

# newsletter

## ONE SPECIAL VETERAN REMEMBERS TWO WORLD WARS

By Jeanne Bonfilio

When four-year-old Bea Hirshkovic was growing up in her native Romania, never could she have imagined that 97 years later, she would be remembering and reminiscing about the days that changed the world forever.

She doesn't remember the city of Bucharest where she was born in 1910, but instead remembers well the town of Buhush, where her family relocated. Her father died when she was three years old, and her mother had an older sister and cousins in that small town. An older brother and sister, by two years, rounded out her family. Bea remembers her sister taking her by the hand and walking her to the park, to the railroad station, to the lake and the jailhouse. "All the houses looked the same and were connected in a U-shape," said Bea, "with nothing in between; no trees; no flowers and no grass." There were no toys, no television and no radio, either." All she had, she explained, was a snail that she called her pet and with which she played in her backyard. "I used to talk to it and sing to it every time I went outside," Bea said. "And I would feed it, too. That's all I had."

She also remembers vividly that morning in August 1914 when she



Private First Class Bea Abrams, Women's Army Corps, 1942

heard a loud roar – so loud in fact that it brought everyone outside into the yard, including her siblings and her mother, an accomplished seamstress who worked for the people who owned the factories. The neighbors came outside too.

The roar turned out to be very low-flying airplanes. "My mother and our neighbors commented how close to the homes the planes were flying," said Bea. "Some of the airplanes didn't have covers on them at that time. One airplane flew so low that I could actually see the pilot's face. He had a mustache and I waved at him. And he waved back at me. The next thing I saw as he passed were the bombs he dropped from his

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## REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE COORDINATORS GO FAR AND WIDE FOR VETERAN OUTREACH

CalVet's Veterans Services Division has a powerful team to assist them to connect with our state's veterans. Known as Regional Collaborative Coordinators (RCCs), their task is to provide services to veterans communities across 9 distinct regions.

"These folks are CalVet's eyes and ears," explains John (Buzz) Kraft, RCC Director for CalVet. "They are tasked with finding, organizing, and documenting any and all veteran-assistance partnerships in their areas; with the common goal of unifying veteran outreach efforts."

Each RCC is hand-picked to bring an array of multi-tasking skills to the mission. Kraft describes the RCC job as

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**REMINDER** All veterans are reminded that the fastest way to inquire and secure the benefits you have earned is by visiting your local County Veterans Service Office. A listing of these offices is available at [www.cacvso.org](http://www.cacvso.org) or on CalVet's website at [www.calvet.ca.gov/resources/database.aspx](http://www.calvet.ca.gov/resources/database.aspx)

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airplane on the factories close by. I will never forget it." That was the beginning of World War I in the summer of 1914.

Bea also remembers that her family planned to relocate to America in 1914. But World War I changed that. "My mother had made plans to marry a man with nine children—a widower whose sister also lived in Buhush and for our family to move to America," said Bea. "He had written to his sister about marrying again after he lost his wife. But transportation was halted due to the war and we had to wait our turn to make the trip." After a period of correspondence between the two, he sent the money for Bea's mother to move the family to Texas. It took until 1920 for them to finally take the train, a beautiful train, she remembers, from Romania to France.

From France, the family sailed to America. "We all went over on a big ship," Bea remembers. "We were all in one room. My mother had packed a bundle of food for the voyage. We came through Ellis Island. And you had to be healthy. My brother had hurt his head on the ship and my mother was worried they would send us back, but they didn't." From Ellis Island they took a train to Texas. The family arrived safe and sound in Texas on August 8, 1920. "My mother married her second husband the day we arrived," Bea recalls. "We all thought America was Fort Worth, Texas. I supposed they exchanged pictures at the time, but had never met until we arrived in Fort Worth." The children now took the name of their new father. Bea Hirshkovici was now Bea Abrams.

The Abrams children were enrolled in school right away. "No one in the family spoke English," she said. Four of her stepfather's children were grown and moved on. There were six new

stepbrothers and sisters. Her father had a grocery store. And they also had a dog. "We always had to look out for the dog catcher, who used to drive by in his horse and buggy," Bea added. And all the time, she said that her mother worked very hard for the family.

"The most beautiful thing in Fort Worth was our huge round table in the dining room," Bea explained. "Every Friday my mother baked challah egg bread, made gefilte fish (poached fish patties) and lit the candles. My stepfather, I called him Papa, would stand at the head of the table and my mother would sit with him with a veil over her head and she said prayers to bring in the Sabbath—every Friday and holidays. And all the children sat around the table. My father took the milk and took the fresh challah bread, which he sliced with a knife and gave it to everyone at the table. Nobody knew anything about going to a bakery and buying bread. Everybody did their own baking. My mother made her own bread, and noodles and strudel—everything. My mother made a blessing for allowing us to eat the bread together. Another sip

of wine accompanied another blessing. There are blessings for many things, for getting up in the morning, for eating the first fruit of the season, for washing your hands; it's beautiful."

In 1929, as other members of the family migrated West to California, so did Bea's family. The West Adams area of Los Angeles on Westview Street became their new home. "Ten years later, Papa went back to Buhush to visit and brought me a Romanian dress that I saved and wore for my 100th birthday party!" He came back from Romania just before World War II broke out. And sadly, he died in September 1939.

In 1941, the world changed again for Bea. She remembers that while attending a show at the famous Pantages Theater in Hollywood, the lights came on and it was announced that we were at war. "President Roosevelt made the announcement, and of course, everyone left the theater and went home by streetcar."

One Sunday just after the war broke out, while reading the Sunday

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Reporting for duty is Private First Class Bea Abrams (center) Women's Army Corps and other soldiers during training in Denver, Colorado



For over 35 years, until she became legally blind in 1990, Bea Cohen organized free trips to Disneyland for the Spastic Children's Foundation

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newspaper, Bea became interested in a story about the United States government using the strong black widow spider webs for crosshairs in the sites of submarine periscopes. She then began collecting the spiders and turning them in to the University of Southern California for the war effort. She also learned about riveting at a class in Inglewood, California and was soon offered work at Douglas Aircraft in Santa Monica. One of the original "Rosie the Riveters" she worked the swing shift from 4:00 p.m. to midnight. "We worked on many different parts, but we never knew what they were for," said Bea. "It was a secret. But we knew it was important. And we had to park underneath camouflage in case a reconnaissance enemy located the factory."

"This is really something," she remembers. "All our fuel was being sent overseas. We had to conserve fuel, so we carpooled. Imagine that. The front and back seats of the car were always full. So I sat with my cousin in the trunk

of the car, with the trunk opened and an umbrella in case it rained. With a car full of people—in the front seat, in the back seat and in the trunk—off we went to work at Douglas Aircraft."

Bea also remembers that she felt in her heart that she wanted to "pay back this country because of what America had done for me and my family," she said. "We were all free. And freedom is not free." So she decided to enlist in the military, where they accepted her immediately. When she gave her notice to Douglas Aircraft, they offered her five cents more per hour to stay. But she said she had already made up her mind to serve her country.

In 1943, Bea was sent to Des Moines, Iowa to serve in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC). It was later changed to the Women's Army Corp (WAC). The women's training was the same as the men's: the same pay as the men – everything, she explained. Additional training took her to Denver, Colorado until she was recommended for service overseas. Chattanooga, Tennessee was the location for her overseas training. "Nobody—none of us knew what we

were going to be doing or where we were going until we finally got to New York," she said. "I just had enough time to go home and say goodbye to my family. My mother was very proud of me."

Bea eventually ended up on a ship to Scotland. "You could see the steel gates open to let the ship in," she said. "The water was so clear that you could also see the mines in the water—put there to keep enemy submarines out. We were zigzagging in to avoid submarine-infested waters." From there, a train took her to Stone, England, and there she saw skies filled with American planes on their way to the invasion of Normandy, "... which we knew nothing about at that time," she explained. "It was top secret. And there were gliders attached to the planes." Their destination was Elvedon, England—about 90 miles from London, where Kings and Queens used to go hunting. "It was so foggy, we had to put our hands out in front of us when we walked," Bea said. She recalls that there were quite a number of women soldiers with her as well.

Her duties as Private First Class Abrams included working in the communications department with top-secret mimeographed documents. She also worked Kitchen Patrol (KP) when needed for the hundreds of soldiers stationed nearby. "Oh, cutting all those onions!" she said. Keeping the troops fed was an important, full-time job. All the while, there were bombing raids in the cities nearby, and the children had to be sent away, she continued. "I also remember being a member of a choir and a women's baseball team," she said, "the men against the women. I played third base. Little did they know that we had a secret: a professional female pitcher on our team—and boy did we

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surprise the men! I just love baseball!"

After the war, Bea returned to Los Angeles in 1945 where she read a story about a former Prisoner of War named Ray Cohen. "I just fell in love with his picture," she remembers. As luck or fate would have it, her mother and Ray's mother lived next door to each other. "I met him November 4, 1945; we got engaged on Christmas and were married January 28, 1946 in Los Angeles."

Ray had been imprisoned in Corregidor, Philippines, for more than three years. The couple became involved for many years with an Ex-POW group in Los Angeles, who still meets regularly at the Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles. Bea has also been active in many philanthropic organizations. She has been a member of the Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary and became its Child Welfare Chairman. Also involved with the Spastic Children's Foundation for more than 35 years, Bea organized trips to Disneyland with help from the Los Angeles Air Force Base. She put advertisements in the newspaper asking the public for their unused Disneyland tickets. And she organized groups of people who helped children get on and off the rides. "I got everything I needed from the Air Force," she said. "Everything we needed we got."

If that didn't keep her busy enough, she also took upholstery classes and made lap blankets for veterans at the USDVA Hospital, was an avid oil painter, a great cook and an inspiration to all who met her.

Becoming legally blind in 1990 has not slowed Bea Cohen down. She still lives alone with her dog Nadia, at her home in a suburb of Los Angeles, since Ray passed away in February 2003. She continued taking upholstery classes until just six months ago, and only because



Bea Cohen, "Queen Bea," celebrates her 101st birthday in Los Angeles on February 3, 2011

the teacher lost the class location. Her two grown daughters live nearby. Bea just celebrated her 101st birthday with friends and family on February 3, 2011.

Today, Bea Cohen continues to be an advocate for veterans and the Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles. She can recite names, dates and her friends' telephone numbers without looking them up. She also still attends the Ex-POW meetings regularly and the Blinded American Veterans meetings. Bea added, "One of the things I want people to know is that our veterans have given their lives and their health for the freedoms we enjoy. I would like to ask people to please show respect and compassion to our veterans. And remember, they are our heroes. And also please remember our American Ex-Prisoners of War."

When asked what she owes her longevity to, she said, "Be active and help others." And when asked what she would like to accomplish this year, she

said among other things, she wants to buy more socks for veterans at the USDVA Hospital. She also wants to meet First Lady Michelle Obama. She said, "I want to thank her for helping us support our veterans." And most of all, she wants veterans to be remembered.

*Writer's Note:*

*It was my honor and privilege to interview Bea Cohen for this article at her favorite restaurant in Culver City, California on a Sunday afternoon. Unknowingly, a couple sitting nearby had overheard our conversation. Just after our interview, the husband, a Vietnam War Veteran and his wife, came over to meet Bea, shake her hand and thank her for her service. They said they were "riveted" by her story. Bea is the embodiment of patriotism and service to others and to her Country, and continues to be an inspiration to all who meet her. Thank you, Bea Cohen. We will always remember you.*

**CALVET**  
 WILLIAM J. "PETE" KNIGHT  
 VETERANS HOME OF CALIFORNIA  
 LANCASTER



## The Lancaster Veterans Home is Currently Accepting Applications for Residency!

The William J. "Pete" Knight Veterans Home of California—Lancaster is a 60-bed Residential Care Facility, also known as "assisted living." The Veterans Home opened in 2010 and is currently accepting applications for residency. The Veterans Home provides residents with individualized care within a homelike environment that contributes to self-reliance and an independent lifestyle. It offers an enhanced plan of amenities, including:

- assistance with medical and dental services
- assistance with medications
- a modern fitness center and exercise classes
- library, cable television, and wireless Internet
- restaurant dining experience—three meals plus snacks
- dietary modifications
- housekeeping and laundry services
- caring and compassionate staff, and
- variety of community outings and an enhanced activity program

The Veterans Home is located in the picturesque high-desert area of Southern California, just off the Antelope Valley Freeway, an hour's drive north from the San Fernando Valley. Lancaster and

nearby Palmdale offer recreational and educational opportunities, including the:

- Antelope Valley Fairgrounds, Aerospace Walk of Honor
- California Poppy Reserve, JetHawks Baseball Stadium
- Prime Desert Woodland Preserve
- Lancaster Center for the Performing Arts, and
- Parks, shopping centers and movie theaters

Veterans Homes of California are also located in Barstow, Chula Vista, Ventura, West Los Angeles, and Yountville. Veterans Homes are currently under construction in Fresno and Redding. Veterans considering assisted living are encouraged to apply to any of the Veterans Homes of California. Spouses are also eligible to apply with the veteran.

**For admission information, contact:**

**William J. "Pete" Knight  
 Veterans Home of California—Lancaster  
 45221 30th Street West  
 Lancaster, CA 93536  
 (661) 974-7035, ext. 6**

# CALOVET

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## VETERANS SERVICES

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“part road warrior, part ambassador, and part juggler, all wrapped in a can-do spirit of helping veterans connect to their benefits.”

RCCs must also collaborate well with their County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs). “The CVSOs are the subject matter experts for services and contacts throughout each RCCs veteran community,” Kraft notes. “We couldn’t succeed out on the tip of the spear without the fantastic CVSO support that each of our RCCs is receiving.” While the CVSOs are helping provide leadership and mentorship in the field, the sometimes daunting task of physical outreach is aided by a cadre of AmeriCorps members. These

Operation Welcome Home designees are trained to directly assist veterans through personal interviews, and help ensure that each region is achieving maximum connection with their veteran population.

Finally, each RCC is surrounded by partner agencies, including veteran service organizations and at-large volunteers. The RCCs effectively tie all the pieces together, and it’s this unification effort that is at the heart of the program. “The task isn’t easy,” Kraft concludes, “But our RCCs and their teams are finding and helping veterans in every last corner of our Golden State; all 163,707 square miles of it.”



**Operation Welcome Home:**  
[www.veterans.ca.gov](http://www.veterans.ca.gov)

**Support:**  
[www.gwtvetsinneed.org](http://www.gwtvetsinneed.org)

**Relief:**  
[www.afrtrust.org](http://www.afrtrust.org)

**Job Fair:**  
[www.military.com/career-expo/](http://www.military.com/career-expo/)

**Assistance:**  
[www.jointservicesupport.org](http://www.jointservicesupport.org)

**Veterans & Families:**  
[www.veteransandfamilies.org](http://www.veteransandfamilies.org)

### OUR SOCIAL NETWORKS!



## UPCOMING events

### CalVet News

1227 O Street, Room 300  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
P (916) 653-2192  
F (916) 653-2611  
[pao@calvet.ca.gov](mailto:pao@calvet.ca.gov)

JP Tremblay  
Deputy Secretary, Communications

Jaime Arteaga  
Editor

Thomas Moralez  
Graphic Designer

Angela Slater  
Graphic Designer

### MARCH 4 - 5

American GI Forum of California  
2011 Mid-Year Board Meeting  
Veterans Memorial Building  
100 E. Locust Avenue, Lompoc, CA 93436  
Contact: Cajé Segura (805) 588-3589 or  
Willie Galvan (805) 714-6015

### MARCH 19

3rd Annual Women in Military History  
Week Celebration  
Twin Towers United Methodist Church  
1411 Oak Street, Alameda, CA 94501  
2:00 pm - 3:30 pm  
RSVP: (510) 748-6881 or  
[kdieden@yahoo.com](mailto:kdieden@yahoo.com)

### MARCH 24

Orange County EDD Office - Annual  
Women Veterans Celebration Program  
S2323 North Broadway, Santa Ana, CA  
8:30 am - 4:00 pm  
Contact: Kim Sykes (949) 341-8088 or  
Kathy Kral at [kathy.kral@edd.ca.gov](mailto:kathy.kral@edd.ca.gov)



Michael Sotak (left) and Robert McCullough stand proudly next to the Pearl Harbor Remembrance Memorial at the Northern California Veterans Cemetery

## NORTHERN CALIFORNIA VETERANS CEMETERY DEDICATES PEARL HARBOR REMEMBRANCE MEMORIAL

On Saturday, January 07, 2011, the Northern California Veterans Cemetery (NCVC) located in Igo, dedicated a monument honoring those veterans who were present during the attack on Pearl Harbor by Japanese forces on December 07, 1941. More than 400 guests were present for the dedication of the memorial, it's unveiling, and to honor the nine Pearl Harbor Survivors who were present at the ceremony. Among Pearl Harbor survivors present were Melvin Fisher, Carrol Halcomb, Van Harrison, Robert McCullough, Hilton Reynolds, Michael Sotak, Arthur Wynant, George Whitmer and Albert March.

The design and construction of the memorial was a community effort led by the Northern California Veterans Cemetery Support Committee and supported by Shasta County Pearl Harbor Survivors Association Chapter 28. Support Committee member and local artisan John Welsh created the design and led the construction effort assisted by numerous cemetery volunteers. All of the materials for the project were either donated by area vendors or through cash donations.

Guest speakers included USNR, SCPO Robert Burroughs, who is Director for the Northern California Veterans Museum and Heritage Center and the memorials designer, artisan John Welsh. Hawaiian music, leis and refreshments provided by the Red Bluff Exchange Club made this a festive and memorable event.

## VETERANS CALL CENTER: HERE TO HELP!

**(877) 741-8532**

Under the auspices of the California Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Services Division, the Veterans Call Center is the latest step forward in our outreach efforts to veterans. The Veterans Call Center is staffed by a team of highly qualified specialists whose mission is to provide excellent service to all of California's 1.9 million veterans and their families.

The Veterans Call Center works closely with County Veteran Service Officers, California Employment Development Department Veterans Representatives and the many Veteran Service Organizations to provide assistance on a wide range of veterans' issues, including employment assistance, home loans, tuition programs, disability claim resolutions, homelessness assistance, educational reimbursement, and veterans' license plates, etc.

The goal of the Veterans Call Center is to ensure that every veteran receives accurate information and assistance concerning the services for which they are entitled.

If you are a veteran and have a concern regarding your benefits, call the Veteran Call Center for answers at (877) 741-8532.

**CALIFORNIA**  
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VETERANS MEMORIAL

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Where past and future heroes meet.



## MORE SUPPORT FOR OUR HOMELESS VETS

By Christopher Colbert

Various statistics show that 16 - 25% of our nation's homeless populations are veterans. Over the years, homeless veterans' issues have not been resolved in the most efficient or effective way due to numerous factors such as lack of resources and oversight over existing programs. President Obama and his administration, along with both the Senate and House of Representatives acknowledge the need for change.

The President's recent released Budget Proposal for Fiscal Year 2012 (FY 12) includes funding commitments for veterans and homeless veterans programs. The budget includes \$4.8 billion for targeted homeless assistance funding for the entire homeless population, a 23.4% increase over the previously enacted Fiscal Year 2010 Budget and a 13.3% increase over the President's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Proposal.

President Obama announced in June the Federal Government's strategy to prevent and end homelessness, including a focus on homeless veterans. The report, "Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness," sets goals to end veterans' and chronic homelessness by 2015; and ending homelessness among children and families by 2020.

Below are a list of the current programs and the proposed budgets to help homeless veterans:

### **Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) - Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program combines Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs (USDVA). The USDVA provides these services for participating Veterans at USDVA Medical Centers and community-based outreach clinics. HUD has awarded funding for approximately 10,000 HUD-VASH vouchers each year in 2008, 2009 and 2010. HUD is requesting an additional \$75 million for HUD-VASH in 2012.

### **Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program**

The Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program provides services to help homeless veterans obtain meaningful employment and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems to address the complex problems facing homeless veterans. It is the only nationwide program exclusively focused on assisting homeless veterans reintegrate into the workforce. Funds are awarded through competitive grants. Within the program are funds to support grantees providing specialized services to homeless female veterans and homeless veterans with families. This program was initiated in FY 2010 in recognition of the special needs of these subgroups.

*FY 2010 - \$36.3 million*

*FY 2011 (proposed) - \$41 million*

*FY 2012 (proposed) - \$39.3 million*



### **Supportive Services for Low Income Veteran Families (SSVF) Living in Permanent Housing**

SSVF is a new program that provides supportive services to very low-income veteran families in or transitioning to permanent housing. Funds are provided through grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that will assist very low-income veterans' families by providing a range of supportive services designed to promote housing stability. Through the SSVF Program, the USDVA aims to improve housing stability for very low-income veterans' families.

*FY 2010 - \$20 million*

*FY 2011 (proposed) - \$51 million*

*FY 2012 (proposed) - \$100 million*

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**The Justice Outreach, Homelessness Prevention: Healthcare for Reentry Veterans (HCRV, prison outreach) and Veteran's Justice Outreach (VJO, law enforcement, jail and court outreach)** Justice Outreach (VJO and HCRV) addresses the justice involvement continuum from first contact with law enforcement through release from prison or jail. VJO is designed to help justice-involved Veterans avoid the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration by ensuring that eligible justice-involved Veterans have timely access to (Veterans Health Administration) VHA mental health and substance abuse services when clinically indicated, and other USDVA services and benefits as appropriate. HCRV assists reentry veterans released from prison readjust to community life through access to community reintegration, health, and social services provided through USDVA and community services.

*FY 2010 - \$6 million*  
*FY 2011 (proposed) - \$19 million*  
*FY 2012 (proposed) - \$21.6 million*

**Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program**

The USDVA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program (GPA) provides funds to community agencies providing services to homeless veterans. The purpose is to promote the development and provision of supportive housing and/or supportive services with the goal of helping homeless veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and/or income, and obtain greater self-determination.

*FY 2010 - \$175.3 million*  
*FY 2011 (proposed) - \$218 million*  
*FY 2012 (proposed) - \$224.2 million*

**The Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) Program**

DCHVs provide 24-7 structured and supportive residential rehabilitation and treatment services for homeless veterans. The program provides rehabilitation and treatment to approximately 6,000 homeless veterans with health problems annually.

*FY 2010 - \$119 million*  
*FY 2011 (proposed) - \$136 million*  
*FY 2012 (proposed) - \$158.3 million*

**The Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Program**

The HCHV program conducts outreach to homeless veterans via clinical teams located at 132 USDVA Medical Centers. The main goal of outreach is to connect homeless veterans with needed services that will end their homelessness. The HCHV program also provides residential treatment through contracts with community providers and longer term case management through the HCHV-Supported Housing program.

*FY 2010 - \$83 million*  
*FY 2011 (proposed) - \$116 million*  
*FY 2012 (proposed) - \$141.1 million*

**SNOW BLANKETS NORTHERN CA VETERAN CEMETERY**

The Northern California Veterans Cemetery is the beneficiary of Mother Nature's natural designs and whims. The sweeping vistas of the surrounding mountains in all seasons provide spectacular views, including snow-capped peaks in the winter; across the valley can be seen the Cascade Range and Lassen Peak; incredible sunrises and sunsets are witnessed throughout the year; and visitors in the summer are treated to a green oasis in an otherwise



dull summer landscape.

February storms provided yet another testament to these gifts of nature in the form of snow, seen in this picture, of the nearly completed Veterans Memorial Building.

**ATTENTION CERTIFIED DVBE'S AND SMALL BUSINESSES!**

**Deadline to submit a Request For Expression of Interest (RFEI) California's High Speed Rail Transit Authority is March 16th!**

While a response to this RFEI is not a prerequisite to participating in the procurement process, and RFEI submissions will not be evaluated or "ranked," they will be used to assist in shaping the procurement process, which will lead to the first official Request For Proposals (RFP) at the end of this calendar year. Help ensure that California's High Speed Rail Transit Authority ([www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov)) keeps certified Disabled Veterans Business Enterprises (DVBEs) and Small Businesses in the loop as the \$9.95 billion to build this high speed rail are distributed. Go to [www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/rfei.aspx](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/rfei.aspx) for the application and more information.

## APPLICATIONS DUE MARCH 18 FOR NEW BACKCOUNTRY TRAILS PROGRAM FOR VETERANS

The California Conservation Corps and the Veterans Green Corps are launching an all-veterans Backcountry Trails crew to work for about five months in Yosemite and other California wilderness areas this year.

The CCC is seeking veterans, ages 20-30 recently returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Veterans will earn a monthly stipend of \$1,387 and may be eligible for a \$2,675 AmeriCorps education award at the end of the program.

Life in the backcountry is physically and mentally demanding. Crew members will live in tents in a remote wilderness camp with few luxuries. They'll hike to work at high elevations each day, then work to build and maintain bridges and trails, repair damaged meadows, and more.

A Veterans Green Corps member working in the Southwest says the experience is like the Army in some ways. "You're working for something bigger than yourself. There's a purpose to it, and I like working with people who have a passion for what they do," he says. "We wanted to do more than just assimilate. We wanted to bring back that warrior spirit we had from the military and show people we can all really make a positive difference in this world."

Applications for the CCC Veterans crew are due Friday, March 18, 2011. For details, visit the CCC's website at: [www.ccc.ca.gov/work/programs/Backcountry/veteransgreencorps/Pages/VeteransBCCrew.aspx](http://www.ccc.ca.gov/work/programs/Backcountry/veteransgreencorps/Pages/VeteransBCCrew.aspx)



## SENATOR MURRAY NAMED CHAIRMAN OF THE U.S. SENATE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

On January 27, 2011, U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) was named Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. Senator Murray, who has been a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee since 1995, is a widely recognized and outspoken advocate for America's veterans. She has been honored for her work for veterans by the Vietnam Veterans of America, American Ex-POWs, the VFW, the Paralyzed Veterans of America and the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs. Among other things, Senator Murray has fought to give veterans access to quality care and benefits, has pushed Republican and Democratic administrations to provide the VA with responsible budgets, and has worked to ensure the VA is preparing for the influx of new veterans. Senator Murray has also worked to expand access to care for Washington state veterans by saving three state VA facilities from closure and by pressuring the VA to open community based health care clinics.

"This is a great honor, but an even bigger responsibility. As Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have a tremendous duty to the 22 million veterans across the country who have stepped up to serve our nation and who deserve the highest quality care, benefits, and treatment in return.

"I am humbled by this Chairmanship not only because of the great veterans I'll serve, but also because of the man whose shoes I'll be working to fill. Senator Akaka has been, and always will be, a champion for his fellow veterans. I know that in the coming years he will continue to be a leader on this Committee, someone who I will rely on heavily, and someone who'll never stop fighting for the veterans of his home state and our nation.

[http://murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=NewsReleases&ContentRecoid\\_id=3ded5954-82f9-49e1-9de7-aab10f73924c&ContentType\\_id=0b98dc1b-dd08-4df2-adac-21f6ae03beed&Group\\_id=97a054dd-8a74-4cd0-8771-fbc3be733874&print=true](http://murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=NewsReleases&ContentRecoid_id=3ded5954-82f9-49e1-9de7-aab10f73924c&ContentType_id=0b98dc1b-dd08-4df2-adac-21f6ae03beed&Group_id=97a054dd-8a74-4cd0-8771-fbc3be733874&print=true)

**PLEASE JOIN US  
AT THE  
DEDICATION CEREMONY  
FOR THE  
VETERANS MEMORIAL CHAPEL BUILDING**



**SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 2011 11:00 AM**  
Northern California Veterans Cemetery ~ Igo, California  
**Chapel Dedication to be Followed by a Reception**  
**Missing in America Project Memorial Service**  
at the Veterans Chapel at Approximately 12:30 PM

## NEWS FROM THE USDVA

### NEW AND ENHANCED VA BENEFITS PROVIDED TO CAREGIVERS OF VETERANS UNPRECEDENTED LAW AUGMENTS COMMITMENT TO NATION'S MOST VULNERABLE VETERANS

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) is launching the first of a series of new and enhanced services supporting family caregivers of seriously ill and injured veterans. In May 2010, President Obama signed the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 legislation authorizing the USDVA to establish a wide range of new services to support certain caregivers of eligible Post 9/11 Veterans.

[www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2048](http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2048)

## VETERANS!

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(866) 653-2510



**Currently Accepting  
Applications  
for Residency**

For admission information, contact:  
William J. "Pete" Knight  
Veterans Home of California—Lancaster  
45221 30th Street West  
Lancaster, CA 93536  
(661) 974-7035, ext. 6

