



Mission Statement

Welcome to Branches...

Our newsletter's mission is to assist veterans and families with sharing life stories and personal experiences through the written word. Through our camaraderie and writing skills we will bring to the veteran community informative, entertaining, and inspirational writings. Our goal is to inspire participation in the creative writing program at Jefferson Barracks VAMC.

Sponsor

Rita Reichert

Managing Editor

Tom Kirkpatrick

Contributors

Creative Writing

Peer Group

2013

Welcome Home

Welcome home to our men and women:
who served faithfully and diligently.
who pressed forward to preserve our freedom and peace
that many take for granted.

This war, tragic and gruesome, changed lives forever:
we stand with you, our heroes.
we pray with you.
we honor you this day.

There are those:
who understand the sacrifices you made.
who wore the uniform during peacetime.
who appreciated your love for country.

We welcome you:
to your homeland-land of the free;
home of the brave.
to reunite you with your family and friends.
to weave you back into society.
to enjoy the benefits you deserve.

Welcome home:
to our men and women.
to the greatest nation on earth.
to these United States of America.

May God bless you all. Welcome home today.

KJ

Inside this issue

Mission Statement, Welcome Home **PAGE 1**

Lingering Memories, The U.S. Army Helmet, Trivia Questions **PAGE 2**

Operation Crossword **PAGE 3**

Editorial Comments, A Bright Idea, Operation Crossword Answers, Anxiety, Trivia Answers, Questions, ,Comments and Distribution **PAGE 4**

Lingering Memories

Standing in line at the departure gate for Bien Hoa, South Vietnam, leaving behind a crying college coed, begging for:

One more touch,

One more embrace,

One more soft, sweet kiss

Already feeling absence and loss, a nineteen year old Army buck sergeant turns to wave one last time. Stumbling on the thick carpet, then stepping onto the rubber walk, he moves toward the sound of screaming engines and a smiling stewardess beckoning from the open maw of the plane.

Leaving behind a blissful life barely begun, the soldier heads

toward an incomprehensible future in an unknown foreign land.

Upon exiting the plane, hitting the invisible wall of heat, the young soldier takes his first step towards a future full of mystery and shadow.

Time is moving at half-speed. Sounds are amplified. Taste and smell acutely tuned for superior sensation. A black gun truck rolls slowly past abandoned shells of ancient buildings. The gunner aims the long barrel of his fifty caliber weapon, focused sharply on the surrounding flora and fauna.

He listens intensely for the slightest sound. He sniffs the air for any telltale whiff that would

tell him of danger and death silently lying in wait ahead.

A sudden blast is followed instantly by intense pain and thick black smoke. Time and space are convoluted and splintered. Replayed slow-motion in his brain, images flash like an amateur slide show, jittery and out of sequence.

Coming back slowly, filling in the missing pieces of the event, the new buck sergeant shakes off the old memory and prepares to meet the challenges of today dealing with the demons he knows; not the ones from yesterday. There are plenty to go around; no need to dig up the past. It is old history and it hurts.
CB

The U.S. Army Helmet

The U.S. military has been utilizing body armor for decades. Along with the body armor came the military helmet. The helmet was to ensure that soldiers were fully protected from head to toe. As early as WWI, the helmet (the GI steel pot) has been a key aspect of the U.S. Army's gear.

As body armor became progressively better, so did the GI helmet. The WWI and WWII helmets weighed two (2) pounds or more. As the Army was adapting and evolving, so was the

Army's helmet. Today, the Army's cavalier has changed into one with some special light-weight features. In comparison to the WWI and WWII helmets, today's cavalier weighs barely one (1) pound. Another feature is a much greater vision field. This means there is a greater full field of vision and the ability to attach special camera equipment for greater safety. TR

Trivia Questions

- The US Military is made up of how many fighting branches?
 - Six
 - Three
 - Five
 - Four
- Who controls the National Guard in times of peace?
 - U.S. President
 - Congress
 - The Army
 - State Governors

LW

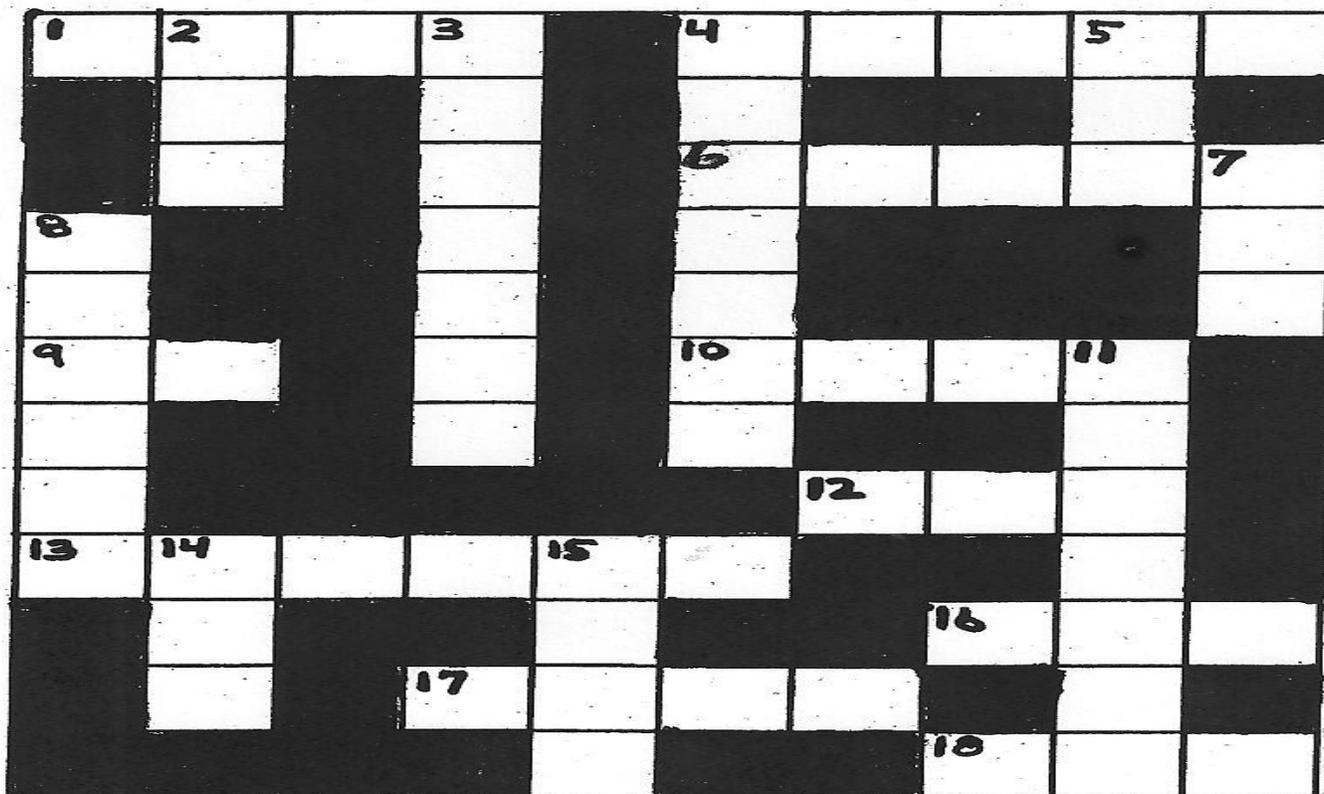
Operation Crossword

Across

1. Military time
4. A tracked vehicle providing mobile
firepower and crew protection for offensive
combat
6. A place where ships dock
9. _____ call
- 10..The Military Justice System
12. Prolonged conflict
13. Gesture used to display respect
in the Armed Forces
16. Military rack, called a _____ by non-military
17. Join the _____, see the world.
18. Defense Data Network (abbr.)

Down

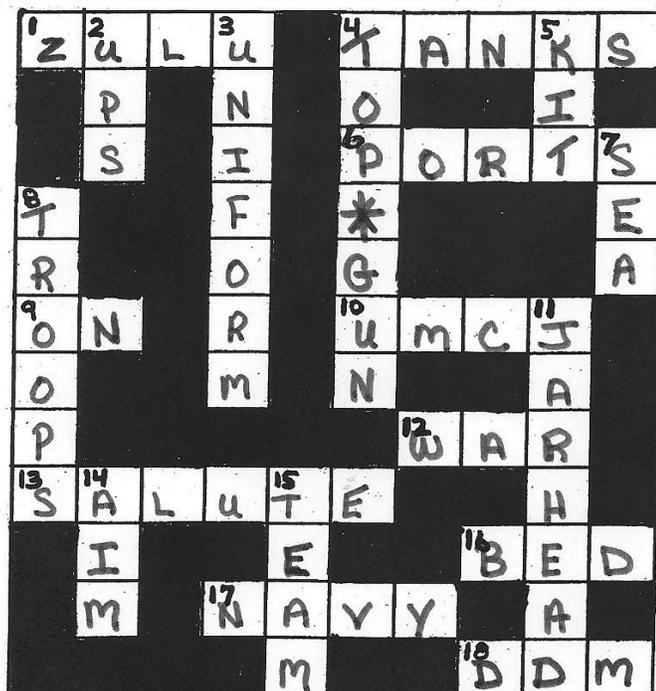
2. Military exercise—push _____
3. Type of clothing worn by military
4. Popular military movie starring Tom Cruise
(two words)
5. Shave _____
7. Type of duty by sailors
8. A collective term for Uniformed Military
personnel
11. Nickname for U.S. Marine Corps members
14. Ready, _____, fire!
15. Seal _____



Editorial Comment

This newsletter is the brain child of the "Creative Writing" Spring 2013 class at the VA-JB. These men and women, representing all five military branches, will attempt to create a deeper connection between themselves and all fellow veterans. Additionally, the knowledge, skills, and experience gained both in and out of the service will motivate our writing. The *Branches* newsletter is our own personal accomplishment. A well deserved salute to our founding members. TK

Operation Crossword Answers



Poet's

Corner

EP

Anxiety

Gun fire burst

Rice paddy stink

A night so dark

Trivia Answers

C. Five. Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force and Marines

D. State Governor's

A Bright Idea

I was very excited one year on my birthday to receive an 8mm movie camera and light. I bought a tripod with money I saved and just imagined the many possibilities. I took movies outdoors almost exclusively and hardly any indoors. So the light was virtually untested.

My birthday falls about a month before Christmas. So on Christmas, I was anticipating taking the holiday movies. I especially wanted to capture my aunt and uncle coming through the door at grandmother's house. Anyway, all was set. My brother announced their impending arrival and I was positioned about 6 feet from the door.

As they opened the door, I flipped on the light and started the camera. They both were almost completely blinded and threw both hands up to shield their eyes. They told me in no uncertain terms to turn it off.

The light was called a Sungun that was close to 600 watts with a focal lens and angled base. I had no idea how bright it was but I found out in a hurry.

DT

Questions and Comments

Any questions and/or comments can be sent to the following person:

Rita Reichert, COTA

#1 Jefferson Barracks Dr.

St. Louis, MO 63125

Mailing Stop Code: 117JB

Distribution

Bi-monthly to all St. Louis area VA locations and to the current and past "Creative Writing" class members.