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 issue of the listserv includes Flip the Narrative; Bravo Company; Ten Famous Korean War Veterans; Vet the Vote; and Veterans Enlistment

Flip the Narrative
An editorial in the Wall Street Journal entitled “The Pentagon's Recruiting Woes” detailed some of the reasons that recruiting for the All-Volunteer Force has recently been dismal. In a published letter to the editor, former Army Chief of Staff George Casey and I pointed out that an important reason for recruiting difficulties is that media depictions of veterans tend to focus on the challenges veterans face such as PTSD, suicide and homelessness. This leaves a “broken veteran narrative” as the widespread public perception, which strongly affects recruiting for the AVF. A DoD survey showed that 57% of young Americans, the targets of recruiting efforts, think that military service would give them emotional or psychological problems. The broken veteran narrative fosters this distorted perception of veterans which in turn influences decisions on enlisting.

Although these challenges are real, veterans have considerable assets and success. They have higher incomes, lower unemployment and better education than counterparts with even greater differences in minorities. Of post-9/11 combat veterans, 47% report emotionally traumatic or distressing experiences and 36% report post-traumatic stress. Yet 67% said their experiences in combat showed them “that they were stronger than they thought they were,” and 68% of combat veterans said their deployments helped them financially.

Our final point was that “somehow we must flip the narrative to a realistic and proportional view of veterans.” We also made this point strongly in our book about veterans of the AVF Supporting Veterans After 50 Years of the All-Volunteer Force and 20 Years of War: Ideas Moving Forward.
Bravo Company
Wall Street Journal reporter Ben Kesling has written an important book about the men of Bravo Company, *Bravo Company: An Afghanistan Deployment and Its Aftermath* published by Abrams Press. The men of this company have suffered an unusually high number of visible and invisible wounds and Kesling “spent years reckoning with their hiring experiences, offering a snapshot of what hundreds of thousands of veterans experienced” in Afghanistan.

A WSJ article gives some examples. Alex Jauregui was born in Mexico and came to the US illegally with his parents when he was a child. He enlisted in the Army was deployed to Afghanistan where he spent considerable time in patrols trying to avoid IED's, with “every step the horror of uncertainty.” He met his fate and lost both legs. “I am not mad at anybody” he says, including the Taliban whom he thinks were doing their job, in fact a better job than the US Army. He went on to become a successful bookkeeper and feels his experience contributed to what he is today, “a loving husband and attentive father.”

Moral injury was an issue for Christian conservative Tyler Keller. His moral compass was deranged by what is called “bacha bazi,” a slang term for the sexual abuse of young boys by corrupt Afghan policemen. After leaving the Army, he went from job to job without purpose, concluding that the Army experience was the highlight of his life. He was sorry that he left it after his first enlistment.

Jared Lemon lost his arm to an IED. It was mangled so badly that when the Army surgeons gave him the choice of amputation, he took it. But he says “If you are talking to someone who’s missing an arm, you can't forget their pain.” Sometimes you can forget that someone is missing a leg when you are talking to that individual but the stump waving around is a “constant reminder of what he has been through.” Lemon has done many things since leaving the service including running a marathon, climbing a mountain alongside Special Forces people, enrolling in college.

There are many other stories and Kesling concludes the article in this way: “Veterans also have stories yet to unfold. The military was just one part of their lives. If they served honorably, they might still tarnish themselves; if they have yet to find honor, they can still do so. The men of Bravo show how much potential can be found in a single Army company.”

Note: it is also worthwhile to look at the responses to the article here.

**Ten Famous Korean War Veterans**
Academy Award winner Sir Michael Caine (born Maurice Micklewhjte Jr.) saw extensive combat as part of the first battalion royal Fusiliers. He was discharged in 1953 after contracting malaria. He then went to acting school in London and his first movie was “A Hill in Korea.” Ed McMahon (you remember him) was a flight instructor though he had not flown combat missions. He did pilot unarmed Cessna O-1E Bird Dogs in spotting missions over enemy lines for which he earned 6 air medals. The first man to walk on the moon, Neil Armstrong, flew 78 combat missions and earned 3 air medals in one year of service in Korea. Another astronaut, Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin, the second
man to walk on the moon, flew 66 combat missions in Korea after graduating near the top of his class in flight school. **John Glenn**, the future astronaut and senator, flew 59 combat missions in the South Pacific as a Marine Corps fighter pilot in World War II and then flew 90 Korean missions in two tours of duty. In the last nine days of the Korean War, he shot down 3 MIGs. **Ted Williams**, Boston Red Sox baseball great, trained as a pilot in World War II but did not see any combat in that war. He was recalled in 1952 for the Korean War where he flew 39 combat missions as a Marine Corps pilot. In several of these missions he was John Glenn’s wingman. He was hit by enemy fire at least three times. Because of his service, Williams missed 5 seasons during his potentially best baseball years. Disc jockey **Casey Kasem**, later of America's Top 40, was a DJ and announcer for the armed forces radio network where presumably his experience helped in a future career. Actor **James Garner**, born James Bumgarner, claimed to be the first Oklahoman drafted in the Korean War. On the second day of service, he was hit by shrapnel and hospitalized having suffered phosphorus burns while diving into a foxhole. He received two purple hearts for his injury and later played in several war dramas as well as “Rockford Files” and “Maverick.” Former Manhattan Congressman **Charles Rangel** enlisted in the Army in 1948 after dropping out of high school. He served in the all black 503rd field artillery battalion in the 2nd infantry division. At the battle of Kunu-ri In November 1950 his Battalion was encircled by the Chinese Army and he led 40 of his fellow soldiers to safety from behind enemy lines. He was awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star. **Johnny Cash**, the future country music superstar, enlisted in the US Air Force. He was assigned to Landsberg West Germany where he served as a high-speed Morse code intercept operator monitoring transmissions from the Soviet Army (he claimed that he was the first American to intercept reports of Soviet dictator Stalin’s death). He then began to write songs for the Force, including "Folsom Prison Blues” and practiced with a newly purchased guitar in a band named “The Lansberg **Barbarians**.”

**Vet the Vote**
An example of public service by veterans is volunteering at voting poll sites. “Vet the Vote”, is an organization that does this by recruiting veterans and military families to serve at the polls. It takes advantage of one important asset of veterans - following rules and procedures. Started by military spouse Ellen Gustafson, the group now has 63,000 volunteers nationwide. Apart from their willingness to serve in general, there were various specific reasons why veterans took this on. One veteran in Michigan said the plot to kidnap Gov, Gretchen Whitmer stimulated him to serve in this way. Another, former Marine Donnie Hazleton, points to Iraqi elections and then coming back to see poll workers threatened here (Marines can deal with that). Another veteran said he never voted in a presidential election until he volunteered to do this. He had been moved by a documentary about voter fraud. Working alongside veterans with different political views was considered a positive of this endeavor.

**Veterans Enlistment**
A newsletter by Peter Coy of the New York **Times** discusses why young people do or do not enlist in the military and makes some interesting points. Firstly, as indicated above, it is well known that recruitment for the military has been dismal in the last few years. According to Coy, individuals who join the armed forces may want to defend their
country, to share esprit de corps, to continue a family tradition, to see the world, to learn a trade or to land a stable job. Those who don't join might fear getting hurt or killed, dislike the military, or think they have better career options in civilian life.

Military quotas are harder to fill when, as is true now, there is low unemployment and businesses are competing for employees. One solution offered is to lower the qualifications for entry into the military, but that is a bad idea. Another approach is to “reacquaint the American people with the military.” Sounds like a very good idea. Many young people do not know any veterans personally (there are far less veterans now than there were years ago) and have a distorted perception of veterans.

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

**Stats Section**
Decline in Population of Veterans
Since 2000, the number of veterans has declined markedly, and the proportion of ‘veterans of the Gulf Wars has increased substantially. From American Community Survey, Census Bureau, 2019