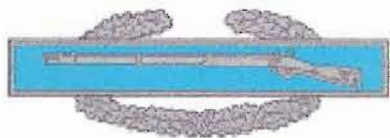


# ON THE RIGHT TRACK

## 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 50<sup>th</sup> Infantry Association



August 2012

Cover Page

### FROM THE TC HATCH

**Jimmy Segars, President**

I hope all of you are having a great summer. Lorretta and I decided to skip this idea of getting old and went to North Carolina in a sports car and went zip lining. We are being kidded about a bucket list, but we think it is just having fun.

Not long after that trip we went to Ft. Benning to attend Lt. Col. Hastings' Change of Command ceremony. We wish the very best for the Hastings family as they go to a new command. The new 1/50<sup>th</sup> Commander is Lt. Col. Nelson. He enlisted and took basic training at the 1/50<sup>th</sup>. His DI's were Vietnam veterans. After attaining the rank of sergeant, he became an officer. Now he is back in charge of the 1/50<sup>th</sup> and is looking forward to our reunion. Since he has a lot in common with us, his heart is with the 1/50<sup>th</sup> and is looking forward to spending time with us, as a group of Vietnam vets.

We had a productive trip to Ft. Benning. Honorary Commander Guthrie, Honorary Sergeant-Major Copley, and Historian Jim Sheppard, and I met and made tentative plans for the upcoming reunion. The hotel we will be staying in at the next reunion will be convenient and beautiful. John Topper is working out the details for the events of that week. We ask that all of you start making plans now to come to what appears to

be an **April reunion**, as this is when the graduations are being held next year. It is going to be a great reunion.



Also, I have a bit of nostalgic news. While at the post, I noticed an APC just like the ones we had in Nam in the motor pool. I asked Mike McCardell, liaison officer for the 1/50<sup>th</sup>, about the chances of getting it moved to the 1/50<sup>th</sup> headquarters building. He is looking into the matter, and it just might be a real possibility we could get it. I'll keep you informed. What would be involved in getting it in shape is unknown at this time.

Well, take care. I hope all of you had a great Independence Day. Remember to celebrate our military and our country every day. It's a privilege to live in America

*P.S. We hope more of you take part in the Wreaths across America event this time—December 14 & 15. See Ladies Support Team column.*

### MEMORIAL



Richard Leland, 62, of McGregor, TX passed away June 19, 2012, in White Flint Park at Belton Lake. Graveside services will be 2 p.m. Friday, June 22, at McGregor Cemetery.

Richard was born Nov. 7, 1949, in Sanford, Maine. Richard owned and operated a home repair service in McGregor for 22 years, which allowed him to fulfill his desire to help people. He was an avid lover and hunter of fossils, and fishing was a great distraction. Richard served his country in the Army for two years, most of which was served in Vietnam. Richard was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his wife of 37 years, Deborah; his children, Chris and Melanie, and Patrick and Erin; grandchildren, Daniel, Vivianne, and Bethany; one brother, Robert Leland; and extended family members, Pat and Richard, Robert and Nancy, and Mike and Kathy, and their kids.

ONLINE GUESTBOOK FOR RICHARD LELAND can be found at: <http://www.gracegardensfh.com/sitemaker/sites/GraceG1/obit.cgi?user=652938Leland#>

### IN THIS ISSUE

**Lorene Burch, Editor**

**Billie McGregor, Editorial Assistant**

From the TC Hatch	Cover
Memorial	Cover
From the Editor	2
1/50 <sup>th</sup> Association is now on Facebook	2
Chaplain's Corner	2
Ladies Support Team	3
M113 Family of Vehicles	3
The Bulletin Board	4
Historian Report	5-6
Army Team to Olympics in London	6
Late Life Depression	7



### FACT OF THE DAY

A large group of baboons is called a "congress".

---

**FROM THE EDITOR**

**Lorene Burch, Editor**

It has been a year since I said I would be editor, you have all been gracious in your responses about what we (Billie and I) are doing. Over the next few issues we are hoping you will see some positive changes that will help keep you up to date on what is going on with the vets. If you have any information you would like to share or a topic you would like posted please let me know.

Please contact me at [thelmaburch@gmail.com](mailto:thelmaburch@gmail.com) anytime you have a question or comment. We would like to see more of you get involved and to have a voice in what goes into the newsletter. It is important that everyone stay informed of the issues that affect each and every veteran, so help us keep on top of things by sharing your information. We are not using this as a forum to push a point of view but as a forum for information.

If you have a story you would like to share that is great. Many of you have bonded because of your shared experiences, so please feel free to share some of them with us. As they come in we will put them in a file to be share at different times. Peace.

---

---

**Facebook for 1/50<sup>th</sup> Association Members**

We have started a Facebook group for the 1/50<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of this group is to focus on interacting with members of the association who use Facebook, the social networking site, with specific interest dedicated to generating interesting submissions for the Newsletter. Because our membership is scattered widely, the objective shall be to communicate with other members for an exchange of informational links and articles as they relate to the United States Army, Veterans as a whole from any branch of the armed forces and from members of our association.



This is not a place to voice your political views, but a way of informing members of your activities, such as visiting vets in hospitals or nursing homes, as well as other events and celebrations in which you participate as a veteran or with your family. We would love to see your photos and to share ours with you. It will be a good place to post any prayer requests as well.

We are hoping that by forming this group and monitoring it daily, it will encourage greater representation from the membership at large. If you have a Facebook account please check us out and get the complete set of guidelines. If you have any questions please contact Lorene or Billie. Search for us on Facebook by entering 1/50<sup>th</sup> Association.

Join us so we can keep up with one another! After all, aren't we one big 1/50<sup>th</sup> BTN Association family?

**CHAPLAIN'S**

**Parker Pierce**

**O** Greetings to all 1/50<sup>th</sup> members and family members. I pray that everyone is doing well. In a group the size of the 1/50<sup>th</sup> I feel sure there are special needs that prayer can address. The book of Philippians 4:6-7 assures us of this fact. In all that is going on in our country and throughout the world we can be assured of one very important truth and that is God is still in control! So, all of our hope rests in Him, and Psalms 39:7 states that very clearly. In the book of Titus 1:2 it states where our hope really lies! Faith is our substance for the hope we do have. In Romans 14:22 it states the importance of us having faith and in Hebrews 11:6 it says we need to have faith to please God. Finally, in Hebrews 11:1 it tells us what faith really is! In closing my prayer is for all of us, who are members of the 1/50<sup>th</sup> organization, to keep our hope, and have strong faith as life goes on! Let's keep praying for each other, our President and all our leaders, our military troops and families, and our blessed United States of America. May God continue to bless each and every one of you. In Him.

---

---

**1/50<sup>th</sup> Ladies Support Team**

**Loretta Segars**



*Join the Ladies Support Team for  
Wreaths Across America*

I hope you are having a great summer. We are. Even though it is hot almost everywhere across the country, maybe it will help to cool you down if you think of Arlington in December. The 1/50<sup>th</sup> Ladies Support Team and Association Members are once again going to participate in the Wreaths across America event. It is an honor to place wreaths on the graves of our nation's departed heroes. Taking part in this event is something you will never forget. So I am asking you to consider going this December 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Our schedule will be similar to last year's. On the 14<sup>th</sup> we are looking at going to a nearby hospital for wounded warriors that is near Bethesda to help soldiers that do not get as much attention as do those at Bethesda. We will go to Arlington after breakfast on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The ceremony and wreath laying take approximately three hours from 12:00 to mid-afternoon. Afterward, we can sightsee, etc.

We will be staying at the Crystal City Marriott in Arlington, where we stayed the last time. It is right at the Ronald Reagan Airport and the Metro and not far from the train station. It is in walking distance of Arlington. We have a block of rooms

reserved until November 14<sup>th</sup> at the price of \$89 per night. After November 14<sup>th</sup>, the regular room rate will apply. Please e-mail me if you plan to go as soon as possible. Make your own reservations and mention the 1/50<sup>th</sup> block and room rate.

- Yes, I am interested in going to the Wreaths across America event.
- No, I will be unable to attend.

Also, we need to pay for the Psalm 91 camo bandanas if we give them out to the soldiers again at the hospital. We also need to send another round of care packages to deployed soldiers before Veteran's Day this fall. We need your donations to be sent to me now since our fund is empty. Thank you so much for your help. e-mail [segars-jim-lor@charter.net](mailto:segars-jim-lor@charter.net) or Loretta Segars, 2323 Half-Sectionline Road, Albertville, Alabama 35950.

**M113 Family of Vehicles**

**Mission**

Provide a highly mobile, survivable, and reliable tracked-vehicle platform that is able to keep pace with Abrams- and Bradley-equipped units and that is adaptable to a wide range of current and future battlefield tasks through the integration of specialized mission modules at minimum operational and support cost.

**Entered Army Service - 1960**

**Description and Specifications**

After more than four decades, the M113 family of vehicles (FOV) is still in service in the U.S. Army (and in many foreign Armies). The original M113 Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) helped to revolutionize mobile military operations. These vehicles carried 11 soldiers plus a driver and track commander under armor protection across hostile battlefield environments. More importantly, these vehicles were air transportable, air-droppable, and swimmable, allowing planners to incorporate APCs in a much wider range of combat situations, including many "rapid deployment" scenarios. The M113s were so successful that they were quickly identified as the foundation for a family of vehicles. Early derivatives included both command post (M577) and mortar carrier (M106) configurations.



Over the years, the M113 FOV has undergone numerous upgrades. In 1964, the M113A1 package replaced the original gasoline engine with a 212 horsepower diesel package, significantly improving survivability by eliminating the possibility of catastrophic loss from fuel tank explosions. Several new derivatives were produced, some based on the armored M113 chassis (e.g., the M125A1 mortar carrier and M741 "Vulcan" air defense vehicle) and some based on the unarmored version of the chassis (e.g., the M548 cargo carrier, M667 "Lance" missile carrier, and M730 "Chaparral" missile carrier). In 1979, the A2 package of suspension and cooling enhancements was introduced.

Today's M113 fleet includes a mix of these A2 variants together with other derivatives equipped with the most recent A3 RISE (Reliability Improvements for Selected Equipment) package. The standard RISE package includes an upgraded propulsion system (turbocharged engine and new transmission), greatly improved driver controls (new power breaks and conventional steering controls), external fuel tanks, and 200 AMP alternator with 4 batteries. Additional A3 improvements include incorporation of spall liners and provisions for mounting external armor.

The future M113A3 fleet will include a number of vehicles that will have high speed digital networks and data transfer systems. The M113A3 digitization program includes applying appliqué hardware, software, and installation kits and hosting them in the M113 FOV.

Current variants:

- |                                   |  |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Mechanized Smoke Obscurant System | M548A1/A3 Cargo Carrier                                    | M577A2/A3 Command Post Carrier   |
| M901A1 Improved TOW Vehicle       | M981 Fire Support Team Vehicle                             | M1059/A3 Smoke Generator Carrier |
| M1064/A3 Mortar Carrier           | M1068/A3 Standard Integrated Command POCost System Carrier | OPFOR Surrogate Vehicle (OSV)    |

**Manufacturer: Anniston Army Depot (Anniston, AL); United Defense, L.P. (Anniston, AL)**

# 1/50<sup>th</sup> BULLETIN BOARD



## IMPORTANT NOTICE

### PRELIMINARY REUNION INFORMATION

*This note in from John Topper regarding updated Reunion information. Mark your calendars & make plans to attend.*

*Just nailed down dates with Mike McCardell. 30 April thru 3 May. B Company graduates on 3 May and everything else falls into place behind it. More information to come later as we develop the plans.....JT*

I showed up, I stood up, I stepped forward.  
I raised my right hand, I stood in the gap,  
I walked in the fire.  
I did not run, I did not hide,  
I did not dodge, I did not evade.

Consequently...  
I have nothing to prove,  
and no one to convince;  
those who matter, already know.  
Those who don't, never will.

Submitted by John Topper

## BEWARE OF SCAM

If you get an email or phone call requesting update of information from the VA **do not reply**. They desire your phone number, social security number, etc. **Repeat, do not reply, the VA will not contact you by phone or email at anytime to update information.** If you receive either please report it as it is a scam, they use your information for identity fraud.



## From the Jokerster

There was a bit of confusion at the PX this morning. When I was ready to pay for my groceries, the cashier said, "Strip down facing me." Making a mental note to complain to my congressman about Homeland Security running amok, I did just as she had instructed. When the hysterical shrieking and alarms finally subsided, I found out that "strip down facing me" referred to my Visa card and the card reading device. I have been ordered to shop elsewhere in the future. They need to make their instructions to us senior non-coms a little clearer!

Submitted by: Denis Castelli  
Bravo, 1/50th Inf., Vietnam 1967-68

## Sports trivia

James Brendan Connolly was an American athlete & author. In 1896, he became the first modern Olympic champion.

**HISTORIAN REPORT: Researching KIAs -- On the road to find missing photos**

**JIM SHEPPARD,**

Charlie Company, 12/1965 to 06/ 1968



*Beaufort National Cemetery*

*Many of you know I have an ongoing search in progress for photos of our men killed in action. We have whittled our list of needed photos down to slightly less than 50 men.*

*With this in mind...I decided to use some vacation/travel time to see if I could uncover some photos on a return trip from Florida in early March.*

*I assembled a list of possible addresses, cemeteries and high schools of a few men who lived along my driving route both ways.*

First on my list was our man Robert Lee Owens...home of record, Beaufort, South Carolina. On first impression...I found it ironic that an Army "RA" SGT would hail from the town near the large Marine Corps training base at Paris Island, SC. I approached our volunteer, Barbara Daniels, who specializes in helping us find long lost friends and family members of our KIAs. On the 1<sup>st</sup> night of my trip I picked a hotel near Beaufort and contacted Barbara to see if she could find any information on our man's widow...last known address in Beaufort in 1968. Barbara quickly uncovered that our man's wife died 14 years later in 1982. The two are buried together in the beautiful setting that is the Beaufort National Cemetery. Barbara believes there may have been a daughter and her research is continuing. Early on the morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of my trip, I visited the cemetery. It was a perfect morning...warm temperatures and sunny skies...that lit the symmetrical rows of identical markers of men who fought in all wars since the civil war. In fact, civil war soldiers from both the North and South were among the first to be buried here. Large trees, beautifully draped with an abundance of Spanish moss were abundant in this quiet and proud place...and I found Robert's grave without difficulty. The Owens' are buried together...a single stone with his inscription on one side...and hers on the reverse side. For now, it is all I have in the way of a photo of this man.

Next on my list was Charles Ellis Thomas, a Charlie Company man who drowned after diving off of a bridge along Highway 1 in 1969. A little Internet research revealed he was buried at Rest Haven Memorial Park in Tampa. The first day I traveled to the cemetery, I was disappointed to learn that the office was closed for the day & I had to return the following day. The office manager walked me out to Thomas' grave, which was very close to the cemetery office. His Grave Stone revealed that he had been awarded a Bronze Star and Purple Heart. The Purple Heart must have been from a wound received during his tour previous to his accidental death.

Later that same day I visited the address where his mother lived when he died. No one was home, so I left a note and my 50th Infantry Association Business card on the door. The current resident called me several days later and explained that he was not related to our man...but did supply information about which high school Thomas probably attended. In the 1960's, most of the deep south had segregated schools...and there were two schools in the vicinity of where our man lived that were for black students only (Thomas was black). I will contact the schools in the fall and hopefully find a yearbook photo.

My next stop after the weather cleared was Magnolia Springs, Alabama...across the bay from Mobile. I easily found St. John the Baptist Church and adjoining cemetery. Since the cemetery was not too terribly large, I walked around, checking the headstones until I found our man: Jerome Liston Collins of our Scout Platoon had died from a command detonated mine near Lake Dam Tra O in May of 1969.

After taking several photos of the grave, I found the church office and spoke with MSGR. Guido Calleja and the church secretary Wanda Tyson. These folks went out of their way to put me in touch with the Collins Family. Wanda spoke to a sister of our man who referred her to a brother who then referred us to another sister! I spoke with Lucy, our man's sister, and she was excited to hear of our efforts to memorialize her brother. She is going to mail me some photos of our man for his memorial page & I promised to put her on our mailing list for the next reunion/wreath laying ceremony at Fort Benning. They are excited to see the memorial we erected in front of Battalion Headquarters.

From Magnolia Springs I travel north into the heart of Alabama to the city of Thomasville. Our man Ramon Lee Grayson was killed in action while with B Company of May 5th, 1970, and he was from Dixon's Mills...which is about 11 miles north of Thomasville. I first visited what I suspected might be the cemetery where he was buried - small family cemetery near the High School. The current land owner was very helpful...but informed me that there were no blacks buried in the cemetery...which was a town of Dixons Mills namesake cemetery & contained mostly folks from the Dixon family...to which her mother-in-law is related. I left her with a card and copy of our man's memorial page and asked if she could have her mother look into finding this man's family.

I then visited the high school, which I later learned would be the high school he attended...as it was the only high school for blacks in the county in the 1960s. The school was closed for the summer...and I will contact them in the fall. I also visited the two major local newspapers and although the folks at each paper allowed me to browse back issues...there was no mention whatsoever of our man being killed in action. I then visited the County Clerk...who could find no record of his burial...and finally the county VA Office...who had just "cleaned house" of a bunch of old Vietnam Era records...and could tell me nothing of our man. Hopefully the high school will be able to come through for us.

Something I learned later in this trip...you have to get out and talk to people! I found most of my good information by talking to local people who helped me find family and locations I would never otherwise have found! It is likely I might have been able to find the Grayson Family had I asked around...but the thought did not occur to me until I began to have good results later in my trip from just asking people some question right on the streets where these men lived.

I then traveled north to the Birmingham area...where I bought a new power cable for my GPS. The original had decided it was time to give me some fits by blowing it's ceramic fuse...not easily replaceable!...so I purchased a new cord in Birmingham and proceeded to the town of Leeds, slightly East of Birmingham proper. On the way to the cemetery where our "D" Company man, Melvin Joe Williams is buried...I noticed "Charles Barkley Drive"...and later quite a few "Barkleys" in the same cemetery where Williams is buried along with his Mother. I later learned that, indeed, the famous NBA Superstar Charles Barkley is from the same town as our man...and likely attended the same high school. I also plan to contact that High School in the fall. I found our man buried 20 feet from his mother after about an hour

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

walking the very hot grounds. Temperatures that day must have been pushing 100 degrees! After taking some photos...I continued East of I-20 into western Georgia for the next man on my list.



*Jim Sheppard and Ernest Gentry visit the grave of Bobby Lee Gentry in "Midway, south of Winchester, KY"*

The town of Tallapoosa Georgia was easy to get to & I followed my GPS to the Mount Newley Baptist Church about a half-mile outside of the town proper. The church cemetery was off in a low area about a hundred yards from the church...nestled near a large wooded area. Jere Rhone Lowe's grave was easy enough to find as the cemetery is very small. I took photos and noted we have his middle name spelled wrong...as do all the existing memorial sites, including the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Fund and other "Wall" database web sites. I will distribute the headstone photo to these entities for correction.

I had no luck finding the address reported as Lowe's by the Department of the Army in 1969. The street was easy enough to find...but the number given was not there. Later, after returning home, I checked my folder and found that our one contact, a family friend, lives just 4 miles away! I could have easily visited this man had I known he was so close. He had previously informed me that he "No longer lived in Tallapoosa"...which I naturally "assumed" he had moved far from the area. We all know what often happens when we "Assume"! I plan on renewing my effort via this man to reach the Lowe family for a photo. Hopefully when they see the photos I took and realized I traveled all the way to his hometown in my quest...they will come through for us.

On Saturday, the 30th of June, I traveled to nearby Winchester...where I visited with the father of our man Bobby Lee Gentry. What a pleasure this visit was! 86 year old Earnest Gentry spent about three hours with me, telling me most of his life's story & about the events leading up to learning of his son's death. Bobby Lee had serious wounds and seemed to be recovering when a massive infection (Peritonitis) set in and quickly took his life. He showed me a group photo of Bobby Lee after Basic Training that gives us a glimpse of our man...even though it is of poor resolution, we may be able to remedy the lack of a good photo via Bobby Lee's high school yearbook photo. Mr. Gentry gave me the information on where our man had attended high school in Winchester & I plan on contacting them in the fall.

We drove the 12 miles out to the small family cemetery where Bobby Lee is buried. I used my tripod and self timer to get a photo of Mr. Gentry and myself at Bobby Lee's Grave. I left with a promise to send him a copy of the new memorial page when I complete same in the fall. The afternoon with Mr. Gentry was absolutely one of the highlights of my entire trip!

From Kentucky, I was off to Gettysburg, PA to visit the grave of Ricky Lee Null. Having visited Gettysburg National Cemetery two years ago during a small gathering of 50th Infantry Vets hosted by our Chairman Emeritus Ken Riley, I knew exactly where to go to find Ricky Lee Null. In fact, he is buried about 30 yards from another 50th Infantry man killed in action...Bernard John Burns, Jr. Both were B Company men...Null killed in April of 1968 and Burns in February of the same year.

I then traveled to Null's home town of Lemoyne, Pennsylvania...just across the river west of Harrisburg, PA. I learned that no one of any relation lived in the home where he grew up...and it was here that I learned to start asking people at these locations some questions.

I now have a list of 5 high schools to contact in September! I have also learned that I have more success if I go straight to the High School Library or Librarian for the photo I seek. This is proving to be a winning strategy in the search for photos. Since the 1st of this year, we have found 9 photos...and are down to only 47 men remaining without photos on our memorial pages.

I found that this "In Person" and "One on One" research right in our men's home towns is proving to be very fruitful! I may plan more trips of this nature in the coming year! I am also hopeful that I may receive some help from some of our members who live near the hometowns of these men for whom we still lack photos. This work is relatively simple & I will gladly supply any member interested in helping...information on where these men are buried and where their next of kin lived when they died.

My goal is to have a photo of every man killed in action in Vietnam with our Battalion. This trip was well worth my personal expense and travel! I feel strongly that this work is extremely spiritual. So many times as I do this work, I feel as though God is guiding my every turn. I can think of no more worthwhile endeavor than to help create a lasting visual memory of these men who paid the ultimate price so many years ago.



## U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit heads to Olympic Games in London

Soldiers and spouses from the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit begin their 2012 Olympic experience Friday at the opening ceremonies in London. Competing for the USAMU is: (bottom l-r): Jamie Gray, wife of Staff Sgt. Hank Gray; Sgt. Vincent Hancock; Sgt. 1st Class Jason Parker; and Navy Reserve Petty Officer 1st Class Sandra Uptagrafft, wife of Sgt. 1st Class Eric Uptagrafft. (Top l-r): Sgt. Glenn Eller; Staff Sgt. Michael McPhail; Sgt. 1st Class Eric Uptagrafft; Staff Sgt. Josh Richmond; and Sgt. 1st Class Josh Olson, who will be competing in the Paralympic Games.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was found at the United States Department of Veterans Affairs website in the section related to mental health issues. If you or a loved one are experiencing symptoms of late life depression, please contact your health care professional as soon as possible.*



## LATE LIFE DEPRESSION

According to the VA's National Registry for Depression, 11% of Veterans aged 65 years and older have a diagnosis of major depressive disorder, a rate more than twice that found in the general population of adults aged 65 and older. The actual rate of depression among older Veterans may be even higher, since not all Veterans with depression receive a diagnosis from their health care provider. Recognizing and diagnosing depression in late life can be challenging, according to Dr. Rebecca Crabb, a postdoctoral fellow in clinical psychology at the VA Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center (GRECC) in Palo Alto. "Physical, mental and cognitive health are all closely linked in late life," she notes. "Older adults don't necessarily experience sadness when they are depressed. Instead, an older person may report problems with their memory or unexplained pain or fatigue. Other signs are anxiety, hopelessness, helplessness, and irritability." One of the most serious consequences of depression is suicide. Although young Veterans (aged 18-44) with depression are at the greatest risk of suicide, Veterans aged 65 and older are also at high risk compared to middle-aged (45-64) Veterans. Other serious consequences include increased risk for medical problems, cognitive decline and dementia, and mortality.

**What causes depression in older adults?** Depression in late life may be brought on by losses or serious challenges such as the death of a spouse, family member, or pet, medical problems, disability, or even retirement. A Veteran who has worked all his or her life may have trouble coping with the lack of "something to do" every day, may experience financial strain, or become isolated from other people. Various medical conditions, such as diabetes and stroke, make older Veterans particularly vulnerable to developing depression due to their effects on blood flow to the brain. There also appears to be a genetic component: An older person who has been depressed in the past, or who has a family member who has been depressed, is more likely to develop depression. Recent research also shows that nearly 40% of Veterans aged 60 and over in treatment for depression have a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder. "We are only beginning to understand how previous traumatic experiences, in the military or otherwise, affect mental health in later life, but it is clear that it is important to ask older Veterans about trauma," Dr. Crabb notes.

Dementia, another severe health problem that can occur in late life, appears to influence depression and vice versa. Dr. Crabb points out that depression can be a psychological reaction to dementia. "Older Veterans get frustrated with their memory problems. It can also be hard to adjust to having to stop doing valued activities, like driving." There are also physiological connections between depression and dementia. Parkinson's Disease or the after effects of a stroke, for example, can affect brain tissue and blood flow to the brain in ways that may cause both depression and dementia. According to Dr. Crabb, "In their early stages, depression and dementia in older adults can look similar. Many older Veterans with depression complain of memory difficulties. This is why it's so important to get a thorough assessment from your health care provider if you are experiencing changes in either your mood or your memory."

**How is late-life depression treated?** Says Dr. Crabb, "We have to look at what works. Generally, the same antidepressant medications that are effective in younger adults are effective in older adults. They may be less effective for older Veterans who also have cognitive impairment. "The same applies to psychotherapy, which is also effective for older adults. We use present and past focused exercises to help older Veterans with depression regain a sense of hope, purpose, and meaning. Veterans are supported in solving problems and getting re-engaged in meaningful activities, whether that means volunteering, physical exercise, or spending time with loved ones. We use life review exercises to encourage Veterans to reminisce about life experiences and discuss how they have overcome past challenges. This helps them to "mobilize" some of their life-long strengths." Often, adaptations are necessary to effectively treat late life depression in the context of dementia or cognitive impairment. As Dr. Crabb explains, "Caregivers should be involved whenever possible. It helps to increase the Veteran's involvement in pleasant activities that utilize their strengths and to give them manageable responsibilities, for example, tending to specific tasks in the home or garden." Although late-life depression is a common and treatable problem, Dr. Crabb explains that many older Veterans are reluctant to seek care. One study showed that up to two-thirds of older Veterans discontinue antidepressant medications. There is the stigma of seeking help for a mental health problem and the belief that they should be able to handle the problem on their own. "Older Veterans are used to solving their own problems and can find it hard to accept help. It's important for them to feel that their health care provider respects their life experience."

Dr. Crabb points out that the VA has been working hard to help make depression treatment more accessible and acceptable for older Veterans. For example, Primary Care Behavioral Health teams allow Veterans to receive assessment and short-term treatment for depression without having to leave the primary care setting. "Getting a check up on your mood is just another part of staying healthy. Many times, older Veterans prefer to get treatment for depression in primary care rather than a mental health clinic and the VA has listened to that." Late life depression can have devastating consequences and is an important and common health problem for older Veterans. Veterans or family members who recognize any of the symptoms in this story should see their VA health provider today.

Veterans who are having thoughts of suicide are encouraged to call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), press 1.

Veterans may also chat online with a trained VA crisis counselor at: <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/ChatTermsOfService.aspx>

Further information on late life depression is available at: <http://nihseniorhealth.gov/depression/toc.html> or <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression/index.shtml>