



Post 90 Gazette

December 2020

Edited by Amy Ostler and Harvey Hefley



Merry Christmas to All!

Due to continued COVID-19 restrictions and concerns, we are not having our annual Christmas Party.

In lieu of the party, the American Legion Auxiliary will be putting together the Christmas Bags for the Veterans in the Southern Utah Veterans Home (SUVH), Assisted living homes, WWII and Korean Veterans and other members of Post 90 and Post 90 Volunteers are needed to deliver the bags this year.



IF YOU CAN HELP - PLEASE CONTACT MARTI BIGBIE AT 435-668-5770



A HUGE CONGRATULATIONS TO MARTI BIGBIE!

Veterans, Active Duty, Reservists and their families join Post 90 in congratulating Marti Bigbie on earning the **"DEPARTMENT COMMANDER OF YEAR"** award.

"LET NO VETERAN OR FAMILY MEMBER BE FORGOTTEN" - Marti's motto says it all - Marti's dedication to our military brothers and sisters is un-matched. We are so proud and honor her commitment to our military community. **See Marti's complete bio on page 3.**



Commander's Column

Marti Bigbie

Hope everyone had a safe family Thanksgiving. Now begins our busy time before Christmas.

1. The Pearl Harbor Commemorate on December 7th at Tonaquint Cemetery plan to be there by 10:30am As the Commemorate starts right at 10:48am (lasts about 8-10 minutes).

ALSO, we will have Jeffery J McKenna there to sign his book "Saving Dr. Warren ... "A True Patriot" (Lee Warren - Flag Man is a descendant) from 10:00am to 11:00am. Books will be on hand for purchase. Social distancing and Masks are a requirement.

2. Wreaths Across America on December 19th at 10:00am at Tonaquint Cemetery 11:00am St George Cemetery. The Normal program has been cancelled but volunteers are still needed to help place the wreaths on Veterans graves. If you would like to volunteer call Valorie King 714-686-2496 and let her know which cemetery you would like to volunteer at. Thanks in advance for your help.

3. Wreaths Across American on December 19th Tony Kuhlmann or Cathy Barnes 435-229-6101 are placing wreaths at the Cemeteries in Santa Clara, Ivins, Washington, Hurricane, La Verkin, Rockville, Virgin, Toquerville, Enterprise and Springdale -- If you would like to donate towards the Wreaths or help place the wreaths at these cemeteries please call Tony or Cathy. Thanks in advance for your help.

4. The American Legion Auxiliary will be putting together the Christmas Bags for the Veterans in the Southern Utah Veterans Home (SUVH), Assisted living homes, WWII and Korean Veterans and other members of Post 90/Unit 90. Volunteers are needed to deliver the Christmas bags this year. We are not allowed into any of the facilities due to Covid (they are required to make sure that the bags are Covid free before they are handed out to the residents of the facilities and by the restrictions we can only put the Christmas bags on the door knobs at private homes). The more volunteers that we have the better the area and number of packages can be divided up so it would take only 1 day to deliver. Delivery of the Christmas bags hopefully can be done December 14th-16th

5. If you are planning on renewing your American Legion Membership for 2021 with Post 90 and need help this year please give me a call. We do not want to lose you from the American Legion Family. Your current 2020 membership expires on 12-31-2020 but can be reinstated after 1-1-2021.

6. CHARGERS ARE NEED FOR OLD PHONES as the American Legion has a project called POINT IN TIME where they give older phones to homeless Veterans for them to use by most times the chargers are missing. If you have any laying around please call me and I would be happy to pick up and get them to the Sponsor of the program.



Commander Department of Utah

Marti Bigbie

Wishing everyone a safe Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Stay safe, wear masks when possible remember social distancing when in or at gatherings. BUDDY CHECKS are more important now that we are back to HIGH alert in certain parts of Utah. These checks are needed to check on the welfare of our Veterans (do not have to be members), neighbors and friends as we do not want to lose anyone and if we can help or brighten their day that is a win for us. Keep track of the number of calls and time spent calling or visiting and give them to your Adjutant so your time/hours can be counted on the Post CPR reports.

Department of the Year Award

Editor's note: *Congratulations Marti, I cannot imagine anyone more deserving of this award. Thank you so much for your care and selfless dedication you have for me, members of Post 90, Veterans and their families!*

Martha A. E. Bigbie (Marti) BA, CPIW, AAI

Married David E Bigbie in 1970 and he passed in 2009
No natural children but adopt all Veterans/Family that come into my contact

Education

B.A., 1975, California State College, San Bernardino
Major: Administration Minor: Economics
Special emphasis on Management and Human Resources and Manpower Planning
Certificate in Human Resources Management, 1975
Accredited Advisor of Insurance, 1982
Certified Professional Insurance Women, 1982
A.A., 1985 San Bernardino Valley College, San Bernardino Major: Computer Science
Certificates for classes taken for each job held

8-4-68 to 1-31-73 United States Air Force - SGT Personnel Specialist
2-15-73 to 1-9-76 receptionist at California State College, San Bernardino California
1-12-76 to 9-7-85 Analyst/underwriter for Aetna Casualty & Surety, San Bernardino, Agent for Miller MacClean Inc, Redlands CA, Commercial Accounts Representative/Agent Goldware & Taylor Insurance Service, Riverside CA,
9-30-85 to 1-18-96 Secretary/Configuration Management Analyst Associate/Analyst/Analyst Senior/Configuration Management Engineer for Northrop Grumman, Pico Rivera, CA
3-25-96 to 4-2-99 Binder American Campers, St George UT
4-5-99 to 4-20-07 Quality Control Inspector, RM Precision Swiss Inc, LaVerkin, Utah
4-24-07 to 12-31-2014 CSR, Farmers Insurance, St George, Utah Retirement so that I could become a full time Commander for Post 90, St George, Utah

2007 joined Auxiliary Unit 90 and became the President for 3 years, now Past President, Public Relations/Chairman Christmas for Veterans, work on membership, Unit 90 has received many Awards for membership/community projects for Girls State, Poppy, Contest, Secretary 2 years 2007 joined Post 90 become member of Ritual Team, 1 year Chaplain, then Commander 2015-2017 took on District 7 Commander for 16 Posts in Southern Utah 2017 Sgt-at-Arms for Department of Utah
2018 Vice Commander Department of Utah
2019 -2021 Commander Department of Utah

American Legion Awards Post/District/Department of Utah

Legionnaire of the Year 2012
Legionnaire of the Quarter 2015(June, July, August)
Legionnaire of the Year 2015
Legionnaire of the Year 2016-2017 District 7 while Commander, Department of Utah
Silver Brigade Award 2019
Gold Brigade Award 2020
Department Membership Recruiter of Year 2019 & 2020
Department Commander of the Year Award 2019-2020
Many pins from National Commanders for Membership, Post Excellence Awards (3 years)

MOTO I Live by: LET NO VETERAN OR FAMILY MEMBER BE FORGOTTEN

Our WWII Story: An Illinois farm boy at war



The American Legion

NOV 25, 2020

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“One day, I looked down a small valley very near a bombed-out, dirty hut that we were lucky to find deserted. We had holed up there temporarily. I saw tanks from the 1st Armored Tank Division not far away ... What I also saw down in that valley was a beautiful white sow hog. She was eating grass. I guessed her weight at about 300 pounds.”

- Harold Hammil of Lawrenceville, Ill., writing in *“Please, Jesus, Give Me Three More Minutes to Live,”* a 2004 memoir of his time fighting in World War II

Tucked inside the March 2008 *American Legion Magazine* is the remembrance of an Illinois farm boy whose Thanksgivings growing up at home typically involved hog slaughtering and butchering. “Usually, we had an uncle who would come help us, too,” Harold Hammil reflected in the piece, “A Farm Boy at War,” adapted from his book-length memoir.

In 1943, Pvt. Hammil’s 34th Division 135th Infantry Regiment platoon was so far up front that supplies and food could not reach them. Too dangerous, they were told from the rear. By then, well into 300 days of nearly continuous combat, Hammil didn’t know what part of war wasn’t dangerous. He had already fought in North Africa and was now pressing through German-occupied Italy. As if constant enemy fire were not enough, the young soldiers in his platoon were starving and cold.

Hammil wrote that the white hog’s appearance was like a miracle, one of many he attributed to the hand of God during his combat experience.

“I was the only farm boy in our platoon who knew anything about killing and butchering a hog,” he recalled. The others, he explained, “were all city boys.”

His family's farm in Illinois would ship 100 or more feeder pigs from eight or nine sows to the St. Louis stockyards every six months, he said, adding that "we always butchered our own meat. I knew what to do with the sow."

The hog ambled in and out of view ahead of the soldiers, but they could not shoot it right away, concerned any rifle fire would give up their position. "We didn't have to wait more than five minutes," Hammil recounted. "Three German artillery shells – incoming mail. I went down in the valley to get a closer shot. I shot her just above the line between both eyes, as we always did on the farm. My dad had taught me that many years earlier, while I was still in high school."

The young soldier also had attached to his belt a long-bladed knife that his father had made especially for him before he deployed. "I took the knife out and slit the throat of this sow so that the blood would drain out quickly and not settle in the meat and spoil it. This I also learned on the farm, helping my dad butcher hogs every fall."

The city boys watched in awe as Hammil went to work. Once he was done, he told the others to "cut off the piece of meat you want, anytime you want." It was cold and snowy, "our own walk-in cooler ... We were very lucky."

No one else knew, however, where to cut "to get any certain piece of meat. I had to show them where to find the ham, shoulder, pork chops or bacon. I was also the only one in our platoon who had been a Boy Scout. I hate to think what that hog meat would have looked like if they had killed and butchered it on their own. I am sure that it would have all been ruined. But we still did not have a frying pan to cook it."

Hammil looked everywhere. The soldiers rooted through their gear and searched the shack. All they could come up with was a porcelain toilet, the type of which "most of us had in our bedrooms at the time before running water and indoor plumbing ... I looked at it sadly. I knew I had to make a skillet out of this thing somehow, or killing the hog would have been useless. All this fine meat we needed to survive would have been lost.

"So, I cut the bottom part of the potty off with my long knife and kept the small bottom piece and about two inches of the top rim to keep the meat and grease in. I used a rock and my knife to puncture the pot and hammered the knife blade all around until I had a low, shallow container."

However, he related, the toilet-turned-skillet was dirty. "That was a problem. E. coli could make us very sick – or worse, kill us. So, I wiped it out with snow and dirt as best I could. Then I filled it with water and boiled it over our small GI-issue Coleman gas stove. We always had it with us but seldom used it. After boiling it three times, I figured it was sterilized enough for safe use. It was a terrible-looking skillet."

Hammil then began to cut from the hog and started frying the meat. He showed others as soldiers from other units came into their position. "We soon became very popular with the runners who passed by, delivering messages to company commanders from regimental headquarters.

"Word quickly drifted down to the kitchen crew in the rear that we had butchered a fat hog and were enjoying it immensely. Our mess sergeants sent word that if we could send it back in a Jeep they would have the kitchen crew make us some sandwiches and send them back to us. There were about 15 to 20 men back in that kitchen and the motor pool squad, and I am sure we would have been lucky to have gotten back one sandwich apiece. This was the same group that said it was too dangerous for them to send a Jeep to bring us any cans of C-rations. I took a vote. All the other boys said, 'Hell no. They've never worried about us before. All they want is our fresh meat. Tell them no.'"

Hammil kept that knife for the rest of his life. "Every day I look at it, I can see in my mind that beautiful 300-pound white sow in the valley," he wrote in 2008. "It still bothers me when I see an old white porcelain potty for sale at an antique or garage sale. I just look away and pretend I never saw it. So many little insignificant things bring back memories."

Memories like that also deepened his faith, he said, “because of the many moments during the war when out of nowhere, somehow, miraculously, something like a 300-pound white sow could appear within shooting distance of a farm boy from Illinois who knew what to do with it.”

Following his discharge in 1945, Hammil had a successful career as a chiropractor and was a member of The American Legion in Lawrenceville. He died in 2012 at age 89, having received multiple combat decorations, including the Bronze Star, from his time on the front lines of World War II.

LIBERATED, 1945

Wonderful story. This is great history of WWII! I think there are a lot more great stories out there that are untold, great story from the end of WWII told by a Canadian POW.

On This Day in 1945, Japan Released Me from a POW Camp. Then US Pilots Saved My Life

written by **George MacDonell**

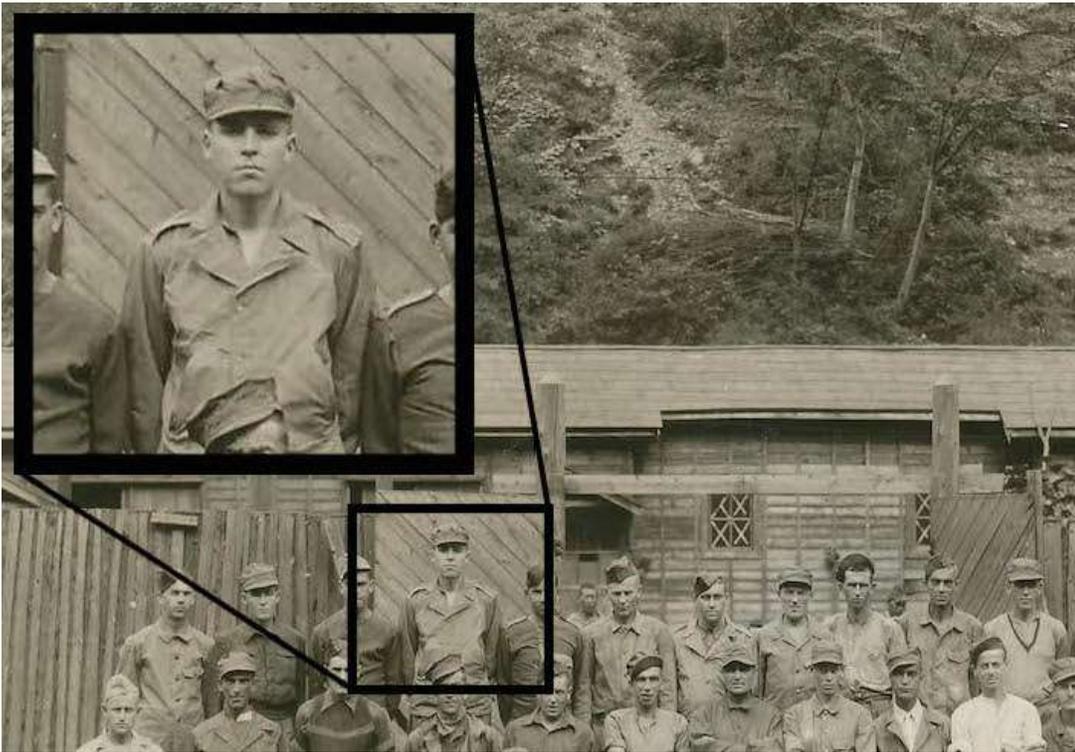
It was noon on August 15th, 1945. The Japanese Emperor had just announced to his people that his country had surrendered unconditionally to the Allied Powers.

To those of us being held at **Ohashi Prison Camp** in the mountains of northern Japan, where we'd been prisoners of war performing forced labor at a local iron mine, this meant freedom. But freedom didn't necessarily equate to safety. The camp's [395 POWs](#), about half of them Canadians, were still under the effective control of Japanese troops. And so we began negotiating with them about what would happen next.

Complicating the negotiations was the Japanese military code of Bushido, which required an officer to die fighting or commit suicide (*seppuku*) rather than accept defeat. We also knew that the camp commander—First Lieutenant Yoshida Zenkichi—had written orders to kill his prisoners “by any means at his disposal” if their rescue seemed imminent. We also knew that we could all easily be deposited in a local mine shaft and then buried under thousands of tons of rock for all eternity without a trace.

We had no way of notifying Allied military commanders (who still hadn't landed in Japan) as to the location of the camp (about a hundred miles north of **Sendai**, in a mountainous area near **Honshu's** eastern coast), whose existence was then unknown. Because of the devastating American bombing, Japan's cities had been reduced to rubble, its institutions were in chaos, and millions of Japanese were themselves close to starvation, much like us. The camp itself had food supplies, such as they were, for just three days.

Lieut. Zenkichi seemed angry, and felt humiliated by the surrender. Yet he appeared willing to negotiate our status. And after some stressful hours, we reached an agreement: The Japanese guards would be dismissed from the camp, while a detachment of Kenpeitai (the much feared Military Police) would provide security for Zenkichi, who would confine himself to his office.



The author, who appears in the featured image, fourth from left in the top row

To our delight, the local Japanese farmers were friendly, and agreed to give us food in exchange for some of the items we'd managed to loot from the camp's remaining inventory—though, unfortunately, not enough to feed the camp. Meanwhile, through a secret radio we'd been operating, we learned that the Americans were going to conduct an aerial grid search of Japan's

islands for prison camps We followed the broadcasted instructions and immediately painted "P.O.W." in eight-foot-high white letters on the roof of the biggest hut.



Two days later, with all of our food gone, we heard a murmur from the direction of the ocean. The sound turned into the throb of a single-engine airplane flying at about 3,000 feet altitude. Then, suddenly he was above us—a little blue fighter with the white stars of the US Navy painted on its wings and fuselage. But the engine noise began to fade as he went right past us. Please, God, I thought—let him see our camp.

Then the engine sound grew stronger, and changed its pitch as we heard the roar of a dive. The pilot had wrapped around a nearby mountain and came straight down the centre of the valley, his engine now bellowing wide open. From just over treetop altitude, he flew over the centre of the camp. We all went wild: Our prayers had been answered.

Then he climbed to about 7,000 feet while circling above us—we assumed he was radioing our location to base—before making another pass over the camp, as slowly as he dared, this time with his canopy back. He threw out a silver tin box on a long streamer that landed in the centre of the camp. Inside, we found strips of fluorescent cloth and a hand-written note: “Lieutenant Claude Newton (Junior Grade), USS Carrier John Hancock. Reported location.”

The instructions for the cloth strips were as follows: “If you want Medicine, put out M. If you want Food, put out F. If you want Support, put out S.” We put out “F” and “M.” Once more, Lieut. Newton flew over the camp, this time to read the letters we’d written on the ground. Wagging his wings, he headed straight out to sea to his floating home, the John Hancock.



Seven hours later, two dozen airplanes approached the camp from the sea. They were painted with the same US Navy colours, but these were much larger planes—Grumman Avenger torpedo bombers with a crew of two. Each made two parachute cargo drops in the center of camp, leaving us with a ton or more of food and medicine. The boxes contained everything from powdered eggs to tins of pork and beans. There was also something called “Penicillin” that, I later learned, doctors had begun prescribing to infected patients in 1942. (Our camp doctor had understandably never heard of it.) That night, we had a feast and a party. Despite the doctor’s warnings not to overdo it, we did. The sudden calorie intake nearly killed us.

August 28, 1945 photo in the collection of Peter Somerville, son of a naval aviator operating on the USS Hancock

But it was one thing for the Americans to drop supplies, and another thing to get to us. The days passed, until one sunny morning we had another aerial visitor from the east. He circled the camp and dropped a note: "Goodbye from Hancock and good luck. Big Friends Come Tomorrow."

The "friends" arrived at about 10am the next day, and they were indeed big: four-engine B-29 Superfortresses. Like the Penicillin, this was something new: These planes hadn't entered service till 1944, and none of us had seen one.



Their giant bomb-bay doors opened and out came wooden platforms, each loaded with parachute-equipped 60-gallon drums. These were packed with tinned rations and other supplies, including new uniforms and footwear. None of this was lost on nearby Japanese villagers, who saw us POWs going from starvation to a state of plenty. Since our newfound wealth was scattered all over hell's half acre, we asked these locals to bring us any drums they might find, which they did, in return for the nylon chutes (which local seamstresses and homemakers would put to good use) and a share of the food. That night, we had another party, except at this one, everyone was dressed in a new American uniform of his choice: Navy, Army, or Marine.

The next day brought another three lumbering aerial giants—from the Marianas Islands, it turned out. Again, the local Japanese residents helped us, amid much bowing, collect the aerial bounty. By now, the camp was beginning to look like an oil refinery, with unopened 60-gallon oil drums stacked everywhere.

When the daily ritual was repeated the day after that, some of the parachute lines snapped in the high winds, and the oil drums fell like giant rocks. Several hit the camp, went through the roofs of huts, hit the concrete floors and exploded. One was packed with canned peaches, and I don't have to describe what the hut looked like. There were several very near-misses on our men, Japanese personnel and houses in the nearby village. When the next drop generated a similar result, I looked up to see that I was right under a cloud of falling 60-gallon oil drums. It was a terrifying moment. And I imagined the bizarre idea of surviving the enemy, surviving imprisonment, and then dying thanks to the kindness of well-meaning American pilots.

Excerpts from a surviving biographical monograph on former camp commander Masake Naganuma

We now had tons of food and supplies—enough for months, and more was arriving. The camp had begun to look as if it had been shelled by artillery. So we painted two words on the roof: NO MORE! The next day, the big friends came from the Marianas and, as we watched from the safety of a nearby tunnel, they circled the camp and, without opening their bay doors, flew back out to sea, firing off red rockets to show they'd received the message.

It was a surreal scene. But it didn't distract us from the fact that the generous and timely American response saved many of our lives. In the days that followed the drum showers, we settled down to caring for our sick and to some serious eating. Thanks to the US supplies, we began to gain a pound a day. The American generosity was especially notable given that few of the prisoners at Ohashi were American. Almost all were Canadian, Dutch, or British.

At about this time, I decided to go back to the nearby mine where we'd worked as prisoner labourers. I wanted to say goodbye to the foreman of the machine shop, a grandfatherly man who'd called me *hanchō* (squad leader), and had been as kind to me as the brutal rules of the country's military dictatorship permitted. It was both joyous and sad. We were happy that the war was over, yet sad at the knowledge that this would be our last meeting. I promised him that I would take his earnest advice and return to school as soon as I got home. "Hanchō, you go Canada now," he said.

I later learned that about three million Japanese soldiers and civilians lost their lives in the war. Millions more were left wounded. The country had been hit with two atomic bombs. Whole cities had been gutted by fire. At every level, the war had been an unmitigated disaster for Japan. Its people had become cannon fodder in a cruel and pointless project to conquer East Asia. My fellow ex-POWs and I visited the camp graveyard, and said one last goodbye to our comrades who'd found their last resting place so far from home. It was an unjust reward for such brave young men. And it was then that tears I couldn't control welled up in my eyes and streamed down my cheeks.

On September 14th, 10 days after Emperor Hirohito had publicly announced Japan's surrender, a naval airplane flew in from the sea and dropped a note to inform us that an American naval task force would evacuate us on the following day. Sure enough, on September 15th, landing craft beached themselves and hastily disgorged a force of Marines. Their motorized column sped inland to the Ohashi camp, led by a Marine colonel and armed to the teeth.

These were veterans of the long Pacific campaign. They'd survived many terrible encounters with the Japanese in their westward campaign across the Pacific, and they looked the part. After our captain saluted the colonel, they embraced, and the colonel told us how he planned to evacuate us, giving specific orders as to how it was all to be accomplished.

After he issued his orders, the Colonel asked, "Are there any questions?" Our captain said, "Yes, I have one. Sir. What in the hell took you so long to get here?" That at least brought a smile to those tough, weather-beaten Marine faces.

Following the Colonel's instructions, we mounted up, said *sayonara* to Ohashi and, after almost four years of imprisonment, began the glorious journey home to our various loved ones. I was in the last vehicle that left the camp that day. And as we departed, I observed a compound that was now completely empty—save for one forlorn figure, who'd emerged from his office and now stood at the center of a camp that once held 400 men. It was Lieutenant Zenkichi.

George MacDonell was born in Edmonton, Alberta in 1922. He served in the Royal Rifles of Canada, which deployed to Hong Kong in 1941 as part of C-Force, shortly before Hong Kong's capture by the Japanese army.

Featured image: Survivors from the Battle of Hong Kong who were held at Ohashi Prison Camp, photographed prior to their evacuation on September 15th, 1945. The author, then age 23, appears in the back row, fourth from the left.

VA, Federal partners plan for COVID-19 vaccination distribution

November 17, 2020

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today it is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners to develop a comprehensive COVID-19 vaccine plan to ensure VA safely and equitably distributes vaccines once authorized.

The plan will be a phased approach based on scientific and historical evidence, lessons learned from past pandemic vaccine plans and input from scientific experts both within and outside VA.

“In October, staff at VA medical facilities conducted important planning exercises in preparation for the vaccine,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “These exercises help us to address vaccine distribution, allocation, safety monitoring and supply tracking.”

COVID-19 vaccine implementation will include an initial limited-supply phase followed by a general implementation phase, when large supplies of the vaccine will be available to Veterans who want to receive one.

VA experts in ethics, health equity, infectious disease, logistics, pandemic planning, pharmacy and public health as well as those in the areas of change management, clinicians from various disciplines, data, education, IT, safety and training, along with government partners, were sought for input to help develop the plan. VA also conducted Veteran listening sessions for valuable feedback in the planning process.

To learn the latest information visit [CDC COVID-19 Vaccine \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html)