Veterans Studies Interest Group Listserv
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The Veteran’s Creed
1. I am an American Veteran
2. I proudly served my country
3. I live the values I learned in the military
4. I continue to serve my community, my country and my fellow veterans
5. I maintain my physical and mental discipline
6. I continue to lead and improve
7. I make a difference
8. I honor and remember my fallen comrades

This month’s Listserv includes Suicide in Bravo Company; The Hundredth Anniversary of the Treaty of Versailles; WW 2 Planes; and, A Poll of Veterans on the Iraq, Afghanistan and Syrian Wars

Suicides in Bravo Company
The tough paratroopers of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment had been through a lot in the Afghanistan War – hard fighting, lost limbs and deaths. But the dangers on returning home were also high. In the 10 years since their return from war, two committed suicide, over a dozen tried it and others considered it. Isolation was a particular problem and the tough fighting men were afraid.
So, the Independence Fund, an advocacy group, and the VA decided to take on a new approach to suicide prevention and resilience. They brought together the remaining 98 veterans and along with VA counselors, white water rafting and “shots of Jameson Irish Whiskey” worked on fraternity and healing “You are your brother’s keeper” said Sgt. Robert Musil.
Usually, such therapy is more individual or in cross sectional groups, done by professionals and without the booziness. But the loss of camaraderie and unit cohesion was a major blow to these veterans in their return to civilian life. The bet here is that restoring it and relying on each other will have a similar value in this combat as it does on the battlefield. Others are also trying it and we will see the results.

Hundredth Anniversary of the Treaty of Versailles
June 28 was hundredth anniversaries of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles by World War I allies, their associated powers and Germany. The Treaty which has 15 parts and 440 articles, was the result of intense discussions of 27 nations at the Paris Peace Conference. Pres. Woodrow Wilson, Prime Ministers David Lloyd George of Britain and Georges Clemenceau of France were the main characters in the Treaty which was influenced by a number of secret treaties made in the years before and during World War I. The Germans were there but were presented with a final product to which they had virtually no input. The Treaty of Versailles was very controversial and loomed large over World War II. For years up to that war, Adolf Hitler used the Treaty as the disastrous embodiment of Teutonic subjugation.
Briefly, the Treaty’s provisions were to form the League of Nations, the Permanent Court of International Justice and the International Labor Organization; return Alsace and Lorraine to France; put the formerly German Saarland under the League of Nations; reinstate the country of Poland with a corridor to the Baltic Sea; make the city of Danzig a “free city” (“I don’t want to die Danzig” became a rallying cry for pacifists prior to World War II); and divest Germany of its colonies and limit its troops and military equipment. The most insulting provisions assigned war guilt (Article 231) and reparations payments to Germany. The amount was not decided until 1921 when it was put at $33 million.

At the time, the economist John Maynard Keyes, who was the chief representative of the British Treasury, considered the terms a “Carthaginian Peace” referring to the harsh treatment the Romans doled out to the conquered Carthaginians (actually that was worse). He walked out.

The reparations were canceled in 1932 and provisions of the Treaty apart from the territorial configurations were moot by 1938 with the many concessions that had been made to Hitler. Der Fuhrer’s territorial expansion in Europe then pretty much canceled the rest. The U.S. never signed the treaty nor joined the League of Nations.

The harshness of Versailles combined with its lax enforcement is a favorite topic for historians as a cause of World War II and “what-if” conjectures.

Dignitaries at the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in the Hall of Mirrors, June 28, 1919, From Encyclopedia Britannica

**WW II Planes: Who Will Keep Them Flying?**

There is a romance about World War II airplanes and especially with the 75th anniversary of D-Day, many events and shows. However, a New York Times article asks the question “Who will keep them flying?” The fact of the matter is that individuals with skills to maintain these airplanes are much fewer and may no longer exist after some years. The article cites a conversation between Garrett Fleischmann, a 20-year-old college sophomore who flew a restored Douglas C-47 continent troop carrier plane named Placid Lassie and Peter Goutiere, aged, 105 years, who flew the plane in World War II. Not many people want to develop the skills to fly these planes or get to
understand the old, hands-on, maintenance technology. They only see computers doing the work. However, many of the students who interact with the old pilots and see these airplanes are thrilled by the visits. The generational problem was exemplified when one of the students approached a 65-year-old pilot of one of the World War II planes and asked “Are you excited about your mission? Tell me, you’re on Facebook Live.” The 65-year-old pilot responded, “What’s Facebook?” prompting the student to say “We have a lot to talk about.”

The Placid Lassie. From Tunison Foundation.

**Poll of Veterans on the Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria Wars**

In a Pew Foundation poll that may be surprising, a majority of veterans felt that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were not worth fighting when considering the costs versus the benefits. The numerical results were very similar to those of the general public. For example, 64% of veterans felt that the Iraq war was not worth fighting as against 62% of adults in the general population. Numbers with this opinion for the Afghanistan war were 58% (veterans) versus 59% (all adults) and for Syria 55% (veterans) versus 58% (all adults). The results were consistent across era of service, rank and combat experience. Republicans had different views than Democrats. The Republican versus Democrat numbers regarding whether the war was worth fighting were for Iraq, 45/15%; Afghanistan 46/26% and Syria 54/25%. The survey is based on an online sample of 1,087 adults, age 18 and older and living in the U.S.

The Listserv is available as an archive on the Georgetown University Library website under the title “Veterans Interest Newsletters”.

There will be no August Listserv. The next issue will be in September.

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Deaths during Military Service, U.S. Wars in and Out of Battle

From VA. (Note: “Veterans” Should read “Military Personnel”)