## Publication of the National Association of Atomic Veterans

## FROM THE DESK OF OUR NATIONAL COMMANDER

During our convention in Las Cruces, New Mexico last year, the Labrats folks, specifically Alan Owen, presented Keith with two very apropos T-shirts. Both were a black color with bright white messages written on them. One said "I'm that legendary Keith everyone is talking about." And the other says, "Don't rush me, I'm waiting until the last minute." These last couple of weeks, both T-shirts could have been interchangeable on a daily basis. There have been numerous occasions, mostly within our family, but secondly with NAAV, where Keith's legendary talents and statesmanship have resolved crises of varying degrees, but all important to the people he was helping. And of course, all took time away from his pending need to find his passport. After two plus days of doing nothing but sort and search, he still doesn't have that vital item to get us on our way to England. The fact that you are reading this, instead of a letter from him, tells you that he did find it and we are making a trip across the pond to attend some important events with Labrats. I will let him tell you all about it next newsletter. In the meantime, this is me appreciating my husband for the unique and powerful individual that he is, along with his less than perfect attributes that keep my life from being boring!

Best wishes for a peaceful, yet eventful, autumn.

Mary Ann Kiefer NAAV Secretary/Newsletter Editor Keith (K2)



# Keith Kiefer NAAV - Commander

On July 16th Congresswoman Titus Reintroduced Legislation in the House Named the Presume Act.

Her office asked Commander Kiefer for an Endorsement, which follows.

# "The National Association of Atomic Veterans is pleased to support the Presume Act.

The legacy of Nuclear tests is riddled with Veterans not having proper Personal Protective Equipment and/or failure of monitoring radiation levels. Few of the Veterans were issued radiation badges and of those that had them, there were high failure rates due to environmental factors. Further, these badges only measure external gamma rays, X-rays, and high-energy beta radiation. They do not measure alpha, neutron, or low energy beta radiation. Additionally, none of the monitoring methods measure internal radiation doses of any form.

Requiring a veteran to prove the level of exposure places an unreasonable burden of proof upon them."

## FROM THE DESK OF OUR NAAV VICE COMMANDER

Fred is AWOL this month. He was cited in Montana, but we haven't heard from him to confirm or deny his whereabouts. Let us know if you see him out and about!

Frank Hischaf



Fred Schafer

**National Vice Commander** 

Change of Address, Membership or Renewal Write or E-Mail

Fred Schafer
Vice Commander & Treasurer
NAAV

130 Cleveland Street Lebanon, OR 97355-4505 Phone: 541-258-7453

E-Mail: derf@trcschafer.com

Despite much hard work, in July 2024 legislators allowed the RECA program that many depend on to expire. On July 4th, 2025 we accomplished getting this program reinstated, expanded and extended to December of 2028. Veterans involved with the nuclear tests that have developed specific diseases and have not had a successful claim in the past, may apply for a one time payment of \$100,000. If the Veteran has passed away, the family can apply on the Veteran's behalf. We didn't accomplish some of the improvements like allowing those that have received a past claim obtain a supplement of the difference (in Veterans' case an additional \$25,000.) We also were unsuccessful getting the Cleanup Veterans included. (See OpEd on page 8.) This is a summary of this program:

The bill is the biggest expansion of RECA in history. If not extended, it expires December 31, 2028. It expands coverage for Downwinders, Uranium mine workers and Ore Transporters. Compensation for Downwinders increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000 and "Onsite Participants" (Atomic Veterans) increased from \$75,000 to \$100,000.

On July 8, 2025, Senator Josh Hawley of Missouri held a press conference in Cold Water Creek Park, MO (the creek was the dumping site of chemical and nuclear waste) to celebrate the reinstatement of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act. The Union of Concerned Scientists, who sponsors a group led by Lilly Adams that meets weekly on Zoom and has worked hard for many years to reenact RECA, was invited to come and speak during the press conference. Commander Kiefer was among those speakers. In the video of the event linked here, the program actually starts 27 minutes in. Keith presented Senator Hawley with the 'Still Engaging an Invisible Enemy' Flag and a NAAV 40th Anniversary challenge coin. Thank you to Lilly and USC for help with funding the trip to be a part of this victorious event. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Gl2gfjtpE4





# LABRATS INTERNATIONAL



11th August 2025

Our annual reunion will take place between the 15th and 19th of September at Pontins, Sand Bay, Weston-Super-Mare. We will be hosting 130 veterans and their families for a week long event which will bring together communities from across the world.

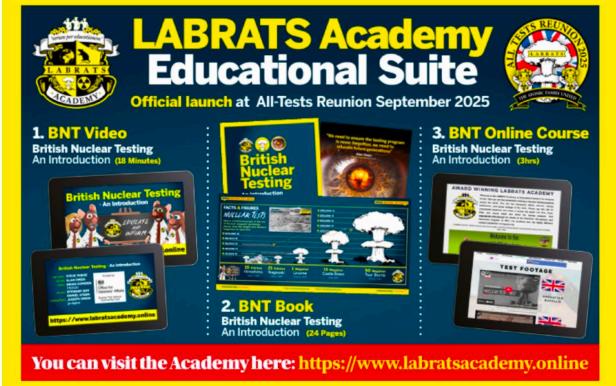


This annual event allows us to inform the members of our campaigning and to inform them of events from across the world, including the USA. It is a fantastic event with traditional dancers from Kiribati and entertainment for the veterans. A chance to meet with old colleagues and have some fun.

Our new educational package will be launched at the Reunion, which includes a book, video and a new online course to educate the world about nuclear testing.

We are delighted to announce that LABRATS has been granted special consultative status at the United Nations through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This status now entitles us to designate official representatives to the United Nations Head-quarters in New York and the **United Nations** Offices at Geneva and Vienna.

We continue to fight for all affected nuclear communities across the world and meet monthly with the Office for Veterans' Affairs.



We have secured the release of a previously classified Ministry of Defence database codenamed 'Merlin', which contains 28,000 records of information. The first tranche will be released to The National Archives at the end of August/beginning of September and we are in the process of setting up a research group to look at the records.

As part of the group of campaigners who worked on the RECA re-instatement, it is great to see it re-instated, but it is with sadness that so many communities are still excluded. We continue to work with those communities to ensure that they are included in any new revision.

Stay safe and healthy.

Alan Owen LABRATS Founder



# FROM THE HERALD/REVIEW JULY 16, 2025

# **Cochise County's Newspaper of Record**

**Atomic Veterans Day** 

# **Unsung Heroes**

Air Force retiree didn't know an Atomic Vet was such a thing until two years ago.

BY MATT HICKMAN

matt.hickman@myheraldreview.com

SIERRA VISTA - In September of 1962, a 23-year-old aircraft electrician stationed at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland was told to get aboard a plane knowing nothing about where he was headed, nor what the mission was once he

After four or six stops to refuel and pick up other men, Robert Dalfonzo landed at Johnston Island, a U.S. territory nearly a thousand miles south and west of Hawaii. There, they were taken just off shore by helicopter to the USS Princeton and on Oct. 2, Dalfonzo would witness the first of nine nuclear bomb explosions over the next 31

days in a place called the 'Johnston Island Danger Area.'
"When the bomb went off, they told you to close your eyes and take your fist and stick it in your eyes," Dalfonzo said, demonstrating the force with which he followed the instruction. "That was still the brightest light your ever saw."

Dalfonzo described later missions where a pilot of a B-52 would fly into the mushroom cloud following an explosion, and after which, he and a team of 10 or 11 participation in these atomi would go aboard the craft and collect radiation through a filter that was then flown to Alamogordo, New Mexico for testing.

Then, the team would be taken back to the Naval Base at Barbers Island, Hawaii where they would wait for test results to come back from Los Alamos, and then do the drill over again.

In between bombing runs every four or five days, Dalfonzo and the team of engine, hydraulics specialists, and the like, would make repairs on the planes. "To my understanding, they were trying to make a clean bomb," Dalfonzo said. "One that would do damage, but you know, not screw up the atmosphere." Dalfonzo recalls being back home in time for Thanksgiving that year, and going on to have a long and distinguished career in the Air Force that included tours in Vietnam, where, he said he walked through Agent Orange daily. He retired from Nellis Air Force Base in 1995 and found his way to Sierra Vista in 2015.

He never kept in contact with any of the Johnston Island cohort and never gave much thought to what they had been exposed to. "After I got back and had never heard another word from anybody," he said. "I never knew I could talk about it."

That was until July of 2023 when watching the TV news from his Sierra Vista home he heard about "National Atomic Veterans Day' commemorated on July

<sup>'</sup>"I said 'what?' and I called my VFW here and they knew nothing about it," Dalfonzo said. "I went to Tucson and they put me on to Texas and California -

nobody knew about it. You know how I found out? Google. Google put me in touch with these people, the National Association of Atomic Veterans."

Dalfonzo discovered the NAAV holds an annual gathering each year, and in 2024, he attended it at Los Alamos. He said the group once numbered more than 1,700, but only 50 made it to the reunion, which included a trip out to McDonald's Ranch, the famous Trinity testing site.

Joining the vets was the governor of the Marshall Islands who stopped by on his way to Washington D.C. to try to convince the federal government to finish cleaning up the nuclear contamination on his island, located 717 nautical miles from Johnston Atoll.

Atomic Veterans commonly experience adverse health effects and in some cases result in birth defects in their offspring. Dalfonzo said some among the 50 reported having children who were born without limbs.

"I had no problems with my kids, but the (veterans) on the Marshall Islands had it worse than we had it," Dalfonzo said.

Now 86, Dalfonzo has been fortunate to avoid any serious health concerns that could be related to his time in the Johnston Island Danger Area. That was until just over a year ago when Dalfonzo was diagnosed with Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS), often a precursor to myeloma and similar types of cancer.

The VA denied his claim and his appeal for compensation.

"They (NAAV) said that VA should have a special roster just for atomic veterans, but they don't. They don't have one here in Sierra Vista," Dalfonzo said. "They know nothing about me here."

However, with the passage of H.R. 1, aka the 'One Big, Beautiful, Bill,' signed into law by President.

Trump last Friday, there is hope for some compensation for Atomic Vets as included in it is the resumption of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, known as RECA, which expired last June due to inaction by

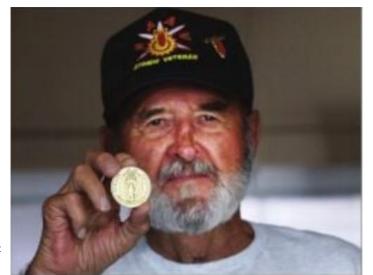
Dalfonzo was told if he had made his compensation claim on his potential cancer diagnosis a month earlier, he would've gotten in under the June 10, 2024 deadline of RECA expiring and perhaps had been compensated for the claim the VA denied.

He heard he might be in line for a few thousand dollars upon the bill's passage, but living comfortably in Sierra Vista at 86 years old, Dalfonzo isn't all that concerned about compensation. He would, however, like more to be known about those who've been affected by our government's nuclear testing over the decades.

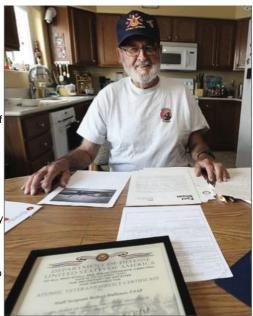
"I would like to have enough benefits, so if something happened to me, the VA is going to take care of my wife," Dalfonzo said. "Of course I feel pride - you bet. It was something we had to do for our country... but nobody knows about us... I'm just a little bit unhappy that the VA don't want to recognize what we did.'

With Atomic Veterans Day set to be celebrated in quiet anonymity for a 42nd time on Wednesday, Dalfonzo plans to commemorate it in kind.

"I think it's a holiday since it's something I've participated in, but it's really not," Dalfonzo said. "I'll put up a flag. What else can you do? Nobody knows about it."



July 16, 2025 is National Atomic Veteran's Day President Ronald Reagan designated that July 16, 1983 was National Atomic Veteran's Day. Sierra Vista resident and Air Force Veteran Bob Dalfonzo displays a gold coin he received recently to memorating his participation in these atomic tests.



Dalfonzo sits in his Sierra Vista home with some of the documents he has saved portraying his participation in the atomic test in the Pacific.

NAAV Director of State Commanders, John Wills, is looking for a volunteer to become the State Commander for New York. He has already done the work of updating the roster, so it would be an easy transition for the newcomer. Other states may come up in the near future. Contact John at 919-339-2404 or incharging 1920. johnwills132@yahoo.com

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**Purpose:** NAAV (National Association of Atomic Veterans) is developing for our webpage a list of museums and historic sites. **We need your help!** Please send the state, name, city, and website link. **What to do:** Write up your entry using the Titan Missile Museum in Arizona as an example. Email to Karen Bosch Cobb, <u>Karen.</u> boschcobb@icloud.com

# List of Atomic Museums and Historic Sites

#### **ARIZONA**

## Titan Missile Museum, Green Valley, AZ <a href="https://titanmissilemuseum.org/">https://titanmissilemuseum.org/</a>

· America's only nuclear missile silo open to the public. Offers guided underground silo tours and Cold War-era exhibits.

#### **ARKANSAS**

## Wings of Honor Museum (Walnut Ridge, AR) https://wingsofhonor.org

• Among its exhibits is content on cleanup operations at Enewetak Atoll and atomic testing effects.

#### **NEVADA**

#### Atomic Museum Vegas, (Las Vegas, NV) <a href="https:///atomicmuseum.vegas">https:///atomicmuseum.vegas</a>

The National Atomic Testing Museum (Atomic Museum), is a national science, history, and educational institution that tells the story of America's nuclear weapons testing program at the Nevada Test Site. Showcases some of the rarest of artifacts relating to the nation's atomic testing program. Nowhere else can you see a large nuclear reactor that was used in the development of the nuclear rocket and the first air-to-air missile, Genie. Personal atomic weapons that were developed to use in place of conventional weapons, such as the Backpack Nuke and the Crockett XM-388 projectile, are placed throughout the 8,000 square feet of museum exhibits.

#### **NEW MEXICO**

# Manhattan Project National Historical Park, Bradbury Science Museum (Los Alamos, NM) <a href="https://www.lanl.gov">www.lanl.gov</a>

• Located at Los Alamos National Laboratory, it features Manhattan Project artifacts including full-size "Little Boy" and "Fat Man" bomb models.

# Manhattan Project National Historical Park, Los Alamos History Museum (Los Alamos, NM) <a href="https://losalamoshistory.org/">https://losalamoshistory.org/</a>

· A journey from the Pajarito Plateau's Ancestral Pueblo, through homestead, the Ranch School Era, and the Manhattan Project. Includes the Hans Bethe House, the Oppenheimer House, and a guest cottage that Gen. Leslie Groves stayed at.

# National Museum of Nuclear Science and History (Albuquerque NM) <a href="https://www.nuclearmuseum.org/">https://www.nuclearmuseum.org/</a>

- A Smithsonian affiliate which teaches the story of the Atomic Age, from early research of nuclear development through today's peaceful uses of nuclear technology. Visitors can explore how nuclear science continues to influence our world. Through permanent and changing exhibits and displays, the museum strives to present the diverse applications of nuclear science in the past, present, and future, along with the stories of the field's pioneers.
- The "Atomic Histories" exhibit explores the Manhattan Project's origins through national laboratories, uranium mining, and nuclear waste sites in New Mexico

#### OHIO

#### Mound Science and Energy Museum Association (Miamisburg, OH) <a href="https://moundmuseum.com/">https://moundmuseum.com/</a>

The Mound Science and Energy Museum Association (MSEMA) is a nonprofit organization that was established to collect, preserve and make publicly accessible the heritage of the Mound Laboratory, its workers and its site.

#### **TENNESSEE**

#### American Museum of Science and Energy (Oak Ridge, TN)

• Focuses on Oak Ridge's role in the Manhattan Project. Exhibits include a nuclear weapons display, reactor tours, and exhibits on Y-12 Plant and K-25 site.

#### **VIRGINIA**

#### The Cold War Museum (Warrenton, VA) <a href="https://coldwar.">https://coldwar</a>

Houses extensive Civil Defense collections and Cold War nuclear-era displays, relevant to the atomic veteran context.

#### WASHINGTON

## Manhattan Project National Historical Park, Hanford <a href="https://www.nps.gov/mapr/hanford.htm">https://www.nps.gov/mapr/hanford.htm</a>

Hanford Engineer Works produced plutonium at a roughly 600 square mile (1554 sq. km) site along the Columbia River in Washington state. Workers at the Hanford Site constructed and operated the world's first nuclear production reactors that produced the plutonium used in the Trinity Test and in the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, on August 9, 1945.

# NEW PODCAST SERIES: OPPENHEIMER AND THE MANHATTAN PROJECT

WORLD WAR II ON TOPIC

The National WWII Museum presents the newest season of its podcast, "World War II On Topic: Oppenheimer and the Manhattan Project." Episodes are available weekly starting July 24 on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and SoundCloud.



Jim Lyons of the Army's 232<sup>nd</sup> Signal Co. of Camp Desert Rock, NV was part of Operation Plumbob in 1957. Here he is attending EAA AirVenture Oshkosh that brings together historic airplanes with pilots and aircraft owners, encompassing 80 years of aviation and military history. The 72nd edition of the EAA's fly-in convention was July 21-27, 2025 at Wittman Regional Airport in Oshkosh. Jim is proudly displaying a picture of one of the Plumbob shots in front of the B-29 Bockscar that dropped Fat Man on Nagasaki, Japan. The Silverplate B-29's were in use for the nuclear weapons program until 1949.

# FROM STARS AND STRIPES

**OPINION** Add ailing cleanup veterans to expansion of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act

By KEITH KIEFER SPECIAL TO STARS AND STRIPES • July 15, 2025

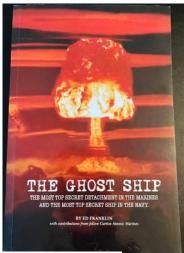


The plume of a nuclear weapons test detonation rises over Bikini Atoll, Marshall Islands, July 25, 1946. (Library of Congress)

July 16 marks 80 years since the United States detonated the world's first atomic bomb in the desert of New Mexico. This marked the start of a decades-long nuclear testing program that exposed tens of thousands of Americans, including members of the armed forces stationed at test sites and tasked with cleanup. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan declared July 16 as National Atomic Veterans Day, in recognition of service member participation in U.S. nuclear tests. But many cleanup veterans are still waiting for justice in the form of compensation from the government for the radiation-related health problems they sustained while serving our country. While the recent reauthorization and expansion of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) was a win for many long-forgotten communities, it perpetuated the injustice of denying cleanup veterans access to alternative aid when the Department of Veterans Affairs fails them. As the national commander of the National Association of Atomic Veterans, I work every day with veterans who were exposed to radiation and other toxins at nuclear test sites and have developed catastrophic illnesses as a result. These service members were exposed to dangerous levels of radiation with little to no protective gear, and without a clear sense of the risk they were taking on. When I was deployed to the Marshall Islands to clean up the Enewetak Atoll following years of tests, digging up irradiated soil, I was assured that my radiation exposure would be minimal — on par with walking the streets of New York City. But after my service, I experienced an ever-growing list of health problems all associated with exposure to radiation: my wife and I struggled to conceive; I was plagued by random fevers and bone pain; teeth crumbled in my mouth; I developed numbness in my legs and feet and radiation-related cataracts; at 40 I learned had the bones of a 90-year-old man, leading to an eventual hip replacement. Help for cleanup veterans is currently limited to the VA, despite its history of failing

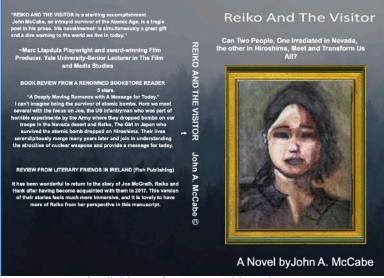
Keith Kiefer is national commander of the National Association of Atomic Veterans.

Read more at: https://www.stripes.com/opinion/2025-07-15/add-cleanup-veterans-radiation-exposure-act-18452354.html



This was a delightful read, recommended by Kelle Wolf, whose husband Ken was listed in Taps last quarter. Ken's shipmate from the USS Curtis, Ed Franklin, wrote the book in 2015. It's available on Amazon. As I read through it while keeping my husband company on one of his many projects, he kept asking me "What are you laughing about now?" So he heard a lot of excerpts from it. Aside from the humorous vignettes, there is a lot of history and information to absorb.

### RECOMMENDED READING



Available on Amazon and Ingrahm

"I am republishing the novel on us Atomic Veterans and the Japanese. The new title is REIKO AND THE VISITOR. The initial focus in the 2nd edition starts out now with the girl who survived Hiroshima, Reiko. Joe McGrath the male lead is one of us Atomic Veterans. This version could do us some good. We need to be concerned about our kids and chronic illnesses."

John is often a speaker at both literary and non-literary events. At the West Virginia University Gateway Conference honoring the legacy of Pearl S. Buck, he examined Buck's 1959 novel, Command The Morning - her historic fiction exposé of the Manhattan Project. John presented at the 2019 National Association of Atomic Veterans 40th annual convention in Dayton Ohio.

The DEVIL REACHED

TOWARD the SKY

AN ORAL HISTORY of

THE MAKING & UNLEASHING

OF THE ATOMIC BOMB

GARRETT M. GRAFF

New York Times bestselling author and Palitzer Prize finalise

https://www. simonandschuster.com/ books/The-Devil-Reached-Toward-the-Sky/Garrett-M-Graff/9781668092392

Karen Bosch Cobb

## LETTERS TO NAAV

Dear Keith and NAAV Commanders,

My name is Victoria Kelly, and I am the granddaughter of an atomic veteran. Some of you may remember from my email last year seeking World War II atomic veterans for a documentary.

I am so excited to tell you that the film is done and will be premiering on PBS on August 1!

Atomic Echoes: Untold Stories of World War II, features three atomic veterans:

- --Archie Moczygemba, of Taylor, Texas
- --Michas Ohnstad, of North Branch, Minnesota
- -- Larry Pressley, of Columbia, South Carolina

I would be honored if you would watch and/or share this with your members.

You can view the trailer here. https://atomicechoesfilm.com/trailer

The film will be available free on the PBS app, for all streaming devices, beginning in August. It will also be airing on select public television stations across the country.

While this film focuses only on World War II atomic veterans, I hope to use it as a springboard to bring your cause to public attention.

I would also like to offer my help to all members. I was able to expedite the Atomic Veterans Service Medal within two months for all three veterans in the film by connecting with their Congressmen (and leveraging PBS). I am happy to do this for any veterans who have not yet received their medal and would like some help.

Thank you so much for being the trailblazers you are.

Sincerely, Victoria Kelly Atomic Echoes will be available on the PBS app beginning in August. Through the app, it can be accessed for free and watched anytime, 24/7.

## LETTERS TO NAAV

National Association of Atomic Veterans NAAV 130 Cleveland Street Lebanon, OR 97355-4505 Re: Richard D. Bee, Operation Hardtack I

July 16, 2025

Dear National Association of Atomic Veterans.

On behalf of our family, please accept this donation of \$1000 in loving memory of my father Richard Dunbar Bee. Of all the accolades and accomplishments in his life, my Dad was most proud of being an Atomic Veteran, having served in the Pacific Proving Grounds during Operation Hardtack in 1958.

My Dad was a card-carrying, lifetime member and supporter of the NAAV. He communicated with Congressman James McGovern years prior to the Atomic Veterans certificate and service medal came into being, and though the recognition was very late in coming, he was grateful to receive it. It was a significant honor for him to attend a recognition ceremony that Congressman McGovern hosted in Massachusetts for Atomic Veterans in December of 2023.



Atomic Veteran Richard Bee with Congressman Jim McGovern, December 2023.

Thank you for all you do to advocate for Atomic Veterans. It is our honor to support the NAAV in honor and memory of my father.

Sincerely,

David M. Bee (son)

# **TAPS**



Jerry T. Thornhill.....Buena Vista, CO
Robert B. Krull......Loveland, CO
William Gray...Colorado Springs, CO
Bill S. Falkenberg.......Denver, CO
Richard L. Dickson......Johnston, OK
H. Frances Dehne..Lake Montana, CO
George A. Blayden......Jackson, MS
John A. Griffiths......Leawood, KS
Russell C. Dedmon......Astoria, OR
Curtis M. Jefferis......Hutchinson, KS
Robert Michael.......Cedar Rapids, IA
Norm E. Dickman......Decorah, IA
Tom T. Kuster.....West Burlington, IA
Richard Dunbar Bee.Marblehead, MA



# **Members Beware**

Please be aware that email scams continue to proliferate, getting more creative daily. NAAV members are repeatedly getting emails that appear to be from the National Commander or other board members asking for financial help for people in need. Often the scammer is asking for gift cards, sometimes it is money through online payment centers. The NAAV board will NEVER contact members via email asking for money in any form. All requests will only be made through a general appeal in our Newsletter or a personal phone call. Nothing else is legitimate. When you get such an email request, check the actual sender address by clicking on the sender name. The address will not match what you have in your contacts for that name. For example, in your contacts Keith Kiefer is kiefer4ramsey@yahoo.com. If the address does not match this, it is a scam and you should report it as such and immediately delete it. When in doubt, please call the board member whose name is being used and ask if they sent it.

# On Another Fiscal Note

Labrats have extended an invitation to Commander Keith Kiefer and Secretary Mary Ann Kiefer to come to their All Tests Reunion Event in the UK this September. The timing is perfect in that we are not having a NAAV convention this year. Labrats are generously willing to host our stay with the end result being that we only need to come up with air fare. We want to assure you that all donations given to NAAV this year for the purpose of having our convention in 2026 will be used for said convention. The Kiefer's will not be relying on NAAV to fund their travels to the UK, other than donations given for that express purpose.

## FOR NOTIFICATIONS

Please use the following email address to submit articles for the newsletter and to notify NAAV of members who pass so we can include them in taps. (Fred Schafer is the other option for taps.) Pics of Atomic Veteran events, new Atomic Veteran Memorial Highways, and Atomic Medal recipients are also welcome.

maryannnaav@yahoo.com



# IF UNDELIVERED PLEASE RETURN TO THE ADDRESS ABOVE!

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Have a good day!

