

The Stars and Stripes

The Weekly Voice
Of Veterans & Dependents
Of All Wars Of
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The National Tribune
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Sample

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WASPs Win 33 Year Battle For Vet Status

Planned Demise Of VA Hospitals Can They Be Saved For Veterans?

[The Stars and Stripes has been the first to expose the catastrophic decline in the Veterans Administration's Hospitals. Weekly, since the first of the year, we have provided evidence of over one-third part-time physicians, over one-third foreign medical graduates who often have communication problems with patients, physicians in their 70's and 80's, low percentage of Board Certified doctors, non-doctors practicing medicine, high turn-over of young physicians, abuses by Medical Schools, operations performed by totally unsupervised residents-in-training, illegal and gestapo tactics of VA Central office, forced transfer regulations allowing a physician only two weeks to get out of town, and many others.]

What has to be done to save the VA Hospitals? We suggested in an editorial on June 30, 1977, that [1] Immediate removal from VA regulations of the illegal clause which gives the Dean's Committee of the Medical School the right to hire or transfer VA professionals; [2] Immediate cessation of all hiring of part-time physicians, and the establishment of a fixed maximum of 5 percent part-time personnel. All Chiefs of Staff, Chiefs of Service, and Chiefs of Section must be full-time VA doctors; [3] Immediate cessation of granting research money to other than full-time VA professionals; and [4] Establishment of a local committee of full-time VA physicians at each VA hospital which will monitor the utility and productivity of the inter-relationship with the Medical School, which can suggest modifications if the interests of the VA hospital are being sacrificed, and which can terminate the relationship if the medical care of the veteran is being compromised. The illegal regulations and the categories of VA Medical Professionals covered by these illegal regulations can be found at the end of this article.

One of the principal causes of the recruitment and retention problems in the VA is the VA's failure to speak out and Congress's failure to pass legislation which would pay VA Medical Professionals the same amount and on the same pay structure as the Federal Government pays other Medical Professionals in the Public Health Service System and in the Military Service.

The National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences' Report confirms all the VA shortages and problems that The Stars and Stripes has been talking about.]

VA Guinea Pig Sugery: Mortality Is Twice As High When Residents Operate Alone!

Last week The Stars and Stripes reported that the VA refused to accept the National Academy of Sciences' ruling that emergency VA operations should have a senior staff surgeon assisting.

The VA claimed that, "A requirement that a senior surgeon be present on 70% of all emergency cases is unrealistically high and cannot be substantiated on the basis of any data which indicates improved patient care or reduced mortality or morbidity."

As usual, the VA lied. It is well known that patients do worse when they are operated on by unsupervised residents-in-training. The Report of the Study on Surgical Services for the United States, which was made by the American College of Surgeons and the American Surgical Association, quotes a well-known investigation which was conducted by the Ohio Chapter of the American College of Surgeons. A study was made of 28,621 patients who had a cholecystectomy (gall bladder removal) in several private, University and governmental Ohio hospitals. Mortality rates attributed to unsupervised residents in surgical training were more

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GI Bill-WASP Explanatory Statement

On November 3, 1977, the compromise to H.R. 8701, the GI Bill Improvement Act of 1977, including the WASP amendment, passed the House, and on November 4, 1977, it was accepted by the Senate.

It was a tremendous victory for the WASP. "A 33-year battle has been won!"... "I can't believe it's true!"... "I never thought I would live to see this day!"... "It shows what can be done when members of an organization work closely together toward a common goal"... echoed WASPs following their victory. [See TITLE IV below.]

Veterans attending school did not fare as well. The GI Bill was considerably watered down from the original desires of veterans. Many stated that this bill, at least, will set the stage for corrective legislation next year, changing the bill to one that is fully funded by the Federal Government. Veterans are the responsibility of the United States and not the States.

The following is a Joint Explanatory Statement of the House Bill, Senate Amendment and Compromise Agreement:

JOINT EXPLANATORY STATEMENT OF HOUSE BILL, SENATE AMENDMENT AND COMPROMISE AGREEMENT

Title I-GI Bill Rate Increases
The House bill and the Senate amendment were designed to amend chapters 31, 34, 35 and 36 of title 38, United States Code, to increase the amounts of education assistance allowances by 6.6%.

The compromise agreement contains the Senate provision.

Sec. 105. Veteran-student Services

The Senate amendment would increase the amount of the hourly work-study allowance to equal the amount of the Federally-required minimum hourly wage and would provide that such work-study hourly allowance be increased whenever such minimum wage is increased.

The House bill contained no comparable provision.

The compromise agreement contains the Senate provision.

TITLE II-ACCELERATED PAYMENT AND DELIMITING PERIOD EXTENSION

Sec. 201. Accelerated payment and education loan eligibility

The Senate amendment would establish a program of accelerated educational assistance payments, thus making it possible for certain

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Women Pilots, Who Put WWII Air Force In The Air, Win Vets Status

By Wm. Bruce Arnold
Col. USAF [Ret.]

It seems strange that on this day a thirty-three-year-long battle that sometimes rose to heights of bloody passion has finally ended in victory in a rather quiet, almost mundane manner.

But that's the way most battles end: one last shot, the clearing of the smoke, the caring for the wounded, and the burial of the dead. Then a quiet time to reflect, perhaps to cry and to pray.

The WASP fight ended on the House floor in much the same manner, although the dead had long since been buried and the wounded had all but been forgotten.

This fight for veteran's status started even before there was a GI Bill. My father, General H. H. "Hap" Arnold, the initiator of the WASP program in 1942, wanted from the first to commission his women flyers as officers in the Army Air Corps. The opposition to his efforts has been well documented in the Patty Hughes' column in The Stars and Stripes and will not be rehearsed here, but let's just say that the WASP program was finally terminated in December 1944 when Congress failed to

pass the WASP militarization bill. Without Congressional support the program could not survive.

I was an Army artilleryman in WWII and my knowledge of the WASP program was meager--except to say I was stationed at Camp Davis when one WASP did not survive a crash landing when the single-seat tow target aircraft she was piloting received a 50 cal. slug in the engine. This incident gave me a long-established memory of the sacrifice these women would make if called upon to do so.

After the war I was stationed all over the world and seldom got home to visit my parents. When I did manage a visit I do not recall any conversation with my dad concerning the plight of his WASPs. He was a sick man in those days, having sustained a massive heart attack shortly after the Normandy landing, and remained in poor health until his death in 1950.

It was not until 1972, when I was invited to attend the 30th WASP reunion in Sweetwater, Texas, that I found to my surprise that the WASPs did not receive veteran's benefits. By then I had served for

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"Hiya, Pop!"

Highly informal was the greeting received by five-star General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, Commanding the United States Army Air Forces, when he stopped beside this young officer's jeep during an inspection tour of Okinawa in July 1945. Reason: the young man is his son, Lt. Wm. Bruce Arnold, of the 834th Anti-aircraft Artillery. Commented the General dryly: "He's the only man on Okinawa who didn't salute me."

The Veteran Shall NEVER Be Forgotten