

# UMA Newsletter

Quarterly Newsletter for USPTO Veterans and Families

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Navajo Platoon 297 at Camp Pendleton. Courtesy of Museum of Northern Arizona MS-136-4-7

## A Vacation I'll Never Forget

By Katarzyna Wyrozebski

Every December my family and I travel to upstate New York for a reunion with all of my relatives who live in the United States. This year, we decided to go to hiking and sightseeing in Arizona instead. Although my relatives were not very happy about our new travel plans, I will probably never forget this trip.

My family and I started from Sedona, then we went up north to the Grand Canyon and continued east through Navajo Nation to see many beautiful landmarks such as Navajo Monument, Monument Valley, and Canyon de Chelly.

One day we stopped at a Navajo museum. As I walked in I saw a man probably in his late 80's, maybe even older. He was wearing a red cap with the Marine Corps logo. When I looked at him I could not help feeling anything but respect. For a person this age I knew that his experience during war was nothing like I have ever experienced. I bowed to him and as I made it through the museum on the very last wall I saw a huge sign:

OUR FATHERS OUR GRANDFATHERS OUR HEROS

It was an exhibit dedicated to the U.S. Marine Corps Infantry Navajo Code Talkers.

### THIS ISSUE

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Our Fathers Our Grandfathers Our Heroes

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### 2014 Board of Directors President Joe Hirl

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## OUR FATHERS, OUR GRANDFATHERS, OUR HEROES

In February 1942, the U.S. Marine Corps was approached by a man with an idea to use a Native American language for military communications. His name was Philip Johnson. He grew up in the Navajo territories, so he used the Navajo Language as an example. Four Navajos traveled with Johnson to Camp Elliot, Calif. for a demonstration. They were given a few minutes to review and prepare military messages and come up with substitutions in Navajo for military words. The demonstration was witnessed by Gen. Clayton B. Vogel, who immediately recommended that efforts be made to enlist 200 Navajos for the Marine Corps Infantry. The pilot began in April 1942 with 29 Navajos and the reasons for their recruitment were considered top secret.

Following the success of the pilot, recruitment orders were issued to enlist an additional 200 Navajos for the program. By spring of 1943, all services that enlisted qualified Navajo recruits were directed to divert recruits to the Marine Corps for the Code Talker Program.

In addition to regular boot camp, Navajo recruits underwent an additional four weeks of training to specifically learn Navajo Code. Upon completion of the training they were awarded Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) 642.

More than 450 Navajos went through the training.

Additions to the Navajo Code were made throughout the war. The basic concept de-

veloped in 1942 continued to be the foundations for all subsequent additions, and most of the terms from the original code remained the same. Navajo Code Talkers used the English alphabet and phonetically spelled words for the code terms. Subsequently, a fourth column was added to show modern spelling that students of Navajo language learned in school at the time.

Navajo Code Talkers joined the war in the Pacific after the invasion of Guadalcanal on Aug. 7, 1942, with the 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions. The code developed by Navajos was the most sophisticated, accurate, fast, and secure means of military communications during WWII. Navajos served on the front lines in ships, aircraft, reconnaissance, and underwater demolition teams, and their code tipped the balance of the war in the Pacific our favor, saving many lives. At the end of the war the Navajo Code included of over 800 code terms.

-Anonymous

Navajo Code Talkers Dec 1943 Courtesy of National Archives

### DID YOU KNOW

The first Code Talkers were used in WWI and were Choctaw Indians from Oklahoma and are regarded as the first Code Talkers to serve in US Military. Their involvement as Code Talkers was spearheaded by Col. A.W. Bloor and the first combat test took place on October 26, 1918. A Memorial to their service was erected in 1995 at the



Courtesy of National Archives, Navajo Code Talker Lloyd Oliver



## UMA Fitness

We stay fit. If you would like to join us, here is a good starting point:

Scuba Diving — POC Albert Gagliardi

Gym Workouts, Basketball/pick up games — POC Marta Dulko and Margaret Squalls

Tough Mudder Run, Body Combat —POC Marta Dulko and Kat Wyrozowski

Sky Diving and other exhilarating special events —POC Brent Howard

Game/sports watching events — Basketball, Soccer, College Football, and Monday Night NFL football if anyone is interested. — POC Brent Howard

**Fitness challenge** — Gym workout team challenges you to attend total body conditioning class with Drew on Mondays at 4 p.m. It is a good preparation for Tough Mudder. Can you outlast Kat and Marta?



# HR Corner

## Disabled Veteran's benefits

When living with a disability that arises out of your employment in the armed forces, life can pose many challenges. If you are a disabled veteran, here are some benefits that are available to you.

**Disability Compensation** is a tax free monetary benefit paid to Veterans with disabilities that are the result of a disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active military service. Compensation may also be paid for post-service disabilities that are considered related or secondary to disabilities occurring in service and for disabilities presumed to be related to circumstances of military service, even though they may arise after service. Generally, the degrees of disability specified are also designed to compensate for considerable loss of working time from exacerbations or illnesses.

**Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)** is a tax free monetary benefit generally payable to a surviving spouse, child, or parent of Service members who died while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training or survivors of Veterans who died from their service-connected disabilities. [DIC for parents](#) is an income based benefit.

**Special Monthly Compensation (SMC)** is an additional tax-free benefit that can be paid to Veterans, their spouses, surviving spouses and parents. For Veterans, Special Monthly Compensation is a higher rate of compensation paid due to special circumstances such as the need of aid and attendance by another person or a specific disability, such as loss of use of one hand or leg. For spouses and surviving spouses, this benefit is commonly referred to as aid and attendance and is paid based on the need of aid and attendance by another person.

**Student Loan Discharge:** If you have been determined unemployable due to a service-connected disability, you don't have to pay back student loans acquired before you became disabled.

**Property Tax Relief:** Some states exempt disabled veterans from paying all or part of their property taxes. Research the [laws](#) in your state regarding property taxes and disabled veterans. Most tax assessors require you to provide a letter from the VA every year in order to qualify. Some local tax officials aren't familiar with

these laws and may collect taxes you don't owe, so research the laws and speak with your tax assessor. If you believe taxes are wrongfully being collected from you, contact your state representative for assistance.

**Disabled Veteran License Plate:** You will need to call your local Department of Motor Vehicles to find out what documentation you should provide to receive a disabled veteran license plate. These plates are usually issued to 100 percent disabled veterans and are substantially cheaper to purchase and renew than a standard license plate. You should also be issued a handicapped parking hang tag with it.

**Dependents' Educational Assistance Program:** Your spouse and children may be able to receive money for college, vocational school, on-the-job training, correspondence courses, certification licenses, cooperative training, and more. Read the Department of Veterans Affairs' [DEA Pamphlet](#) to learn about eligibility and how to apply.

**Home Loan Funding Fee Exemption:** Veterans who are at least 10 percent disabled are exempt from paying the funding fee when obtaining a [VA Home Loan](#). This will save you thousands of dollars, as the funding fee can be upwards of 3 percent of the loan amount.

**Housing Grants for Disabled Veterans:** Certain Service members and Veterans with service-connected disabilities may be entitled to a housing grant from VA to help build a new specially adapted house, to adapt a home they already own, or buy a house and modify it to meet their disability-related requirements. Eligible Veterans or Service members may now receive up to three grants, with the total dollar amount of the grants not to exceed the maximum allowable. Previous grant recipients who had received assistance of less than the current maximum allowable may be eligible for an additional grant.

**Specially Adapted Housing (SAH)**

**Grant Eligibility for up to \$64,960:** VA may approve a grant of not more than 50 percent of the cost of building, buying, or adapting existing homes or paying to reduce indebtedness on a currently owned home that is being adapted. In certain instances, the full grant amount may be applied toward remodeling costs. Veterans and Service members must be determined eligible to receive compensation for permanent and total service-connected disability due to specific body members. **Special Home Adaptation (SHA)**



**Grant:** VA may approve a benefit amount for the cost of necessary adaptations to a Service member's or Veteran's residence or to help him/her acquire a residence already adapted with special features for his/her disability, to purchase and adapt a home, or for adaptations to a family member's home in which they will reside. To be eligible for this grant, Service members and Veterans must be entitled to compensation for permanent and total service-connected disability due to blindness in both eyes with 20/200 visual acuity or less, anatomical loss or loss of use of both hands or severe burn injuries.

**Temporary Residence Adaptation (TRA):** Eligible Veterans and Service members who are temporarily residing in a home owned by a family member may also receive a TRA grant to help the Veteran or Service member adapt the family member's home to meet his or her special needs. For more information, visit <http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/sah.asp>  
*Continued on next page...*

## HR Point of Contact

HR Representative for UMA and all USPTO Veterans:

Anthony Henderson 571-272-6160

[Anthony.henderson@uspto.gov](mailto:Anthony.henderson@uspto.gov)

HR Compensation and Benefits  
Division 571-272-6209



Courtesy of National Archives, Choc-taw Code Talkers

# Disability Benefits

**Supplemental Financing:** Veterans and Service members with available loan guaranty entitlement may also obtain a guaranteed loan or a direct loan from VA to supplement the grant to acquire a specially adapted home. Additional information about the Specially Adapted Housing Program is available at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/sah.asp>.

**Automobile Allowance:** As of Oct. 1, 2012, Veterans and Service members may be eligible for a one-time payment if they have service-connected loss or permanent loss of use of one or both hands or feet, or permanent impairment of vision of both eyes to a certain degree. They may also be eligible for adaptive equipment, and for repair, replacement, or reinstallation required because of disability or for the safe operation of a vehicle purchased with VA assistance. To apply, contact a VA regional office at 1-800-827-1000 or the nearest VA health care facility.

**Clothing Allowance:** Any Veteran who has service-connected disabilities that require a prosthetic or orthopedic appliances may receive clothing allowances. This allowance is also available to any Veteran whose service-connected skin condition requires prescribed medication that irreparably damages outer garments. To apply, contact the prosthetic representative at the nearest VA medical center.

**Allowance for Aid and Attendance or Housebound Veterans:** A Veteran who is determined by VA to be in need of the regular aid and attendance of another person, or a Veteran who is permanently housebound, may be entitled to additional disability compensation or pension payments. A Veteran evaluated at 30 percent or more disabled is entitled to receive an additional payment for a spouse who is in need of the aid and attendance of another person.

Additionally, other benefits available for Veterans with Service-Connected Disabilities are:

Disability Compensation for Sexual or Personal Trauma

Disability Compensation for Individual Employability

"Presumptive" Disability Benefits for Certain Groups of Veterans

Vocational Rehabilitation Benefits

Vocational Rehabilitation Benefits

Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI)

Former Prisoners of War (POWs)

Benefits for Filipino Veterans

This article does not list each and every benefit available to disabled Veterans, to learn about other benefits, visit the [eBenefits](#) portal and research available benefits in your home [state](#). Or, call the toll free numbers listed [here](#).

## Official Military Deployment/Reemployment Program (MDRP) Intranet Site Now Live

The Office of Human Resources, Compensation and Benefits Division now offers the [Military Deployment/Reemployment Program \(MDRP\) intranet site](#) as an online, one-stop shop for employees called to active duty, voluntarily and involuntarily, and those transitioning back from military service into the federal workforce.

The new MDRP site contains information regarding the responsibilities, benefits, and entitlements brought about by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994. This site also contains information about the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which can help employees and their families cope with stress and disruption associated with military duty.

If you have received active duty military orders or are planning to deploy in the upcoming months, call the Compensation and Benefits Division at 571 272 6209 to schedule an appointment to gain the benefits of this program. If you have any questions regarding military deployment and reemployment related to USERRA, email [MDRP@uspto.gov](mailto:MDRP@uspto.gov).



Boy Scouts from Alexandria VA Troop 680 welcoming Honor Flight Veterans at Dulles Airport along with Corps of Engineering Duty Officers



## DID YOU KNOW

Honor Flight events are expected to resume late April. Please contact Kat by mid-March if you would like to participate.



Tomb of The Unknown Soldier Honor Guard. Photo by Kat Wyrozebski

# Veteran Profile: **Capt. Thomas “Tommy” Worden, USAF**

**Tommy Worden**—a patent examiner in Art Unit 3669 (Vehicle Control Systems and Navigation)—has seen a lot of action for a young man of 32, including more than 55 combat missions as a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) lead engineer in Afghanistan.

“I saw a lot of terrible things, especially in Tagob Valley of Kapisa Province and at the gates of Bagram in Parwan Province in February of 2007,” said Worden, whose team was a constant target of improvised explosive devices, suicide bombers, mortar attacks, and small arms/rocket-propelled grenade attacks throughout their extended tour in 2006-07. “I learned a lot about life and what really matters.”

A native of Philadelphia who now lives in Virginia, he grew up in a home with two parents who worked as Navy civilians. His father had previously served an enlisted tour in the Navy. Worden was active in the Civil Air Patrol in middle and high school. When it came time to consider college and his own career in the military, Worden’s first instinct was to follow in his parents’ footsteps and join the Navy, but he fared poorly aboard his first rough-water boating excursion and ultimately changed his mind.

“I applied to all of the service academies, but went with Cornell when I found out I got a full-ride Air Force ROTC scholarship,” he said.

At Cornell he majored in civil engineering with a concentration in architecture. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in 2003 but took an academic delay to finish his mechanical engineering minor, which he had started while studying abroad and playing rugby at the University of Sydney, Australia in 2000. His nine-year career as an Air Force civil engineer officer included stateside tours at Air Force bases in California, Alabama, and Virginia, as well as overseas tours in South Korea, Qatar, and Afghanistan and completion of a master’s degree in engineering management from the Air Force Institute of Technology in Dayton, Ohio.

During his time as a PRT lead engineer in war-torn Afghanistan—the “toughest job” he ever had, he said—Worden commanded convoy missions of combat engineers, security forces, and civil affairs technicians who designed, contracted out, and supervised the timely and quality completion of critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, schools, clinics, and wells throughout the Parwan and Kapisa provinces, where the Taliban actively targeted U.S. and NATO personnel.

“I had to say goodbye to several friends before their time,” he said, reflecting on fellow service members killed in action, including his friend Staff Sgt. Yoon, a South Korean civil affairs specialist and interpreter for the PRT. Worden visited Yoon’s grave on Memorial Day 2010 while assigned to Osan Air Base.



*Then-1st Lt. Tommy Worden (left) in Kapisa Province, Afghanistan, 2006, with a South Korean engineering officer who worked with Worden in the Provincial Reconstruction Team.*

“I walked away with a meritorious service medal and two campaign ribbons for my service in Afghanistan, but I’m even more honored to have witnessed the valor, honor, service, and sacrifice of the men and women of our PRT who received bronze stars or even higher distinctions.

“I personally awarded a bronze star to one of my fellow engineers and now best friend, Tech Sgt. Derril McDonald, for saving my life over there.” On two separate occasions, McDonald’s swift actions saved their vehicle from a deadly ambush.

In other jobs as an operations flight chief and chief of program development, Worden supervised as many as 300 people and was responsible for more than \$300 million in construction projects. He retired from the Air Force as a captain in May 2013 and moved to Ballston that same month with his wife Sara, who is in the final stages of completing her dissertation in international security policy from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va.

“We love D.C.,” said Worden. “I love the USPTO, and I love working for the federal government and serving in any way I can. I’m looking forward to a long career here at the USPTO.”

In addition to joining the USPTO Military Association (UMA), Worden is active in the American Legion post in Old Town Alexandria. In his spare time he enjoys rugby, weight lifting, watching NFL games, sipping scotch, and playing poker or war strategy games.





## Current Events

### Fundraisers and volunteer programs

#### Honor Flight

Honor Flight will begin schedule flights in Late April. Please contact Kat by mid-March if you would like to participate. Please note that if you can still wear uniform you may be presented with opportunity to spend the entire day with veterans. A day like this is truly worth it.

#### Wounded Warrior Wards

The UMA teamed up with the [Yellow Ribbon Fund](#) and Pork Barrel BBQ to provide meals for the Wounded Warriors' of Ward 4 at Bethesda's National Medical Center / Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Special thanks to UMA VP Brent Howard for initiating the program. The warriors, families, caregivers and staff are appreciative of our program, volunteers and the quality of the food. They can't wait for us to visit again.

If you are interested in volunteering for future events at the Wounded Warrior wards in Bethesda or Belvoir, please contact Brent Howard.

#### Career Q&A for Veterans and their families at USPTO

Last Q&A session was a success. These are quarterly sessions. so if you have a topic you would like to see please contact [UMA@uspto.gov](mailto:UMA@uspto.gov)

#### Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) External Outreach

UMA members volunteer with ESGR in organizing H2H Events that teach current Veterans how to write effective resumes and how to gain proper interview skills. For more information, please contact Kat Wyrozebski or Lawana Hixon.

### Classifieds

Please submit photos of you and your family with a military theme. Top 3 winners will be included in the next issue of the newsletter. If you would like to post classifieds, please write to [UMA@uspto.gov](mailto:UMA@uspto.gov)

### Editors

Editor-In-Chief, Kat Wyrozebski  
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Looking for newsletter co-editors. If you would like to consider writing for the UMA Newsletter, please email us at [UMA@uspto.gov](mailto:UMA@uspto.gov).

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