



Retiree Activities Office Newsletter

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April 1, 2010

Director's Corner

Lt Col Bruce Postel, USAF (Ret)
Director, Retiree Activities Office (RAO)



Memorial Day, May 31st. Originally called Decoration Day, it's a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service. Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his [General Order No. 11](#), and was first observed on 30 May 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. It is celebrated near the day of reunification after the Civil War. This year we observe Memorial Day on Monday, May 31st.

Hail & Farewell! A Hearty **Welcome Aboard** to our newest RAO team member, CWO4 George Quinton, USA (Ret)! George is selflessly donating his time to help **YOU**. When you get a chance, why not stop by the RAO and say hello to George and the RAO team! A Sincere **Farewell** to MSgt Wayne Harrison, USMC (Ret) who is stepping down as RAO Assistant Director. Wayne, your integrity, camaraderie and counsel will definitely be missed ... **Semper Fi!**

Thank You! A special **Thank You** to the fine folks running the McGuire AFB RAO, who on my recent visit, indulged many questions in my effort to learn how a successful RAO is properly organized and operated...*Thanks!* **Thank You** to these **Good Americans**: Edward Farmer for donating a U.S. Flag now proudly on display in the RAO. Dan Campion for researching Bangkok Bank's Direct Deposit Service. Miss Jane for helping Jerry Haag square away our library which is now more useful and presentable--**favorably noted by U.S. Ambassador John!** Susanne Robinson for helping organize a core part of our operation. Ron Godsy for donating a Microwave Oven (that's what I'm talkin' about!). Bob Hardesty for his always level-headed advice. Chuck Clemens and Ron Porter for regularly donating reading material. Chuck Krueger and Chuck Kathrein for several helpful ideas and gouge. Don Ratcliff and Johnnie Smith for collecting DVDs donated by various kind persons in Pattaya. Carl Nevin for the superb popcorn and routinely

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offering to make a snack bar run for us. Thomas James for donating hearing aid batteries. Last, and certainly not least; Robert White (Kanchanaburi) for researching how to correctly submit a change of address with the Social Security Administration (see page 3). **Thanks!**

Ongoing Political Unrest. ([U.S. Embassy, Bangkok](#)) We remind U.S. citizens that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. U.S. citizens are urged to avoid the areas that may be targeted for demonstrations and to exercise caution in their movements around Bangkok or if within the vicinity of any demonstrations or large gatherings.

Survivor Assistance. The essential document is the sponsor's DD-214 - Armed Forces of the U.S. Report of Transfer or Discharge. SSA and VA require this document to be certified. If a complete set of **certified** documents that cover all of the sponsor's military service are not available, Mail or Fax an [SF-180 - Request Pertaining to Military Records](#) (or request online)--be sure to note the correct address to send the request to (see SF-180, pg 3).

In order to aid Survivor Assistance planning and preparation (while the sponsor is still alive!) as well as provide actual Survivor Assistance, the RAO has developed a Survivor Assistance Guide which is found here: http://www.jusmagthai.com/rao_portal/SurvivorGuide.pdf

More Survivor Assistance Planning and Preparation:
http://www.jusmagthai.com/rao_portal/Family_Prep.pdf
http://www.jusmagthai.com/rao_portal/Casualty_Worksheet.pdf

JUSMAG–THAI Gouge

By JUSMAG–THAI Staff



JUSMAG Dental Services. Did you know JUSMAG has a Dentist? Dr. Richard Graham is the Dentist at JUSMAG. What may not be commonly known is that U.S. military retirees and their dependents, and 100% DVAPRM and their dependents may use Dr. Graham's services. **Service Hours:** Monday & Wednesday, 0700–1700; and Tuesday & Thursday, 0700–1600. Payment is up front via cash or check, in THB or USD (no credit cards). For more information please call: 02–287–1036 Ext 164.

JUSMAG Notary. Many of you have used the Notary Service previously provided by MAJ Matthews (who has PCS'd). The JUSMAG–Thai Adjutant currently provides that service (duties permitting); just be advised that, as before, the notary stamp is derived from US Army authority and may or may not be accepted outside of the Department of Defense, especially if used on documents in legal proceedings--the burden of determining that acceptance rests solely with the person requesting notarization. If you require notarization, please first visit the JUSMAG Joint Support section (aka "Admin")--the same helpful folks that issue military ID cards--and tell them the purpose of your visit. They will direct you to the appropriate office. Kindly remember, JUSMAG provides this service as a courtesy.

Note: American Citizen Services, US Embassy, Bangkok and US Consulate, Chiang Mai, provides a fee-based Notarial Service (\$30/first seal, \$20/ea additional seal):
<http://bangkok.usembassy.gov/service/notarial-services.html>
<http://chiangmai.usconsulate.gov/service/services/notarial/>

DFAS myPay System. Retirees and annuitants with myPay accounts need to establish new user names and passwords if they have not already done so using the new format. According to myPay officials, customized login IDs and passwords will allow DFAS customers more flexibility and opportunities to increase the security of their personal information.

- **Instructions:** <http://www.dfas.mil/index/StepByStep.pdf>
- **DFAS Retiree & Annuitant Pay:** (1–800–321–1080)
<http://www.dfas.mil/rapay.html>

2009 Tax Year – Income Tax Filing (April 15th).

IRS Publication 54

Tax Guide for U.S. Citizens & Resident Aliens Abroad

<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p54.pdf>

*** **Excerpt from IRS Pub 54** ***

Filing Requirements: If you are a U.S. citizen or resident alien, the rules for filing income, estate, and gift tax returns and for paying estimated tax are generally the same whether you are in the United States or abroad. **When to File & Pay:** If you file on a calendar year basis, the due date for filing your return is April 15 of the following year. In general, the tax shown on your return should be paid by the due date of the return, without regard to any extension of time for filing the return. **Extensions:** You can get an extension of time to file your return. In some circumstances, you can also get an extension of time to file and pay any tax due. However, if you pay the tax due after the regular due date, interest will be charged from the regular due date until the date the tax is paid. **Automatic 2-month extension.** You are allowed an automatic 2-month extension to file your return and pay federal income tax if you are a U.S. citizen or resident alien, and on the regular due date of your return: You are living outside of the United States and Puerto Rico and your main place of business or post of duty is outside the United States and Puerto Rico. **How to get the extension.** To use this automatic 2-month extension, you must attach a statement to your return explaining which of the two situations listed earlier qualified you for the extension. (**Note:** If any questions, read the full text in IRS Pub 54, or contact the IRS or a tax professional.)

- **IRS Main Site:** <http://www.irs.gov>
- **IRS – U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad**
<http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=97324,00.html>
- **IRS Forms & Publications:**
<http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html?portlet=3>
- **American Citizen Services, US Embassy, Bangkok:**
<http://bangkok.usembassy.gov/service/federal-benefits-and-taxes.html>
- **American Citizen Services, US Consulate, Chiang Mai:**
<http://chiangmai.usconsulate.gov/service/services/u.s.-taxes>

VA Benefits. (By Lt Col Bruce Postel, USAF, Retired)

To refresh your memory, Pittsburgh is the servicing VA Regional Office (VARO) for VA benefits claimants using a Thai street address or APO 96546 box number with the VA.



Pittsburgh VARO

That being said, I recently paid a visit to Pittsburgh VARO to see their operation and to learn what I could about the VA disability process. I also wanted to put a human face on the mountain of benefits paperwork the RAO endlessly sends them. I was favorably impressed by what I heard and saw. VA and DAV (Disabled American Veterans) personnel were very professional and obliging.

While at Pittsburgh VARO I spoke with Mr. Rich Lyons, VA Public Contact, and Mr. Kevin Noel, DAV National Service Officer (NSO). The VA Public Contact section answers inquiries submitted through the VA's IRIS portal and receives overseas phone calls to 1-800-827-1000. Mr. Lyons informed me that assistance generally is more efficient when clients email the VA with questions through IRIS (preferred method) vs. telephoning. Even so, non-internet using clients are always welcome to call or write--same applies to internet users. When contacting or visiting the VA or DAV clearly state your request and be **professional**--yes, the process can be frustrating, but abusive missives clearly will not work in your favor.

Mr. Noel, DAV NSO, and I primarily discussed the various components of the VA disability process. Our dialogue was largely a validation of what I previously learned from the DAV, by 'living the process', and by gathering feedback from fellow disabled Veterans. I have developed two VA Disability information papers; one formulated for Active Duty, and one geared towards Retired/Separated Veterans: http://www.jusmagthai.com/rao_portal/VA_ActiveDuty.pdf
http://www.jusmagthai.com/rao_portal/VA_Retired.pdf

While the burden of pursuing a VA disability rating rests squarely with the Veteran, when a Veteran contacts the RAO inquiring about seeking VA disability, that Veteran deserves to be given the necessary foundational tools and a vector, which is the main reason the info papers mentioned above were created. Keep in mind; there is no VA office/representation in Thailand. Yes, there are those of us *familiar* with the VA disability process, but we are not trained VA staffers. **Note:** Don't forget to apply for **Combat-Related Special Compensation**, when applicable: <http://prhome.defense.gov/mppcrsc.html>

VA Recognizes "Presumptive" Illnesses in Iraq, Afghanistan.

Decision Makes It Easier for Gulf War Veterans to Receive Benefits. New presumptions of service connection for nine specific infectious diseases associated with military service in Southwest Asia during the Persian Gulf War, or in Afghanistan on or after September 19, 2001: Brucellosis, Campylobacter jejuni, Coxiella burnetii (Q fever), malaria, Mycobacterium tuberculosis, Nontyphoid Salmonella, Shigella, Visceral leishmaniasis and West Nile virus.

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1869>

New Agent Orange Rule to Allow Retro Claims.

About 86,000 Vietnam War veterans, their surviving spouses or estates will be eligible for retroactive disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs under a draft VA rule to expand by three the number of diseases presumed caused by herbicide exposure in the war.

The 86,000 are beneficiaries who can reopen previously denied claims for these conditions: Ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's disease and chronic B-cell blood cancers including hairy cell leukemia. Another 29,000 claims are expected to be approved this year for Vietnam veterans suffering from these diseases but applying for benefits for the first time.

Veterans with these diseases will need to show they set foot in Vietnam during the war. Those who served aboard ship just off the coast remain ineligible.

<http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,213007,00.html>

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1876>

SSA - How to Change your Address (when receiving SSA Benefits).

Address changes cannot be done online if you reside in most overseas locations, including Thailand:

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/foreign/index.html>

<http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10137.html#changeofaddress>

When you write to the Social Security Administration about a change of address (or status), please type or print your new address carefully and be sure to include the country and ZIP or postal code. Also, be sure to list the names of all your family members who are moving to the new address. Always include your social security number.

Social Security Administration
Office of International Operations
P.O. Box 17769
Baltimore, Maryland 21235-7769

Colonel Edward A. Swanda
Chief, JUSMAG-THAI

Mr. Victor J. Loschinkohl, YC-03

Deputy Chief, JUSMAG-THAI

• RAO Coordinator •

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Hours: Tues-Wed-Thurs, 0930-1430

Integrity - Service - Excellence

*** **HQ JUSMAG-THAI** ***

• **TRICARE Health Benefits Advisors (Rm. J-202)**

Wed & Thurs, 0800-1100 & 1300-1500; Fri, 1300-1400

Email: nursetida.th@san.osd.mil (x512)

Email: nursepranee.ctr.th@san.osd.mil (x511)

Web: <http://www.jusmagthai.com/medical.html>



• **USUS ID Card Issue & DEERS Update (Rm. E-206, x180)**

Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday, 0800-1100

• **Air Post Office (APO) (Rm. C-109) (x168; Call after 1300)**

Monday through Friday, 1030-1200 & 1300-1600



• **American Citizen Services, U.S. Embassy, Bangkok**

Mon-Fri, 0730-1100, 1300-1400 (Closed Last Friday of Each Month)

Tel: 02-205-4049 / Emergency After-Hours, Tel: 02-205-4000

Email: acsbkk@state.gov / Fax: +66-(0)2-205-4103

Web: <http://bangkok.usembassy.gov/service.html>



• **American Citizen Services, U.S. Consulate, Chiang Mai**

Monday through Friday, 0730-1630 (By Appointment)

Emergency Tel: 05-310-7777 / Email: acschn@state.gov

Web: <http://chiangmai.usconsulate.gov/service.html>

• **2011 COLA: +1.1% ... Oct '09-Mar '10, [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)**

• **US Embassy & JUSMAG Holidays 2010:** Tues, Apr 6; Tues-Thurs, Apr 13-15; Wed, May 5; Fri, May 28; Mon, May 31; Mon, July 5.

• **JUSMAG Comp Days:** www.jusmagthai.com/announcement.html

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JUSMAG-THAI

EMAIL RECIPIENTS