1. VFW Launches Action Alert to Expand Caregiver Benefits: Caregivers of military veterans, the overwhelming majority of whom are family members, put their lives and careers on hold, often accepting great emotional and financial burdens to ensure their veterans have a meaningful quality of life and stay in their homes instead of having to receive institutional nursing home care. The family caregivers of post-9/11 veterans are eligible for comprehensive support to include a living stipend to alleviate the financial burden of being a full-time caregiver. Unfortunately, veterans of previous eras are unjustifiably denied eligibility simply based on the era in which they served. *The Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act of 2017* would correct this inequity by expanding eligibility for the Caregivers Program to veterans of all generations. Please urge your members of Congress to support this important bill by clicking here.

2. VA Opens Mental Health to OTH Veterans: Effective on Wed., July 5, veterans with other-than-honorable (OTH) administrative discharges may receive care for mental health emergencies for up to 90 days, which can include inpatient, residential or outpatient care. “Suicide prevention is my top clinical priority,” said VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin. “We want these former service members to know there is someplace they can turn if they are facing a mental health emergency — whether it means urgent care at a VA emergency department, a Vet Center or through the Veterans Crisis Line.” Any veteran in crisis should call the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255 (press 1), or text 838255. For more information, click here.

3. Medical Discharge Review: All veterans medically separated from the military between Sept. 11, 2001, and Dec. 31, 2009, and with combined disability ratings of 20 percent or less, can now request a Physical Disability Board of Review. About 25 percent of requests have resulted in increased disability ratings of 30 percent or higher, which turns the medical separation into a medical retirement and comes with monthly retiree pay. The increased rating also provides
access to military installation exchanges, commissaries and Space-Available travel, as well as eligibility to TRICARE and survivor benefits programs. When reviewing records, board members first compare DOD and Veterans Affairs ratings and then make a recommendation to the respective service secretary. If successful, military records are then updated with a retroactive effective date equal to the original date of separation. Click here to learn more.

4. VA, DOD Will Host Suicide Prevention Conference: The Departments of Defense and Veteran Affairs have partnered to host a suicide prevention conference August 1-3, 2017, in Denver. Participants and exhibitors at the conference will include caregivers, clinicians, researchers, suicide prevention and post-intervention specialists, service members, veterans and their families. The conference is free to those interested in attending. Click here for more information.

5. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains of 10 Americans who had been missing in action from WWII and Korea. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

- **Army Technician 4th Grade John Kovach, Jr.**, 21, of Gypsum, Ohio, will be buried July 10 in Port Clinton, Ohio. Kovach was assigned to Company C, 192nd Tank Battalion, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands on Dec. 8, 1941. After months of intense fighting, Corregidor fell and American forces surrendered on May 6, 1942. Kovach was one of the thousands of U.S. and Filipino service members taken prisoner and eventually moved to Cabanatuan POW camp. Kovach died Nov. 19, 1942, after being admitted to the camp hospital. Read about Kovach.

- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Paul S. Raimond**, 20, of Converse, La., will be buried July 11 in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as the “Punchbowl,” in Honolulu. Raimond was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Raimond was one of 429 crewmen killed in the attack. Read about Raimond.

- **Army Cpl. Frank L. Sandoval**, 20, of San Antonio, will be buried July 11 in Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Sandoval was a member of Battery A, 15th Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division. Sandoval’s unit, part of Support Force 21, provided artillery fire support for South Korean forces from Changbong-ni. On Feb. 11, 1951, Chinese forces launched a massive counter offensive, forcing the support force to withdraw. Sandoval could not be accounted for after the unit reassembled in Wonju on Feb. 13. He was later reported to have been captured and held in Camp 3, a prisoner of war camp near Changsong, North Korea. He was declared deceased July 7, 1951. Read about Sandoval.

- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Monroe Temple**, 19, of Des Moines, Iowa, will be buried July 12 in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as the “Punchbowl,” in Honolulu. Temple was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Temple was one of 429 crewmen to be killed in the attack. Read about Temple.

- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. William J. Gray, Jr.**, 21, of Kirkland, Wash., will be buried July 14 in Kent, Wash. Gray was a member of the 391st Fighter Squadron, 366th Fighter Group. In April 1945, Gray flew his single seat P-47D aircraft on a dive-bombing mission in the vicinity of Lindau, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany. After strafing a truck, Gray's aircraft clipped a tree and crashed. Gray was declared killed in action on April 16, 1945. Read about Gray.
-- Army Staff Sgt. Gerald L. Jacobsen, 27, of Little Canada, Minn., will be buried July 14 in Fort Snelling, Minn. Jacobsen was a member of the 134th Infantry Regiment, 35th Infantry Division. On July 15, 1944, Jacobsen’s unit participated in the siege of Saint-Lô, France. Jacobsen and another service member were manning a mortar compound post near La Forge, approximately two kilometers northeast of Saint-Lô, when they went missing. Jacobsen was subsequently declared deceased as of July 16, 1945. Read about Jacobsen.

-- Marine Sgt. James J. Hubert, 22, of Duluth, Minn., will be buried July 15 in his hometown. Hubert was assigned to Company H, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division. Hubert’s unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll on Nov. 20, 1943, against stiff Japanese resistance. Hubert was killed Nov. 21, 1943. Read about Hubert.

-- Army Sgt. Richard G. Sowell was a member of the 295th Joint Assault Signal Company, Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 106th Infantry. In July 1944, his unit participated in the battle for the island of Saipan, part of a larger operation to secure the Mariana Islands. On July 6-7, Sowell was serving as a spotter for the signal company in the vicinity of Hill 721, while under heavy attack by Japanese forces. Sowell’s commanding officer reported him killed in action on the morning of July 7. Interment services are pending. Read about Sowell.

-- Army Pfc. Gerald F. Wipfli was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 112th Infantry. In early November 1944, his unit engaged with German forces in the town of Schmidt, Germany, within the Hürtgen Forest. After the intense fighting, it took the unit several days to account for its personnel. Wipfli was one of 33 unaccounted-for soldiers and was declared missing in action on Nov. 4, 1944. Interment services are pending. Read about Wipfli.

-- Army Sgt. 1st Class Max E. Harris was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. In late November 1950, his unit was assembled with South Korean soldiers in the 31st Regimental Combat Team on the east side of the Chosin River, North Korea, when his unit was attacked by Chinese forces. Harris was among more than 1,000 members of the RCT killed or captured in enemy territory and was declared missing on Dec. 12, 1950. A returning American prisoner reported that Harris had been captured and died while en route to POW Camp 3, near Changsong, North Korea, in September 1951. Based on this information, the U.S. Army declared him deceased on Sept. 30, 1951. Interment services are pending. Read about Harris.


As always, we want to hear your advocacy stories. To share your stories or photos with us, simply email them directly to vfwac@vfw.org.