

Veterans Corner

VA completes digitization of archived Vietnam-era deck logs

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today completion of an interagency effort with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to digitize declassified deck logs to process claims faster for eligible Vietnam-era Veterans. The U.S. Navy and Coast Guard deck logs within NARA contain helpful information being used to validate claims for Blue Water Navy (BWN) Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam, to establish presumption to herbicide exposure for service-connected disability benefits.

“The team at NARA recognizes the importance of this effort making it easier for BWN Veterans to receive the benefits they’ve earned without burdening them with paperwork,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Since January 1, VA has processed thousands of claims and encourages every Veteran, dependent and surviving spouse who is eligible to file a claim as soon as possible.”

Data contained in deck logs is used when deciding VA benefit claims. Also known as ship logs or captain's logs, information was manually inputted to chronologically document the daily activities of a navy ship or unit. VA provided the digital images of deck logs to NARA, available in the National Archives Catalog.

“Through this scanning project, VA contractors digitized declassified Navy and Coast Guard deck logs from 1956-1978 in NARA's holdings, including the log of the hospital ship USS Sanctuary which I served aboard during the Vietnam conflict,” said Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero. “As a Veteran from this era, I recognize the unprecedented value this provides to Veterans making these logs easily accessible online.”

The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, signed into law by President Trump June 25, 2019 and effective January 1, extends the presumption of service connection for certain diseases associated with herbicide exposure. To date, VA has collectively awarded \$641 million to more than 22,524 Blue Water Navy Veterans or survivors. For assistance filing claims, please see the information below. (Adapted from va.org)

The Kings County Veterans Service Office can complete the DMV Veteran Status Verification Form for the California Veteran Designation on your driver's license and also issues Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Scott Holwell at the email address provided below, if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To determine if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com/vets.

Scott Holwell, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call (559)852-2669; or e-mail scott.holwell@co.kings.ca.us.