**VA News for the Week of September 18, 2006**

**BASIL WHITE:** Here's a quick peek at the top stories on this week's show.

**MARTHA ORR:** 9-11 in Washington – five years after the attacks.

**BASIL:** VA's new insurance for traumatically injured service members is an instant success story.

**MARTHA:** The leader of VA's Katrina heroes reflects on that long day and the grueling recovery.

**BASIL:** I'm Basil White with the Technology and Integration Service.

**MARTHA:** And I'm Martha Orr with the Office of Information and Technology. Thanks for tuning in today.

**MARTHA:** Results of a study by the Institute of Medicine found that U.S. and foreign veterans of the 1990 Gulf War suffer from an array of very real problems.

But it is not a syndrome - a unique pattern of symptoms - even though the symptom rate is higher among Gulf War veterans, the study found.

The study was sponsored by V-A to determine Gulf War veterans' eligibility for disability benefits for illnesses linked to service. Gulf War veterans can now claim benefits for undiagnosed illnesses.

V-A has not commented on the findings. That will come after thorough review.

While the study did not answer the basic question of the cause of the symptoms, one expert said it was a "first step" in cataloging health studies of 700,000 Gulf War veterans from the U.S. and 34 other countries.

**BASIL:** As witnessed by most of us on television last week, the fifth anniversary of the attacks of Nine-Eleven 2001 was very emotional.

It was literally a two-day-long memorial service in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania, where the planes crashed.

In Washington, the memorial began Sunday evening, September Tenth, as thousands gathered on the National Mall to make a long walk from the Washington Monument, past the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials, across Memorial Bridge and past Arlington National Cemetery.

As the procession moved toward the Pentagon, gasps arose from the crowd when they caught their first glimpses of a huge, lighted American flag hanging from the side of the building – reminiscent of the flag hung hours after the Sept. 11 attack.

Once at the Pentagon, the Freedom Walkers were treated a dramatic show and 184 lights - one for each person killed in the Pentagon attack - lit up the night sky.

**MARTHA:** Members of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and a number of witnesses had nothing but praise for VA's new Traumatic Injury Servicemembers Group Life Insurance, or T-SEGLI.

**BASIL:** Committee Chairman Larry Craig - who introduced the legislation to create the insurance benefit - said the program for wounded warriors is all he hoped for and more.

**MARTHA:** One of three severely injured veterans who inspired Senator Craig to write the legislation was Army Sergeant John Keith, a Texas native who lost his leg in Iraq. We featured Sgt. Keith in a story on the new program in May, when he said the program gave him hope for his family's future.

Sgt. Keith gave emotional testimony at the hearing.

**BASIL:** The team at the Philadelphia Insurance Center that developed the program was a finalist for the prestigious Service in Government awards. Tom Lastowka, director of the Philadelphia Regional Office and Insurance Center and leader of the T-SEGLI team, spoke with us after testifying in the hearing.

**MARTHA:** September was a pivotal month in a number of conflicts in our Nation's military history. In our year-long "This Month in American Military History" series, Jim Benson tells us about seminal events from the Revolutionary War right up to 9-11-2001.

**JIM BENSON:** During the American Revolution, British forces fought to control the Hudson River Valley to isolate New England from the other colonies. They realized an early success when General Burgoyne and nearly 8,000 troops defeated American forces at Fort Ticonderoga in New York.

However, Burgoyne lost needed support when American militia, commanded by Benedict Arnold, forced British troops back to Canada. The Americans continued to push Burgoyne back with victories at Oriskany and Bennington. Finally, on September 19, 1777, General Burgoyne surrendered his forces after being defeated at Saratoga. The victory was a key turning point in the war for America.

In June of 1812, the United States declared war on Great Britain after years of strained relations over control of what was then the Northwest Territory – around the Great Lakes.

President James Madison ordered the creation of a naval fleet to regain control of Lake Erie. On September the 10th, 1813, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry hoisted his personal flag inscribed with the motto “Don’t Give Up The Ship.” They were the dying words of Captain James Lawrence, who was mortally wounded earlier that year.

After a fierce battle, Commodore Perry received the British surrender and penned his famous message to General and future President William Henry Harrison: “We have met the enemy and they are ours.”

On September 13, 1813, a British fleet of 19 ships began pounding Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor. Some 1,000 soldiers, under the command of Major George Armistead, withstood a 25-hour onslaught. On the morning of September 14, the oversized American flag still flew over the fort, signaling the British that victory had eluded them.

American lawyer Francis Scott Key watched the proceedings from a truce ship on the Patapsco River and was inspired to write a poem that would become the national anthem of the United States – “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

The battle for "Heartbreak Ridge" in Korea began September 13, 1951, with a 9th Infantry attack on Hill 728. With truce talks suspended, the fierce struggle continued throughout the month. By the 24th of September, the 23rd Infantry had captured prisoners from six communist regiments. Soon after, the communists agreed to resume the talks.

9-11-2001 now has its place among the significant events in American history. Immediately after the attacks on September the 11th, 2001, U.S. President George Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair accused Iraqi President Saddam Hussein of having links to the Al-Quada terrorist network and its leader Osama Bin Laden. This action set the stage for initiating Operation Enduring Freedom the following month with air strikes against Taliban military targets and Al-Quada training camps.

**BASIL:** The response by V-A employees of the facilities slammed by Hurricane Katrina has been called nothing short of phenomenal. "Heroes all," said Secretary Nicholson.

That day and many to follow were confusing, exhausting and sometimes terrifying, but V-A employees stayed on post to protect and serve veterans. The leader of these heroes - VISN 16

Director Dr. Robert Lynch - was an eye in the storm, a reflection of V-A employees' resolve to carry out the V-A mission. Dr. Lynch talked with American Veteran Executive Producer Michael Wilker recently and discussed the plans to make V-A's recovery complete on the Gulf Coast.

Next month's edition of The American Veteran will have a full story on the rebuilding of the V-A health care system on the Gulf Coast.

**MARTHA:** We wanted to remind you of a couple programs to look for on the V-A Knowledge Network or Content Distribution Network.

First is the recent Town Hall meeting at the American Legion Post in Frederick, Maryland. Veterans' got straight answers to their questions from Secretary Nicholson and V-A managers from facilities in the region. The 30-minute question-and-answer session of the Town Hall meeting is now available for viewing.

Also now airing is Secretary Nicholson's "State of VA" speech at the American Legion's Annual Convention in Salt Lake City on August 30.

You can view both programs on the V-A Knowledge Network's Communications Channel. Get the schedule at the Web address on the screen.

You can also view the shows at your desktop by going to this Web address for the Content Distribution Network.

Last week we should have credited others besides Memphis V-A Medical Center Webmaster Chuck Jones for the "Resident Supervision" online course. The popular course's developers were the hospital's Health Information Management Service team and Compliance Officer Rebecca English.

**BASIL:** Did you know that a V-A study after the 9-11 attacks in 2001 revealed a far-reaching emotional impact on most Americans?

The study was conducted by the National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, created by V-A in 1989. The study says that three to five days after Nine-Eleven, 90 percent of 560 adults across the Nation experienced at least one symptom of stress.

Those symptoms include nightmares, difficulty concentrating, trouble falling or staying asleep, feeling upset by reminders, and feeling irritable.

Emotions ran high in commemorations of the fifth anniversary of Nine-Eleven and experts say most people would feel better once the date passed.

But if symptoms persist, consider getting professional help.

And you can get more information at V-A's P-T-S-D Web site on the screen.

**MARTHA:** That's all for we have this week.

**BASIL:** V-A News airs on the V-A Knowledge Network's Communications Channel five times every day. It's also available on-demand at the Public Affairs Web page and on the Content Distribution Network.

I'm Basil White.

**MARTHA:** And I'm Martha Orr. Thanks for joining us and have a great week.

**The End**