



LINCOLN HILLS VETERANS GROUP

BULLETIN

September 2009

Lest We Forget

VOLUME 9, No. 9

President's Corner

Medical Benefits: Cause for Concern

I try to avoid politics as much as possible anymore because it's become so complicated and confusing that you need a guide to escort you through all of the so-called great ideas that are being promulgated both nationally and in California. I am increasingly concerned that the drive to include everyone in a national medical plan may have unintended consequences for some of us – most notably those of us who rely on military retirement or veterans' benefits.



We are a great country and this is demonstrated by our concern for those who have experienced misfortune. We feed the hungry, both at home and abroad. We share our bounty regularly with

the poor and the unfortunate. We send hospital ships to areas beset by tidal waves and earthquakes. Yet, some tell us that we don't do enough. We ignore millions who have no medical insurance or cannot obtain medical care.

The statistics are daunting; but, remember the pundit who said (I'm paraphrasing), "there are lies, damn lies, and statistics." Reality seems to indicate that nearly all Americans have some medical care available. Hospital emergency rooms routinely provide aid to indigent persons who have no other options. Many charities provide clinics to service the poor. Organizations like Loaves & Fishes offer medications and medical treatment to those in need in Sacramento. Our July speaker, David Morgan, through his Flying Doctors group, serves poverty areas in California as well over the border in Mexico.

The truth may be that some are left out. No system is ever 100% perfect. But, if you have a good watch that only loses 2 minutes each day, there is no reason to throw it out and buy a new watch.

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Next Meeting

Combat Vet of WWII and Korea, POW to Speak September 17

Sgt. Obie Wickersham, a combat veteran of World War II and Korea, and a prisoner of the Communist Chinese, will be the featured speaker at the September 17 meeting of the Veterans Group at 1 p.m. in the Kilaga Springs Presentation Hall.

As a paratrooper, he served with the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II. He first saw combat on the Anzio beachhead. Later, he parachuted into Holland during Operation Market Garden and fought to secure the bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem ("A Bridge Too Far"). He fought in the Battle of the Bulge, the Battle of the Ardennes in Belgium and at the Siegfried Line. He fought until the end of the war when his unit crossed the Elbe River to meet the Russians.



As a reservist, he was called back to active duty at the beginning of the Korean War. He served as a platoon sergeant with the 2nd Infantry Division until May 17, 1951, when his battalion was overrun and he was captured by Chinese forces. Wickersham was reported missing in action until the Chinese confirmed his status as a POW six months later. As a POW, he and other American, British, Turkish and South Korean troops were marched 500 miles to a camp on the Yalu River. The march started with 500 men and ended with 200. Some of the others died of illness and starvation, but most died of brutality.

After 28 months as a POW, he was released when the peace talks were wrapping up on August 23, 1953.

Visit the Veterans Group Website at www.lhvets.org

**Lincoln Hills Veterans Group
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Secretary: Jon Hodson 543-4687
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Meetings

The board of directors meets the Wednesday before the third Thursday of the month at 9:00 a.m. General membership meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at 1:00 p.m., normally in the Kilaga Springs Lodge Presentation Hall.

Membership

The purpose of the Veterans Group is to bring together resident veterans who have served honorably in any uniformed service of the United States or its allies during war or peace. Dues are \$10 a year. Life membership is \$100. For further information, please contact Jon Hodson at 543-4687 or any of the board members or committee chairs listed above.

Bulletin Contributions

Contributions to the monthly *Bulletin* are appreciated. Photos and memorabilia will be scanned and returned. Please send material for consideration to:

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President's Corner, continued from page 1

As grandpa said, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." We need to add to our efforts to reach those who need the help, not replace the existing system with a whole new federal program. The government has proven time and time again that it cannot manage programs better than private entities because government has no incentive to make a profit or improve efficiency.

While no politician involved in the health-care debate has actually stated that military and veterans' medical benefits are being considered for cuts, these programs represent huge expenditures and could be tempting targets. Any change from the present system to a single-payer (government) plan would result in fewer services and long lines to access whatever services are left. I urge everyone to contact their congressional representatives - both House and Senate - and state their reservations.

The covenant made to our veterans to provide medical care is sacrosanct. Setting aside this promise made to our compatriots who placed their lives on the line to defend this nation in its many conflicts would signify that we are abandoning our greatness and substituting passive socialism for our great democracy, and from this we may never recover.

- Doug Cooper

Treasurer's Report

As of June 16, the group had \$5,991.54 in its checking/savings account and \$3,438.48 in a CD.

Membership Report

As of August 12, the group's paid membership stood at 284, including 50 life members.

Welcome, New Members

Member	Service
David R. Borden	Navy
Jack Everett	Navy
Wayne Winslow	Navy



More on Flying Doctors



Members and guests enjoyed learning about the Flying Doctors from Dr. David Morgan at the July meeting. Some members expressed an interest in getting further information and/or making a donation. The Flying Doctors web site lays out their programs and contacts at www.flyingdocs.org.

Calendar of Events

September

- 7 Labor Day* 
- 11 Patriot Day* 
- 16 Directors Meeting
- 17 General Membership Meeting

October

- 12 Columbus Day* 
- 14 Directors Meeting
- 15 General Membership Meeting

* National Holiday or Observance. Proudly fly the American flag.

Items of Interest to Veterans

Newest ISR Platform Deploys to Iraq

A year ago, the MC-12 was just an idea. The Air Force needed to provide more of one of its most vital contributions to the joint fight: intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, or ISR. The concept was to take a readily available airframe and outfit it with ISR capabilities. Now this program has gone from drawing board to deployment in record time.



◀ *The first MC-12 Liberty aircraft in-theater lands after its first combat sortie at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. The Air Force's*

newest intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platform, the MC-12 is a medium-altitude manned special-mission turboprop aircraft that supports coalition and joint ground forces. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Tiffany Trojca)

Lt Col David Maher, MC-12 System Management Chief said, "Normal acquisition takes anywhere between ten to thirty years to design an aircraft, to build it, and to field it; we've done this entire program in less than nine months. It's an amazing feat that the Air Combat Command team has been able to accomplish."

"ISR is a core Air Force mission," said Lt Gen Gary North, 9th Air Force and U.S. Air Forces Central commander. "The MC-12 enhances and complements the entire ISR umbrella from space down to small UAVs and will integrate in a seamless fashion the processing, exploitation and dissemination of intelligence at all required levels."

The MC-12 flew its first combat mission June 10. Its presence directly affects the safety and security of coalition ground forces.

"We provide a mission called over-watch and convoy escort," said Lt Col Phil Stewart, 362d Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron commander. "So imagine if you were riding around in a hum-vee in a convoy in Iraq, you would want to see exactly what was on the other side of the hill. Well, now you can."

Not only does the MC-12 provide ground forces valuable information in an asymmetric battlespace, it provides that information when it is most needed.

"We'll be able to provide full motion video to the boots on the ground in real time so they can affect their mission instantaneously," said Colonel Maher.

This program was dubbed the Project Liberty Program as a nod to a World War II effort that quickly built and transitioned commercial ships into the fight in Europe, much like what the Air Force was able to do with the MC-12. The Air Force plans to increase the MC-12 inventory to 37 by 2010.

- TSgt Mike Slater, USAF

New Website Offers Space-Available Travel Info

Air Mobility Command (AMC) recently unveiled its first official travel website. People planning to utilize the AMC military travel system can now go to www.amc.af.mil/amctravel/index.asp for the latest travel information.

The site, which officially went live July 24, offers prospective space-available travelers a wealth of information, including an updated AMC passenger terminal contact list (complete with phone, e-mail and Web links), and more than a dozen travel documents, example letters and brochures.



Every day, hundreds of military and military-contracted commercial aircraft travel the world delivering troops and cargo. And each year, hundreds of thousands of military personnel, retirees and their family members go along for the ride, courtesy of the AMC space-available travel program.

Visit the Veterans Group Website at www.lhvets.org

Space-available flights, also known as "military hops," are a unique benefit to U.S. service members, retirees and their families. Under the AMC travel program, unused seats on U.S. military and military-contracted aircraft are made available to non-duty passengers on a space-available basis (once space-required or official-duty passengers and cargo have been accommodated).

- Mark Diamond, Air Mobility Command

Warship Honors Marine who Died Protecting Comrades

Marines flushing out Iraqi insurgents after an ambush in April 2004 came upon a column of vehicles: a van with a father and son, a pickup truck, a tractor, a BMW with a couple of sheiks and a Toyota Land Cruiser with four young men, all of them insurgents.

As Marines began searching the vehicles, the driver of the Land Cruiser jumped out and attacked Cpl. Jason Dunham. The two men tumbled onto the dirt



road. Two Marines ran up to assist but Dunham cried out, "No, no, no, watch his hand!"

A grenade exploded, rocking the narrow street.

Dunham, 22, of Scio, N.Y., mortally wounded as he saved his comrades that day, is being honored with the christening of the Navy's newest destroyer, the USS *Jason Dunham* (DDG 109). The young corporal who threw his Kevlar helmet and his body onto the grenade became the first Marine since the Vietnam War to receive the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military honor.

- David Sharp, Associated Press

Lest We Forget

World's Oldest Man, WWI Vet, Dies Founding Member of the RAF

Henry Allingham, the world's oldest man and the oldest surviving British veteran of World War I, died at the age of 113. Born on June 6, 1896, Allingham was active until his final days.

Born in the East End of London during the reign of Queen Victoria, Allingham joined the Royal Naval Air Service as an aircraft mechanic in 1915. He was the

last known survivor of the Battle of Jutland, considered the greatest battle of World War I. He was serving aboard the armed trawler HMT *Kingfisher*, which was sent to meet up with the British fleet as it fought the Germans off what is now



Denmark. The battle still holds the record for the most battleships and battlecruisers engaged in a fight, according to Britain's Ministry of Defence.

In 1917, Allingham was sent to France to support the Royal Flying Corps. His job as a mechanic was to service aircraft and recover parts from downed planes, but pilots would often ask their mechanics to fly with them, so Allingham would sit behind the pilot and drop bombs or operate the machine gun.

Allingham was a founding member of today's Royal Air Force, formed in 1918 when the Royal Naval Air Service merged with the Royal Flying Corps.

After the war, Allingham remained a reservist, and during World War II he was called on to find a solution to the German magnetic mines that were bottling up the English harbor of Harwich. Allingham and his team devised an effective system to neutralize the mines, after which every ship was fitted with a neutralizing device using the system.

The Royal Navy celebrated Allingham's birthday last June by throwing him a party aboard the HMS *President*. A birthday cake and card signed by the First Sea Lord was delivered by fast raiding craft of the Royal Marines, and he was given a decanter of Pussers Rum, his "favorite tippie," on behalf of the Fleet Air Arm.

► **Henry Allingham, Harry Patch and Bill Stone at Remembrance Day 2008.**



A week after Allingham's death, Harry Patch, Britain's last soldier to fight in World War I, died at age 111. In January, Bill Stone, the last known British veteran to see active duty in both world wars, passed away at 108. The last living American-born veteran of WWI is 108-year-old Frank Woodruff Buckles of Charles Town, West Virginia.

- Multiple sources

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