



Women Veterans of America National Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 1

November 2008

Women Veterans of America Has New Commander

I would like to introduce myself. I am Janet E. Cook, and I am honored to have been elected as your new National Commander at the Women Veterans of America (WVA) 2008 National Convention at Nashville, Tennessee, in September. I retired from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in 1999 after 30 years of federal service. I began my federal career when I enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1966. After serving as enlisted for five and one half years and attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant, and earning a Bachelor of Science in Economics degree from the University of Tampa, Florida, I applied for and was accepted into Officer Training School at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. I graduated as a Distinguished Graduate in 1972 and received a commission as a Second Lieutenant, serving two years at Andrews Air Force Base (home of Air Force One) in Maryland, just outside of Washington, DC. After I was discharged in 1974, I completed a Master of Science degree in Counseling at Troy State University in Montgomery, Alabama, and then completed two years of post-graduate studies at George Peabody College, in Nashville, Tennessee, majoring in Human Development Counseling. In 1977, I became a full time employee at the VA Regional Office in Nashville, where I served in increasingly responsible positions until my retirement. After my retirement, I devoted many volunteer hours to the Nashville VA Medical Center, working with the Women Veterans Program Manager. In 2005, I returned to my hometown in Texas so that I could spend more time with my family. I am a lifetime member of Women Veterans of America and a Charter Member of Nashville Chapter 20. I hope to have a chance to meet many of you during my term in office. I pledge that I will work hard to serve you to the best of my ability as your Commander. I would be remiss if I didn't say a special "thank you" to the outgoing National Officers as well as to the founders of this organization. I appreciate their foresight in forming this organization, and am grateful for all of their hard work. If it were not for them, we would not have the dynamic organization that we have now. I am confident that WVA will continue to grow and become stronger over the coming years.



*WVA National Commander
Janet E. Cook*

Your New Officers for 2008-2010

When the votes were counted at the Women Veterans of America National Convention in September, the new officers elected for the coming two years were:



New Officers (l to r): Shirley Harrison, Chaplain; Kathy Bell, Sgt.-at-Arms; Jean Daugherty, Finance Officer; Robin Blanchard, Adjutant; Judy Scott, Vice-Commander; and Janet E. Cook, Commander

Commander	Janet E. Cook, Chapter 20 Nashville, Tennessee
Vice Commander	Judy Scott, Chapter 39 West Columbia, SC
Adjutant	Robin Blanchard, Chapter 20 Nashville, Tennessee
Finance Officer	Jean Daugherty, Chapter 20 Nashville, Tennessee
Sgt.-at-Arms	Kathy Bell, Chapter 20 Nashville, Tennessee
Chaplain	Shirley Harrison, Chapter 8 Houston, Texas

Flu Shots

***Be sure to get your flu shot. Protect yourself and your loved ones.
On average, the flu kills 36,000 people each year in the U. S.***

Don't be a statistic!



National Convention News

The Women Veterans of America National Convention held in Nashville, Tennessee, in September was a resounding success. More than one hundred members from 12 states representing 8 chapters and the Territory of Guam were present. Host Chapter 20 of Nashville really put on a well-run, professional program. The highlight of the convention was the appearance of Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris as the keynote speaker. Dr. Trowell-Harris is the Director of the Center for Women Veterans in Washington, DC. She reports directly to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and is the Department of Veterans Affairs' primary advisor on programs and issues related to women veterans. Prior to her appointment as Director of the Center for Women Veterans, Dr. Trowell-Harris served 38 years in the U.S. Air Force/Air National Guard, retiring as a Major General. Her talk centered around VA's efforts to prepare for the unprecedented influx of women veterans who will access the VA for care in the coming years, estimating that the number of women who will utilize the VA will double in the next five years. VA has made great strides in improving the quality of care and becoming more sensitive in the treatment of women veterans, and this trend is set to continue.



*Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris, Director,
Center for Women
Veterans*

National WVA Convention Photos, September 2008



Left to right: Outgoing National Commander Colleen Mussolino, from Pennsylvania, with Tennessee State Commander Corina Collins



Guest Speaker Juan A. Morales, Director, VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System



VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System Women Veterans Program Manager MaryAnn Woodward-Smith extended welcoming remarks



Host Chapter 20 Commander Mary Ross, right, with Dr. Trowell-Harris



Outgoing Vice Commander Susan Getz, Chapter 6, Dayton, Ohio



National Finance Officer Jean Daugherty, Chapter 20



Chapter 20 Vice Commander Stacey Hopwood, from Clarksville, Tennessee



Women Veterans Program Manager and WVA member Kathy Lyons, left, with Shirley Morrill, Chapter 23, Augusta, Maine



Robin Blanchard, incoming National Adjutant, Chapter 20, singing the National Anthem at opening ceremonies

More National WVA Convention Photos, September 2008



Left to right: Houston Chapter 8 Commander Karen Shaver and Judy Sample with Commander Emeritus Mildred Cipolla from Florida



Francis Shumaker, center, and Joyce Gray, right, were primarily responsible for the wonderful food at the hospitality reception and the continental breakfasts. Left: Shelly Galloway, Chapter 20, Chattanooga, Tennessee



Incoming National Vice Commander Judy Scott, left, from West Columbia South Carolina Chapter 39; Corina Collins, center and Laura Comas, outgoing National Chaplain, Chapter 20, from Knoxville, TN



Incoming National Chaplain Shirley Harrison, Houston Chapter 8



Presentation of Colors, Hawk Battalion Drill Team, Rossvie High School JROTC, Clarksville, Tennessee



Left to right: Ruby Herndon, Dr. Trowell-Harris, and Nettie Thomas, Chapter 20 members from Clarksville, Tennessee



Chapter 20 members Mary "Jane" Ellis, left, from Birmingham, AL, and Kathy Bell, incoming National Sgt-at-Arms, from Nashville, Tennessee

More National WVA Convention Photos, September 2008



Hawaii State Commander Doris Evert, left, with WVPM and Associate Member MaryAnn Woodward-Smith and Chapter 20 member Andi Johnston, right



From left to right, Chapter 20 members Angela Smith Dorothy Aman, and Linda Aponte with Chapter 20 Associate Member Freida Beougher, enjoying lunch



Left to right: Chapter 20 member Pat Knight from Texas, veteran Carolyn Stoehr, and Honorary Hostess Ginnie Tribble, Chapter 20, Nashville, TN



Houston Chapter 8 member Jackie Hall, left, and Commander Peggy Butler, Chapter 39, West Columbia, SC



Chapter 20 Lisa Quinn, left, visiting one of the displays, this one from Operation Stand Down Nashville, Inc., staffed by Marine veteran Kathleen Kelly



Chapter 20 member Diane Howard, left, from Chattanooga, TN, getting information about women veterans healthcare services from one of the display tables



Carla Johnson, Chapter 20 Finance Officer from Cadiz, Kentucky

More National WVA Convention Photos, September 2008



Retired MSgt Shiela Kelly, left, with Chapter 20 member Sue Williams from Kentucky



Guam Territory Commander Anisia Terlaje, left, with Chapter 20 member Estrella Whitehurst, originally from Guam, now from Clarksville, Tennessee



Associate member Elinor Smith from Chattanooga, TN, with Army veteran Patriot Guard Rider Dina King and Doristine Jones-Hearin, Chapter 20, Tennessee State Women Veterans Coordinator



Outgoing National Adjutant Lois Dillree, Chapter 20, from Clarksville, Tennessee



Lindsay Long, Chapter 20 member from Knoxville, Tennessee



Left to right: Chapter 20 members Gloria Taylor, Clarksville, and Birdie Anderson, Nashville, Tennessee



Left to right: Emma Stembridge from Georgia and Carmen Maldonado, Chapter 20, Nashville, TN

More National WVA Convention Photos, September 2008



Chapter 20 member Wanda Graham from Clarksville, Tennessee



Sandra Hughes, Chapter 20 Chattanooga, TN, member



Chapter 20 members Dorothy Dalton McMahon, left, and Martha Munn, right



Left to right Myra Golhofer and Commander Sharon Smith, from Edmond, Oklahoma, Chapter 37



Harriet Ducombe, Ohio Chapter 6



Judy Gorman King reading her poem ONLY EIGHT at the Memorial Ceremony conducted by outgoing National Chaplain Laura Comas. The VA Tennessee Valley Women Veterans Network's "Women Veterans Wall of Honor" is in the background.

The National Convention at Nashville

By Mary Ross, Commander, Chapter 20

Little did we (WVA Chapter 20) know when we volunteered to host the National convention, how much work there was to it. I have to say, that just as we did when actively serving in the Armed Forces, when it came down to the wire, our strengths came out! No matter what it took we wanted to make this a convention to remember.

If I had to give any one person credit for making this happen, it would be impossible. Oh yeah, we had some over-achievers and we had some really talented people but it took all of us working together or in parts to make it happen. Sometimes putting the parts together was a challenge. I was concerned for a while if we would still be friends after this.

I do feel that the convention came off with very few SNAFU's and what glitches we had were easily fixed. We cannot stress the importance of early planning and tapping into individual strengths and talents enough! Having Dr. Trowell-Harris as our guest speaker, I think was the proudest moment I had. To think that a woman in that position would take the time to attend our convention and spend time with us as a sister veteran was just great! I was inspired by the

caliber of the other women veterans who attended and feel extremely lucky to get to know some of them. While trying to get people to register for the convention I met via email some very interesting people. I corresponded with family members of veterans who helped work out the details just so the veteran could attend. And being able to meet them in person at the convention was an honor.



Host Chapter 20 Officers, left to right: Finance Officer Carla Johnson; Sgt.-at-Arms Kathy Bell; Adjutant Robin Blanchard; Chaplain Corina Collins (seated); Commander Mary Ross; and Vice Commander Stacey Hopwood

And of course we cannot forget the ladies from Houston, who turned a weekend convention into a week long vacation in Nashville! Because of Hurricane Ike, which hit on the weekend of the convention, they were unable to return home until the Friday after the convention ended. But thanks to Chapter 20 members, Operation Stand Down Nashville, Inc. and Next Stage, Inc. (a woman veteran owned non profit agency) they were furnished food and lodging until they were able to return home.

Thanks to all who helped make the convention a success and to everyone who came. I truly hope you had a good time. There is nothing better than spending a few days with our sister veterans to make us proud to be a part of this organization.

That's really what it's all about. Being proud of being a veteran, being proud of being a woman veteran and being proud of our sister women veterans.

Janet asked me to write a short article on the convention but I keep remembering things that happened and people I met and it goes on and on and on!

Special Occasions

There are many occasions during the year for us to wear our uniforms and represent Women Veterans of America. When you are in uniform, you must remember that you represent every woman veteran, and you should carry out this honor in a dignified and professional manner. Your actions and words will reflect on you as a woman veteran, and will also reflect on all women veterans and WVA. Be respectful of the uniform and the occasion.

Who You Gonna Call?

Every VA Medical Center has a Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM) and each VA Regional Office has a Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC) available to help women veterans in navigating a sometimes complicated system.

The WVPM at your Medical Center is a healthcare professional charged with the responsibility for assessing the needs of women veterans for their medical center. She assists in the planning, organizing and coordinating of services and programs and makes recommendations to the Medical Center Director on the care of women veterans. If you do not know who your WVPM is, you should make an effort to get to know her. She is an excellent resource for information about the activities and services available for women veterans.

The WVC at the Regional Office can be of assistance to you in filing a VA claim for non-medical benefits, or to answer your questions about education, home loan guaranty, service-connected disability compensation, non-service connected pension and death benefits.

Your Newsletter

I plan to publish a quarterly newsletter, sending out an issue in November, February, May and August. I welcome input from you. With your help, this can be an informative newsletter for all of us. If you have items of interest about happenings in your Chapter, please send them to me, Janet Cook, at Nationalcommander@womensveteransofamerica.org before the middle of the month prior to publication month. Please include photos of Chapter activities. If you do not have access to a computer, you may send articles and photos to me at P.O. Box 1032, Gilmer, TX 75644.

WVA Update

Women Veterans of America is a dynamic, growing organization. Currently, there are twenty nine active Chapters in seventeen states and the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico. Women veterans in Iowa, Arizona, and Georgia have expressed an interest in forming a Chapter. WVA needs to grow and strengthen. At the recent WVA Convention in Nashville, a Membership Committee was formed, with the objective of developing a dynamic recruiting campaign. This committee has made progress, and will soon send a package of information to each current active Chapter. Once these materials have been received, the committee would welcome feedback from you about its effectiveness. The Chair of the Membership Committee is Judy Scott. You can reach her at NationalViceCO@womensveteransofamerica.org.

Women Veterans of America is committed to holding a convention biennially in September, with the next one scheduled for 2010. Although the West Palm Beach chapter was chosen as the location of the next convention, the Commander has since notified WVA National that Chapter 11 will not be able to be our host. **So, the location for the 2010 convention is to be determined.** If your Chapter is interested in hosting the next convention, please let the National Commander or the Convention Committee know. The Co-Chair of the Convention Committee is Mary Ross, Commander of Chapter 20 in Nashville, Tennessee, who hosted the recent convention (the other Co-Chair will be the Commander of the Chapter which will be chosen to host the next convention). Please consider taking on this challenge. You can reach the National Commander at Nationalcommander@womensveteransofamerica.org or at (903) 725-3276. You can reach Commander Ross at mddross2@msn.com. Hosting a convention is a daunting task, but it can be a lot of fun and a way for a Chapter to grow stronger in the process of planning and fund-raising. Chapter 20 can share some great ideas with you about how to get started.

Another committee appointed at the National Convention was the Constitution and By Laws Committee. This committee is hard at work reviewing the current Constitution and By Laws, and will propose changes to be voted on at the next convention. The Chair of this committee is Sharon Smith, Commander of Chapter 37 in Edmond, Oklahoma. If you have any ideas or suggestions about how the by laws can be improved, you can send them to Commander Smith at drillsgtvet37@yahoo.com.

Our national website is undergoing a major redesign, being spearheaded by National Adjutant Robin Blanchard. Check back periodically as we continue to fine-tune the site to keep it visually pleasing and informative. You may send any suggestions you have for improvement to Robin at Nationaladjutant@womensveteransofamerica.org.

Any errors that may exist in this newsletter are solely mine, and I apologize for them. I hope that I properly identified everyone in the photographs, but I could have made an error. If so, please correct me, and I will reprint a correction in the next issue. Thank you for taking the time to read this...Janet E. Cook