "checked" box 26 on page 10 of VA Form 21-526EZ. Evidence can be in your military or VA records, including your DD-214, or it can be "lay statements", or if you have a private doctor that has completed a DISABILITY BENEFIT QUESTIONNAIRE (DBQ) for you. Information can be sent as in STEP TWO. Results will be prompt. The VA will send you a letter acknowledging the date of the receipt of your VA 21-0966. You may be asked to go to a "VA contracted" doctor to substantiate your claim. Be on time and be respectful during the exam. Once you receive your "RATING DECISION LETTER", go back to your VSO for additional advice and possible benefits.

www.VVA1069.org is the web site of my Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1069.