Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, Ohio Ninth District Signs on as Co-Sponsor of The Toxic Exposure Research Act

Toledo’s Marcy Kaptur, Ninth District Congresswoman has officially signed on in support of the Toxic Exposure Research Act of 2015. Ms. Kaptur is a life member of the Associates for Vietnam Veterans of America.

Congresswoman Kaptur commented to the Listening Post, "Our men and women in uniform regularly put themselves in harm’s way without complaint or hesitation. All too often that call of duty brings them into contact with dangerous and sometimes toxic substances. The health effects may even have reached the children of those exposed." She added, "We have a duty to ensure that any members of the armed services, and their families, that were harmed by that exposure will receive the medical care they need. I am pleased to co-sponsor the Toxic Exposure Research Act, which promises to bolster our national research, coordination, and care services when it comes to toxic exposure, and I will continue the fight to see it become law."

The Vietnam Veterans of America position on the bill is as follows:

Some three million veterans served in Vietnam. Since the end of the Vietnam War, veterans have reported numerous health effects on both themselves and their children and grandchildren. Herbicides used in Vietnam, in particular Agent Orange, have been associated with the development of certain disabling medical conditions, including a variety of cancers and other long-term health effects.

The Agent Orange Act of 1991 established a presumption of herbicide exposure for veterans who served in Vietnam and who developed one or more of the diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure.

On the basis of the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM’s) Veterans and Agent Orange (VAO) reports and other information, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has recognized 14 health effects as being associated with Agent Orange and other herbicide exposure: acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy; multiple myeloma; AL amyloidosis; non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (NHL); chloracne; Parkinson’s disease; chronic B-cell leukemias; porphyria cutanea tarda; diabetes mellitus (type 2); prostate cancer; Hodgkin’s disease; respiratory cancers; ischemic heart disease; and soft-tissue sarcoma.

The Listening Post
“NEVER AGAIN WILL ONE GENERATION OF VETERANS ABANDON ANOTHER”

Continued on page 3

President’s Situation Report November 2015

Veterans Day is the 11th.

As we approach “our day” plans are being developed and fine-tuned for at least four ceremonies we’ve been asked to participate in. Thanks to those who have stepped forward to help. Thanks also to several of you in our general membership who also have responded to my appeals “to get more active”.

On the Internet at: www.toledovietnamvets.com
In the past we have had a great time at our Christmas pot luck, again members have decided to have another pot luck at this December meeting. Associate member Lil Meadows has a sign up list to bring a dish. The chapter will furnish the main dish for the meal. Everyone is invited

Please inform Lil if you plan to attend with a guest or alone and if you will bring a dish to share. The chapter will supply the main dish along with refreshments however we need to know how many are attending so we know how much main dish we need to buy. Please inform Lil by the end of November meeting or call her at 419-666-4924.

Chapter 35 members have come through with loads of toys and lots of cash for the Toys For Tots drive. Some of our members, have even helped with the distribution of all toys. Last year at the November meeting the chapter decided that we should give cash or checks to the cause and the chapter will match donations up to $100.00, to be collected and turned over to the Marine Toys for Tots at the Dec. 13th meeting. If you would rather donate toys, that is ok. Can’t make the December meeting? You can still make a donation to the Toys For Tots. Send your check right away to Chapter 35 c/o Gene Shurtz 5661 Brown Rd, Oregon, Oh. 43616 Make checks payable to, Marine Toys For Tots Foundation
Every year we have topped the past in donations, let us do it again and make this the best year yet.

At the October 11th 2015 meeting a check for $1625.00 was presented to the chapter, in memory of David D Brott, A U.S. Army Vietnam Veteran.

Pictured above presenting the check to Chapter president Gene Shurtz is Raye Broth (David’s wife) son David Tyler Brott daughters Dr. Rene’e Brott, Prudence Brott and Jennifer Brott, Granddaughter Raylee Brott along with best friend Al Hosmer and his daughter Stacey King.

After David’s death last year from cancer, best friend Al Hosmer and his daughter Stacey King organized a memorial motorcycle run. With the help of David’s family they did the run out of David’s son, David Tyler’s tattoo shop in Bowling Green. They later decided to do another run only this time it would be to raise funds to donate to Vietnam Veterans and decided to donate to chapter 35, for this we are very thankful, these monies will help with different projects that are in the works as well as future projects. The Family also stated they would like to do more to help us in the future and will notify us when they are going to do another fundraiser, on our behalf.

December Meeting
CHRISTMAS POT LUCK
Sunday Dec 13, 2015 7:00 p.m.
LAKE TOWNSHIP BUILDING
St. Rt. 795 & Cummings Rd.
Lake Township, Wood County
Fellowship at 6:30pm

MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS WORE MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS WORE
JUNGLE BOOTS
Kaptur Supporting Toxic Research Act of 2015

Toxic Research Act (continued)

On the basis of the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM’s) Veterans and Agent Orange (VAO) reports and other information, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has recognized 14 health effects as being associated with Agent Orange and other herbicide exposure: acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy; multiple myeloma; AL amyloidosis; non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (NHL); chloracne; Parkinson’s disease; chronic B-cell leukemias; porphyria cutanea tarda; diabetes mellitus (type 2); prostate cancer; Hodgkin’s disease; respiratory cancers; ischemic heart disease; and soft-tissue sarcoma.

Agent Orange & the Generations

While the only birth defect the VA recognizes in the children of male veterans is Spina Bifida, the VA recognizes a wide range of birth defects as associated with women Veterans' service in Vietnam. These diseases are not tied to herbicides, including Agent Orange, or dioxin exposure, but rather to the birth mother's service in Vietnam.

Faces of Agent Orange

In 2009, VVA initiated the Faces of Agent Orange project to record the stories of the health conditions manifesting in the children and grandchildren of male Vietnam veterans. To date, VVA has convened 150+ Faces of Agent Orange town hall meetings in 40 states, reaching over 15,000 Vietnam veterans and their families. Based on the thousands of anecdotal accounts we have recorded from veterans and their families, we strongly suspect that the children, grandchildren, and in some cases, great grandchildren, are manifesting a range of health issues suspected to be as a result of a parent’s exposure to toxins while serving in the armed forces.

Chapter Selected to Present Colors at Larchmont School’s First Veterans Day Salute

Our chapter has been selected to be the guest veteran’s organization at Larchmont Elementary, 1515 Slater Street, in Toledo, on Veterans Day, November 11th. The morning assembly of all students will allow our chapter to reach out to more Vietnam Veterans as students are invited to bring their parents, grandparents, or siblings who have served in our Armed Forces.

Jerry Eversman, 419-266-7776, is heading up this project on behalf of the chapter. He said, “Any chapter members who could help out that morning are urged to call me.”

Besides having a color guard the chapter will be staffing an information table with membership applications and brochures.

Coffee and donuts will be served at 8:30 a.m. in the gymnasium. Complete information is posted on the chapter’s web site:

www.toledovietnamvets.com. Those who can come are asked to wear Veterans gear.

Supporting Toxic Research Act of 2015 / Co-Sponsors

Rep. Bob Latta - YES
Sen. Sherrod Brown - YES
Sen. Rob Portman - NO

~source...VVA.org web site

President’s Sit Rep, Nov. 2015

Continued from page

This is crucially important since our mortality rate seems to be increasing with our chapter’s aging factor. For instance, since I last wrote to you, we’ve had news of the passing of John Maxcy, Frank Ford, and Mike Schmieder.

John Maxcy was in the “second wave” (those recruited by the fifty charter members). He served faithfully as one of our Chaplain’s, recruited and closely mentored me until moving to TN twenty-some years ago. Via email he was still one of my active mentors. Frank Ford was a founder and our first President, effective 4/14/1982. Only ten of that original fifty are alive and/or active members today. Sadly, Mike Schmieder I did not know, as he moved to Battle Creek, MI several years ago.

Any questions as to why we need your able-bodied help in serving our community? If you’re not “able-bodied”, please let us know how we can serve you and your family. Otherwise, please attend and support your chapter’s meetings and events...while you still can!

VVA Call in Day on the Hill

November 4, 2015

Call (800) 224-3031, give the operator your state or zip code, and he/she will connect you with your elected official’s office. Ask to speak to the LA for Veterans Affairs, make it clear that you are calling on a constituent, asking for their support of H.R. 1769 and S.901, the Toxic Exposure Research Act of 2015.

WE HONOR VETERANS

Join Us

WEHONORVETERANS
Vietnam Radio
Milton's 1330 AM WEBY will air a 10-hour documentary featuring the real Good Morning Vietnam including footage from historic tapes of the American Forces Vietnam Network.

In a time where anyone can find almost anything online, Milton's 1330 AM WEBY radio station has found and will air, for the first time since its original broadcast, footage that will turn back the calendar to when commercials were about anti-Malaria pills, cleaning your M16 rifle and good locations for military R & R.

While Robin Williams only played the famous Air Force radio disc jockey Adrian Cronauer in the movie “Good Morning, Vietnam,” WEY talk show host Mike Bates has been working with real Marine Corps DJ Sgt. Harry Simons on a documentary featuring historic tapes from the American Forces Vietnam Network (AFVN).

For Veterans Day, WEY will honor vets' service and sacrifice with "AFVN: the GI's Companion, a Tribute to our Vietnam Veterans," a broadcast of live recorded programs from 1960s and 1970s AFVN providing positive and humorous memories from the soundtrack of their lives in the bush.

"The idea initially was play it for an hour, talk about," Bates said. "Very simple. But the more it evolved and the more I listened and the more I talked to other veterans about the historical importance of these recordings, the more I realized that to do this justice, we've got to do a full blown serious documentary. And so that's what we've done." Over the past six months, Bates and Simons have digitized the old radio reels, interviewed Vietnam veteran listeners impacted in some way by the AFVN and even traveled to Saigon back to the original site of the AFVN station in Vietnam, where Simons was a DJ.

"It has consumed nearly every waking minute of my life for the last six months," Bates said. "But it is a labor of love." Simons and his sister have had the 100-plus reels of studio quality mastered historic tapes for almost 50 years. While he admits to avoiding the tapes for a long time, he realized the historical value and wanted to share it with fellow veterans.

"I really didn't want to go back to listening to them," Simons said. "It stirred up negative memories of my service in Vietnam that I just didn't want to have to recall. And playing these tapes was just way too close."

It's taken him the past three years to digitize them because he's had to keep walking away but he finally got it done.

Simons got his start in radio in the fourth grade when he played in "The Littlest Angel" on a live presentation on Augusta, Maine. As he got older, he stayed in local radio stations doing odd jobs which eventually led to him reporting short news broadcasts. After enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1967 as a F-4 mechanic, his big break came when he got the inside scoop on the Apollo 1 flash fire that killed three astronauts, which he aired at the base radio station he worked at during his free time.

Shortly after that broadcast, Simons was sent to Saigon where he recorded many of the programs WEY will air this month and for Veterans Day. In addition to Simons' short news broadcasts, the 10-hour, five-day tribute documentary will also include broadcasts from other AFVN DJs — such as Army Spec. Pat Sajack of "Wheel of Fortune" — personal stories from Vietnam veterans who were avid listeners of AFVN and, of course, the cherished music troops depended on for a taste from back home. And that was the purpose of AFVN, he said, to provide an element of entertainment that would support the morale of the Americans that were in Vietnam.

When a soldier of the Vietnam era that served in Vietnam listens to one of these programs, what that person is going to enjoy and what that person is going to immediately recall is where he was or she was at the moment they heard that song because that's what AFVN was all about," Simons said. And the music was important, according to Bates, but there was much more to it than just the music.

"The DJs brought the sound of home to the servicemen who were thousands of miles from home," Bates said. "They made it sound like the hometown radio station they left to go to Vietnam. They made jokes, they took requests, they did dedications, they made announcements ... The music and what was between the music are all essential elements of what AFVN was."

WANT TO LISTEN?
WHAT: AFVN: the GI's Companion, a Tribute to our Vietnam Veterans.
WHY: To honor the service and sacrifice of military veterans, and rekindle positive and humorous memories through the Armed Forces Vietnam Network; a radio station that provided positive news and music heard by troops in and offshore in Vietnam.

WHEN: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2015.
WHERE: www.1330weby.com
"Listen Live On The Internet"
Two weeks ago, the House and Senate veterans affairs committees quietly allowed a provision of the Agent Orange Act of 1991 to expire. How significant that will be for Vietnam veterans and their benefits is disputed. Committee staff and the Department of Veterans Affairs agree the change has not impacted the VA secretary’s authority to decide to expand the list of diseases presumed connected to wartime herbicide exposure. But veteran advocates and at least one lawmaker suggest the change is intended to dampen VA cost risks and perhaps ease political pressure on the secretary and Congress facing a potential tsunami of disability claims. That scenario assumes that a final review of medical science will establish a stronger link between Agent Orange and hypertension (high blood pressure), a condition that the Center for Disease Control says is so common it afflicts a third of the U.S. adult population VA asked Congress to keep the Agent Orange law intact five more years. Rep. Timothy J. Walz (D-Minn.), a VA committee member, offered a compromise, a bill to leave the law unchanged for two years, long enough so its secretarial review requirements held during VA consideration of a final report of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences on health conditions associated with Agent Orange. The VA committees declined to back these delays because, said a House committee staff member, under separate law “the secretary already has authority to make such [presumption] decisions, and we felt he did not need to be compelled by [the Agent Orange] law to do so.” The provision that “sunset” Oct. 1 required the secretary to adhere to certain standards and procedures in determining if additional diseases associated with herbicide exposure should be presumed service connected. Vietnam War veterans diagnosed with ailments on the presumptive list qualify for VA disability pay and medical care. The expired provision also set a timetable for the secretary to accept or reject IOM findings and required him to explain in writing if he declined to add IOM identified conditions to the presumptive list. Walz told colleagues at a hearing last week they effectively “allowed the Agent Orange Act to expire” and “it’s altogether possible” the next IOM report, due in March, will support adding hypertension and stroke to the presumptive list. Consequently, Walz said, “literally hundreds of thousands of people” will be able to point to scientific data showing they experienced health consequences from exposure to Agent Orange “And the pressure is going to be on,” he warned, Turning to VA Secretary Bob McDonald, Walz advised that if Congress doesn’t “have the courage” to respond to the IOM findings, presumably with bigger VA budgets to cover the influx of claims, “they’re going to ask you. And much like the Nehmer claims, it’s going to add to your work.” Walz was referring to a federal court ruling, Nehmer v. Department of Veterans Affairs, which forced VA the last time it added conditions to its presumptive list, including heart disease and Parkinson’s, to review all previously filed claims for these conditions and make payments retroactive to original claim dates, or the date of the 1985 Nehmer decision, whichever is later. The scope and cost of this requirement surprised then-VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, as he later conceded. It also exploded the VA claims backlog. So McDonald told Walz he had made “a very good point.” Earlier in the hearing McDonald noted that disability claims backlog still stood at 611,000 in May of 2013, but that VA finally had reduced it below 75,000.
“If we add another pre-condition and we don’t get the people to do it, the 80-plus-percent progress we’ve made on the backlog will go away,” McDonald testified.

Walz sympathized, saying he might face a tough decision resulting in many new claims. McDonald said how Congress responds would be key. “We prefer to do what’s right for the veteran, and then have you help us get the people we need for the job,” McDonald said.

No one interviewed was certain what the next IOM report will recommend. Regardless of those findings, or the Agent Orange law change, the secretary still will have authority to expand the list of presumptive conditions, said David R. McLenachen, VA deputy under secretary for disability assistance, in a phone interview Wednesday.

“It’s always good to have it straight in the law, set up clearly, what our authority is regarding the Agent Orange Act,” McLenachen said. That’s why VA didn’t want the provision to expire Oct. 1. But the secretary still has general rulemaking authority that “allows us, even while these provisions are expired, to add presumptions,” he said.

Barton Stichman, joint executive director of the National Veterans Services Legal Program, a nonprofit group that fights for veterans’ benefits, said there is reason to be concerned that the secretary no longer is required by law to consider IOM findings on presumptive diseases, that whatever he decides doesn’t have to be explained, and he will have no deadline to decide. From a practical standpoint, Stichman added, any secretary will feel pressured from veterans and support groups to act on IOM findings. But IOM did find “limited or suggested evidence of association” between hypertension and Agent Orange in 2006, and while other conditions with the same degree of association became presumptive, hypertension did not.

About 2.6 million veterans served in Vietnam. Most are still alive. Current law presumes that all of them have been exposed to Agent Orange. VA grants disability ratings of 10 to 60 percent for hypertension, depending on severity, and the Center for Disease Control says high blood pressure grows more common as any population ages.

So will this secretary, or future VA secretaries, feel at least as much pressure from Congress to hold down disability costs as VA budgets tighten as he does from advocates for Vietnam veterans?

The Congressional Budget Office apparently heard the same rumors as Walz about the next IOM report and hypertension. Walz wasn’t available to be interviewed but a member of his staff said costs were a committee consideration for not embracing his bill. In informal discussions, she said, CBO analysts had raised the specter of added costs “in the billions” if the secretarial review provision of the Agent Orange law didn’t expire.

Asked to comment, a House committee staff member said, “CBO has not released an official cost estimate, and we can’t speculate regarding potential costs associated with a report [IOM] has not produced.”
We've all read the signs of a heart attack listed on posters in the hospital waiting room. But what if there were other, earlier signs that could alert you ahead of time that your heart was in trouble? It turns out there are. Researchers have done a lot of work in recent years looking at the signs and symptoms patients experienced in the months or even years leading up to a heart attack. "The heart, together with the arteries that feed it, is one big muscle, and when it starts to fail the symptoms can show up in many parts of the body," says cardiologist Jonathan Goldstein of Saint Michael's Medical Center in Newark, New Jersey. Here are seven surprising clues that your heart needs a check. Any of these signs -- and particularly two or more together -- should send you to the doctor for tests.

Sexual problems

Something cardiologists know but the average guy doesn't: Erectile dysfunction (ED) is one of the best early tip-offs to progressive heart disease. "Today, any patient who comes in with ED should be considered a cardiovascular patient until proven otherwise," says Goldstein. In women, reduced blood flow to the genital area can impede arousal, make it harder to reach orgasm, or make orgasms less satisfying. Scary stat: Researchers at the Mayo clinic followed men ages 40-49 with erectile dysfunction and found they were twice as likely to develop heart disease as those with no sexual health problems. Another study looked backward and found that two out of three men being treated for cardiovascular disease had suffered from erectile dysfunction, often for years, before they were diagnosed with heart trouble. Why it happens: Narrowing and hardening of the arteries restricts blood flow to the penis, which can give men trouble when it comes to getting or keeping an erection. And because those arteries are smaller than the ones leading to the heart, erectile dysfunction can occur before any other sign of artery stiffness. Lack of oxygen can also lead to ongoing fatigue and weakness, which can sabotage libido, so lack of desire may accompany lack of success. What to do: If you or your partner has difficulty getting or maintaining an erection or has problems with sexual satisfaction, that's reason enough to visit your doctor to investigate cardiovascular disease as an underlying cause. Get a full workup to assess possible causes of erectile dysfunction or difficulty with orgasm. (Guys, see your GP, not just a urologist; gals, don't just see an ob/gyn.) If your doctor doesn't mention heart tests, request them.

Snoring, Sleep Apnea, and Other Breathing Problems During Sleep

If you snore loudly enough to keep your sleeping partner awake or to force him or her to resort to earplugs, your heart may be at risk as well. Restricted breathing during sleep -- the underlying cause of snoring -- is linked with all types of cardiovascular disease. Sleep apnea, in which breathing briefly stops during sleep, is linked with a higher risk of both cardiovascular disease and heart attack. Scary stat: Those with sleep apnea were found to have three times the normal risk of having a heart attack within five years. Why it happens: Sleep-disordered breathing, which includes sleep apnea and a lesser condition known as UARS, lowers the blood oxygen that feeds the heart. Obstructive sleep apnea is thought to damage the right side of the heart, which has to pump harder to support the lungs, which are strained by trying to overcome the airway obstruction. What to do: Any sleep-related breathing problem is a clue that something's wrong, so call the doctor. She may recommend a sleep study, but get your heart checked out too.

Sore, Swollen, or Bleeding Gums

Sore, swollen, or bleeding gums are symptoms not only of periodontal disease -- in which exposure to bacteria causes the gums to become inflamed and pull away from the teeth -- but also a possible early sign of underlying cardiovascular disease. Scary stat: A 2010 study by the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) estimated that the prevalence of periodontal disease may be underestimated by as much as 50 percent. Why it happens: Experts believe that poor circulation due to heart disease could be an underlying cause of periodontal disease. Researchers are also studying whether a common bacteria is involved in both gum disease and plaque buildup inside coronary arteries. The link may also have something to do with the body's response to prolonged inflammation. What to do: See a dentist to treat gum disease and prevent the presence of bacteria. Because gum disease can be a red flag for inflammation and circulatory problems, ask your doctor if ongoing gum symptoms warrant a checkup.

7 Surprising Signs continued on page 8
Irregular Heartbeat or Arrhythmia

An early sign that something in the cardiovascular system is out of whack is irregular heartbeat, or arrhythmia. It may feel like your heart is skipping beats, beating too fast, or pounding too hard.

Scary stat: Coronary artery disease (CAD) is the leading cause of sudden death for both men and women because it can lead to both heart attack and stroke.

Why it happens: The most common cause of irregular heartbeat is CAD, which restricts blood flow to the heart, straining the electrical system that keeps the heartbeat regular and coordinates it with other functions. Heart failure can also cause arrhythmias because the weakened heart overcompensates by beating harder and faster.

What to do: An EKG can measure the electrical activity of your heart, including the regularity of the heartbeat. A stress test, which measures your heart rate while you walk on a treadmill, can determine if your heart is pumping properly.

Constriction or Aching in the Chest or Shoulder

The most common symptom of coronary artery disease (CAD) is angina, a type of chest pain. Angina (officially called angina pectoris) is different from the sharp clutching pain of a heart attack; it's likely to feel like a deep ache or a constriction or weight on the chest, and it may worsen when you draw in a breath. One of the reasons angina is often missed is that it feels different to different people; to some it's more of a heaviness, fullness, or pressure rather than pain. It can also be mistaken for indigestion or heartburn when the pain occurs lower down in the abdominal area. The tightness, constriction, or pain may also occur in the shoulder, neck, jaw, arm, or upper back, where it may be mistaken for a pulled muscle.

A tip-off to angina versus a pulled muscle or gastrointestinal problem is that you're likely to experience the problem repeatedly rather than to have one isolated or prolonged episode.

Scary stat: According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 17 million people are living with angina. Cases of angina are divided almost equally between men and women, with men being slightly more at risk.

Why it happens: When plaque builds up in the coronary arteries, it deprives the heart muscle of blood, making it feel squeezed. Most people with stable angina find that episodes are most often triggered by anything that puts an additional strain on the heart, such as exercise or stress.

What to do: If you're diagnosed with angina, your doctor will recommend resting when episodes occur; or she may prescribe nitroglycerin, which relaxes the coronary arteries and other blood vessels, increasing blood supply to the heart and easing its work.

Shortness of Breath

An early sign that something is wrong with a major bodily system is shortness of breath, typically with exercise, exertion, and stress. (Typically, shortness of breath indicates either early-stage heart disease or early-stage lung disease, and it's not possible to know which it is without seeing a doctor.) It may feel like you can't catch your breath, or you may notice a feeling of compression in the chest and lungs, making it difficult to take a deep breath. Another breathing symptom of poor circulation may be labored breathing, which occurs when fluid accumulates in the lungs. If you notice that your breathing problems are worse at night or anytime you lie down, that can also indicate a heart problem.

Scary stat: In a landmark study by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) published in Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Institute, 95 percent of women who'd had heart attacks reported experiencing unusual symptoms in the weeks and months before the attack, and 40 percent reported shortness of breath.

Why it happens: When your heart isn't pumping strongly enough, less oxygen circulates in your blood. The result is shortness of breath; you might feel like you do at high altitude or when you've run for the bus, unable to draw enough oxygen into your lungs.

What to do: Shortness of breath, either with exercise and stress or all the time, is always a reason to see the doctor for a checkup, since it can be a symptom of a number of serious conditions.

Puffy or Swollen Legs or Feet

If you notice that your feet swell enough to make your shoes tight; your ankles, wrists, or fingers are noticeably puffy; or there are deep pressure marks or indents when you take off socks or hose, you may have a problem with fluid retention. Also called edema, fluid retention can be a sign of coronary artery disease (CAD), heart failure, and other forms of cardiovascular disease.

Scary stat: More than 80 million people have one or more forms of cardiovascular disease, and approximately 900,000 people die from it each year.

Why it happens: Fluid retention occurs when the heart doesn't pump strongly enough and blood doesn't carry waste products away from tissues. Edema usually starts in the feet, ankles, fingers, hands, and legs because they're furthest from the heart, where circulation is poorer.

What to do: Report problems with edema to your doctor, who can run tests that may indicate CAD and can determine if your heart function is normal.

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Why it happens: When your heart isn't pumping strongly enough, less oxygen circulates in your blood. The result is shortness of breath; you might feel like you do at high altitude or when you've run for the bus, unable to draw enough oxygen into your lungs.

What to do: Shortness of breath, either with exercise and stress or all the time, is always a reason to see the doctor for a checkup, since it can be a symptom of a number of serious conditions.
When I think of the NVA, I recall a famous line from the movie Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid where the two protagonists are being methodically pursued by a highly paid professional band of outlaw hunters. Both Butch and Sundance look back at their pursuers and ask: “Who are those guys?”

I view the NVA similarly. Who are these guys who dared to contest the mightiest military on earth, who suffered a million deaths from a country with only twenty-five million people (4), who stood and fought as hell rained down on them from the skies? They could not call in air strikes to save themselves as we could, there were no “dust off” choppers to race their wounded to a first-rate hospital, there were no transport planes to move them into the theater; they had to walk or ride in trucks with B-52s lurking in the skies above them. Their “bedroom” was a hammock in the jungle for years at a time.

My only direct information comes from a novel by a former NVA soldier, Bao Ninh, who wrote The Sorrow of War in 1991. (5) Ninh is about my age and fought the entire length of American involvement in the conflict and, further, to the fall of Saigon, or the ten years from 1965 to 1975. I presume his characters are largely autobiographical.

Ninh has to be the luckiest NVA soldier who ever lived. Only he and nine others from his five-hundred-man battalion managed to survive a battle near the Sa Thay River near the Cambodian border in 1969. As he wrote: “That was the dry season when the sun burned harshly, the wind blew fiercely, and the enemy sent napalm spraying through the jungle and a sea of fire enveloped (the battalion), spreading like the fires of hell. Troops in the fragmented companies tried to regroup, only to be blown out of their shelters again as they went mad, became disoriented, and threw themselves into nets of bullets, dying in the flaming inferno. Above them the helicopters flew at treetop height and shot them almost one by one, the blood spreading out, spraying from their backs, flowing like red mud. The diamond-shaped grass clearing was piled high with bodies killed by the helicopter gunships. Broken bodies, bodies blown apart, bodies vaporized (pp. 4–5).”

Who were these guys who repeatedly walked into the terrible teeth of the world’s preeminent war machine? Just before the final push for Saigon, Ninh and his four-man scout platoon fought at police headquarters in B¨am Me Thuot in the Central Highlands. Two of his comrades were incinerated into ash as the tanks they were riding exploded and burned.

The other remaining member of the group died at Ninh’s side in the police headquarters building. A South Vietnamese police female Ninh had already shot, and who he had told to go outside with her hands up and she would not be harmed, instead pulled out a pistol and pumped four bullets into Ninh’s comrade’s back. She would have killed Ninh, too, and leveled the pistol at him at short range, but she had expended all her ammo and the pistol clicked as she repeatedly pulled the trigger. Ninh emptied his entire AK-47 clip into the woman and then fell to the floor retching, saying this was the most distraught he had felt in ten years of war—quite a statement. A female of the “puppet” South Vietnamese forces had shown discipline and dedication equal to his, and this must have greatly disillusioned him.

Ninh quotes North Vietnamese officials as claiming the NVA was the best land army in the world. That might be true for this specific niche of warfare where they could employ their finely honed guerrilla tactics from nearby sanctuaries against a militarily superior foe constrained by superpower geopolitics. Freed from geopolitical constraints, however, the US could have invaded North Vietnam and made short work of the NVA, but given those constraints, I would not dispute the accolade.

Yet, the NVA’s extraordinary capability turned out to be a curse. They were so good they persevered and “won” but sacrificed perhaps two generations of young men to hitch their society to a collapsing political system that would mire them in poverty for decades. Destitution became the spoils of their dearly paid-for victory.

Ninh provides hints that the soldiers knew their political system might be suspect. They mocked the simplistic Communist slogans forced on them and ridiculed the political class for their rigid orthodoxy. Perhaps Ninh should have considered what this would mean should victory arrive, a tacit validation of the inept, foundering Communist system. The NVA were nationalists fighting under the banner of Communism, and the political commissars looted their victory.

A quick defeat at the hands of the
Americans would have been far kinder. Almost a million men would have lived to experience the somewhat corrupt but still preferable capitalist system of the South. Vietnam could have become one of the "Asian Tiger" economies that arose at the end of the twentieth century instead of suffering decades of abject poverty as other nations around them prospered. As many relatively rudimentary societies discovered two thousand years ago, their best social advancement would come from losing to the Romans and becoming incorporated into the empire. The same would have been true for the North Vietnamese had they lost quickly and gracefully to the Americans so we could have rained money on them instead of bombs. A string of golf and tourist resorts down the length of Vietnam could have allowed them to prosper by catering to newly rich Japanese in the 1980s. This catastrophe replayed the same scenario of the American Civil War. Had the South not had a fanatically dedicated army and superlative generals compared to the North’s inept bureaucratic commanders, the North might have won quickly. That would have saved America hundreds of thousands of war dead, spared Atlanta from being torched, and made Sherman’s march to the sea unnecessary.

Who were those guys in the NVA army? They were a splendid, ferociously capable guerilla army whose prowess, ironically, doomed their country to economic depression while decimating their population. They won the war but lost the future.

An airman hasn't received the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War. But according to reports, that could change in the near future, as Air Force Special Operations Command plans to recommend one of seven recipients of the Air Force Cross be upgraded to receive the nation's top medal for valor.

Of those seven airmen, all received their medals since Sept. 11, 2001, and five have ties to Fort Bragg or the former Pope Air Force Base. Those five have names and likenesses that are already immortalized on Fort Bragg, where busts are on display at the nation's Combat Control School, part of a grueling pipeline to become one of the nation's most elite airmen. They are Tech. Sgt. John Chapman, Capt. Barry Crawford Jr., Tech. Sgt. Robert Gutierrez Jr., Tech. Sgt. Zachary J. Rhyner and Senior Airman Dustin Temple.

All were combat controllers, tasked with deploying alongside other elite special operations units to control air power.

Medals of Honor are rare for a reason; only the nation's best are considered. But it's only fitting the nation adds an airman to that short list of recipients. In retrospect, the nation has seemingly been too stingy with its highest awards.

For years, officials in Congress and in military circles have argued that too few have been considered compared with past conflicts. That could be a factor of the changing landscape of war, or it could be something that can be quickly fixed by doing just what Air Force Special Operations Command has done: Taking a closer look at the nation's heroes of the past decade-plus and ensuring that each has received the honors commensurate with their valor.