

Veterans Studies Interest Group Listserv

Issue #37 December 2019

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 Army Suicide From 1840 to 2018; Honor Flights, The Battle of the Bulge; and, Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial

Army Suicide From 1840 to 2018

There is no more vexing problem for our country than suicide in the military and veterans. The general assumption is that their suicides result from battle scars and PTSD. However, in many instances, such does not appear to be the case. A recent report published in Journal of the American Medical [Association](#), examines Army suicides back to 1819 and concludes that the factors causing these suicides are not simple. According to the data, increased combat operations are not in fact the cause of most suicides and may actually be associated with their diminution. Since the 1840s the suicide rates dipped below those in peacetime in the Civil War, the Spanish-American war, World Wars I and 2 and Korea and then increased versus peacetime during the Vietnam and the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars.

During the height of World War II, the rates fell substantially below those during the peacetime 1930s with the historically lowest suicide rate in 1944-5 (Note: a factor in the 1930s may have been the Great Depression). For Vietnam and the Iraq and Afghanistan, the 17-year duration of the wars may be important..

This study suggests a number of new areas of research on suicide in the military and veterans, especially for the current conflicts. See also [Listserv #5](#) for a VA report on veterans' suicide. The VA suicide hotline, which is open to everyone, is 1-800-273-8255 and select option 1 for a VA staffer.

Nuts!

The 75th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, is [upon](#) us. The Battle, which was part of a German offensive in the Ardennes Forest was code named *Wacht Am Rhein* (Watch on the Rhine) but the westward bulge it created stuck as its common name, The German offensive was a last-ditch effort by Hitler to win the war against an Allied force marching across Northern Europe. It also closely followed the failed assassination attempt on Hitler by Operation [Valkyrie](#). What resulted was the largest battle in American history

The Allies were unprepared for the onslaught. “The thought was that Germany was on his knees and could no longer raise a big Army” said the director of the Bastogne War Museum. There were only 4 American divisions in the Ardennes's covering an 89-mile front and two of the divisions had never “fired a shot in [anger](#)”. Allied intelligence had heard rumors about the battle but were incredulous and the actress Marlene Dietrich had been in Bastogne, Belgium a key battle site, on a USO tour a few days before the [Battle](#). The forest had, in fact, been an area of quiet.

The offensive saw 200,000 German soldiers counterattack the Allies on December 16, 1944. Fighting occurred in snowy, cold weather, with temperatures as low as -4°F, pea soup fog preventing air support, and Allied troops low on fuel, rations and ammunition. The fog also made communications extremely difficult. and the Germans constantly encouraged surrender by radio and leaflets. But the Americans hung on.

As the offensive started, 2 German regiments quickly surrounded the Allies and took 6800 American soldiers' prisoner, the single largest field surrender of Allied troops in World War II. At another location 84 American prisoners were summarily killed by the German Waffen SS, the largest mass military execution of the war.

The battle became famous in part because of the resilience of small units hampered by poor communications standing shoulder to shoulder to fight off the Germans. The Americans were pushed back but managed to delay the German advance in its initial crucial stages. Bastogne was the site of one of the most famous responses in military history, "Nuts" by Brig Gen Anthony C McAuliffe of the 101st Airborne, to a German demand that the Americans surrender unconditionally (a 2-page response had been drafted and [discarded](#)). It was a symbol of the Allied resistance.

The 101st held out at Bastogne long enough for the skies to clear, supplies to arrive and allied bombardment to occur. Gen. George Patton turned his 350,000-man army North through the German flank to relieve them. After the fighting ended on January 28, 1945 the Allies attacked Germany and brought the war to an end.

The Americans suffered 19,000 soldiers dead, 47,500 wounded, and 23,000 [missing](#). On the German side there were 12,000 killed among 100,00 casualties. Remembrances of the fighting were held on both sides of the Atlantic. Private Arthur Jacobson, age 95, who visited the battlefield on the 75th anniversary said he still remembers it "I used to wake up at night in the hospital. I dream about having to move out at night. Orders would come down 'let's move to another position' and I'd wake [up](#)." The Battle was immortalized in the movie "Battleground" which emphasized the grit of the American soldiers.



Scenes from the Battle of the Bulge including a lone soldier and a Medic bringing a soldier in. From [History Website](#).

Honor Flights

Begun after the opening of the World War II Memorial in Washington DC, the Honor Flight Network has carried nearly a quarter million World War II, Korea and Vietnam War veterans to Washington from its 120 nationwide [hubs](#). "Our mission is to transport our veterans to visit the memorials that are dedicated to honoring their sacrifice" said Meredith Rosenbeck, chief executive of the Network.

As the veterans pass through Reagan airport, many of them in wheelchairs and a few weeping, they are met by "whoops and applause". "Walking through the airport when we landed was the most emotional experience I've had in relation to the Vietnam War" said Mike Sims who served in the Air Force "I've never seen anything like [it](#)" I, myself, have witnessed these arrivals on two occasions and can certainly attest to the emotions they arouse.



Honor Flight veteran arriving at Reagan Airport. From NY [Times](#).

Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial

The National Desert Storm War Memorial Association unveiled the design of National Desert Storm Desert Shield War Memorial at its offices in Fredericksburg Texas. This Memorial will be completed in 2021 in time for the 30th anniversary of the war, fought from Aug. 2, 1990 to Feb

28, 1991. It will be near the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC. The design (above) is a left hook around an elevated pool of water, symbolizing the movement used to outflank Iraqi forces in southern Iraq and Kuwait. Veterans of the war strongly supported and influenced the design, including its left hook shape. The design will be available for further feedback, presumably also in large part by [veterans](#).



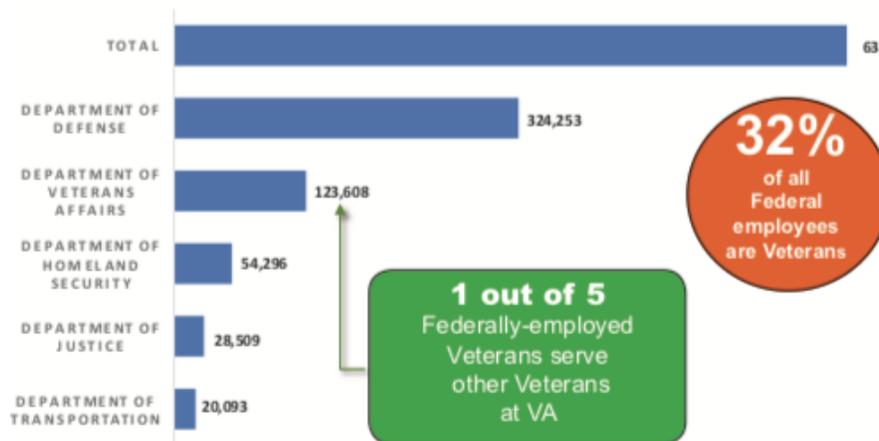
Representation of the Desert Storm and Desert Shield War Memorial. Posted on [Facebook](#)

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

Joel Kupersmith, M.D.
 Director, Georgetown University Veterans Initiatives
 Professor of Medicine

Stats Section

Where Veterans Choose to Work in the Federal Government



From [VA](#).