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: Last Survivor of the Arizona Dies; New West Point Mission Statement (But the Same Motto); Veterans Helping Rescue American Aid Workers in Gaza; Cutting Red Tape for Military Veteran Truckers; Voices from the Front; Buffalo Soldiers in World War II; Excerpts From the Poem Ulysses by Alfred Lord Tennyson

Last Survivor of the Arizona Dies
Lt. Cmdr. Lou Conter, the last survivor of the USS Arizona battleship sunk during the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, died April 1 at the age of 102. The Arizona had lost 1,777 sailors and marines, nearly half of the 2,403 who died in the Pearl Harbor attack.

Mr. Conter, then a quartermaster, was standing on the deck of the ship when the attack began at 7:55 AM as morning flags were being raised. During an oral interview conducted by the Library of Congress, he recalled how a bomb penetrated the steel decks and set off more than 1 million pounds of gunpowder stored below. The explosion lifted the battleship 30-40 feet out of the water. Fire was everywhere and sailors were jumping into the sea to rid themselves of it. “Abandon ship” was only ordered when everyone who could be rescued was rescued.

Following Pearl Harbor, Mr. Conter went to flight school and subsequently flew 200 Pacific combat missions. He was part of the “Black Cats” squadron conducting dive bombing raids at night in black planes. He was shot down once in shark infested waters and survived that as well. Later he became a pilot instructor and (fittingly) a survival expert.

Mr. Conter had enlisted in the Navy at age 18 receiving $17/month and a hammock for his bunk at boot camp. He later was a regular attendee at Pearl Harbor survivors’ reunions, watching the group shrink.

New West Point Mission Statement (But the Same Motto)
Amidst a certain amount of confusion and perhaps expected controversy, West Point changed its mission statement dropping the words “duty, honor, country.” But the words remain in West Point’s motto.
First used in the motto in 1898, the 3 words were made famous by GEN Douglas MacArthur's 1962 farewell address to the cadets. “Duty, honor, country: Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be.”

According to a statement by Lt. General Steve W. Gilland cadets will be grounded in “Army values” including loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage.” The change was based on an assessment of leaders in and outside of the Army and approved by Army Secretary Christine E Warmuth. One response, of course, has been that the change has been considered “going woke.”

The new mission statement, reads “To build, educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets to be commissioned leaders of character committed to the Army Values and ready for a lifetime of service to the Army and Nation.” However, the more famous motto “Duty, Honor, Country” will still be seen in the cadets’ handbook “Bugle Notes” and throughout the school over entrances and on cadets’ uniforms as well as used as a greeting by plebes.

Veterans Helping Rescue American Aid Workers in Gaza
As they have done in Afghanistan, veterans are helping Americans caught in Gaza leave the war zone for Egypt. They rescued 5 Americans who had been trapped after Hamas’ October 7th massacre. All were women volunteer aid workers trapped in a UN compound in Rafah, Gaza under makeshift tents with little access to clean water and food. With the rescue, they escaped to Egypt.

According to Emily Callahan, one of the rescuing veterans who is also a nurse practitioner, the veterans’ groups kept the aid workers informed of efforts to extract them, shared survival techniques and saw to it that they were put on a list ensuring their entry into Egypt.

The rescuers were former special operations troops who had played a similar role in Afghanistan. The two veteran-run organizations were Special Operations Association of America and Save Our Allies, and the volunteers were chosen because they had experience working with the Egyptians or Israelis.

The rescue and the considerable other work that certain groups perform in these areas shows the value of non-government agencies in such conflict. One of the rescuers, Alex Plitsas, noted that there is room in the complex and messy work of humanitarian evacuations for unofficial caseworkers who can use open-source technology and human networks to reach where government officials can’t. “There’s that gap in the middle there,” he said, “of helping to find people, navigate them and keep them safe, until the government can do what it needs to do.”

Cutting Red Tape for Military Veteran Truckers
This is more important than it at first might seem. Certain rules and red tape are significant impediments to veteran employment, especially in trucking which is an
important destination for veterans. Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman John Tester (D-MT) and Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) have introduced the Veterans Transition to Trucking Act which would cut the bureaucratic red tape that makes it more difficult for veterans to become trucking apprentices.

The legislation is supported by several veterans’ organizations and the American Trucking Association. At present, offering trucking apprenticeships to veterans can require 20 different approvals. This Act would allow interstate commercial carriers to get one approval for their apprenticeship programs from VA making it much easier to get commercial licenses and jobs.

This is just one example of approvals and/or seniority required for many occupations, hurdles that can make it difficult for veterans to get these jobs.

Voices From the Front
You may think this is a little odd, but if you want to talk to a WW2 veteran at the national WW2 Museum in New Orleans LA, you can do it using Artificial Intelligence. Called “Voices From Front” the museum has set it up so that you can ask questions of virtual home front heroes and supporters of the US war effort “including a military nurse who served in the Philippines, an aircraft factory worker, and Margaret Kerry, a dancer who performed at USO shows and, after the war, was a model for the Tinker Bell character in Disney productions and a MOH recipient.” It is based on video interviews of 18 war veterans or support persons who responded to up to 1000 questions about the war and their personal lives.

Visitors can ask questions of life-size images of these persons sitting in a chair and appearing on the screen in front of them. Using AI, the answers will match the elements of the question to the most appropriate of the thousands of answers given by the subjects. It is an interesting futuristic way to teach the past.

Buffalo Soldiers in World War II
The 92nd Infantry Division (Buffalo) was the only African American Infantry Division in combat in Europe during World War II and it fought in the Italian campaign. The Division was composed of predominantly African American enlisted persons and primarily white officers and was one of three segregated African American divisions in World War II, the only one serving as a full division in combat.

While in the Northern Apennines and Italian Alps, the Buffalo Soldiers advanced more than 3,000 square miles and captured more than 20,000 German prisoners. Their casualties were in the thousands. Two soldiers won Medals of Honor including 1st Lt. Vernon Baker who was honored for courage and leadership in destroying enemy installations, personnel and equipment including machine gun emplacements, against a strongly entrenched enemy. On the following night, he voluntarily led a battalion advance covering the evacuation of wounded personnel by occupying an exposed position and drawing enemy fire.
The other Medal of Honor recipient was 1st Lt. John R. Fox who served as a forward observer in the 598th field artillery battalion at the Serchio River Valley Sector, forfeiting his life to delay German advances.

Thee Buffalo Soldiers join the storied African American Montford Point Marines and Tuskegee Airmen of World War II.

**Excerpts From the Poem *Ulysses* by Alfred Lord Tennyson**

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'

We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Joel Kupersmith, M.D.
Professor of Medicine

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

**Stats Section**

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