



# NAA&NV NEWS

*MARCH 2017*

*1st QUARTER*

**Members Publication of the National Association of Atomic & Nuclear Veterans**

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## **Desk of the Commander --**

**Happy New Year to All!** Hope all are well and ready to get going. We are looking forward to a great year. More states getting passed July 16<sup>th</sup> as Atomic Veterans Day in their state. We hope we can get this day recognized in 15 States. Then we should be able to have Congress put it on the federal calendar. This will be a big job for the State Commanders so please contact your representatives by phone and e-mail to help get this done.

We have to start all over again on the Atomic Veterans Medal. It was shot down in the last minutes of last year's bills. Please contact your members of congress and get them on board. We need all of our members of congress to sponsor and co-sponsor these bills. If we want these bills passed, each and every one of us must support NAAV and contact our representatives in Congress. Don't hope others will do it for us. **Contact your state commanders and volunteer to help.** The NAAV Board has approved that **the** Armed Services Committee members receive our newsletter.

We are in contact with the Marshall Islanders to work with them getting their bill passed in Congress, more to come from the Marshall Islanders soon.  
Some of our wives are busy setting up the 2017 Convention in Branson, MO for the middle of September, more on this next newsletter.

## **NAAV main goals for this year:**

- Get several more states to make July 16<sup>th</sup> Atomic Veterans Day for each year forward. State Commanders, you have your work cut out for you get hold of your representatives.
- **Pass the Atomic Veterans Service Medal and to help the 1970's cleanup veterans officially become Atomic Veterans by passing the Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act.**
- So members and all, as soon as we get bill numbers, you can contact your members of congress to ask them to co-sponsor and vote for the bills.
- **Helping Atomic Veterans and family members file claims to get the help they deserve.**
- *Reminder that NAAV has it's TAX EXEMPT status so once again you can again make exempt donations.*
- Also, working to help the Marshalllese people receive health care benefits

*Submitted by Fred Schafer, COMMANDER.*

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## **Atomic Veteran Legislative Corner --**

On the Federal level HR632 in the House and S283 titled Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act have 72 and 6 sponsors respectively. This legislation adds the Enewetak Atoll Radiological Cleanup Veterans to the list of Atomic Veterans included for Title 38 presumed diseases. Legislation for the Atomic Veteran Medal is expected to be introduced this session in both the House and Senate by the end of March. National Atomic Veterans Day continues, no Bill has been introduced nor do we have any expected introduction date. On the State Level Minnesota House and Senate introduced Bills to change Chapter 10 of the Statutes to Include July 16<sup>th</sup> as Atomic Veterans Day. These Bills were referred to the respective VA committees. On March 9<sup>th</sup> the Senate Bill was voted on in committee and passed with unanimous support being referred to the Floor for a future vote. On March 10<sup>th</sup> the House Bill was voted on in committee and passed with unanimous support being referred to the Floor for a future vote. This is a major accomplishment.

*Submitted by Keith Kiefer, Vice Commander*

# REVISITING IONIZATION RADIATION EXPOSURE CLAIMS/BENEFIT STRATEGIES

Due to an error introduced during the publishing/printing process to the presumed diseases Table and a change in the prescription drug copay we are revising the December 2016 Newsletter article

If you have been involved with military service activities that could result in Ionization Radiation Exposure, regardless of whether you have a radiological induced disease, your first step should be to contact your VA (Veterans Administration) Environmental Health Care Coordinator (the directory can be found here: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp>) to schedule an Ionization Health Care exam (at no cost) and to be placed on the Ionization Radiation Registry. Remember there is strength in numbers, the larger the group the more likely they will receive attention. As with many VA programs, you may have to be persistent and insistent. In the past, the Registry has sent out a newsletter. Some of the things the registry can be used for is to find common ailments and the number of individuals exposed.

Step two is to look at Table 1 RECA (Radiation Exposure Compensation Act) column and determine if you have one of the diseases listed. If you are an Atomic Veteran, but not a participant in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki operations, nor part of the Japanese occupation forces following World War II, nor presently being compensated for the disease as VA Service Connected, apply for the RECA of \$75,000. The forms and information can be found at : [http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-postservice-exposures-ionizing\\_radiation.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-postservice-exposures-ionizing_radiation.asp) The RECA is administered by the US Department of Justice by authority of 42 U.S.C. § 2210 note (2012). Claimants' experience has been that this Justice Department program tends to be faster and less predisposed to denial. After RECA award, a claimant can apply with the VA for a Service Connected Claim for the same disease. However, if approved, they will not receive additional compensation until after \$75,000 of compensation for this disease has been expended.

Step three: if you have additional radiological induced disease(s) contact your local VSO (Veteran Service Office) to make a Service connected claim. Presumed radiological diseases are listed in Table 1 VA 38 CFR 3.311(B)(2) (as of Dec 15, 2016). Other diseases can be claimed with proper documentation. Step four, not as well known, is the Military Exposure category. Before determination has been completed on the previous applications, ask to be assigned to Priority Group 6 as "Veterans exposed to Ionizing Radiation during atmospheric testing or during the occupation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki". Changes in the Prescription Copay rate, as of Feb. 27 2017, no longer provide a lower cost copay for non Ionization Radiation disease prescriptions. However, this is reduction in out of pocket costs. See Table 2.

"Military Exposure" prescriptions and medical care associated to the exposure should be covered 100% under "Other qualifying factors, including treatment related to their military service experience." Generic drugs, which are the most commonly prescribed, will have the lowest copay amount. The annual copay limit a veteran must pay will decrease to \$700 from the current \$960. Veterans who pay more than the annual copay limit will continue to receive their medications but will not have to pay anything for them. For what prescriptions are included in the Tier 1 group visit [http://www.pbm.va.gov/PBM/Tiered\\_Copay/Tier\\_1\\_CO-PAY\\_MEDICATION\\_LIST.pdf](http://www.pbm.va.gov/PBM/Tiered_Copay/Tier_1_CO-PAY_MEDICATION_LIST.pdf).

**Table 1** is on pages 3 & 4 while you will find **Table 2** on bottom of page 7.

*Submitted by Keith Kiefer, Vice Commander*

**Table 1**

<b>Disease</b>	<b>RECA (Radiation Exposure Compensation Act)</b>	<b>VA 38 CFR 3.311 (B)(2) (as of Dec 15, 2016)</b>
leukemia, but NOT cronic lymphocytic leukemia	<b>X</b>	<b>(any time after exposure)</b>
multiple myeloma	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
primary cancer of the pharynx	<b>X</b>	<b>Any other cancer</b>
lymphoma, other than Hodgkin's disease	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
primary cancer of the small intestine	<b>X</b>	<b>Any other cancer</b>
primary cancer of the salivary gland	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
primary cancer of the brain	<b>X</b>	<b>Tumors of the brain and central nervous system</b>
primary cancer of the stomach	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
primary cancer of the urinary bladder	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
primary cancer of the colon	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
primary cancer of the thyroid	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
primary cancer of the pancreas	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
primary cancer of the female breast	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
primary cancer of the male breast	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
primary cancer of the esophagus	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
primary cancer of the bile ducts	<b>X</b>	<b>Any other cancer</b>
primary cancer of the liver (escept if cifrrhosis or hepatitis B is indicated)	<b>X</b>	<b>(no exceptions listed)</b>
primary cancer of the gall bladder	<b>X</b>	<b>Any other cancer</b>

**Table 1 (continued)**

<b>Disease</b>	<b>RECA (Radiation Exposure Compensation Act)</b>	<b>VA 38 CFR 3.311 (B)(2) (as of Dec 15, 2016)</b>
primary cancer of the lung	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
primary cancer of the ovary	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
bone cancer		<b>(within 30 years after exposure)</b>
skin cancer		<b>X</b>
kidney cancer		<b>X</b>
Prostrate subcapsular cataracts		<b>(manifest 6 months or more after exposure)</b>
Non-malignant thyroid nodular disease		<b>X</b>
Parathyroid adenoma		<b>X</b>
Cancer of the rectum		<b>X</b>
Prostate cancer	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Any other cancer		<b>X</b>
(4) If a claim is based on a disease other than one of those listed in paragraph (b) 2 of this section, VA shall nevertheless consider the claim under the provisions of this section provided that the claimant has cited or submitted competent scientific or medical evidence that the claimed condition is a radiogenic disease		<b>X</b>
	<b>No Manifest time after exposure is listed.</b>	<b>Unless noted otherwise in this column disease must manifest 5 years or more after exposure.</b>

# National Association of Atomic & Nuclear Veterans Convention - Branson, Missouri September 13-16, 2017

Wednesday 13	Thursday 14	Friday 15	Saturday 16
 <p><b>Radisson Hotel Branson \$99.00</b> Per night, plus tax with Breakfast Included</p> <p><b>Registration and Hospitality Room Opens 12 Noon</b></p> <p><b>Welcome Buffet \$15 per person</b></p> 	<p><b>Hot Buffet Breakfast</b></p> <p>Depart hotel at 9:00am for Area Guided Tour includes College of the Ozarks and <b>VIETNAM MEMORIAL</b> Followed by</p>  <p><b>THE SHOWBOAT BRANSON BELLE Entertainment Lunch Cruise \$88 per person</b></p> <p>Hospitality Room Open</p> <p>Dinner on own</p> <p>Depart at 7:15pm <b>MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET</b></p>  <p><b>\$48 per person</b></p>	<p><b>Hot Buffet Breakfast</b></p> <p><b>Men's Business Meeting 9:00am- 4:30pm</b></p>  <p><b>Lunch Buffet \$16 per person</b></p> <p><b>Group Photo at 5:30pm</b></p>  <p><b>6:00pm Banquet Dinner</b></p>  <p><b>\$43 per person</b></p>	<p><b>Hot Buffet Breakfast</b></p> <p>Depart</p> <p><b>Optional Show</b> A must see show for those staying. Depart at 1:30 pm</p>  <p><b>\$45 per person</b></p> <p><b>ACTIVITY PACKAGE: \$299.00 per person</b></p> <p><b>INCLUDES:</b> Registration Fee Name Badge Welcome Reception Guided Tour Showboat Branson Belle Lunch Cruise Million \$ Quartet Luncheon Buffet Final Evening Banquet Dinner All Transportation. Taxes and gratuities Included (excludes housekeeping and Shuttle Drivers)</p>

# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of ATOMIC & NUCLEAR VETERANS CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM

## Branson, Missouri Reunion September 13-14-15, 2017

Name (on name badge) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Spouse/Guest \_\_\_\_\_ Guest \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wheelchair Access?  Yes  No Dietary Restrictions? \_\_\_\_\_

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### HOST HOTEL: THE RADISSON HOTEL BRANSON 120 South Wildwood Drive, Branson, Mo. 65616

Call **417-335-5767** for room reservations and mention you are with the NAAV Reunion. The room rate is \$99.00 per room per night plus tax. A hot buffet breakfast is included in room rate and rate is available 3 days prior and 3 days after the reunion based on availability. Rooms not reserved by August 13, 2017 will be dropped from the group block. Complimentary hotel parking.

For airport transportation needs please call Gray Line Cab Service at 800-542-6768. For a special discount please let the dispatcher know you are with National Assn Atomic Veterans Reunion

**REUNION ACTIVITY PACKAGE \$299.00 per person** (does not include the optional show)  
 Includes early bird Registration prior to August 1<sup>st</sup>. # \_\_\_\_\_ of attendees x \$299pp = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Late Registrations after August 1<sup>st</sup> up to August 25<sup>th</sup> **\$309.00**. # \_\_\_\_\_ of attendees x \$309pp = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### Partial ACTIVITY PACKAGES AVAILABLE – \$55 REGISTRATION FEE per person applies

Welcome Buffet \$15pp x _____ = \$ _____	Tour & Showboat Lunch \$88 x _____ = \$ _____
MDQ Show \$48pp x _____ = \$ _____	Luncheon Buffet \$16pp x _____ = \$ _____
Banquet Dinner \$43 x _____ = \$ _____	ADD Optional Show #1 Hits \$45pp x _____ = \$ _____

**TOTAL DUE: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Any late registrations after August 25<sup>th</sup> will not include any activities based on the venue deposits and final guaranteed counts. No refunds can be given on activities after August 25<sup>th</sup>.

### MAIL REGISTRATION FORM AND CHECK PAYABLE TO:

GRAY LINE GATHERINGS PLUS  
 155 Industrial Park Drive  
 Hollister, MO 65672  
 417-338-4048



*Branson's number one Military Reunion Planner and Branson's First Class Fleet  
 Welcomes the National Assn Atomic Veterans!*

## A MESSAGE FROM THE VICE COMMANDER

My wife and I had the pleasure of attending the September 2016 NAAV convention in Las Vegas for the first time. It was great to meet many of you and now have a face to go with the voices. Seeing the Atomic Museum for the first time was also a treat. Our plan to tour the Nevada nuclear test site was thwarted by thieves breaking into our car. I was so looking forward to that activity, oh well. During the convention I was drafted into the Vice Commander position from the National Director At Large position. I still retain the Minnesota State Co-Commander position.

My Atomic Veteran experience was being part of the Enewetak Atoll Radiological Cleanup Project that took place from 1977 to 1980.

We are well on our way to getting our three pieces of legislation (Atomic Veteran Service Medal Act, Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act (H.R. 632 & S283 115th session), and the National

Atomic Veterans Day (July 16th) introduced in the 115th legislative session. I believe all will be introduced by the end of February 2017. We are looking for a Senator to introduce the National Atomic Veterans Day (July 16th) Bill. It is imperative that we encourage our friends, relatives, and each other to contact our Senators and Congressmen to cosponsor these Bills. Updates and info will be coming on the [www.Project180.Today](http://www.Project180.Today) web site.

I'm hoping to be able to make it to Washington DC May 20th, 2017 for Operation Stand Together. I hope many of you can also make it to this gathering.

I look forward to working for and with all of you, as well as, meeting more of you at the 2017 NAAV Conference in Branson, MO.

Thank you,

Keith Kiefer - Vice Commander

## NEVER TOO LATE TO HELP!

**“Still not too late to help out.”** I spoke with a young lady about her father who had passed in 2000. Her father was an atomic veteran (1957). Her mom tried to file a claim and was told there was nothing the VA could do. She told of missing her dad “a lot” and sure wish something could have been done.

She was able to find a letter dated 2000 from his oncologist. The letter... *He was exposed to atomic bomb testing in the past, and I think that it was at least possible that this contributed to the... “*

Apparently pointed correctly, she was told, after getting information together, “Get Mrs. Xxxx (mom) in the office to sign the papers.” The claim is still pending, “mom” filed for commissary and exchange privileges, Tricare, full set of dad’s medals and Presidential award.

I’ve helped one person, I know about some of you that have but how many more could we help?

<http://explore.va.gov/disability-compensation/spouses-dependents-survivors>

Submitted by Darryl Hirst • WZ70.rm2@gmail.com

**Table 2**

MEDICATION TIER	COPAY AMOUNT		
	1-30 day Supply	31-60 day Supply	61-90 day Supply
Tier 1 (Preferred Generic)	\$5	\$10	\$15
Tier 2 (Non-Preferred Generic & Some Over-the-Counter Drugs)	\$8	\$16	\$24
Tier 3 (Brand Name)	\$11	\$22	\$33

# ATTENTION ALL

## DUES NEED TO BE RNEWED

**Gentlemen, many of you have dues that have expired. Please bring your dues up to-date by getting \$25.00 to Fred Schafer immediately, because in 2017 any one who is not up to date will be removed from the mailing list. Life memberships are still available, just contact Fred his address and phone number are listed in several places in this newsletter.**

## **TAPS**

**Royden "Pat" Snuffin**

.....Virginia Beach, VA

**Dale Karkenén**

.....Virginia Beach, MT

**Vernon L. Zanker**

.....Boone, IA

**Donald R. Holditch**

.....Clifton, TX

**Robert A. Philebaum**

.....North Chesterfield, VA

**Charles E. Peterson**

.....Cambridge, MN

**Warren H. Scott**

.....Whitefish, MT

**Robert D. Geist**

.....Hutchinson, KS

**Noddy LeBlanc**

.....Sheridan, WY

**Edwin F. Sweeney**

.....Santa Fe, NM

**Richard M. Fournier**

.....Anderson, AK

**James M. Kemp**

.....Payson, AZ

**Billy L. Woodsmall**

.....Terre Haute, IN



# OPERATION ABLE & BAKER

My ship, the USS FLUSSER DD-368, was the first combat vessel to enter the harbor at Nagasaki after the atomic bomb had been dropped.

We led a Hospital Ship and Navy CVE into the harbor. they were there to rescue and treat POW's prior to taking them to other places for treatment, we were told they were taken to Manila and Tokyo.

When the USS Flusser finished their responsibility in Nagasaki we were sent up river to Sasebo to care for the slave labor and dependents. We were to see that they had proper care.



**USS Flusser & Eldred Zeek, CVE**

Soon after we were on our way to the United States. We were told not to discuss any of our experiences with anyone under penalty of imprisonment or worse.

When we arrived at San Pedro, California, we learned that we were to be a target vessel at Bikini for Operation Crossroads. We took part in Test Abel and Test Baker. Our ship was heavily contaminated with radiation from the explosions of Atomic Bombs.

The result of this exposure to me was prostrate cancer, one melonama, and many skin cancers. I also had many problems with my kidneys. The VA termed me 100% disabled and indicated that I was heavily exposed to radition.

My rank at the time was PHM 2nd Class and an independent duty specialist. I was later raised in rank to PhM 1st Class.

Submitted by Eldred R. Zeek

## SOMETIMES YOU GET LUCKY

A much-repeated adage asserts that “an army travels on its stomach.” Certainly, food is important, and in any discussion with military veterans there is a good chance that the subject will come up. It is also true that in the military caste system, the higher your rank the better you eat. Thus, on a typical navy ship, one moved down a line as various mass-produced items were deposited on a large metal tray which were then carried to a long table where he would sit on similarly long bench to eat; upon finishing, he would carry tray, cup and utensils to the appropriate area, rinse them off and stack them by the dishwasher. Chief petty officers fared a bit better. They still ate the same food, but in a smaller room, with more pleasant surroundings and, depending on the particular vessel, there were more individuality and more amenities.

But there was a real distinction between enlisted personnel and officers. Officers ate in the wardroom where, even on small ships, they had regular plates and silverware. They had cups and saucers instead of the mugs used by enlisted personnel. And, most importantly, their food was more attractive and was prepared and served by mess attendants. Finally, on the larger ships, senior officers had their own private mess (dining facility), even officers’ cooks.

One important advantage of serving on a very small ship (crew smaller than 100) is the fact that officers on these vessels subsist on the general mess. As a consequence, although the wardroom mess has linen tablecloths and china plates, the food is the same, cooked by the same cooks in the same galley. Thus, because the officers are eating it, they have some influence regarding its quality.

In the spring of 1946 I was assigned to the USS ATR-40, a rescue tug, with a crew of 40 men and 5 officers. Shortly after I reported aboard, we were ordered to proceed to Bikini Atoll. There, we would be assigned to the salvage unit for OPERATION CROSSROADS, the first post-war series of atmospheric tests of nuclear weapons.

Shortly after we arrived at Bikini our leading ship’s cook began spending most of his waking hours at the rear of the ship. Hour after hour, day after day, he would simply sit on one of the

bits, staring out over the lagoon. In time he was transferred for transportation back to Pearl Harbor and psychiatric observation. To this day there is at least a small question in my mind as to whether he was mentally disturbed or simply more clever than those of us who remained aboard, and who have spent decades dealing with radiation induced health problems.

Of course, our commanding officer requested a replacement cook and we hit the jackpot. The aircraft carrier, USS Saratoga was one of the target vessels and once she had been deployed in the target array her crew was removed and those men were available. As a consequence, we ended up with a man who had been an officer’s cook on the Saratoga. Now, it has always been my contention that navy ships are provisioned with top quality raw materials, but the navy cooks frequently don’t do it justice. This man, having cooked for some high-ranking officers, knew how to make the best of this material. We ate well that summer!

The Saratoga, of course, survived the air drop on July 1. But the underwater detonation on July 25 seriously damaged her hull. She lasted through the night, but on the following afternoon she began to go down. Ships in the area lay dead in the water and watched as this victor of many WW II battles slid quietly into the deep. The ATR-40 was less than 200 yards away and I was able to see R.C., our cook, at the rail watching his former ship disappear.

*Submitted by F. Lincoln Grahfs*



**Sinking of the USS Saratoga • July 26, 1946**



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