

The Informer



From the Chair

By Tommy Simpson III, Department of Health, Health Services Consultant, US Army Veteran

It's March, which means springtime is in the air, and don't forget Daylight Savings Time (DST), which means our clocks will magically, or not, "spring forward!" on Sunday, March 11, at 2:00 a.m. There is also two special observances this month which will take "center stage", throughout this month's Informer. [Women's History Month](#) which is observed Thursday March 1 – Saturday March 31, is intended to recognize and honor the significant workforce contributions of women of all races, cultures and ethnicities, who have taken up the cause to resist and succeed, against all forms of discrimination against women. [Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day](#), observed March 30 in our great state, is an annual observance to give Vietnam Veterans the honor and recognition they deserve, and didn't get when they returned home nearly 43 years ago. The Washington State House of Representatives unanimously approved the bill, and the governor signed it into law in 2013, marking the 30th of March each year as a day of recognition to honor all who served directly, and indirectly during the Vietnam era which officially began November 1, 1955, and ended April 30, 1975. As written, the law does not create a legal holiday, but instead, a day of recognition in which all public entities in the state would be required to fly the National League of Families' [POW/MIA \(Prisoner of War/Missing in Action\) flags](#).

From my own vantage perspective, having served 26 years in the United States Army, when I entered on May 28, 1986, I vividly recall many of my Drill Sergeants, Platoon Sergeants, First Sergeants, Platoon Leaders, Battalion and Brigade Commanders, and Command Sergeants Majors, all wearing patches and or appurtenances on their uniforms, testifying their honorable and selfless service during one of the longest, costly and most divisive (and to this very day, extremely misunderstood), conflicts in our American history. More than 3 million people (including over 58,000 Americans) were killed in the Vietnam War, and more than half of the dead were Vietnamese civilians. Of historical note, it has been noted that, "Whether they volunteered or were drafted, 1 out of every 10 soldiers were injured or killed during the Vietnam War."

During my early years of service, I recall while many were eager to talk about, and share their war experiences, many others didn't want to talk about, and or remember their involvement in a conflict in which to this very day, many American citizens feel we never won. This is due in part to the fact that only a year after all U.S forces were pulled out by order of then President Nixon, communist forces ended the war by seizing control of South Vietnam in 1975, and the country was unified as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Our leaders 'back then', were proud, hardened, seasoned, and extremely disciplined veterans who demanded excellence in everything military-related.

Finally, I recall interacting with a few female Vietnam era veterans also and am not ashamed to share in this forum, I was more afraid of them, as a young and eager up-and-coming Soldier, than the males. I recall one female drill sergeant getting right in my face and remarking, "Private do you think I'm pretty?!" I recall standing frozen, petrified and speechless as she demanded an answer to which I eventually replied, "Drill Sergeant, I do not know how to answer your question!" In earnest, I was staring at the patch on her "right" shoulder, which signified she had been a part of the 101st Airborne Division (Screaming Eagles), as they are oft-times

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affectionately referred, and was simply amazed that a “female” had served our beloved country in time of war. Boy was I behind the times! But alas, I am happy to share, some of the best leaders I encountered during my military tenure were females. A couple of great leaders that come to mind are, MG(ret.), Jimmie Keenan-Owens, whom I first met as a young second lieutenant in 1989, at Dwight David Eisenhower Army Medical Center (DDEAMC), Augusta, GA, in the emergency room. I recall her already wearing airborne, air assault and the pathfinder patches on her battle dress uniform, and her eagerness to add the Expert Field Medical Badge (EFMB), to her already impressive collection of decorations. I remember us both attending the EFMB competition which was being hosted at Fort Stewart, GA, September-October of this same year, and her achieving the coveted badge of field medical excellence, on her very first attempt! I had the honor and privilege of serving with her on two other occasions, when she was a LTC(p), and again as a COL, right before she was selected to jump two promotions to MG, where she served out her military tenure as the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Public Health Command (PHC), and simultaneously, Chief of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps! Then there was BG Sheila Baxter, the 1st African American Female to serve as Commanding General, Western Region Medical Command and Madigan Army Medical Center, who simultaneously served as the Chief, of the Medical Service Corps. It was my highest honor to serve for, and with these two outstanding military leaders, and you can bet there were plenty of others whom I viewed as both peers and mentors throughout my military career!

In closing this month’s comments from the Chair, I’d just like to reflect that Most Americans will never serve in the military or step foot on a battlefield, but many feel an obligation to support those who have. In addition, although observances time periods are established throughout the year for us to pay homage to the tremendous, and absolute necessary contributions of outstanding Men and Women past and present. It’s an honor to acknowledge their worth each and every day, as it paves a way for a brighter future for others to follow. To my fellow VEG members, THANK YOU for all you do each and every day to reflect the attributes of diversity, inclusion and gender equality – together, let’s continue to move the needle.

Resources:

Burgess, Mark J. (2018), National Adjutant-Disabled American Veterans (DAV), POW/MIA Reference Guide
National Women’s History Month—Writing Women Back into History, retrieved on February 21, 2018 from <http://www.nwhp.org/>
Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day - March 30th, retrieved on February 21, 2018 from <http://www.dva.wa.gov/welcome-home-vietnam-veterans-day-march-30th>
Vietnam War retrieved on February 21, 2018, from <http://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-history>

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Feature Article: The VERG Celebrates Women's History Month with a special emphasis on Military Service

By Kattarina Simmons, Department of Revenue (DOR), Tax Review Officer, US Army Veteran [Photo Credit © www.nwhp.org]



The National Women's History Project (NWHP), whose anthem's decree "Writing Women Back Into History", and proudly proclaims, "Our History is Our Strength!", proudly announces the 2018 Theme for National Women's History Month – **"Nevertheless, She Persisted: Honoring Women Who Fight All Forms of Discrimination Against Women."** While this theme applies to outstanding, unrelenting and inspirational women across the broadest spectrums of the American way of life past, present and future, we the members of the Veterans Employee Resource Group (VERG), thought it especially important to pay honor and respect to those who've dedicated their full-measure, preserving the freedoms and way of life through service in the Armed Forces of the United States of America, while blazing exemplary trails resolve, resiliency, and bravery, in spite of seemingly overwhelming odds of discrimination and rejection – and "Yet They Persisted!", since the times of the Revolutionary War, to modern day wars and campaigns, domestic, and abroad.

Women's service in the American military has a long, varied history. As we celebrate Women's History Month in March, it seems an appropriate time to remember how women have contributed to military history and service throughout our nation's life.

During the Revolutionary War, women often accompanied the Army, working as nurses, cooks, laundresses, and water bearers. Occasionally, they picked up arms. In 1775, a group of women in Groton, Massachusetts put on men's clothing, grabbed muskets and pitchforks, and defended a local bridge from the British. The Field Artillery similarly celebrates the story of Molly Pitcher, who was a wife working as a water carrier who, when a cannon crew fell, helped man the cannon and earned herself a pension.

The Civil War required women to step up their running of farms and households as men left in droves to fight. They also operated public relief groups, sanitary commissions, and provided nursing care to thousands of soldiers. Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, a Civil War surgeon, even won the Medal of Honor for her service during the war.

The Spanish-American War saw 1,563 Army contract nurses serving in Army and Navy hospitals, on a hospital relief ship, and overseas. They served stateside, in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and in Hawaii. The success of these nurses led to the establishment of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901.

At the beginning of World War I (WWI), 403 women were on active duty in the Army Nurse Corps. Over the course of the war, 21,480 women joined, and 10,000 of those served overseas. More than 250 women died in

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service during WWI. During the war, a manpower shortage led to the Navy recruiting female yeomen. 12,000 female Yeomen served between 1917 and 1921. The Marine Corps also enlisted 305 female clerks.

World War II (WWII), like the previous wars, saw a widespread draft that opened up previously-closed areas of life to women, e.g. Rosie the Riveter. In 1942 the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) began. More than 60,000 women volunteered. The continued need for manpower, combined with successful recruitment of WAACs, led to the changing it from the WAAC to the Women's Army Corps (WAC) in 1943. The WAC was now part of the Army, not merely an auxiliary service. Women filled 239 different kinds of jobs, some overseas. Across the services, 400,000 women served in WWII, as WACs, WAVES (Navy), Coast Guard SPARs, in the Civil Air Patrol, as Marine Reservists, and as Women's Air Service Pilots (WASPs).

In 1948, Congress established the WAC as a permanent part of the regular Army, a separate Corps. However, while there was some recruitment for women during the Korean War, it was largely a failure. Women had experienced the closing of advancement and lack of challenging opportunities that had occurred when the male soldiers from WWII had returned. Social mores of the 1950s probably also played a large part in the lack of response to recruitment efforts.

The 1960s saw society at large agitating for change in women's roles, but the military remained conservative. The head of the WAC called for acceptance of women in the military, not equality, and it was viewed as vitally important that military women were seen as feminine; weapons familiarization was no longer mandatory and skirts and heels were.

The Army forgot the lessons of WWII. During the Vietnam War, concern over the protection of women remained high, and women were not posted in large numbers to Vietnam until more than two years into the war. This was despite requests for deployment and the presence of civilian women in administrative and clerical positions. Nevertheless, women continued to serve. Stateside service members, including women, faced the stigma of anti-war sentiment at home as much as those returning from overseas. Eventually, some 7,500 women did deploy to Vietnam, but few serving during the era, male or female, stateside or deployed, had an easy time in service.

In 1972, major changes came to the military; abolishment of the draft, making an all-volunteer force, and opening both the Army and Navy academies to women. The change continued apace, and by 1976, one in 13 military recruits was female. In 1978, the Women's Army Corps was abolished and women were fully assimilated into Army. They remained barred from entry into combat arms branches.

Women continued to serve during the Cold War 1980s. Notably, 170 women served abroad in Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada, as part of the first gender-integrated units deployed to combat. In Operation Just Cause, in Panama, more than 800 served. CPT Linda Bray commanded the 988th Military Police Company out of Fort Benning, and she became the first woman to command troops in combat.

By 1990, women were 11 percent of active duty forces and 13 percent of the reserve forces, but remained excluded from combat branches. More than 40,000 deployed to Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. This war demonstrated the difficulty of separating combat and non-combat jobs in modern warfare. There are no clear front lines, and combat zones shift; artillery shells do not care if you are nurse, a cook, or a rifleman. The combat exclusion was the topic of the decade, because while rules excluded women from 9 percent of Army

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roles, for example, those roles comprised 30 percent of active duty positions. Lack of combat experience was, and remains, a factor in promotion to higher ranks, and therefore the combat exclusion limited advancement opportunities for women in the military.

Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom saw large-scale deployment of integrated units. Despite formal exclusion of women from combat arms units, the insurgency in these countries meant women were in combat, with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and insurgents that do not discriminate between a supply convoy and an infantry patrol. Military police units, which are gender-integrated, patrolled the streets of Iraq and Afghanistan. Female logistics personnel drove in convoys. All these situations meant that, exclusion from combat units or not, women faced risks from the enemy. In fact, in 2005, SGT Leigh Ann Hester, a Reservist from Kentucky, earned a Silver Star for her actions during an enemy ambush on the supply convoy she was traveling in.

Operating in the local culture also posed difficulty for male troops. Combat arms units asked for females to be attached to their units, in order to search local civilian females. Special Forces and other combat units recruited for women to be attached to teams, to interact with local women. Female Engagement Teams were part of the counter-insurgency strategy. As long as women were attached, not permanently assigned, to combat units, they could and did serve alongside, taking many of the same risks.

In 2013, after more than a decade of war, the Pentagon began the process of removing the ban on women in combat, culminating in a 2015 announcement that all jobs were open to women. Actual implementation has been slow and in some cases reluctant. However, in August of 2015, two women graduated from the Army's storied Ranger School, CPT Kristen Griest and 1LT Shaye Haver. Griest, a former military police officer who served in Afghanistan, went on to transfer to the infantry and attend the Maneuver Captains Career Course. In January 2017, the first females were sent to a Marine Corps infantry unit at Camp Lejeune. September 2017 saw a female lieutenant complete the Marine Corps Infantry Officer Basic Course. As of late 2016, female interest in combat arms was exceeding expectations, and more than 300 women had gone into combat arms positions in the Army.

Not all women can meet the physical standards needed to succeed in all jobs. Not all who can have the interest to do it. But the coming years will let us see what women, less fettered by stereotypes, can achieve. Persistence will be key.

For more detailed information, see www.womensmemorial.org/history

Conversations around Diversity AND Inclusion, Equity, and Ethics in the Workplace - *By Tommy Simpson III, Department of Health, US Army Veteran*

The Interagency Committee of State Employed Women (ICSEW) has extended a wonderful opportunity to bring all the ERGs/BRGs together to continue to build collaboration efforts in regards to creating diverse, inclusive, discriminatory and harassment-free environment for all employees, regardless the setting. The meeting, March 20, 2018, Department of Labor & Industries, 7273 Linderson Way SW, Tumwater, 8am-4pm is open to ALL state employees and lunch is free and will be catered. You MUST RSVP by clicking [HERE](#) and be sure to get your supervisor's approval to attend where applicable!

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A Solemn and Respectful Tribute to 'ALL' Vietnam Era Veterans

By Jennifer McDaniel, WDVA, US Army Veteran



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Sitting down to write an article that can properly convey the respect I have for the Vietnam Veteran is not something I do lightly nor do I feel I can truly do it justice. Over the years, I have given several speeches honoring these men and women on what has come to be known as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day at the end of March. However, each time I do it is a concern that I am not capturing the true reality of what they represent to me as a veteran and a person.

This generation of veterans served during the most unpopular war of our time, an unwinnable war. After enduring the tragedies that often accompany the challenges of serving during a time of combat, these service members often returned to what would be almost as traumatizing as where they had been. Many were spit on, cursed at, called degrading names, made to feel shame or fear for wearing their uniforms, or ignored altogether. There were no parades, no recognition of service, and often no

“thank you” or offers to help them settle back into their communities.

Over 58,000 were lost in battles that took place in the La Drang Valley in 1965, or An Khe, Plei Khu, or the Tet Offensive launched on January 30, 1968. I can't name all the battles, the many hills that were taken, the landing zones cleared, the night time perimeter patrols, or the seemingly endless trails walked. Some returned but carry heavy burdens of the heart and mind. Many more are still missing.

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Since March 2013 when Governor Inslee passed legislation making March 30th officially Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day in Washington State, we have finally given public recognition to this generation of veterans that served their country for a cause greater than themselves. But for those friends and family members who know and love these veterans, we know the sacrifices they made and what some of them still go through today because of their service during that time period.

I believe this is a generation of heroes. In this day and age where sports figures and actors are placed on pedestals, I wanted my youngest son to see what a real hero was. I took him to see a panel of Vietnam Veterans at Shoreline Community College last spring. It was comprised of Bruce Crandall; a Medal of Honor recipient for his actions during the battle of La Drang in 1965, Joe Galloway a reporter whose actions were also portrayed with Bruce Crandall in the film “We Were Soldiers”; and Joe Crecca, an Air Force pilot who was shot down and held prisoner for 6 years in Vietnam. These men shared their experiences during the course of the war and answered questions from the audience. My son and I got our picture taken with LTC Crandall where he even put his MOH around my son’s neck for the picture. When this was over and they had described their experiences and views, my 11 year old son looked to me and said he was glad I brought him “cause now he knew what real heroes looked like.”

The Vietnam Veteran has not asked for our appreciation or support, all the more reason it should be given. It is deserved. They are a generation of dignified veterans who are worthy of respect and gratitude.

Veterans Spotlight – Department of Health

U. James Chaney, Department of Health (DOH), Executive Director, Florida National Guard / US Army Veteran



James Chaney, was hired on 1 December 2017, as an Executive Director within Health Systems Quality Assurance, Office of the Assistant Secretary. James is a southerner raised primarily in Florida; however spending quite a bit of time in Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana. In his own words, “The South is home, however I love my new life in the Pacific Northwest”. James has six kids and four granddaughters – all living in Texas. He has two master’s degrees, two bachelor’s degrees, and is currently pursuing a PhD.

James entered the military service in the delayed entry program for the Florida National Guard. After serving four years in the National Guard, James went Active Duty with his first assignment being in the Panama Canal Zone followed by four years at Fort Stewart when it was home to the 24th Infantry Division.

James is an outdoorsman that embrace the serenity that only being nature can provide. He loves to travel, hike, and explore the scenic beauty of the country – especially at state and national parks. To date, he has a footprint in all but four states – Maine, New Hampshire, Alaska, and Hawaii. In the future, James intends to volunteer in support of nonprofit organizations focused on ending homelessness and promoting access to good behavior/mental health.

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The Washington State VERG “Pays-it-Forward”

The Washington State Veteran’s Employee Resource Group (VERG) hosted its new ‘Working for the State of Washington’ employment workshop and recruitment event at Joint Base Lewis McChord on February 8th. This quarterly event allows transitioning service members and their spouses to learn firsthand about the various opportunities at multiple state agencies and hear directly from both recruiters, hiring managers as well as veteran state employees. The day was a complete success and the state agency representation was phenomenal and well received.

Attendees learned how to navigate the online application system, how to translate military skills on a resume, and how important cultural fit is to state roles. Best practices were shared by the state panel along with newly hired veterans telling their personal transition stories and state hiring experience.

Job seekers from all the armed services, as well as military spouses, are welcome to attend and the next event will be held in May/June. Interested agencies or individuals who wish to participate can contact Don Chavez at 360-407-4125 or don.chavez@ofm.wa.gov.



Mary Forbes, WDVA Assistant Director and the VERG Executive Sponsor opens the event and highlights the many opportunities the state has to offer.



State agency displays and networking with interested job seekers.

Upcoming Career-Focused Events

WDVA Events Calendar	WDVA website	Dates vary	Locations vary	Continuously updated
Veterans, Spouses, Domestic Partners CF	Hire G.I.	03/28/2018 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.	The Club at McChord Field 700 Barnes Blvd, JBLM, WA 98438	Free Event
Veterans, Spouses, Domestic Partners CF	Hire G.I.	03/29/2018 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.	American Lake Conference Center 8085 NCO Beach Rd, JBLM, WA 98433	Free Event

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Announcements, Tools & Resources

Food for thought - Apply Early: According to leading industry experts, it is recommended you should apply within three (3) days of a job posting because when you apply early, you increase your interview odds because your resume gets seen first and this in turn boosts your chances.

The Transition Success Podcast with Cesar Nader: Outstanding Transition Success Podcast series presented by former United States Marines Corps Veteran. Watch and learn!

LinkedIn for Veterans: How using professional social media can help you in your transition to the civilian world - By Marguerite Cleveland on January 25, 2018.

WA Pathways to Employment (Veterans Pages): Each year thousands of disabled military personnel return to the civilian labor force seeking rewarding and meaningful work. The resources in these pages can help you in your job search and your transition to civilian life.

Working for Washington State: Check out state employment opportunities and sign up for daily job postings sent to your email inbox.

Simply Hired: Discover thousands of local jobs listings using this career-location filtered, job search engine.

WDVA Legislative Updates: Check often for updated information on bills affecting veterans and their families that are still active. The first day of the Regular 2018 Legislative Session was January 8, 2017 and will last 60 days.



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Contact us if you have a relevant news story, idea(s), and or general information to share and the Communications Team will take action!

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