

Did You Know?

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That the American Legion VA&R Chicago office has been locked down since March. Our office is located in the VA Regional Office, along with our sister Veterans Service Organizations (VFW, DAV, IDVA, AMVETS, VVA and the PVA). As a result of this lock out, we have been working from home since then. However, even at home we have access, via the internet, to the VA computer systems. But some of us lack fax machines and our home printers don't always work. Sometimes we must rely on snail mail or fill out certain forms by hand, but we are getting the job done. We are proud to say that calls and e-mails are being responded to in a timely fashion. Within 48 hours, 97% of them were serviced and we hope to continue with that response time. Looking back at these last seven months I want to highlight some of the more interesting and successful claims or situations we handled.

1. The son of a veteran, who lived in the Amboy area, was being proactive and getting his dad's stuff in order. The dad was in hospice with only a few months remaining. Arthur G. Pym (the dad) final wishes were to be buried at Abe Lincoln but the son was unable to locate dad's DD 214. Having advanced dementia he seldom responded to questions and only remembers serving in the Army and being drafted. I suggested an old trick I learned. Got his date of birth and based on that knew that his service number would have started with US 55..... Told the son next time he visited his dad to keep on saying US 55, US 55 over and over. Dad's eyes lightened up on the second try and he rattled out his full service number in an instant from rote. With that I was able to track down the DD 214 and dad is now buried at Abe Lincoln.

2. Received a call from a concerned veteran out of Rock Falls. He was at an estate sale and found a silver urn containing the ashes of a veteran along with his bronze star. Seems the vet died 20 years ago and the widow kept those on her mantelpiece. The executor was unable to locate any next-of-kin so he was selling those items. My caller had bought them and took it upon himself to try and locate any relatives. Neighbors on the block remember they had children but they had long ago moved away. We decided to run a classified ad in the local paper seeking information on where the children may have moved to. As it happens, the local High School was having a 40 year reunion and one of the vet's children attended it, saw the article in the paper and made contact. He will have the ashes interred at Abe Lincoln cemetery.

3. After a Power Point Presentation on VA benefits at the Franklin Park Post 974, the Commander introduced me to a widow. She had started a claim for survivors benefits, her husband had died from cancer caused by radiation. She was denied. I agreed to try and

assist her. I reviewed his VA file and the vet was involved in atomic bomb test sites in the Pacific after World War II. While alive, the vet told her about these tests but never mentioned what ship he was on. Most of his Navy personnel file was destroyed in the St. Louis archives fire in 1973. I had her go through all her old love letters from her husband and she found correspondence from him during that time of testing. The envelope actually had the name of the ship and postmark on the envelope. With that, we were able to prove he was in the area of the testing. She got her benefits.

4. A veteran in Clayton was trying to get service-connected disability for arthritis of both hands due to using a wrench on airplanes. Appealed and judge ordered a new exam. He took the LARGE wrench (he used on airplane bolts) to the exam to show the doc and he agreed. Previous doctors pictured a tiny wrench like you would use to fix your bicycle. He got a very large retroactive check.

Until next month, stay safe, healthy and GOD bless all of us during this season of time.