Inside this issue:

My Dog Outranked Me ...........................................2
Invisible Scars ....................................................3
Dying in Vain ......................................................4
War and Us ........................................................5
Bad Day ............................................................6
What Did I Sacrifice, What Did I Gain? ...............6
Moving East Orange VA to Lyons .....................7
Memorial Day ......................................................8
Failure .............................................................9
Helping Vets Like Me, With Memory Issues ..........9

This newsletter is written by combat Veterans to assist all who may benefit.

As disabled Veterans we are dedicated to helping others on our journey toward recovery.

We will share our experiences, provide helpful resources and offer our insight on various issues while connecting with our readers.

The Stars and Stripes Veterans News provides patients in the Traumatic Brain Injury Program the opportunity to write, edit, and publish for therapeutic purposes. The views expressed in this newsletter are not those of the VANJHCS or its staff.
In 1964 my wife and I purchased a German Shepherd puppy. We lived in Queens, New York. I worked in Manhattan full time and attended college at night. Since we had not lived there long, we did not know any veterinarian. I called information and found a veterinarian who did house calls. We lived in a second-floor apartment and I buzzed the veterinarian in. As he was coming up the stairs my unnamed puppy stood guarding our home. Two months old and he thought he was tough! The vet said: “Guarding your home already Sarge?” The name stuck. Over the next five years we acquired two more shepherds (Sarge’s puppies).

In Queens, NY you walked your dogs and scooped up after them. On weekends I took them to a nearby park. At the park I let them off leash. They were well behaved due to regular obedience training. The kids loved seeing the dogs since I had trained them to climb up the ladder for the slide. They did not slide down but rather ran down and went back around to get back on line to do it again.

In early 1968 I got my draft notice. I went to basic training, AIT (Advanced Individual Training) and an advanced AIT. By then I was a PFC (Private First Class); my dog was still a Sergeant. My orders were for Viet Nam. Sergeant’s are ranked higher than PFCs: my dog outranked me.

After I got to Nam as a clerk, our division was getting mortared every night. We referred to it as “Mortar City”. I wanted off the Division Base since it was such a sweet target. This sounds nuts but I put in a transfer to an infantry company. I felt I would rather shoot back than be a helpless target every night. My transfer was approved but the Army has a way of approving what you asked for while giving you what they want.

They transferred me to the 9th Infantry’s Military Intelligence Detachment.

Jumping ahead five years my wife and I had a baby girl. When we were due to bring our daughter home from the hospital my mother-in-law told us that we had to get rid of the dogs. I told her we were keeping the dogs and “giving my daughter” to the dogs. We introduced each dog individually to our daughter by letting them greet her in her baby basket. When I came home from work I would give our daughter her last bottle of the day and the dogs all sat around us. I would talk to the dogs and petted them a bit. Upon putting her in her crib for naps all her dogs would get under her crib for the night. Talk about security.

Sarge and his two puppies all had good lives filled with love.
**My Dog Outranked Me, continued**

To this day, my daughter is one of the most compassionate pet owners I have ever known. She has a full time high tech job but continues to rescue stray dogs and cats. The number of her rescues is well over 100 animals.

Thanks Sarge for helping me feel again!

---

**Invisible Scars**

I have invisible scars  
Scars that you cannot see  
My mind is locked behind bars

You only see what I want you to see  
That does not mean I’m not in pain  
I only wish you could see the real me

The real part that is very scarred  
That is damaged from what I’ve seen  
The part of me you could never understand  
You would be asking me, “What do I mean?”

I keep my scars hidden to protect you  
From the burden of my hell and pain  
I wish for one day you could walk in my shoes

You could then understand the horrendous pain  
The nightmare I live everyday  
You would feel the never ending rain

I have invisible scars you cannot see  
To you I look normal and happy  
I wish you could for one day be me

---

*Otto Espenschied  
9th Infantry Division  
“Old Reliables”*

*Margo Williams  
3rd Infantry Division  
Rock of the Marne*
Dying in Vain

“Remembering all my fallen brothers”
“May God give you peace”
“You should rest in peace”
“For you made the ultimate sacrifice”
“The heroes of my generation”
“A credit to what you did in history”
“Wow, men among men”

I’m tired of hearing all of these sayings over and over. It’s BS!

They died so that …
BOEING CORPORATION
SMITH & WESSON
ESSO
COLGATE CORPORATION’S HUGE GOVERNMENT CONTRACT
MORTICIANS
ETC., ETC., ETC.
… Could make a bundle of money for their precious lives.

Michael K. Morgan, Army
War and Us

Since the beginning of time there has been war. From Kane and Abel and throughout time man has fought and killed their brothers for money, fame, power, land, resources, women and the list goes on. Whatever the reason, war has been part of the human race for decades. When the call for duty rang out, brave men and women answered the call, putting aside personal self-preservation for their country. The dedication and persistence of these men and women are never really known but only by their fellow comrades.

I wanted to write this coming from someone who above all else, puts his country and his fellow Marines first. I never took the time to really appreciate the country that I lived in for my entire life before I joined the Marine Corps. Even with saying the Pledge of Allegiance every morning in grade school, I really never took the time to really understand what it meant to be an American. While many saw war as just a tragedy, I and others saw it as a call to arms, and I was going to prepare myself to answer that call. I trained physically and mentally to prepare myself for joining the Marines. I ran and exercised every morning before school and went to the weight room every day after class. I also went into the DEP (Delayed Entry Program) so I could learn and do PT (Physical Training) with Marines. I even scored pretty high on the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery). And when the recruiters told me that I could be used more productively in a job other than infantry, I threatened not to join. I was set on becoming an infantryman.

Many people might think, “What the hell are you thinking, wanting to risk your life as your occupation?” And I say to them “Why not? To serve my country is the ultimate honor, in my opinion”. To be part of something bigger than yourself is the greatest feeling in the world. And though my quality of life is pretty bad and I have to deal with ailments such as PTSD, TBI and arthritis, I wouldn’t trade my time in the service for anything.

Ilde Millan Jr.
2nd Battalion 2nd Marine Division
“Warlords”
### Bad Day

A victim of circumstance  
collateral damage

In the wrong place  
At the wrong time

A freak accident  
A misfired weapon

An involuntary action  
Couldn’t be avoided

A Vietnamese boy  
Lays on the trail dead  
A bullet in his young heart

Choose any of the above  
“Carry on with your day soldier”  
“don’t mean nothing”  
“don’t mean nothing”

*Michael K. Morgan, Army*

### What Did I Sacrifice?  
What Did I Gain?

Was all the gain  
Worth all the horrendous pain  
This conflict still resides in me

There were great times  
Times I did the impossible  
Then times I never want to remember

I had to sacrifice the only thing that I loved  
The purest thing to ever have happened in my life  
This is the cost of having PTSD

Now there are two sides to me  
One side that is proud and strong  
The other side that is damaged and heavy

There are plenty of medals and citations  
That shows everything that I was capable of  
These material items don’t compare to what I lost

What did I sacrifice and what did I gain  
Pride fights with the sorrow of a broken heart  
My emotions remain in conflict with my brain

*Margo Williams  
3rd Infantry Division  
Rock of the Marne*
Moving East Orange VA to Lyons

What would every Veteran say if they were asked if they like or dislike going to the East Orange VA for an appointment? All of the Veterans that I talk to dread and hate going to the East Orange VA. I really didn’t know what anyone was talking about when they talked about going to the East Orange VA for an appointment. When it came time for my first appointment I wondered what I would experience. All of the problems about East Orange that everyone told me about became true. I arrived at East Orange playing dodge the accident in my travels because it is in the heart of congested traffic area. Because of this, I was so stressed out when I arrived the East Orange VA parking lot. So, I waited in line and finally reached a gentleman in uniform. I greeted the parking attendant and said good morning and he replied saying the same. The attendant told me to leave my keys in the car and handed me a ticket with a number on it. I asked the parking attendant if I could park my own car and he said that I couldn’t because they park the vehicles a certain way.

Other Veterans told me that things were stolen out of their vehicles. Many veterans suffer from PTSD and have trust issues. Having a stranger drive your car and sitting in your personal space is an issue for me. I never ever use valet services. At East Orange, I have no choice but to hand my keys to a stranger and hope and pray that they don’t damage my vehicle or rummage through my stuff.

I asked the attendant what I should I do if anyone scratched or dented my car. He said to fill out a claim form and that someone would notify me. I went for my appointment and took care of my travel pay. When I went to the parking lot, I handed my ticket to the parking lot attendant and waited. While waiting for my car, some Veterans were expressing how annoyed they were waiting for their car. The wait seemed forever but it was only 10 minutes. When the parking attendant finally arrived, I was hoping I didn’t have any damage because I didn’t want to go through the process of filing a claim. I checked out my car and thanked God that there were no scratches or damages to my car. On the way home I wondered what would have happened if I had damage to my car. It would have delayed my travels and would have to live with that damage until it was fixed. I really do not want to go to East Orange again.

I think if they just took all the machines and specialty doctors to Lyons and put them in a building it would be a better. Lyons is easy to get to but needs to add more parking. Lyons has the room to expand.

East Orange can be just for general practice, like Lyons is now. Lyons VA is in a great location off of Interstate 78 which connects to Route 287 and the Turnpike. I personally think it would be easier for every veteran.
For the most part, when people hear the words “Memorial Day” they think of a sunny day at the beach or a nice barbecue with friends and family or just another day off from work. For me, Memorial Day is not a day for celebrating or having fun. It’s a day filled with pain and sorrow. For me, the days leading up to the holiday are filled with anxiety and dread. Even writing this article right now is making my heartbeat climb.

Last Memorial Day, I could hear all of the children playing and having fun while their parents were throwing meat on the grill, having a grand ole time while I am there standing in my living room peeking through the blinds, infuriated by their happiness.

What I think Memorial Day should be is a day where, one day out of the year, people actually take the time to give respect to those who served and are no longer with us. Being that this is not the case, I don’t see a change coming any time soon especially since there are many people who are oblivious to the meaning of Memorial Day.

Yes, I understand that not everyone agrees with war, but I would think that everyone agrees that you should be respectful of an individual that is no longer here, even if you don’t agree with the decisions that put them in the ground. As time goes on, it seems that more and more people are becoming less considerate.

Ilde Millan Jr.  
2nd Battalion 2nd Marine Division  
“Warlords”
Failure

Failure to achieve
Too much to deny
Lasting memories
Watch, don’t close your eyes

Failure to succeed
Too much to hide
Lasting memories
Don’t seem to die

Failure to achieve
Too far behind
Lasting memories
Lingering inside

Failure to feel
Too much to fight
Lasting memories
Will haunt me tonight

Ojo Loco

Helping Vets Like Me, With Memory Issues

In conversation, when a vet hears “he” or “she” the vet will often connect the pronoun to the last male or female in the vet’s short-term memory. The speaker thinks the vet is thinking of the right he or she. Not always the case. A couple of extra sentences and the speaker and the vet are often not even remotely talking about the same person, event or timeline. This leads to frustration, tension, humiliation and sometimes, even anger.

Here are some suggestions:

1) Use real nouns:
   • Doctor Frankenstein instead of he/she
   • John and Mary, not they

Sometimes the title or first name is still not enough.

2) Detail helps. It doesn’t mean the vet is ignoring you; the vet is often several seconds behind. Adding new information before the first information has registered accurately just increases the vet’s inability to process the initial and subsequent information.

Now, what were we discussing, and who are you?

Otto Espenschied
9th Infantry Division
“Old Reliables”
Contributors:

A.J.
Otto Espenschied
Ojo Loco
Ilde Millan Jr.
Michael Morgan
Margo Williams

If you have comments/feedback
or if would like to receive future or past publications of this newsletter,
please contact us at: Suzanne.Roscher@va.gov.