



Still Serving in Korea



Newsletter 03-4

The newsletter for U.S. military retirees in the Republic of Korea

Oct-Dec 2003

Medical Care Matters

Medicare Late Enrollment Penalty Revised

The Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 was signed into law in December. The bill makes three very important changes relating to enrollment in Medicare Part B, the Supplementary Medical Insurance Program. The first two changes affect persons not enrolled, or paying surcharges because they enrolled after they were initially eligible for Part B:

First, uniformed services beneficiaries who would be eligible for TRICARE For Life, but are not enrolled in Medicare Part B, may enroll without penalty during a special enrollment period through Dec 31, 2004. The special enrollment period will be announced via Medicare on the TRICARE Web site (www.tricare.osd.mil) and publicized widely.

Second, uniformed services beneficiaries who enrolled in Medicare Part B in 2001, 2002, 2003, or 2004 and are subject to a premium surcharge for late enrollment in Part B can get those surcharges eliminated by demonstrating that they are covered under TRICARE. The elimination of surcharges is effective Jan 1, 2004, but the Department of Health and Human Services will need to work out procedures to be followed. Procedures will be announced

continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Dental Care in Seoul
- 2 FDA Issues Ephedra Alert
- 3 Concurrent Receipt Now Law
- 5 Comparing CRSC and CR
- 6 Survivor Issues Need Attention Next

Still Serving in Korea is published quarterly by the Osan Air Base Retiree Activities Office to inform retirees and family members on information of interest on rights, benefits and privileges, and on the status of legislative initiatives which affect military retirees and beneficiaries. Items in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the 51 FW, 7AF, PACAF, USAF, USFK, or DOD.

Pay Matters

CRSC Year-end Update

Under the original Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) law, effective June 1, 2003, military retirees with 10 percent or more VA disability compensation resulting in a Purple Heart, and those with at least 60 percent disability because of combat or combat-related causes, were eligible for CRSC.

By the end of 2003, about 40,000 retirees had applied and some 10,000 of those had been processed.

On Jan 1, 2004, military retirees, including Guard and Reserve, with combat and certain combat-related disabilities rated 10 percent or higher became eligible for expanded CRSC. As many as 200,000 are expected to apply for that program.

Processing of new applications for both programs may take as long as six months from the date of submission. Payments will be backdated to June 1, 2003 for original CRSC beneficiaries, and Jan. 1, 2004 for the expanded program.

(Note: Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA) retirees with at least 15 years but less than 20 years of service are not eligible for CRSC, but can receive Concurrent Receipt, which is described below.)

News of the Force, Jan 5 (page 3)

Some TERA Retirees Confused by Act's Provisions

Based on questions by a number of retired members who failed to completely understand the provisions of the Temporary Early Retirement Act (TERA), officials have provided a web site offering additional information.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1992, Public Law 102-484, Oct. 23, 1992, under which Congress enacted the TERA, permitted selected military members to retire early and accrue additional military retirements credits if they gained employment with qualifying public or community service organizations.

The TERA measure gave each of the Armed Services the temporary early retirement authority (TERA), to offer retirement at 15 to 20 years of service. It stated that a service member electing early retirement may accrue additional retirement credit if employed in public or

continued on page 3

Medical Care Matters - continued from page 1

via Medicare on the TRICARE Web site (www.tricare.osd.mil) and publicized widely.

The third change made by the bill affects all seniors, not just uniformed services beneficiaries. The Part B premium will be tied to income, beginning in 2007. Individuals with incomes above \$80,000 will pay more, and couples with incomes above \$160,000 will pay more.

extract from NAUS Special Update, Dec 6

Medical Web site opens for veterans

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has created an Internet web site with information about a variety of military-related health issues.

The web site, <http://veterans.iom.edu>, has separate sections for health care issues affecting veterans of World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Gulf War. Other sections list IOM's completed reports and reports in progress, while another area contains studies about chemical and biological agents suspected of causing health problems for service members. Yet another section contains reports and information about deployment health.

Part of the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine is a nonprofit organization that provides advice on matters of biomedical science.

News of the Force, Jan 5 (page 3)

Retiree-to-Retiree: Dental Care in Seoul

The following e-mail was received from a retiree who works at Yongsan Army Garrison in Seoul:

All too frequently we hear horror stories of dentists throughout Korea, which involves either pain or unusually high prices. I'd like to share with my fellow retirees a positive story about my most recent trip to the dentist.

I woke up with the throbbing pain, which I knew meant one thing – root canal! I knew on base meant a blow off and a convenient referral to a high-priced dentist in Kangnam, aka Beverly Hills, only because he speaks English.

I discovered a dentist located about 200 meters past the German Embassy heading in the direction of Bogwang-dong. The clinic's name is Dr. Choi & Dr. Ahn's.

I had a complete root canal done for about W285,000 (about \$240)! I'm still in shock; and better yet, I experienced no pain whatsoever.

The doctor speaks fluent English, accepts most types of insurance, and is just one heck of a nice guy.

If you're looking for quality dental work at very reasonable costs, I strongly recommend him.

You can reach the office at (02) 795-0620. If you need directions or more information don't hesitate to contact me at my e-mail, kenbakameyer@yahoo.com, or cell phone 011-383-4412.

Ken Bakameyer, GYSGT, USMC Retired

VA Expands Health Care Priority

A new directive from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides that all veterans requiring care for a service-connected disability – regardless of the extent of their injury – must be scheduled for a primary care evaluation within 30 days of their request for care. If a VA facility is unable to schedule such an appointment, it must arrange for care at another VA facility, at a contract facility or through a sharing agreement. The directive covers hospitalization and outpatient care, but does not apply to care for medical problems not related to a service-connected disability. However, veterans needing emergency care will be treated immediately. The new provision extends a rule that took effect in October 2002 extending priority access to health care for veterans with disabilities rated at 50 percent or more. For them, it includes care for non-service-connected medical problems.

Armed Forces News, Jan 9

FDA Issues Ephedra Alert

Food and Drug Administration officials have issued a consumer alert on the safety of dietary supplements containing ephedra that calls for consumers to immediately stop buying and using ephedra products. Besides issuing the alert, FDA officials have notified manufacturers that they intend to publish a final rule stating dietary supplements containing ephedrine alkaloids present an unreasonable risk of illness or injury. The rule would have the effect of banning the sale of these products as soon as it becomes effective, 60 days after publication. Military service officials have in turn issued warnings about using ephedra. ■

Armed Forces News, Jan 9

Passport Information

Expedited service for passport renewal is not available overseas. If you apply for passport renewal at the Embassy, it takes no more than 2-3 weeks to return the passport to you. Since last year, we have been required to send all passport applications, both new passports and renewals, to the U.S. where they are printed. Passports can only be issued locally in the case of a bona fide medical or similar emergency. Please check the expiration date of your passport and make sure it's still up to date.

For frequent travelers: If you find your passport is bursting at the seams because of the additional pages you've obtained, consider requesting a 48-page passport the next time you apply for renewal. There is no additional charge for this.

US Embassy, Seoul, American Citizen Services

continued ►

community service between the time of retirement and the time the retiree would have attained 20 years of military service. The early retiree will have his or her military retired pay increased at age 62.

According to officials, the public or community service organization employing the retiree must be designated a qualifying organization and be on the Department of Defense's Public and Community Service Organization Registry, which is maintained by the Defense Manpower Data (DMDC). More information and the registry is at <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/tera/owa/ShowPage?p=index>.

Air Force Retiree News, Dec 13

Concurrent Receipt Pay Becomes a Reality

Military retirees will begin receiving both retired pay and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation as the VA disability offset is phased out.

Previously, the offset reduced the amount of the military retiree's pay by an amount equal to any disability payment received from the VA.

Legislation authorizing concurrent receipt of both forms of compensation was signed by President George W. Bush on Nov. 24, 2003. The legislation will deliver billions to more than 200,000 disabled military retirees and takes effect Jan. 1, 2004.

Public Law 108-136 (Sections 641 and 642 of Public Law) authorizes a 10-year, phased elimination of the VA disability offset to retired pay. This will affect members with non-disability retirements, without regard to years of service. Those who retired as a result of a service-related disability are also eligible. These members must have at least 20 years of qualifying service. In all cases, the retiree must be rated at least 50 percent disabled by the DVA. Today, more than 200,000 military retirees meet the criteria required to receive an increase in their retired pay.

This legislation expands the field of eligibility for Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) to include retirees with 20 years of qualifying service, who have a combined disability rating of less than 60 percent. It expands eligibility for a tax-exempt payment to replace retired pay lost to the concurrent receipt ban and is open to retirees with 20 or more years of service and disabilities tied to combat or combat-related training. Reserve retirees are included; people who retired under Temporary Early Retirement Authority are not. While this change expands the number of veterans currently receiving CRSC from about 4,800 today, eligible retirees may not receive both concurrent receipt payments and combat-related special compensation at the same time. The act requires an annual "Open Season" to be conducted to allow veterans eligible for both concurrent payment and CRSC to choose between the two options. Details on how the annual open season is to be conducted will be published separately.

Because the act also repeals the authorization for Special Compensation for the Severely Disabled (SCSD), which provides veterans benefits for those with disabilities greater than 60 percent, about 37,000 SCSD recipients will be the first to see increases to their retired pay effective Jan. 1, 2004, for the payment dated Feb. 2, 2004.

System changes are required to fully implement the legislation and will take several months to complete. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service is working closely with the DVA to implement this legislation and issue the payments to all eligible retirees as soon as possible. When full implementation is completed, payments will include monies that are due retroactive to Jan 1, 2004.

Military retirees should watch for updated information on *myPay* (<https://mypay.dfas.mil>), which allows retirees to take control of their pay account information online, and the DFAS Web site (<http://www.dfas.mil>). Retirees should also visit <http://www.dod.mil/prhome> for other information about benefits, programs and information that affects them. Information on veterans' benefits is available at <http://www.va.gov>.

*Defense Finance and Accounting Service
News Release, Dec 23*

Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 Restores DIC and SBP Concurrently for Some Widows

Current law provides monthly tax-free Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payment from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to widows of veterans/military retirees whose cause of death is ruled service-connected. Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) is income protection purchased by the retiree for the surviving spouse who should be entitled to receive the full amount for which was contracted. However, SBP annuities to the widows of military retirees whose death is service-connected are offset by the DIC. Also, surviving spouses of military retirees have SBP annuities suspended if they remarry before age 55. If the remarriage ends for any reason, the SBP will be reinstated when requested and appropriate documentation provided. DIC is suspended if the widow remarries but can be restored if death, annulment, or divorce ultimately terminates that marriage.

The President has signed the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 (H.R. 2297) into law. Under this act the first step has been taken to remove these inequities. It allows DIC to be paid with no reduction of certain other Federal benefits (SBP annuities) to which the surviving spouse might be entitled to those who remarry after attaining age 57. Payments are effective Jan 1, 2004. Payments are not retroactive for any periods the widow was married prior to that date. If a spouse's SBP was reduced or eliminated because of DIC, all the SBP costs that were refunded when DIC first began must first be repaid. Installment type

continued ►

continued on page 4

repayments are allowed. The language in H.R. 2297 is not a complete authorization for concurrent receipt of DIC payments and SBP annuities. However, the passage of this language, even with its restrictive application, should help in the efforts for full concurrent receipt of DIC/SBP to all eligible widows. NAUS and other associations through the umbrella groups, National Military Veterans Association (NMVA) and The Military Coalition (TMC), are continuing efforts for that. [Source: VFW Washington Weekly 16 Dec & NAUS msg. 18 Dec 03]

RAO Baguio Bulletin Update, Dec 20

Budgeteers Seek Lump of Coal for Retirees

On Dec 16, the Pentagon Comptroller issued a draft budget decision paper proposing large pharmacy copay increases for military retirees.

The paper recommended raising retiree copays from \$3 (generic) and \$9 (brand name) to \$10 and \$20, respectively. It also urged imposing the same copays on retirees using pharmacies at military hospitals and clinics (currently, military pharmacies have no copays for any eligible patron). Copays for non-network pharmacies would rise from \$20 or 20 percent of the prescription cost to \$30 or 20 percent, respectively.

Given only two days to respond, all Services reportedly objected to the plan. Our sources indicate this initiative didn't start in the Pentagon, but was directed by the Office of Management and Budget - the budget arm of the White House. Defense leaders have been urging the White House to defer any FY 2005 copay increase in favor of a study of the issue, with any recommended adjustments to be implemented in FY 2006.

(Note: OMB has shelved the proposal, at least until 2005. Retirees are encouraged to voice their opinions to their legislators on this since it should be a legislative decision rather than an executive decision.)

Extract from MOAA Legislative Update, Dec 30

More on OMB's Retiree Drug Scheme

Denying charges that the administration is trying to make money from military retirees with its plan to more than triple pharmacy payments, a Defense official says the idea is just to implement "best business practices" and to "help guide people to mail order and generic drugs." The response of James E. Lokovic, spokesman for the Air Force Sergeants Association, was: "These people earned it and the government owes them. It's disgusting that they would even float this notion." The government has a debt to military retirees, he continued, and ought to be budgeting for it. You cannot run military benefit programs like a business, he concluded. Meanwhile, in a separate initiative, Defense officials plan to establish a uniform formulary around April, which would include a three-tier co-pay plan. Drugs not in the formulary would cost beneficiaries \$22 for a 30-day supply.

Armed Forces News, Jan 9

Benefits Restored with Veterans Benefits Act

Other provisions of the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 affect widows and retirees as follows:

- Restores dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC), home loan, education and burial benefit eligibility for spouses remarried after age 57. Qualifying spouses who remarried at age 57 or more before enactment of the bill will have one year to apply for reinstatement of these benefits.
- Extends burial benefits to surviving spouses who remarry after age 57
- Increases monthly educational benefits for spouses and dependent children of members who died of service-connected causes from \$695 to \$788 for full-time study, from \$522 to \$592 for three-quarter time study, and from \$347 to \$394 for half-time study.
- Extends VA's specially adapted housing grant to severely disabled servicemembers prior to separation from active duty service.
- Expands benefits eligibility to children with spina bifida who were born to certain Vietnam-era veterans who served in Korea near the demilitarized zone.
- Eliminates the 30-day requirement for POWs to qualify for presumptions of service-connection for certain disabilities.
- Expands the Montgomery GI Bill program to cover self-employment training programs and entrepreneurship courses at approved institutions.
- Provides \$3 million in yearly compensation to about 100 U.S.-based Filipino New Scouts for their war-related disabilities, burial benefits and for 400 widows.
- Increases the specially adapted automobile grant from \$9,000 to \$11,000, and increase the specially adapted housing grant from \$48,000 to \$50,000 for severely disabled veterans
- Allows the surviving spouse or dependent children to receive the full amount of accrued benefits if the veteran dies while claim is pending
- Mandates that the Department of Labor place staff in veterans' assistance offices at overseas military installations 90 days after date of enactment. ■

[Source: Various 28 Nov 03]

RAO Baguio Bulletin Update, Nov 30

VA Insurance Annual Dividends

Retirees are reminded that when they hear that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is paying annual insurance dividends, that it applies only to certain types of life insurance issued by VA. Dividend-paying policies were not issued by the VA after 1956.

Osan AB Retiree Activities Office

continued ►



Year-by-Year Comparison of Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) and Concurrent Receipt (CR) with 10-year Phase-in for Single and Married Disabled Retirees Each Receiving \$3,000 Monthly Retired Pay



Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
100% Disabled Retiree - No Family											
Combat-Related Special Compensation											
VA Pay	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193
CRSC	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193
Pay not offset	807	807	807	807	807	807	807	807	807	807	807
Total	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193
Concurrent Receipt											
CR Recover		10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
VA Pay	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193
CR	750	894	1154	1466	1757	1975	2106	2167	2188	2192	2193
Pay not offset	807	807	807	807	807	807	807	807	807	807	807
Total	3750	3894	4154	4466	4757	4975	5106	5167	5188	5192	5193
Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
100% Disabled Retiree - With Family (<i>wife, 1 minor child, 2 children over 18</i>)											
Combat Related Special Compensation											
VA Pay	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868
CRSC	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193	2193
Pay not offset	132	132	132	132	132	132	132	132	132	132	132
Total	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193	5193
Concurrent Receipt											
CR Recover		10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
VA Pay	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868	2868
CR	750	962	1343	1801	2228	2548	2740	2830	2860	2867	2868
Pay not offset	132	132	132	132	132	132	132	132	132	132	132
Total	3750	3962	4343	4801	5228	5548	5740	5830	5860	5867	5868
Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014

To calculate the annual reduction of offset (which equals annual increase to monthly retired pay) using the above married retiree, take the total pay offset, subtract the previous year's concurrent receipt allowance, then multiply the CR Recover % at the top of the column for the current year by the remainder of the offset. After rounding to nearest dollar (00-49 round down, 50-99 round up), add that to the previous year's concurrent receipt to obtain the current year concurrent receipt starting Jan 1.

For example, to obtain the 2005 CR, use the 2004 figures $\$2,868 - \$750 = \$2,118 \times 10\% = \211.80 (rounded up to nearest dollar) = $\$212 + \$750 = \$962$ CR for 2005.

To obtain 2006 CR, use 2005 figures: $\$2,868 - \$962 = \$1,906 \times 20\% = \381.20 (rounded down to nearest dollar) = $\$381 + \$962 = \$1,343$ CR for 2006.

If you are receiving VA disability pay of 50% or more for non-combat related disabilities, you can calculate your own annual restoration of CR pay. First, substitute the amount of VA pay you receive for the amount shown above in "VA Pay." Next, for "CR," in the first column replace \$750 with your initial concurrent receipt pay as follows: 90%-\$500; 80%-\$350; 70%-\$250; 60%-\$125; or 50%-\$100. Then continue the year by year calculations as described above. Don't forget to change the "Pay not offset" to the retired pay you receive. ■

Prepared by the Osan Air Base Retiree Activities Office

Survivor Matters

Survivor Related Issues Need Attention

With the implementation of full Combat-Related Special Compensation for all disability ratings incurred in combat or combat training, and the phased-in implementation of Concurrent Receipt, it's time to look at resolving the inequities in survivor annuities. Specifically, these issues address the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) and the offsets to the annuity that occur when the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is approved, and with the eligibility for Social Security at age 62.

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA, formerly The Retired Officers Association) describes several survivor issues that are important to Korea retirees. The first two issues below are important because they affect the income of survivors when the retirees die.

The third issue directly affects retirees paying for SBP.

Issue: The military SBP entails a sharp annuity drop for survivors after they have attained age 62. For some, this offsets the amount of the survivor's Social Security benefit attributable to the member's uniformed service. For those who attained retirement eligibility since 1985, it is a reduction from 55 percent to 35 of SBP-covered retired pay. Many older retirees and survivors were never informed of the age-62 reduction when they signed up for SBP in the 1970s, and are shocked to learn their survivor's annuity will be far less than they expected.

The Broken Promise: When SBP was enacted in 1972, Congress intended that the government would pay 40 percent of the cost. That was short-lived. Over time, because of too-pessimistic actuarial assumptions, the government's cost share has declined to 19 percent. Retirees' premiums now cover 81 percent of expected long-term program costs, vs. the intended 60 percent.

The Military-Civilian Inequity: In contrast, the federal civilian Survivor Benefit Plan enjoys a 33 percent subsidy for employees under the post-1984 Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). For those under the pre-1984 Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), the subsidy is 48 percent. Further, FERS survivors receive 50 percent of retired pay, and CSRS 55 percent, with no reduction at 62. Although Federal civilian premiums are up to 10 percent of retired pay compared to 6.5 percent for military retirees, military retirees pay SBP premiums for far longer than most civilians because they are required to leave service at a younger age. Since their mortality isn't much different, this means federal civilian retirees have a far more advantageous benefit-to-premium ratio.

Issue: Under current law, the surviving spouse of a retired military member who dies from a service-connected

cause is entitled to DIC from the Department of Veterans Affairs. If the military retiree was also enrolled in SBP, the surviving spouse's SBP benefits are reduced by the amount of DIC (currently \$967 per month in 2004). A prorated share of SBP premiums is refunded to the widow upon the member's death in a lump sum, but with no interest.

MOAA believes that SBP and DIC payments are paid for different reasons. SBP is elected and purchased by the retiree based on his/her military career and is intended to provide a portion of retired pay to the survivor. DIC payments represent special compensation to a survivor whose sponsor's death was caused directly by his or her uniformed service. In principle, this is a government indemnity payment for causing the premature loss of life of the member, to the extent a price can be set on human life. These payments should be additive to any military or federal civilian SBP annuity purchased by the retiree. There are approximately 31,000 military widows/widowers affected by the DIC offset under current law.

A significant inequity exists when compared with federal civil service in that surviving spouses of federal civil service retirees, who were also disabled military veterans or retirees and enrolled in civilian SBP, do not lose any of their purchased SBP benefits when receiving Veteran's Administration DIC payments.

The estimated cost of this proposed legislation is \$400 million per year. Unfortunately, annual efforts over the last several years to include the legislation in the National Defense Authorization Act have proven unsuccessful.

Issue: The FY 1999 Defense Authorization Act authorized a 30-year paid-up Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) provision. Retired SBP enrollees who have attained age 70 and paid SBP premiums for at least 30 years will be able to stop paying premiums, while retaining SBP coverage for their survivors. But instead of making it effective Oct 1, 2003 as proposed in the legislation, Congress delayed the effective date of this change until Oct 1, 2008.

Background: In recent years, Congress has made it much tougher to increase "entitlement" spending (which includes all survivor and retirement programs), imposing stringent offset requirements under congressional budget "scoring" criteria. Whenever Congress increases entitlement spending, these rules normally require a dollar-for-dollar offsetting reduction in other entitlement spending, or raising taxes or selling federal assets to cover the cost.

The delay of implementing the paid-up provision had the effect of fully covering members who retired after 1978, but disadvantaged earlier SBP enrollees, who will have to pay up to 36 years of premiums under current law. ■

Compiled from MOAA web site (www.moaa.org)
by Osan AB Retiree Activities Office

continued ▶

Community Matters

USAF Thunderbirds Coming to Korea

The USAF Aerial Demonstration Team, the Thunderbirds, is returning to Korea in 2004. The last time the team visited Korea was in August 1994.

The team was scheduled to return to Korea in October 2001, but that visit was preempted by 9/11.

The team will be at Kunsan AB on Sep 16 and at Osan AB on Sep 19.

97th Signal Battalion Association Reunion

The Battalion Association is proud to announce the organization's reunion schedule for 2004 and 2005.

2004 - 10-15 May 2004 - San Antonio, Texas
2005 - April/May - Northern Kentucky (exact dates published at later date)

All former members and their families are invited to attend. For details and information contact: Secretary, 97th Signal Battalion Association, 3 High Ridge Circle, Laurel Heights, Uncasville, Connecticut 06382, phone (860) 848-0895. Email: Mike97th@myeastern.com, or visit our web site at: www.triedandtrue.org. We look forward to seeing you again. ■

97th Signal Battalion Association

Laughing Matters

Two Reasons

Early one morning, a mother went in to wake up her son. "Wake up, son. It's time to go to school!"

"But why, Mom? I don't want to go."

"Give me two reasons why you don't want to go."

"Well, the kids hate me for one, and the teachers hate me too!"

"Oh, that's no reason not to go to school. Come on now and get ready."

"Give me two reasons why I should go to school" says the son.

"Well, for one, you're 52 years old. And for another, you're the Principal!" ☺

from the Internet

The Director's Corner

RAO Web Site

The Retiree Activities Office web site underwent another major renovation, this time to try to standardize menu selection options throughout, and to make it easier to navigate between some of the more complex tasks such as the slide shows. The new format went on line on Jan 2, and on Jan 5 the site went down. It was down for one week and two hours (approximately). So what happened?

What happened was that I had to change hosting service in May when the original hosting service went bankrupt. As part of the contract with the new service, I paid them to renew the site name, rao-osan.com. When it came time to renew, I received several e-mails from the original hosting service, which had been taken over by another company. I ignored the e-mails. So when the registration for the name expired, the site became "unlisted." It took me a week to get it straightened out, but now I own the name, and I'm fully responsible for keeping it registered.

continued ►

SOFA Status for RAO Volunteers

Headquarters PACAF, at the urging of CMSgt (Ret) Vince Mee, did some research and discovered that government employees can officially exist as unpaid volunteers. (Vince is the Pacific Region representative to the USAF Retiree Council. He visited WestPac in July.) As a result, PACAF agreed that RAO volunteers can be on orders and are eligible for SOFA status as civilian employees. The initial decision is that a maximum of the RAO Director and one other volunteer can be on orders.

Having bitten off more than I can chew, I am seeking an office manager to handle some of the administrative chores of keeping the RAO organized. This will allow me to devote more time to the web site, to develop an electronic newsletter and to work on other tasks that are being done minimally, if at all.

This also opens up the possibility for volunteer-staffed RSO's in Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4, as well as an RAO at Kunsan AB. If you're interested, please contact me at 784-1441, or e-mail retact@osan.af.mil.

Jack Terwiel

**RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE
51 MSS/CVR
UNIT 2097
APO AP 96278-2097**

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

USMRAK Annual Meeting and Election of Officers

The U.S. Military Retirees Association Korea (USMRAK) held its annual membership meeting and election of officers on Dec 13. The meeting was held for the first time at the Multi-Function Facility, also known as the South Post Theater, from 10am to noon. The guest speaker was Brigadier General John A. Macdonald, Director of the Korea Region Office of the Installation Management Agency (IMA-KORO). He was accompanied by Command Sergeant Major John M. Sanders.

Brigadier General Macdonald gave a one-hour presentation on the roles and missions of IMA-KORO and emphasized that retiree support is an important component of IMA-KORO's role in Korea. The presentation was followed by a question and answer period.

Jack Terwiel of the Osan AB Retiree Activities Office gave a briefing on Concurrent Receipt and provided other information on recent developments of interest to Korea retirees.

Following the presentations, President Al Chellis held the election of officers. He emphasized that he was not standing for re-election. The new officers for 2004 are:

President - SFC Wnd Thomas, USA Retired
Vice President - SFC Richard Boyce, USA Retired
Secretary - SFC Matt Brown, USA Retired

Al Chellis was presented a Certificate of Appreciation for his five years' service to the Association. ■

Osan AB Retiree Activities Office

C-7a Caribou Association Reunion

Midland-Odessa, Texas – Sep 30 to Oct 2, 2004.

We will stay at MCM Elegante Hotel, 5200

E.University Boulevard, Odessa, Tex. Reservations

must be made prior to Jul 31, 2004. Hotel phone:

432-368-5885 or 866-362-5885, and contact Jim

Collier, 5607 Jolly Ct, Fair Oaks Ca 95628-2707,

ph 916-966-4044, e-mail cob@c-7acaribou.com.

C-7a Caribou Association

In the Next Issue

Preparing for the Inevitable – Get organized, get ready

Your Vote Counts – Important registration and voting information

continued ▶