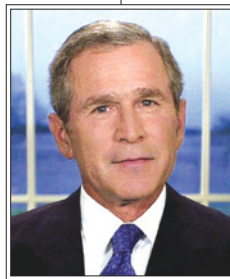


CHAPTER 11

THE NEW CENTURY AND WAR ON TERROR



What our enemies have begun, we will finish.

~ George W. Bush ~

AS THE NEW CENTURY BEGAN, THE WORLD WAS STILL BASKING IN THE PEACE THAT CAME WITH THE CONCLUSION OF THE COLD WAR. ONLY A FEW KNEW A NEW, DEADLIER KIND OF WAR WAS BEGINNING, AND AMERICA, THE TARGET, WAS UNAWARE OF THE UNRELENTING AGGRESSION PLANNED AGAINST IT.

On October 12, 2000, the USS *Cole* was refueling in the port of Aden, Yemen, when terrorists struck. The ship lost seventeen crew members killed and thirty nine more injured when a boat loaded with powerful explosives detonated amidships as most of the crew was having lunch. It was the first attack of the new century. More would come.

As the crippled ship was brought home, surviving crewmembers of the USS *Cole* were special guests of the DAV on March 13, 2001—the 25th anniversary of the dedication of the DAV’s National Service and Legislative Headquarters (NSLH) in Washington, D.C. Each crewmember was given a trifolded American flag encased in oak for each fallen member of the USS *Cole*. The ship’s company was presented with an engraved plaque thanking the men and women of the ship for their courage, honor, and sacrifice when they were viciously and coldbloodedly attacked by a then-unknown enemy. Lt. J.G. Dennis Gains thanked the DAV during the rededication ceremonies, saying, “It is an honor to be recognized by true American heroes.”

Among those attending the 25th anniversary of the NSLH were former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown and entertainer Connie Stevens, who said DAV members are “the sons and daughters of America and we love you so.” The highlight of the rededication ceremony was the raising of the POW-MIA flag by then Executive Committeeman Frank Tracy, Past National Commander Lyle Pearson, and retired NSO William Taylor, all former prisoners of war. In tribute to all those who died and were injured, the crew members

of the USS *Cole* raised our national ensign to conclude the ceremonies. The tragedy suffered by the crew members of the USS *Cole*, as it sadly turned out, was only the beginning.

Recognizing that the 21st century would present both enormous challenges and breathtaking opportunities, National Adjutant Wilson commissioned a team to begin work on a Strategic Plan to ensure the continued viability and vitality of the DAV well into the future. Under the DAV’s leadership, programs were expanding and the organization was experiencing its greatest financial recovery. During the

USS COLE



1990's, the demand for DAV services required a much greater effort to provide and the organization was challenged to adequately allocate resources.

As the 20th century ended, information was gathered from DAV leaders throughout the organization on what should be done to make their mission successful in the 21st century. Their insights were incorporated into a Strategic Plan, which was designed to be flexible and responsive to the ever-changing needs of disabled veterans and their families. The plan provided a blueprint for the DAV to remain the greatest veterans' service organization in the world.

"The Strategic Plan involved our Chapters, Departments, and the National Organization," said Ken Wolfe. "Art Wilson made it a point to ensure that all of these entities were included because if one link was missing, we would be less effective. Art received many different opinions and thoughts, and we had professionals to help us. I heard Art say many times, in interviews and talking to new employees, the DAV has a very narrow

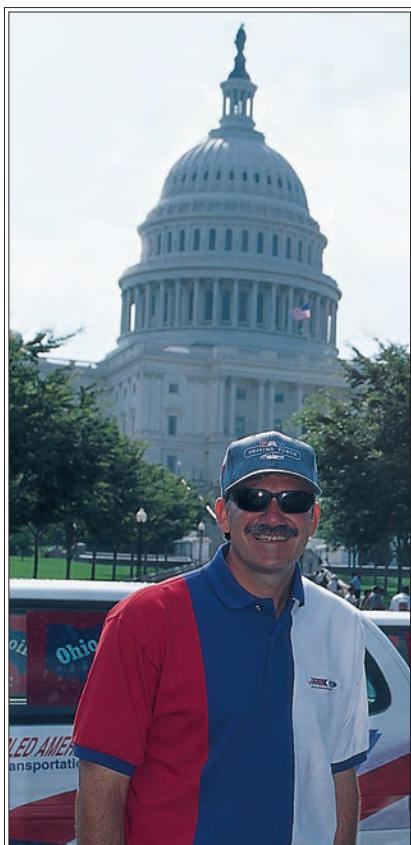
focus: Our Charter purpose is simply to care for the Nation's wartime disabled, their dependents, and their survivors. He said it's great to talk about defense issues and military affairs, but that's not the DAV's purpose. The fact that we are narrow in our focus has served us well."

The Strategic Plan is working even better than expected. The plan became a great example—a matrix that led to greater and greater professional success in serving veterans. It took months to put together, from the first meetings in Oglebay Resort in Wheeling, W. Va., to building the initial Strategic Plan, and it didn't stop there. The DAV required Departments to have annual plans as part of normal operations. Goals were set and employees kept focused. The Strategic Plan helped the DAV work as a team. As a result, the DAV operated more professionally than ever before.

The creation of the Strategic Plan proved providential as the promise of a new century crumbled with the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11, 2001. The fiery crashes of passenger airliners into the World Trade Center Towers in New York City and the Pentagon outside of Washington, D.C.,



DALE JARRETT





and in the Pennsylvania countryside rushed our Nation into a lengthy, bloody struggle throughout the world. In a single day, more than 3,000 people from many nations died at the hands of terrorists. Not since the attack on Pearl Harbor sixty years before had America been the scene of such a horrific loss of life.



DAV ASSISTING AT THE PENTAGON SITE, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001



NSO ASSISTANCE AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Immediately following the September 11, 2001, attack on our Nation, the DAV sprang into action to assist in the relief efforts. In Florida, a DAV Transportation Network van delivered 250 pints of blood from the VA medical center in Orlando, Fla., to Patrick Air Force Base for shipment to New York.

In New York City, DAV NSOs, unable to return to their office, began volunteering their time at Giants Stadium, the Javits Center, and the ruins of the World Trade Center. On September 21, 2001, the DAV established an office at the Family Relief Center on Pier 94 with a host of other agencies. From this location, and with the assistance of the FBI, New York Fire and Police Departments, and the companies located in the World Trade Center, NSOs identified veterans and their families who were victims of the attacked and provided whatever assistance possible. The DAV dispatched a Mobile Service Office to the World Trade Center disaster site to distribute more than 6,000 articles of clothing, nearly 5,000 comfort kits, 1,000 flag pins, and other patriotic items to firefighters, police, and emergency rescue workers. The DAV issued nearly 300 disaster relief grants and provided claims assistance to veterans and their families who fell prey to the cowardly attacks on the World Trade Center.

For some families, the loss of loved ones on September 11 was the hardest to bear. The DAV responded with care and compassion whenever possible, and vowed that those lost would never be forgotten. Each family of a veteran who died in the September 11 attack was recognized with a touching certificate honoring the service and supreme sacrifice of the lost loved one, and their duty to our Nation.

Thus began a new war that was quickly joined on several fronts. In Afghanistan, United States and allied forces destroyed the bases of terrorists. Terrorist units were hunted down and destroyed in Yemen, the Philippines, and other countries. The evil Taliban government of Afghanistan and its supporting Al-Qaeda terrorists were forced to flee into the wastelands of a savage land to hide from American retribution.

From the very start of the war on terror, the DAV was lending assistance to disabled veterans and their families. For those service members killed in the Pentagon, the DAV offered its support in

FIELD SERVICE UNIT ASSISTING FLOODED RURAL AREA





MSO IN FLORIDA AFTER A HURRICANE DISASTER

obtaining benefits for grieving families. The DAV also looked to the young men and women who would become disabled veterans of the global war on terror. A new generation of disabled veterans was getting its baptism of fire.

As part of the Strategic Plan, the DAV fielded a fleet of Mobile Service Offices (MSOs) and created a new Transition Service Program. Using the MSOs, DAV NSOs returned to the Nation's small towns and hamlets far from large population centers to lend aid and assistance to veterans and their families. These traveling offices were designed to deliver all the DAV services offered at a national service office, much like the Field Service Unit Program of the 1970s. Specially trained Transition Service Officers (TSOs) were stationed at military separation centers to inform those leaving the military about their rights and benefits as veterans immediately upon their discharge. DAV TSOs at military centers also helped these new veterans file their necessary paperwork and claims on the spot where their military records were readily available.

The DAV began the new century with the necessary tools to serve newly disabled veterans. The Mobile Service Office Program replaced the antiquated and outdated Field Service Units. New life was instilled into the program by using the latest technologies. Computers were installed aboard MSOs, and instant communications were available. The TSO program put DAV professionals in direct contact with disabled veterans returning from conflicts and wars all around the world. It was the DAV that was at their bedsides, filing their claims, telling them about their benefits and how they could travel the road to rehabilitation.

Many of these active duty service members were so grateful they joined the DAV. It wasn't surprising, but the direct result of every effort by the DAV, from the Chapter to the Department to the National Organization, to be of service.

The DAV's outreach programs also sought out other veterans who needed professional representation. One group of particular concern to the DAV was Native American veterans, who obtain their earned VA benefits at lower rates than do other veterans. To address this issue, MSOs



MOBILE SERVICE OFFICE

TRANSITION SERVICE OFFICER, FT. CAMPBELL, KY





TSO WITH PETTY OFFICERS, NORFOLK, VA

purposefully scheduled trips in cooperation with tribal leaders to reservations and other communities where Native American populations are concentrated.

In the public policy arena, the DAV continued to fight inadequate VA budgets that did little more than prolong the previous decade's trend of funding shortages. Static funding created persistent problems in the VA's benefits delivery system, and the veterans' health care system was on the brink of disaster. The DAV again led nationwide efforts to support adequate funding for veterans' health care and services.

To ensure the viability of the VA health care system for new and future service-connected disabled veterans, the DAV called for a fundamental shift in federal funding for the VA health care system. The DAV's solution to decades of inadequate budgets was guaranteed funding to assure that all service-connected disabled veterans, and all other enrolled veterans, would have access to the system in a timely manner. Passage of the Veterans Health Care Guaranteed Funding Act, a top DAV legislative priority, gained momentum in Congress as a solution to the growing backlog for care.

Under mandatory funding, the VA would have the funds it needs to carry out its mission. No longer would the VA's supporters have to lobby and fight Congress for meager, inadequate annual increases of 3, 4, or 5 percent, when the VA said its health care system required a 13 to 14 percent annual increase just to stay even.

The DAV also called for legislation to correct federal court actions that seriously eroded veterans' legal right to obtain assistance from the government in gathering evidence needed to prove their claims for disability benefits. Congress passed legislation that upheld the VA's duty to assist veterans in gathering the necessary evidence to substantiate their claims for compensation for service-connected disabilities. Under a misinterpretation of the clear intent of Congress, the VA had refused any government assistance to veterans until they had proven their cases were well grounded.

One of the more comprehensive laws benefiting disabled veterans was the Veterans Education and Benefits Expansion Act of 2001. This law contained several benefit

improvements sought by the DAV. It restored the presumption that Vietnam veterans were exposed to herbicides, increased specially adapted housing and automobile grants for severely disabled veterans, and increased the plot allowance and the burial allowance for service-connected veterans. In addition, it removed the 30-year limitation on the time for presuming service connection for respiratory cancer as related to herbicide exposure, expanded and improved provisions for service connection of undiagnosed and poorly defined illnesses in Persian Gulf War veterans, liberalized provisions for entitlement to non-service-connected pensions, authorized bronze markers for already marked graves of veterans buried in private cemeteries, and increased education allowances for survivors and dependents and those eligible under the Montgomery GI Bill.

To further support its legislative efforts, the DAV created the Commander's Action Network (CAN) to encourage members to directly contact elected representatives in support of veterans' programs. The DAV CAN program was augmented by a tremendously successful DAV legislative-issue Internet Web site. An example of how successful the grassroots program was during the final months of 2001. Statistics showed that, on average, approximately 80,000 e-mails were being sent to government officials through the DAV Web site every six months. Obviously, many more contacts were being made by telephone, facsimile, personal visits, and regular mail. These contacts led to many successes and, on the whole, proved effective in the quest for favorable veterans legislation.

The DAV also launched a nationwide voter registration campaign, which saw an unprecedented level of support from Departments, Chapters, and individual members who participated in more than 100 local events. By registering citizens to vote, the DAV sent a powerful message that our government should honor America's commitment to veterans.

The DAV joined with the White House and the VA in sponsoring the second National Summit on Women Veterans Issues in 2000. The result was a platform for the development of proposed legislation, new programs, outreach, and other issues designed to improve services offered to women veterans. Though not allowed in combat, women service members were being killed and maimed in combat action.

The DAV also sponsored the first National POW/MIA Summit in Washington, D.C., to tackle the issues surrounding Americans taken prisoner of war or listed as missing in action. The meeting was convened to assess the status of efforts to achieve the fullest possible accounting of those missing, including any who might be still alive in captivity.

STATISTICS SHOWED THAT, ON AVERAGE, APPROXIMATELY 80,000 E-MAILS WERE BEING SENT TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS THROUGH THE DAV WEB SITE EVERY SIX MONTHS. OBVIOUSLY, MANY MORE CONTACTS WERE BEING MADE BY TELEPHONE, FACSIMILE, PERSONAL VISITS, AND REGULAR MAIL. THESE CONTACTS LED TO MANY SUCCESSES AND, ON THE WHOLE, PROVED EFFECTIVE IN THE QUEST FOR FAVORABLE VETERANS LEGISLATION.

The issue of homeless veterans continued to be supported by the DAV and the Charitable Service Trust. Chapters and Departments hosted “stand-downs” all across our Nation to give food, clothing, medical care, and representation to our most needy veterans. The Charitable Service Trust each year awarded dozens of cash grants to programs and services targeted to restoring homeless veterans to productive lives, including those from the newest generation of veterans from the war against terrorism.



ACTOR GARY SINISE

Thanks to the far-reaching Strategic Plan, membership began to set new records, growing during the first years of the new century to 1.3 million members. And the number of full-paid life members reached the one million mark. Supporting the membership goal was an expanded member benefits package that offered special discounts to DAV members purchasing automobiles, phone service, prescriptions, and other goods and services.

“I am sometimes amazed that we’ve been able to sustain the membership with the appreciation that we’ve had,” said Rick Patterson. “As other veterans service organizations lose members, we seem to maintain our own quite well. We’ve done a number of mailings to prospective members. We are moving in a direction where we hope to improve the new membership systems we’ve created.”

In 2001, the DAV volunteer service program was strengthened by the commitment of National Commander George H. Steese, who created the National Commander’s Volunteer Recruitment Initiative. Recognizing that the beloved World War II generation had far too long held the banner of volunteerism in the DAV, Commander Steese encouraged a new generation of volunteers. As our Nation witnessed the passing of those who so proudly served during World War II, there was a need to involve the younger,

more active people in volunteerism. Commander Steese’s bold initiative helped increase the number of volunteers by 30 percent, far exceeding the 10 percent goal.

The DAV also enlisted the cooperation of Oscar-winning actor Paul Newman, who appeared in a television public service announcement (PSA) urging Americans to volunteer to help veterans. The PSA received the Public Relations Society of America’s 2002 Bronze Anvil Award for best use of creative tactics in a public relations campaign. Actor Gary Sinise lent his expertise in 2004 to the effort to recruit a new generation of volunteers by appearing in a television PSA released at the same time his new television program, “*CSI New York*” debuted.

NEW YORK YANKEES GREAT PHIL RIZZUTO, RIGHT, SIGNS DAV MEMORIAL DAY POSTERS AT THE NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



The DAV's Celebrity Entertainment Program also was expanded to include not only major league baseball umpires and figures from the entertainment world, but major league players and NASCAR drivers as well.

The DAV Day at the Ballpark became a regular feature in 2002 as 27 Major League Baseball teams scheduled games. DAV Departments and Chapters were honored by teams, and hundreds of thousands of DAV baseball cards were distributed at the games. Each card carried the DAV message of hope and honor. The DAV also made friends. Hall of Fame catcher Yogi Berra became a member of the DAV. At the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y., greets Bob Feller, Bobby Doerr, Ralph Kiner, Phil Rizzuto, and DAV member Warren Spahn joined the DAV in honoring those who played baseball and served our Nation. Ted Williams, who passed away shortly before the event, showed his support of the DAV in a video presented at the Hall of Fame. Yogi Berra paid tribute to disabled veterans by saying, "You guys just keep on doin', you just keep on doin'."



BASEBALL HALL OF FAME, COOPERSTOWN, NY, FEB. 2004

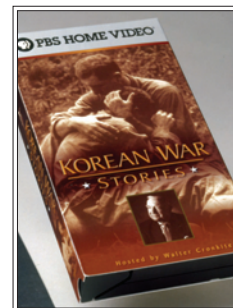


PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER EDWARD R. HEATH AND ARTHUR H. WILSON RECEIVING THE EMMY AWARD

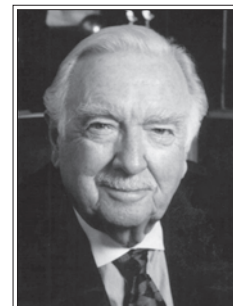
to honor those Americans who served during the war. The DAV National Service Foundation supported the production of the award-winning documentary *Korean War Stories*, which told the stories of the men and women who fought in one of the bloodiest wars in American history. It was recognized with an Emmy Award for Outstanding Historical Documentary, and the National Vision Award for Best Documentary.

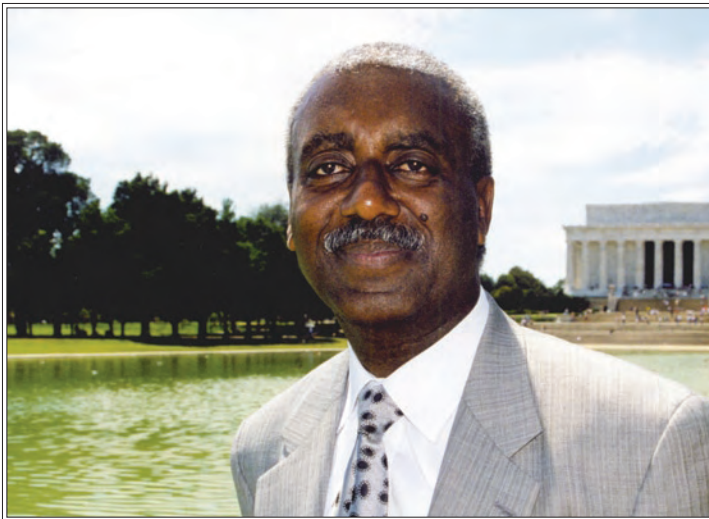
To mark the great history of our organization, the Fred R. Bristol Visitors Center was opened at National Headquarters in Cincinnati in 2000 to honor his more than four decades of skilled leadership and outstanding professionalism to the DAV. The center showcases artifacts and memorabilia spanning the history of disabled veterans and the DAV.

To remember those of past wars, the DAV joined the Korean War 50th Anniversary Commemoration Committee



WALTER CRONKITE AND KOREAN WAR STORIES





JESSE BROWN

One of the DAV's truly historic leaders was honored in 2000 when former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown was selected as the DAV's Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year. Brown, who served as Executive Director of the DAV National Service and Legislative Headquarters in Washington, D.C., before his appointment to head the VA, was also the recipient of LIFE's Presidential Unsung Hero Award. Sadly, Brown, who suffered from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly called Lou Gehrig's disease, died August 15, 2002, ending a lifetime of dedicated service to disabled veterans and closing an era for the DAV. During his nearly five years as VA Secretary, Brown earned the

love and respect of VA employees and his fellow veterans across our Nation. Many called him the twentieth century's greatest champion of America's veterans.

War in Iraq

On March 19, 2003, citing continued belligerence against United Nations mandates, the United States and other nations launched war on Iraq. The initial combat against Iraqi forces lasted only weeks when President George W. Bush declared an end to organized resistance. But unknown to the United States was the reality that many of the most ardent soldiers had melted into the general population to conduct a guerilla war. They quickly attracted the support of terrorists and foreign fighters, and a lengthy and costly war of insurgency began. More than two years after the organized resistance ended, American men and women were dying in ambushes, roadside bombings, and uprisings. The number killed and maimed rose into the thousands. The Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Bethesda National Navy Hospital in Washington, D.C., were flooded with the wounded. New developments in body armor were saving lives, but arms, legs, and heads were still exposed to injury. The wounded to dead ratio rose to nine-to-one, and hundreds suffered traumatic amputations.

The DAV's role in veterans advocacy became even more critical as our young men and women engaged in relentless combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. Daily, wounded and injured arrived at military hospitals and VA medical centers to begin the lifetime journey of rehabilitation. They returned completely unaware of what benefits and services they were entitled to, and that's where the DAV stepped in. NSOs were at Walter Reed and



AN AMPUTEE AT WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL CENTER

Bethesda on a continuous basis, ready to offer DAV services and extend whatever assistance needed.

Initially, the Department of Defense, citing privacy and security requirements, denied DAV NSOs access to the returning wounded. Never in the history of the DAV had its professional expertise been denied to those who have paid the price of freedom. Gorman took the issue directly to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the leaders at Walter Reed.

In a letter to Secretary Rumsfeld, Gorman said that “those wounded and disabled in service to our Nation should not be held captive and deprived of the

knowledge that would allow them to receive all their rightful benefits, earned on a battlefield half a world away.”

“It brings great dishonor to our Nation to learn of disabled veterans suffering physical and economic hardships following their release from medical treatment solely because they are unaware and uninformed of their rightful benefits.”

As a result of the powerful letter, Secretary Rumsfeld ordered within days that DAV NSOs be granted free access to those who needed our services.

At military separation centers, DAV TSOs worked tirelessly with government officials to ensure that those medically retired from military service received all the benefits due them from a grateful Nation.

As the first of the subsequent hundreds of amputees from the Iraq War and the war against terrorism began arriving at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, members of the DAV’s National Amputation Chapter 76 in Malverne, N.Y., was meeting with these young service members, keeping the commitment to a new generation of wartime-disabled veterans.

Past National Commander Donald A. Sioss remembered the World War II amputees who visited him when he returned from Vietnam without a leg. He remembered

NATIONAL COMMANDER JAMES E. SURSELY, LEFT, OFFERS PERSPECTIVE TO FELLOW TRIPLE-AMPUTEE ARMY SPECIALIST BRIAN KOLFAGE OF DEARBORN HEIGHTS, MICHIGAN





PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER DONALD A. SIOSS, RIGHT, TALKS WITH LADDA T. DUCKWORTH OF ILLINOIS AT WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL CENTER IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

the questions he asked of the older disabled veterans and the hope they gave to troubled young soldiers facing an uncertain future.

During the Vietnam War, the World War II and Korean War amputees visited Vietnam veterans like Sioss at Valley Forge and Walter Reed. They carried the message that all is not lost: “You can have a career, have a family.” Despite the decades that had passed since he was injured, Sioss found the questions he asked during Vietnam were the same being asked of him by those who had lost limbs in the Iraq war. “Can I drive a car? Can I date? Will people find me attractive? What does the future hold?”

The message Sioss received from the World War II and Korean War disabled veterans was there’s a fairly normal life ahead. That was the message DAV amputees were giving to the men and women recuperating at Walter Reed.

Each day, as new amputees arrived at Walter Reed from Iraq and Afghanistan, they faced the same fears and concerns that veterans had returning from Europe, the Pacific, Korea, and Vietnam. And they had the compassionate support of the DAV members who’ve been there before and who are keeping the commitment given to them.

In 2004, the DAV continued to keep its commitment by launching a benefits counseling program for soldiers being treated at Walter Reed as part of an overall National Service Program outreach to troops injured in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the war on terror. NSOs conducted benefits seminars at the hospital, giving patients an overview of the DAV and our free services. National Commander James E. Sursely, a combat-disabled triple amputee of the Vietnam War, told soldiers of his appreciation for the DAV when he was an injured warrior. The program forged a partnership between Walter Reed and the DAV that will help disabled veterans make a smoother transition from the military.

Building the Volunteer Legacy

On May 6, 2003, DAV members gathered at the World Headquarters of the Ford Motor Company for the largest drive-away in the history of the organization’s Transportation Network Program.

That day, 221 vans were donated to the VA and driven away to 42 States across the country for use in this unique program. But the event turned out to be much more than another milestone in the life of this initiative that ensures sick and disabled veterans can get a ride to VA hospitals and clinics for necessary treatment.

That day at Ford World Headquarters was, first and foremost, a celebration of DAV and Auxiliary volunteers who had driven 282 million miles during the program’s first



DAV DRIVE AWAY 2000 OUTSIDE THE ENTRANCE OF FORD MOTOR COMPANY WORLD HEADQUARTERS IN DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

16 years. As VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi pointed out, the many miles “equaled eleven thousand trips around the world!”

The ceremony also marked a new zenith in the relationship between Ford and the DAV, a true partnership that began way back in 1922 when Henry Ford sent a group of disabled veterans off to the DAV’s second National Convention in a caravan of 50 Model Ts. In all, DAV Departments and Chapters, together with the National Organization, have donated 1,549 vans to VA medical centers nationwide at a cost of \$31,562,656. Between 1996 and the 2004 drive-away, Ford had donated an additional 98 vans to the Transportation Network.

Meanwhile, the DAV sought to reward a new generation of VA volunteers when it created the National Commander’s Youth Volunteer Scholarship program in 2000 to annually honor outstanding young volunteers who participate in the VA Voluntary Service program. The scholarships were awarded to deserving young men and women who generously donated their time and compassion to sick and disabled veterans in their communities. In February 2003, in remembrance of late VA Secretary Jesse Brown, the DAV National Executive Committee approved at the Mid-Winter Conference renaming the scholarship program in Brown’s honor.



FORD MOTOR COMPANY EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT PETER PESTILLO AND NATIONAL ADJUTANT ARTHUR H. WILSON

HOLDING THE SYMBOLIC KEY TO NEW FORD VANS PURCHASED BY THE DAV AND DONATED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ARE, FROM LEFT, SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TOGO WEST, JR., DAV NATIONAL COMMANDER MICHAEL E. DOBMEIER, NASCAR REIGNING WINSTON CUP SERIES CHAMPION DALE JARRETT, FORD MOTOR COMPANY GROUP VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OF STAFF JOHN M. RINTAMAKI.





SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ANTHONY J. PRINCIPI, SECOND FROM LEFT, UNVEILS A COMMEMORATIVE PORTRAIT OF THE LATE JESSE BROWN, DURING THE CEREMONY RENAMING THE CHICAGO VA MEDICAL CENTER IN HONOR OF JESSE BROWN. ASSISTING PRINCIPI, FROM LEFT, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE DANNY K. DAVIS, NATIONAL ADJUTANT ARTHUR H. WILSON, JESSE BROWN'S WIDOW, SYLVIA, AND LUCILLE BROWN, MOTHER OF MR. BROWN

Through 2004, the DAV has awarded 51 scholarships totaling \$338,000.

"The DAV felt it was highly appropriate to name the scholarship program in Jesse's memory because he was known both as a scholar and a warrior," said National Adjutant Wilson. "He represented the very best of our Nation, and with this action, his memory will be carried forward by the outstanding young men and women receiving scholarships in his name."

"Naming the scholarship program in honor of Jesse's life is a fitting tribute to a man who was so instrumental to the DAV and the lives of veterans everywhere." Wilson said. "Where people saw disability, Jesse saw opportunity. He sought achievement as

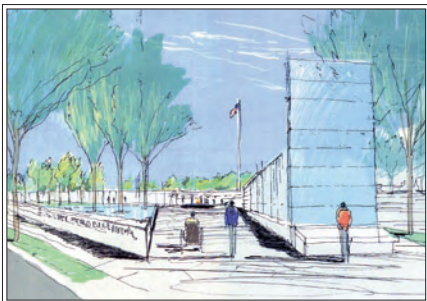
well as success. Jesse was a visionary who moved among and became a role model for new generations."

Keeping Memories Alive

As the new century progressed, the DAV was engaged in two memorable projects aimed at making sure Americans never forget that their freedoms were purchased at a very high price. Just as the DAV wholeheartedly supported the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, dedicated in 1982, and the Korean War Veterans Memorial, dedicated in 1995, the organization enthusiastically endorsed the creation of a National World War II Memorial, which was finally dedicated in 2004.



AMERICAN VETERANS DISABLED FOR LIFE MEMORIAL



While the World War II Memorial now stands on the National Mall, the dream of an American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial to be constructed within sight of the U.S. Capitol building is fast becoming a reality.

With memorials recalling the great sacrifices made during the Korean and Vietnam Wars already gracing the National Mall, it seemed essential that another edifice be built to honor those who served in the largest war the world has ever seen. And, when the World War II Memorial was dedicated on Memorial Day 2004, thousands of DAV and Auxiliary members were on hand to mark the day.



NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

through the organization, as well as an untold amount in individual contributions on their own.

In addition, the organization once again worked with New Voyage Communications to produce a film to document the occasion, *The World War II Memorial: A Testament to Freedom*.

Aired on public TV stations across the Nation on Memorial Day and Veterans Day 2004, the film combined clips from World War II with beautiful scenes of the memorial. It featured interviews with many war veterans, including ordinary citizens, movie stars, sports celebrities, and political leaders.

The DAV's support of the World War II Memorial wasn't only about preserving memories of the past. The organization wanted to make a statement to the future: Americans must always remember the veterans who paid the price of freedom with their lives, their blood, and their health.

Actively involved in the project since the beginning, the National Organization had contributed \$500,000 toward the memorial's construction. DAV Departments, Chapters, and members gave more than \$150,000

FORMER U.S. SENATOR ROBERT J. DOLE, RIGHT, RECEIVES A DONATION FOR THE WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL FROM DAV NATIONAL COMMANDER ANDREW A. KISTLER.

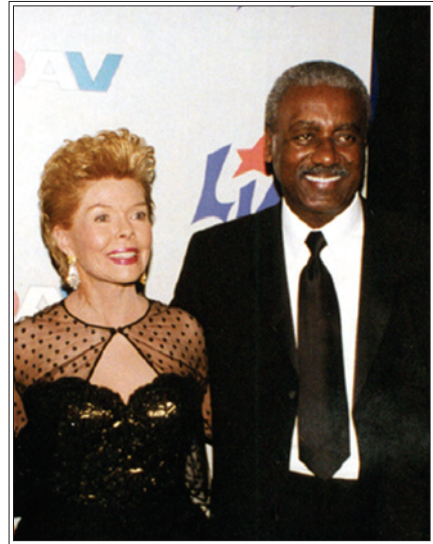


NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL DEDICATION, MAY 29, 2004



This same motivation prompted National Adjutant Wilson, noted philanthropist Lois Pope, and Jesse Brown to join forces in a unique partnership in the late 1990s. Together they shared a vision to honor disabled veterans, and together they founded the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation. Pope was selected as Foundation Chairman with Art Wilson as President and Jesse Brown serving as the Executive Director. The memorial concept was endorsed by the DAV and other veterans service organizations.

As a result of their work, Congress approved construction of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial. A site in full view of the Nation's Capitol was selected as a reminder for members of Congress of the sacrifices of those who served the cause of freedom. The memorial was approved by all of the necessary authorities and fundraising began. When completed, the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will be the only memorial to honor both living disabled veterans and those who



DISABLED VETERANS' LIFE MEMORIAL FOUNDATION
GALA EVENT

have gone on before us.

At the start of 2003, the Foundation began planning for a major national campaign to raise the funds needed to design and construct the memorial. Many DAV members, Chapters, and Departments showed support. To help with the project, the National Organization matched each Chapter donation, dollar for dollar.

At the same time, the touching book by the late Jesse Brown, *The Price of Their Blood—Profiles in Spirit*, was released, containing the stories of brave men and women who triumphed over the adversity and heartbreak of war. The book is also a testament to the spirit and passion that moved Jesse throughout his life. Proceeds from the book sales would help fund the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial.

Another major milestone for the memorial was reached in 2004 when approval was given to a preliminary design.

DAV MEMBERS OUTSIDE GOLDEN CORRAL RESTAURANT DURING MILITARY APPRECIATION NIGHT ON VETERANS DAY 2004



The DAV was also pleased with one unique corporate program, which has done a great deal to keep the memory of wartime sacrifice alive. The first decade of the new century saw Golden Corral Restaurants nationwide expand on the concept of Military Appreciation Night, an idea launched by one of its franchise owners in Virginia.

Every year around Veterans Day, nearly all of the chain's restaurants open their doors, offering free meals to veterans and active-duty military members and assisting local DAV fundraising efforts. The program has done wonders to enhance veterans' self-esteem and to boost awareness of what veterans mean to our Nation.

Another public awareness program introduced in 2003 was DAV sponsorship of appearances of the World War II B-25 Mitchell Bomber, *Panchito*, at air shows around the country. This sponsorship reaches out to the many thousands of Americans who stop by the DAV's booth at air shows, learning about the organization's free services and volunteer opportunities. In 2005, the DAV expanded the program to include a second restored B-25 Bomber, *Special Delivery*, seen at air shows in the western United States.

At the 2003 DAV National Convention in New Orleans, La., hundreds of DAV members, chanting "Veterans want health care," rallied outside a Republican Party political fundraiser at the Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel. Their goal was to inform the political powerbrokers about the need to adequately fund veterans health care. President Bush's senior political adviser Karl Rove was the keynote speaker at the Republican fundraiser, and passed directly in front of the DAV rally. He was quickly swept to a side entrance to enter the Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel without fanfare.

The DAV members were offended that the Administration sent its top adviser and other national Republican leaders to New Orleans to speak to a campaign fundraiser, while disabled veterans, meeting only blocks away, were largely ignored by the Administration.

Gathered on the median sidewalk on Canal Street, DAV members were supported by passersby and motorists honking their horns to encourage increased funding for VA health care. Television video crews swarmed around the rally, conducting interviews and reporting the need for adequate VA health care funding to the people of Louisiana.

WORLD WAR II B-25 MITCHELL BOMBER, *PANCHITO*



VOLUNTEERS WORKING AT AN AIRSHOW



Seal of Approval

BBB SEAL OF APPROVAL



DAV's integrity in fundraising was honored in 2003, when it received the Better Business Bureau's (BBB's) Wise Giving Alliance Charity Accountability Standards designation, which allows the organization to display a seal of approval. One of the twenty BBB standards required the DAV to create a new seven-member Board of Directors. The board, approved at the 2003 National Convention in New Orleans, replaced the National Finance Committee, enhanced oversight, and met the BBB standard for such a supervisory capacity. The Board provides oversight of the DAV's finances, operations, and staff. It has responsibility for approval of the annual budget and implements policies to ensure that all finances and assets of the National Organization, including the Life Membership Fund, are managed in a prudent and responsible manner. The first members of the Board of Directors included the National Senior Vice Commander, the Immediate Past National Commander, the National Adjutant, and four members selected by the National Executive Committee. The National Commander and the National Judge Advocate served as advisers to the Board, with the privilege of attending all meetings, but without a vote. The changes did not affect Chapters or Departments, since affiliates were not automatically covered by the BBB standards.

The first members of the Board of Directors were Past National Commander Edward R. Heath, Sr., Chairman; Senior Vice Commander James E. Sursely, Vice Chairman; National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson, Secretary; and Jerome Krejci of East Grand Folks, Minn., Treasurer. Thomas F. Mazza of Middletown, N.Y., John F. Regan of Quincy, Mass., and Bobby G. Williams of Oakboro, N.C., were elected board members. National Commander Alan W. Bowers and National Judge Advocate Michael E. Dobmeier were selected as advisers.

At the board's first National Convention meeting in 2004, the members received an historic briefing in how during one short decade, the DAV reaffirmed its place as the world's best veterans service organization by enlarging our corps of National Service Officers,

THE COMPELLING STORY OF THE DAV'S ACHIEVEMENTS, THE "DECADE OF EXCELLENCE," WAS PRESENTED BY PATTERSON AND GORMAN. "DURING THE DECADE FROM 1993 TO 2003, DAV EXPENDITURES FOR SERVICE FOR CLAIMS ASSISTANCE AND ADVOCACY GREW 60 PERCENT TO NEARLY \$38 MILLION," PATTERSON SAID IN SUMMING UP THE DAV'S MISSION. "BUT ALL OF OUR SERVICES REMAINED FREE TO VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES."

offering new and better services to veterans, setting records for membership, and earning the respect of policymakers in Washington. The energetic spirit of the organization during that ten-year period was a testament to the generations of men and women who have sacrificed for the cause of freedom.

The compelling story of the DAV's achievements, the "Decade of Excellence," was presented by Patterson and Gorman. "During the decade from 1993 to 2003, DAV expenditures for service for claims assistance and advocacy grew 60 percent to nearly \$38 million," Patterson said in summing up the DAV's mission. "But all of our services remained free to veterans and their families." National Commander Alan Bowers said the presentation showed that "the DAV has etched into our history one of the finest decades we could have hoped for. Our record of service to our fellow disabled veterans and their families is without equal. And we're just getting better."

"I admire Art Wilson's decade of leadership," said Patterson. "I have known him for 33 years, working with him and for him in his positions of National Adjutant and Executive Director. I've admired his willingness to take risks, make good decisions for the organization, and institute the changes we had to make. If he had not made the

THE FIRST MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS





DAV NATIONAL COMMANDER MICHAEL E. DOBMEIER, LEFT, AND NATIONAL ADJUTANT ARTHUR H. WILSON, RIGHT, PRESENT NBC "NIGHTLY NEWS" ANCHOR TOM BROKAW, CENTER, WITH A SPECIAL AWARD, A REPLICA OF A WORLD WAR II JEEP, IN RECOGNITION OF HIS COMPASSIONATE AND COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF AMERICA'S VETERANS IN HIS BOOK, *THE GREATEST GENERATION*

important decisions he faced, the DAV could be in ruin today. Today companies are failing and pension plans are defaulting. If he didn't make the tough decisions in the mid to late 1990's, I honestly believe we would be in really dire straights today."

While the DAV was growing strong under the outstanding leadership of Art Wilson, the VA was experiencing lean times in support of its mission to help disabled veterans.

In August, 2004 the Department of Veterans Affairs unveiled a report on the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) report, which was compiled with the participation of the DAV. It called for spending \$6.1 billion over seven years to improve medical care for veterans. The report called for three new VA hospitals, 156 new community clinics, four new spinal cord injury centers, two blind rehabilitation centers, and expanded mental health outpatient services nationwide. The DAV was encouraged that the plan would modernize some facilities, open more outpatient clinics,

and expand spinal cord injury care, blind rehabilitation, and other specialty services. National Commander Alan Bowers said the CARES plan represented “a positive first step toward providing for the health care needs of today’s and tomorrow’s veterans.”

In October 2004, DAV National Commander James E. Sursely visited amputees at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Sursely, a triple amputee of the Vietnam War, was greeted by young Brian Kolfage of Dearborn Heights, Mich., a triple amputee of the Iraq War. Across a gap of thirty years, the two men reached out to each other—one knowing the difficult road ahead for the young Kolfage, the other seeking the advice of one who has traveled the road of rehabilitation. The mission of the DAV has run its full circle, from older disabled veterans to the young—the next generation who will provide the service and support to all those disabled veterans who come after them. For as long as there is one disabled veteran, the DAV’s mission of service will be unfinished.

