



# NAAV NEWS

MARCH 2021.....1st QUARTER

*Publication of the National Association of Atomic Veterans*

## FROM THE DESK OF OUR NATIONAL COMMANDER



Keith Kiefer  
NAAV - Commander

Keying off of the theme of the 2021 Marshallese Nuclear Remembrance “We Are Not Alone,” you may notice in this newsletter the Marshallese, British, and French all are experiencing/fighting the same battles.

We are off to a good start, a RECA hearing, introduction of a healthcare bill in both the House and Senate, and law requiring the DOD to conduct a feasibility study on the Service medal and another State on the way to recognize Atomic Veterans Day. We need to continue to contact the Congresspersons and Senators to cosponsor and support our efforts. We also have a growing number of organizations supporting our efforts.

Our counterparts are also making progress on their agenda items too.

We were proud and honored to have supported

the Marshallese in getting Medicaid reinstated. This was a bill vetoed in Dec. of 2020, yet passed. The French have gained medal recognition. Others have seen the TPNW (Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons) pass in January 2021.

The downside is we had to cancel yet another annual convention.

NAAV has a good Board, good members, good working relationships with others and is making a difference.

I hope all of you are staying safe and in good health.

**NAAV Convention Rescheduled**

**We are sorry to report the August 2021 Convention is being rescheduled to August 17, 18, and 19th 2022.**

**Because most of our membership is considered a high risk health group, the uncertainty of our full membership receiving vaccinations, lifting of lockdown restrictions and the inability to receive a deposit refund we have decided to play it safe and reschedule our convention.**

**Please mark your calendar for next year.**

# FROM THE DESK OF OUR NAAV VICE COMMANDER



**Fred Schafer**  
NAAV -Vice Commander

Hope all are doing Great, with this virus all around us. This staying at home is hard to live with. This Virus is very strong this fall and winter, so please stay SAFE. I received my First dose of Moderna Vaccine, My second dose is due on 3-20-21. Maybe we will be able to have a

convention next August 2022.

Keith is staying busy with a lot of projects. He is a very busy person. We need to thank him for the time he spends doing what he does.

This Year has gone by very fast. Like most of you probably, getting things caught up around the house. Those projects that I have been putting off, are getting done now.

Membership continues to grow and the items in the store continue to sell. Keith has set up an account to pay your dues online, or order from the store and want to pay online call Keith. His phone # is 612-232-6596

I will repeat this. "Keep working with your States and Federal Congress to Get July 16th as Atomic Veterans day annually. Also get a section of Highway to become Atomic Veterans Memorial Highway. State Commanders PLEASE - Please Make contact with your members and get members to get current in dues, just \$ 25.00 will get them current. Please update your information. If your phone numbers are not current, E-mail or call with

that information. When you send in dues let us know of any changes.

Thank you to members that send in extra dues earmarked for helping someone that needs help with their dues and other support of NAAV.com. Please make checks out to NAAV. Not to me.

Member, when you send in a check for your annual dues, please send in your phone number and e-mail address. Also a note on how the money is to be used. Let's help update the Data Base.

A big Thank you to the State commanders and members that have supported NAAV.

Please stay safe and be careful!

Thank you

## Atomic Veteran Service Medal update

At the time of the NAAV Newsletter 4th quarter publication President Trump was threatening to veto the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This bill included provisions in our progress towards a Service Medal. Ultimately, the bill passed. Although we didn't get exactly what we wanted, we did make progress. To date, we have funds secured for the Atomic Veteran Service Medal. By the time of publication of the NAAV second quarter 2021 newsletter, the Secretary of Department of Defense (DOD) is tasked with conducting a feasibility study regarding the Service Medal. This feasibility study is supposed to include input from NAAV. Request for said NAAV input is yet to be solicited.

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# ILLINOIS STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**Representative Tom Bennett  
& NAAV State Commander Aubry Briggs  
Advocate for Atomic Veterans Day.**

On March 3, 2021 Illinois State Representative Tom Bennett and NAAV State Commander Aubry Briggs, 93, testified before the Veterans and Public Safety Committee in favor of HB285. HB285, if passed, will designate July 16 th as Atomic Veterans Day annually in Illinois. Aubry, with the assistance of a friend, Merv Elrod, attended the Committee hearing via Zoom. Following testimony by Rep. Bennett, Aubry Briggs and Keith Kiefer, the Committee voted on whether to forward the Bill to the House floor for a vote. The Committee voted 8 to 0 to forward the Bill to the floor for a vote. Upon completion of the vote, all eight asked to become cosponsors of the Bill.

Presently, 9 out of 118 members are sponsors.

Both gentlemen are also working on getting a Highway designated as an Atomic Veteran’s Highway.



Aubry Briggs



Merv Elrod



Rep. Tom Bennett

Thanks to Rep. Bennet,  
Commander Briggs  
Merv Elrod, Zoom Tech

## TAPS



RICHARD A. CASTILE.....Oklahoma City, OK  
ALBERT G. KELS.....Republic, MO  
MICHEAL SCALE.....Shedd, OR

## Marshallese Nuclear Rememberance Day

The 2021 Nuclear Rememberance Day in Washington State became a virtual event. Despite it being virtual, it was well attended. The event included a week long line up of speakers. The videos of this event can be seen at: <https://www.labrats.international/nuclearrememberance>



# OPERATION CROSSROADS AT 75 YEARS

On 1 July 1946 by the Bikini Calendar (30 June in New York), millions of people around the world waited anxiously by their radios for the results of the first postwar atomic bomb tests. Code named: OPERATION CROSSROADS.

NAAV Life Member, William L. McGee, witnessed Crossroads from the deck of the heavy cruiser *Fall River (CA-131)*, Target Vessel Control Ship, responsible for positioning the 95 target vessels in the Bikini Lagoon.

McGee, USN, was one of the 42,000 military scientists and civilian personnel assembled at the remote Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands for the tests. Three tests were planned: Test Able from the air on 1 July; and Test Baker from underwater on 25 July; Test Charlie, the site and date to be determined later. (Charlie was cancelled when the results of Baker turned out to be much more hazardous than planned for.)

In his journalistic style, McGee provides his own account in *Operation Crossroads, Lest We Forget! An Eyewitness Account, Bikini Atomic Bomb Tests 1946*. In the slim volume (134 pages, 52 photos/illustrations), McGee adds to his account extracts from the *Fall River* ship logs, quotes from shipmates and other Crossroads participants, early opinions of the media, and later opinions of Crossroads experts Dr. Oscar Rosen and Jonathan M. Weisgall, legal representation for the Bikini people since 1975.

NAAV member Dr. F. Lincoln Grahlfs, a Crossroads participant and expert, writes in the Foreword to McGee's book, "The recollections of Operation Crossroads veterans raise serious

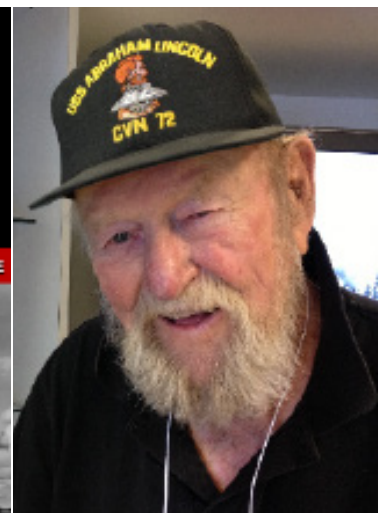
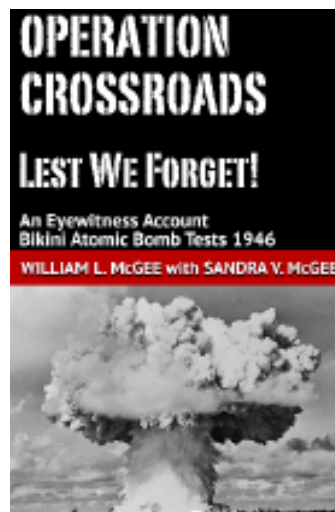
questions about both the efficacy and the morality of nuclear weapons...I commend Bill McGee on his skillful effort at keeping the story alive...Lest We Forget!"

Mark Barnes of [WarHistoryOnline.com](http://WarHistoryOnline.com) wrote, "A sobering, but entertaining read." *Publishers Weekly BookLife* selected McGee's memoir for their November 2020 Spotlight on military histories.

William L. McGee is an award-winning World War II Pacific war historian. His writing career has spanned six decades and he has written twenty-two books. He was a veteran of World War II in the Pacific theater and an Atomic Veteran of Operation Crossroads in 1946. Visit Bill's website at [WilliamMcGeeBooks.com](http://WilliamMcGeeBooks.com).

*Operation Crossroads, Lest We Forget!* is available from Amazon in paperback and eBook. Bill McGee passed away in 2019 from a variety of cancers. His co-author and wife, Sandra, is grateful to NAAV members who reached out to her after Bill's passing and to Robert Ruyle for his lifelike painting of Bill.

Submitted by Sandra McGee



# SAVE LIVES ACT

All Veterans, their spouses and caregivers can soon get COVID-19 vaccinations from VA under the SAVE LIVES Act signed into law March 24.

Covered individuals can receive a vaccine from VA due to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency. Under the bill, covered individuals are:

- Veterans who are not eligible to enroll in the VA health care system;
- specified Veterans who are eligible for hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care abroad;
- family caregivers approved as providers of personal care services for Veterans under the VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers;
- caregivers of Veterans participating in the VA's Program of General Caregiver Support Services; and
- caregivers of Veterans participating in the VA's Medical Foster Home Program, Bowel and Bladder Program,

Home Based Primary Care Program, or Veteran Directed Care Program.

- Civilian Health and Medical Programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs recipients.
- Veteran spouses. VA must prioritize the vaccination of (1) Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system, (2) Veterans who fail to enroll but receive hospital care and medical services for specified disabilities in their first 12 months of separation from service, and (3) caregivers accompanying such prioritized Veterans. Additionally, vaccines furnished abroad are authorized to be furnished in a geographic location other than a state regardless of whether vaccines are needed for the treatment of Veterans with a service-connected disability.

This includes those participating in a VA rehabilitation program. More information To learn how to get COVID-19 vaccine from VA, visit <https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/84404/veterans-designated-caregivers-can-get-covid-19-vaccine-va/>.

## Atomic Veteran Service Medal update continued --

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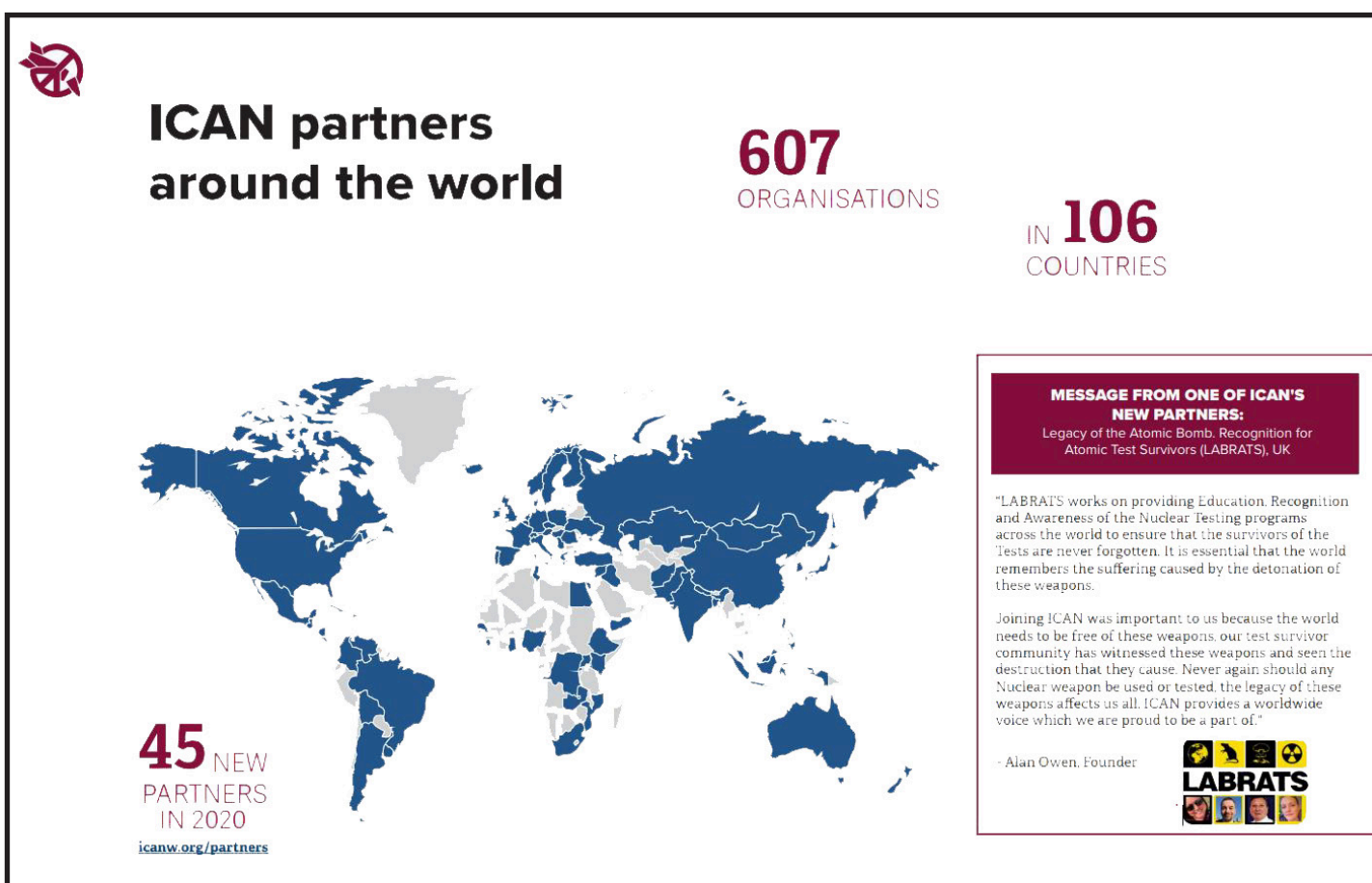
Additional updates will be provided in next quarters newsletter.

Meanwhile we continue to pursue other avenues to obtain the medal.

# LABRATS for NAAV March 2021

We have been working extremely hard in ensuring that the world is made aware of the Atomic Testing programs across the world. Our board of directors is now complete, with 4 members sitting on the board. Susan Musselwhite, Melanie Owen, Eric Barton, and myself. Eric continues to advise UK participants of Operation Dominic on the RECA program.

We were privileged to be included in the ICAN annual report as a partner, we continue to campaign for the abolishment of Nuclear Weapons and for states to meet their obligations under the Treaty on the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. (TPNW)



The infographic features a world map with various countries highlighted in blue. Text statistics are placed around the map: '607 ORGANISATIONS' and 'IN 106 COUNTRIES' in the top right; '45 NEW PARTNERS IN 2020' with the URL 'icanw.org/partners' in the bottom left; and a quote from Alan Owen, Founder of LABRATS, in a purple box on the right. The quote reads: 'LABRATS works on providing Education, Recognition and Awareness of the Nuclear Testing programs across the world to ensure that the survivors of the Tests are never forgotten. It is essential that the world remembers the suffering caused by the detonation of these weapons. Joining ICAN was important to us because the world needs to be free of these weapons, our test survivor community has witnessed these weapons and seen the destruction that they cause. Never again should any Nuclear weapon be used or tested, the legacy of these weapons affects us all. ICAN provides a worldwide voice which we are proud to be a part of.'

**ICAN partners around the world**

**607**  
ORGANISATIONS

IN **106**  
COUNTRIES


**45** NEW PARTNERS IN 2020  
[icanw.org/partners](https://icanw.org/partners)

**MESSAGE FROM ONE OF ICAN'S NEW PARTNERS:**  
Legacy of the Atomic Bomb. Recognition for Atomic Test Survivors (LABRATS), UK

"LABRATS works on providing Education, Recognition and Awareness of the Nuclear Testing programs across the world to ensure that the survivors of the Tests are never forgotten. It is essential that the world remembers the suffering caused by the detonation of these weapons.

Joining ICAN was important to us because the world needs to be free of these weapons, our test survivor community has witnessed these weapons and seen the destruction that they cause. Never again should any Nuclear weapon be used or tested, the legacy of these weapons affects us all. ICAN provides a worldwide voice which we are proud to be a part of."

- Alan Owen, Founder



In the UK, we are still dealing with the COVID pandemic, but we have hope that the vaccine will allow us to meet at the All-Tests Reunion in September where over 100 veterans and their families meet at an adult only venue. This year, this event is even more important to our veteran's mental health as last year was cancelled.

LABRATS have taken over the administration of the All-Tests Reunion as Sandie Hern is unable to continue due to illness. Sandie has organised the event for many years and we hope that we can live up to her high standards. Full details of the event can be found on our website (<https://www.labrats.international/atr>)

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# LABRATS for NAAV March Continued

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Unfortunately, the medal campaign which many people had worked on for two years was unsuccessful, with the Advisory Military Sub Committee denying the veterans medallic recognition for their service. We will continue to fight for recognition, with a new campaign starting in mid-April, which will enable anyone to support the recognition campaign.

Our education program continues with our affiliates undertaking a virtual tour of the National Atomic Testing Museum via zoom. This tour was fully funded and provided a unique insight into the US Atomic Testing program. I have been lucky enough to visit the museum in person, but with the power of technology, it became accessible to many.

Our live Q&A sessions on Facebook are proving to be very successful, with John Wills and Paul Griego taking part, we hope to undertake a lot more over the coming months, as the stories of the people who experienced the testing program are invaluable.

We are working very closely with the Children of Atomic Veterans as part of the advisory team, supporting their programs, and ensuring that the generations never forget. As descendants it is extremely important that we use science to prove the genetic damage to the communities across the world.

Our directory continues to grow, with 5 new members in the last 3 months. Our quarterly publication 'ATOM' is available online or in printed format a subscription can be purchased via our website.

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WORLDWIDE NEWS FOR THE ATOMIC FAMILY

**ATOM**

**What is Risk & Rigour?**  
Our definition is ignored, overlooked, lied to, exposed, left to die.

LABRATS MEDIA

The LABRATS team had hoped to see you all in person this year, but unfortunately it will be 2022 before this is possible. Please stay safe and continue the fight for recognition.

**Alan Owen**

– on behalf of LABRATS International

# MVA SUPPORTS AND ADVOCATES FOR NAAV

MVA supports and advocates for NAAV

Military-Veterans Advocacy (MVA) has established a Bill of the Week. With this program they will highlight critical legislature that will benefit veterans.

Bill of the week:

Week of March 24 - March 31 - HR 1585 and S 565.

HR 1585 and S 565 (short title; Mark Takai Atomic Veteran Health care Parity Act) are companion bills that will provide for the treatment of veterans who participated in the cleanup of Enewetak Atoll as radiation-exposed veterans for purposes of the presumption of service-connection of certain disabilities by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. MVA has supported similar bills in previous Congress. It is time to move this bill off dead center and provide these veterans their earned benefits while they are still alive. Please ask your Member of Congress and Senators to co-sponsor these [bills actnow.io/obQNAug](https://actnow.io/obQNAug).

MVA has also provided a letter of support for these bills.



# MARK TAKAI ATOMIC VETERAN HEALTHCARE PARITY ACT REINTRODUCED IN 117TH SESSION OF CONGRESS

On March 3rd, 2021 HR1585 and S565 was introduced. Presently, HR1585 has 109 cosponsors and S565 has 15 cosponsors. We are off to a good start. We have a support letter from MVA (Military Veterans Advocates) and others to come.

On S565 we have both Senators in four states, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Oregon. In eight other states we have one Senator. Those states are;

- Arizona [1]
- Connecticut [1]
- Delaware [1]
- Hawaii [1]
- Maryland [1]
- North Carolina [1]
- Vermont [1]
- Wisconsin [1]

Please call your Congressman's and Senators to support these Bills.





## DEMOCRATS WANT BIDEN TO RELINQUISH SOLE AUTHORITY FOR NUCLEAR LAUNCH CODES

The president of the United States, always accompanied by a military aide carrying a satchel containing nuclear launch codes, has sole authority to order nuclear warfare or respond in kind to such an enemy attack.

Now, lawmakers of the current president's own party are asking President Joe Biden to surrender that unilateral power.

Giving one person such authority "entails real risks," according to a letter endorsed by 31 Democratic members of the House. "Past presidents have threatened to attack other countries with nuclear weapons or exhibited behavior that causes other officials to express concerns about the president's judgment."



The letter, led by Representatives Jimmy Panetta and Ted Lieu, both from California, calls for officials, such as the vice president and speaker of the House, to concur with a launch order before it can be issued.

"My colleagues and I are requesting a straightforward review of our nation's nuclear command-and-control structure to determine how we can have a safer nuclear weapons launch authority, not to jeopardize but to enhance and bolster our national security," said Panetta in a statement. "Based on our president's distinguished record and leadership on nuclear arms control, for our country's nuclear forces, we're recommending that he continue his thoughtful and professional analysis of ways for additional checks and balances within the nuclear command-and-control structure."

The proposed change is being criticized by three prominent Republican members of the House Armed Services Committee.

In their statement, Liz Cheney, Mike Rogers and Mike Turner contend "the president of the United States must have the exclusive ability to command and control our nuclear deterrent. Democrats' dangerous efforts suggesting a restructuring of our nuclear command-and-control process will undermine American security, as well as the security of our allies."

## RECA ACT Received a Hearing

On March 24th, 2021 the Judiciary Sub Committee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties held a hearing on examining the need to expand the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA). Those allowed to provide oral testimony was limited. Lilly Adams and Tina Cordova were two of those allowed to provide oral testimony. NAAV provided written testimony. We believe the subject was well received and further hearing will be forth coming.

Go here to listen to the hearing:

<https://youtu.be/9gCGejMaYu4>

## CORRECTION!



**The NAAV forth quarter 2020 article titled “NAAV DIRECTOR & AMBASSADOR TURNS 98!” contained an error. In the fourth paragraph twice it states “Texas” (USS Texas) it should have stated New York. Please accept or apologies for the error and any inconvenience it may have caused.**

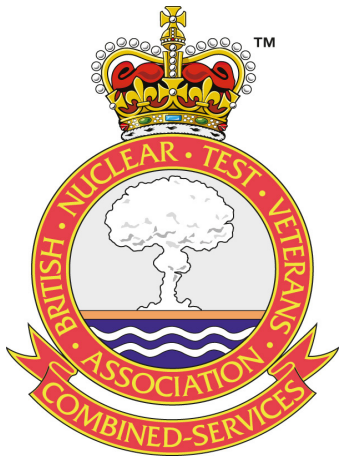
## RECOGNITION FOR FRENCH NATIONAL DEFENSE MEDAL EXPANDED

The French National Defense medal was created in 1982 by the Minister of Defense Charles Hernu. It’s nickname is the “Hernu Cross”.

In January 2021 those eligible to receive this medal now includes; active and reserve soldiers, former soldiers and civilians who have effectively participated in missions related to the development of the nuclear deterrent force, nuclear tests, in the zones and during the periods mentioned: Either between February 13, 1960 and December 31, 1967 at the Saharan Center for Military Experiments, or between November 7, 1961 and December 31, 1967 at the Oasis Military Experiment Center or in the areas peripheral to these centers; Either between July 2, 1966 and December 31, 1998 in French Polynesia.

This is awarded as recognition and compensation of victims of nuclear tests.





The Covid–19 pandemic has brought an increased workload to the BNTVA concerning social isolation and loneliness, as it has to many welfare charities. Multiple lockdowns have brought frequent contact from callers over the phone and through the BNTVA website. Due to the virus, this has included unpicking complex issues, lengthier and multiple contacts per caller, provision of advocacy, signposting to specialist charities, linking to military benevolent funds and building relationships with social and health providers.

We are adapting services to prepare for increased frailty and lower mobility in veterans and their wives, by introducing Telephone Friendship Groups, run in partnership with the Charity, Age UK. Volunteer training is now complete, and six veterans will meet over the phone on a weekly basis, with a facilitator, to chat together about life at the nuclear tests, hobbies, interests and current affairs. We run “BNTVA Nuclear Companions” for matched pairs of veterans, wives, widows and descendants to talk regularly, after carrying out safeguarding training for our growing Volunteer Network. We are now working on the provision of wellbeing services tailored for descendants.

After a disheartening outcome from the UK Advisory Military Sub-Committee concerning medallic recognition for our nuclear test veterans, the BNTVA has met with three MPs so far this year to discuss ways forward. Johnny Mercer MP, Secretary of State for Veterans’ Affairs, was astounded when our Vice Chair, John Lax, ex-RAF, related that he had witnessed 24 nuclear tests in 77 days during Operation Dominic - an average of one bomb blast every 3.2 days. We informed Mr Mercer that the BNTVA is planning a new application to the medallic committee, which he said he would support. We have gained significant support for the British nuclear veterans within the House of Commons and are working to submit an evidentially backed application at the appropriate time, as we will continue striving for recognition for our nuclear test veterans.

During the pandemic, the BNTVA has launched the Living Histories Project, to collate as many veterans’ stories as possible about life surrounding the nuclear tests; too many of our veterans have passed away and their stories have been lost. This is our biggest project yet, and will be incorporated into the interactive BNTVA Virtual Museum. Design work is currently taking place to realize this project, with skilled individuals and academics. The BNTVA has just joined the Oral History Society, affiliated to the University of London to achieve this exciting venture.

Recently, myself and John Lax held an impromptu virtual meeting with Keith and Fred. It was great to meet our American counterparts, and we had a lot to discuss. We hope to be able to attend the NAAV conference in the summer, and, depending on Covid-19, we also look forward to meeting Keith and Fred at the BNTVA Conference in August, close to Thomas Telford’s Ironbridge.

Ceri McDade  
Chair BNTVA



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