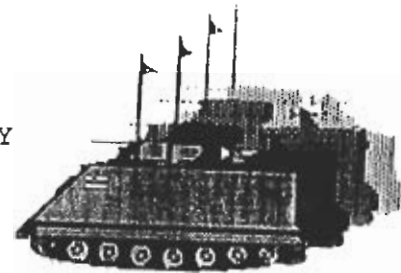


1ST BATTALION (MECHANIZED) 50TH INFANTRY



" ON THE RIGHT TRACK "

VOLUME NUMBER 2 -- DATED 31 MARCH 1998 -- ISSUE NUMBER 02

FROM THE
EDITOR'S DESK ...

LTC Joe Robinson ...



I first met this man 16 January 1998, at the Mid-Winter Conference held in Hershey PA by the VFW. He was our guest speaker that night and spoke briefly on the situation in Bosnia. After the question and answer period ended, Joe left the room, only to re-appear in 21st District's hospitality room later that evening. We listened attentively as Joe recalled his time as the commander of the American Forces stationed in Bosnia. If you have the chance to hear him speak, please do so. More on what he had to say in a later newsletter.

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Each newsletter will feature a brief history of one or more of the battalion members. This month's history is about two members.

The first one is Walter C Billups. Walter was a member of Bravo Company, 1st Platoon, 2nd Squad. He arrived with us via luxury cruise liner in September of 1967 and departed country in August of 1968. Walter has been married for 28 years and has two daughters. They live in a farming community in Northeast Missouri. Walter works for the Cyprus/Amex Corporation and his wife is employed as a Bookkeeper for a construction company in the area.

The second member is Timothy Patterson. a Charlie Company member, arriving in country September of 1967 with the battalion. He managed to survive on his "vacation" until that fateful day in May of 1968 when Alpha Company ran into an ambush near LZ Uplift, and he was wounded in the rescue. Tim left country and like most, got married and settled down to raising a family. Course, I think Tim got a little carried away. Tim has his own squad of nine (9) children. Tim and his wife, Rita, will be married 29 years in April. Congratulations big guy!!

The newsletters will profile members of the 1/50th. I would appreciate it if you would send a brief history of yourself along.

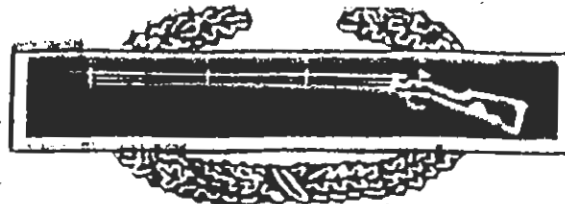
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1. Sometimes, it hit 9.8 on the scale of 10, What was it?

EDITOR'S PAGE



This article was e-mailed to me from a good friend that I met on the MVC area of Internet. It was written by Joe Casal.

When tomorrow starts without me, and I'm not there to see;
If the sun should rise and find your eyes all filled with tears for me.
I wish so much you would not cry, the way you did today,
While thinking of the many things we did not get to say.
I know how much you love me, as much as I love you,
And each time you think of me, I know you will miss me too.
But when tomorrow starts without me, please try to understand,
An angel came and called my name, and took me by the hand.
And said my place was ready in heaven far above,
And that I'd have to leave behind all those I dearly love.
But as I turn to walk away, a tear fell from my eye,
For all my life I'd always thought, I didn't want to die.
I had so much to live for, so much yet to do,
It seemed almost impossible that I was leaving you.
I thought of all the yesterdays, the good ones and the bad,
I thought of all the love we shared and all the fun we had.
If I could relive yesterday, just even for a while,
I'd say good-bye and kiss you and maybe see you smile.
But then I fully realized, that this could never be,
For emptiness and memories would take the place of me.
And when I thought of worldly things I might miss come tomorrow,
I thought of you and when I did, my heart was filled with sorrow.
But when I walked through heaven's gates, I felt so much at home,
When God looked down and smiled at me, from his great Golden Throne.
He said, "This is eternity, and all I have promised you,"
Today for life on earth is past, but here it starts anew.
I promise no tomorrow, but today will always last,
And since each day's the same day, there's no longing for the past.
But you have been so faithful, so trusting, and so true,
Though there were times you did things you knew you shouldn't do.
But you have been forgiven and now at last you are free,
So won't you take my hand and share my life with me?
So when tomorrow starts without me, don't think we're far apart,
For every time you think of me, I am right here, in your heart.

A carpet-layer is exhausted after a hard day's work. His partner did not show and he finally finishes putting down the carpet in a large house all by himself. Cleaning up his tools, he prepares to leave the house. As he does, he reaches in his shirt pocket for a cigarette and notices they are missing. Looking around, he notices a lump right in the center of the Living Room about the size of his cigarette pack.

Not wanting to rip up the carpet he just installed by himself, he finds a board and a hammer. Laying the board over the lump, he hastily hammers the lump flat, even he can't notice where the bulge was.

Sighing with relief, he heads for his truck, only to discover his cigarette pack on the front seat of the truck. Just then, the lady of the house appears. "The carpeting looks real good, thank you," she says. "By the way, have you seen my parakeet today?"

2. A brand of Canadian beer was shipped to Vietnam because no one would drink it. What was it?



Where Friends Meet



HEARD FROM SEVERAL GUYS

Lt. James L Wonsick lives in Columbus Ohio and says he will be meeting us at the next reunion. Bob Schaller found him in December of 1997 and we welcome Jim aboard. Welcome Home, Brother!

Parker Pierce sent another name of fellow member of the battalion, Russell Roth, from Oregon. Thanks brother! Really do appreciate you helping find our missing men. Russell has since joined the Association

Eugene Foppe sends his regards and "sorry we missed the reunion." Eugene's wife is ill and he could not make it, but hopes to in Kansas City. Eugene ... our best wishes go to your wife, for sure!

Bill Brennan, from HQ Company, called to say Hi and will have a story for you in the next newsletter. I find it very interesting. Bill was one of the first men from our outfit to set foot in Vietnam.

Heard from Norman "Sandy" Pottinger several times over the past few weeks. Sandy ... glad you joined the association and thanks for all your help. Sandy has volunteered to help out in any capacity.

Been getting a lot of names from Bob Schaler. Bob, Thank You very much. Everyone you put me in contact with has joined the association.

I just want to say, "Thanks to all of you for your support of the Association and the help you have given me at tracking down our men out there."

If anyone is interested in attending a "min-reunion" this fall, (probably in mid-September) in the Pittsburgh PA area, please contact me as soon as possible so I can make the necessary arrangements. I have not done any work on this yet, so let me know real quick if you are interested and I will make the contacts with the people I can.


This report came from the POW/MIA Internetwork, dated 2/16/98 ...

Phnom Penh, Feb 16 - The U.S. Embassy on Monday repatriated the flag-draped personal effects and remains of possible American servicemen missing in action in Cambodia since the Vietnam War. The remains were handed over and loaded onto a U.S. military Transport plane as an honor guard saluted during a ceremony at Phnom Penh Airport.

The remains will be taken to the U.S. Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii along with additional remains found at three crash sites in Laos, a U.S. Embassy spokesperson said. The personal effects and remains were recovered during a joint U.S.-Cambodian investigation in Northeast Cambodia. Some were from a helicopter crash site in a remote jungle and others were at the site of an F-4 air crash.

The embassy said it was thought the remains were of several servicemen, but did not give the number or names of the individuals associated with the remains to protect the privacy of their families. There are 75 Americans still unaccounted for in Cambodia.

3. Name the division unit responsible for Civic Action.



A TRUE STORY OF LOVE AND COURAGE



This story was written by a veteran from the backwoods of Georgia.

Walking down a path through the woods in Georgia in 1977, I saw a puddle of water on the path. I angled my direction to go around it on the part of the path that was not covered with water or mud. As I reached the edge of the puddle, I was suddenly attacked!

Yet, I did nothing, for the attack was so unpredictable and from a source that was totally unexpected. I was startled despite having been struck four or five times already. I backed up a foot and my attacker stopped assaulting me. Instead of attacking me more, he hovered in the air on a set of graceful wings right in front of me. Had I been hurt, I would not have found it amusing or funny, and I would not have been laughing. After all, I had just been assaulted by a butterfly!

Having stopped laughing, I took a step forward, only to have my attacker rush at me again. He rammed me in the chest with his head and body, striking me several times in a row. Again, I retreated a step while my attacker relented in his attack. Yet again, I tried to move forward only to have my attacker lunge at me again and again. This time though, I stepped back several steps to look the situation over. My attacker moved back as well to land on the ground. That is when I discovered why my attacker had charged me only moments earlier.

He had a mate and she lay dying, right there along the puddle where I was about to step. Sitting close to her, he opened and closed his wings as if to fan her. I could only admire his love and courage in his concern for his mate. He had taken it upon himself to attack me for his mate's sake, even though she was clearly dying with no hope of survival, and I was so much bigger than he. He did that just to give her those extra precious moments of life, if I have been so careless enough to step on her.

Now I knew why and what he was fighting for. There was really only one other option left for me as I carefully made my way around the puddle to the other side of the path. His courage in attacking something hundred of times larger and heavier than himself just to give his mate a few more seconds of life justified it. I could not do anything other than reward him by walking on the more difficult side of the puddle. He had truly earned those few precious moments to be with her, undisturbed. I left them both in peace for those last few moments of life they would have together, and sadly, continued on my way down the wet and muddy path.

Since then, I have always tried to remember the courage of that butterfly whenever I see obstacles facing me. I use that butterfly's courage as an inspiration and to remind myself that good things are worth fighting for.

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There was a great loss today in the entertainment world. The man who wrote the song, "Hokey Pokey" died. What was really horrible was that they had trouble keeping the body in the casket.

They put his left foot in and it wiggled all about ... they put his ... well, you know the rest.

4. What unit's patch was known as Poison Ivy?

MISCELLANEOUS
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Gentlemen:

The Association is growing into a very large group of close-knit men now and I have to say this: I am trying to put into the newsletter articles I feel might be of interest to the majority of members. I realize there will be, at times, things that one or more may not like to read. As an amateur at this, I ask your indulgence.

I am currently working on enlisting several people who I hope will help me to produce an attractive newsletter that we can all be proud of. As I mentioned in previous newsletters, if any of you out there have a story you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please forward it along to me and we will try our best to get it into a newsletter as soon as possible. Currently, I am working on adding things to the June and September newsletter and they are filling up quickly.

You will notice we now have address labels. This is because of the help that "Sandy" Pottinger has donated to the Association. On the label, you will note a date. This is to serve as a reminder of your dues you have paid and when they expire. Please Gentlemen, if you have any interest at all in preserving the hard work that went into starting the Association, continue to pay your dues when they are due. More about this in the next newsletter.

A STORY OF TAPS ...

It began in 1862 during the Civil War, when a Union Army Captain, Robert Ellicombe, was with his men near Harrison's Landing in Virginia. The Confederate Army was on the other side of this narrow strip of land. During the night, Ellicombe heard the moans of a soldier. Not knowing who he was, he risked his life to bring the stricken man back for medical attention. Crawling through the gunfire, he reached the soldier and pulled him behind his encampment. When the Captain finally reached his own lines, he discovered it was actually a Confederate soldier, but the soldier had died while he struggled to bring him back.

As the captain lit a lantern, he caught his breath and went numb with shock. In the dim light, he saw the face of the soldier. It was his own son. The boy had been studying music in the South when the war broke out. Without telling his father, he enlisted in the Confederate Army.

The following morning, the heartbroken father asked permission of his superiors to give his son a full military burial despite his enemy status. His request was partially granted.

The captain had asked if he could have Army band members play a funeral dirge for his son at the funeral. That request was turned down since the soldier was a Confederate. Out of respect for the father, they did say he could have one musician. The captain chose a bugler. He asked the bugler to play a series of musical notes found on a piece of paper in the pocket of the dead soldier's uniform.

This wish was granted. That music was the haunting melody we now know as "Taps" used in military funerals.

5. What was a "flying cow?"





ANOTHER STORY OF TAPS ...

The 24-note melancholy bugle call known as "Taps" is thought to be a revision of a French bugle signal called "Tattoo," that notified soldiers to cease an evening's drinking and return to their garrison. It was sounded an hour before the final bugle call to end the day. The last five measures of "tattoo" resemble "Taps."

The revision that gave us present day "Taps" was made during America's Civil War by Union Brigadier General Adams Butterfield, heading a brigade at Harrison Landing, VA. Up to that time, the U.S. Army's infantry call to end the day was the French final call, "l'Extinction de feux." General Butterfield decided the "lights out" music was too formal to signal the day's end. One day in July, 1862, he recalled the tattoo music and hummed a version of it to an aide, who wrote down the music. Butterfield then asked the brigade bugler, Oliver W Norton, to play the notes and, after listening, lengthened and shortened them while keeping his original melody. He ordered Norton to play this new call at the end of the day thereafter, instead of the regulation call.

The music was heard and appreciated by the other brigades, who asked for copies and adopted this bugle call. It was even adopted by Confederate buglers who had heard it. This music was made the official Army bugle call after the war, but was not named "Taps" until 1874. The first time Taps was played at a military funeral may also have been in Virginia soon after Butterfield composed it. Union Captain John Tidball ordered it played for the burial of a cannoneer killed in action. Not wanting to reveal the battery's position in the woods to the enemy nearby, Tidball substituted Taps for the traditional three rifle volleys fired over the grave. Taps was played at the funeral of Confederate General Stonewall Jackson ten months after it was composed.

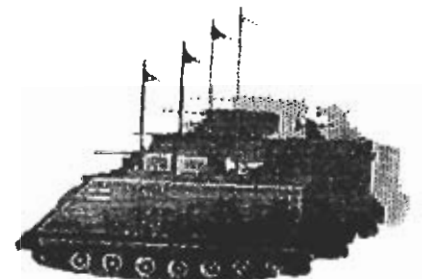
Army infantry regulations by 1891 required Taps to be played at all military funeral ceremonies. Taps is now played by the military at burial and memorial services, to accompany the lowering of the flag, and to signal the "lights out" command at the end of the day.

NOW!! ... Does anyone out there really know the TRUE version to the origination of "TAPS?" Let me know as soon as you can so I can print it in a future newsletter.

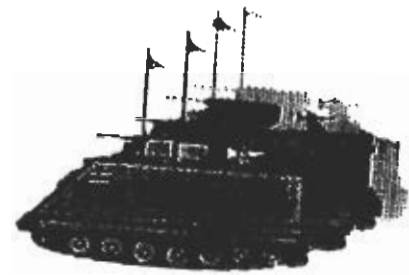
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I personally want to thank someone right now for a donation given to the Association in the amount of \$250.00. YES! That is not a mistake. A very generous member of the Association has sent a check for that amount. Right now, he wishes not to have his name published, but I want to say this: HEY GUY! THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART! You know who you are! I am sure ALL members of the Association would also like to thank you for YOUR donation. It is because of people like him that I feel we have one of the best groups of guys out there and because of his generosity, this association will continue until the last man saddles up for the final trip. Again ... THANK YOU VERY MUCH for the donation.

6. What was the flame-thrower track called?



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TET 68 REUNION, RICHMOND VA
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January 30, 31, and February 1, 1998



There are many good things to talk about since returning from the Tet Reunion. One thing I want to let you know about is one of the guest speakers, Colonel Fred Cherry, longest held black POW from Vietnam era.

After being introduced, Col Cherry thanked everyone for having him here. "Every time I start to talk about this, I get scratchy throat and teary eyed because I know what all of us went through."

His last mission from Thailand in a F-105 was against a SAM site. All flights had been cancelled over North Vietnam for the F 105's. "Someone cancelled the alert, but later, a fellow shook my bunk and said we had an 'Iron Hand'." Fred stated. So, he ended up being one to go. Prior to getting to the target, he was hit by small arms fire, since they were flying low to escape the radar.

"It pushed us down to tree top level because of the threat of SAM missiles. I was hit by small arms fire and I thought I had the problem solved and I corrected the situation from the cockpit. About one minute before my target, I loaded the weapon system, but smoke started to appear in my cockpit and I reached over to turn off three switches. Had I managed to hit those three switches, I think I would have had it made. But then, there was a explosion in the front of the plane and I knew that I would have to eject. I had accelerated to about 700 miles per hour, which should have been enough to kill me when I ejected, but it seemed someone was looking after me. I ejected and the parachute released automatically and I waited for the seat to disengage."

"But it didn't work so I went to the emergency pull and the seat separated, the chute opened and I counted to three. There was the ground and I hit hard and rolled. As I was able to get my composure together, I saw Vietnamese all around me."

Naturally, he was captured immediately. He had on an anti G-suit and the Vietnamese who captured him didn't know much about it plus the fact that he had a 38 under his right arm. They didn't like that at all. They pointed their weapons at him telling him to put his hands up.

"I didn't mind that so much since I knew I would be captured and taken prisoner. They didn't trust me cause my arm was too close to the 38. I finally was conscience enough to lean into my bad arm. I thought by doing that they would understand I was injured and they wouldn't fire on me."

They took the 38 and a hunting knife he had. They tried to take his suit off. He was sitting on the ground and the guy who had his knife tried to slit the suit since they couldn't get it off of him. "That's why I talk a little squeaky today," he said.

"So they tried to take my boots off but I wasn't keen on that idea I rolled on the ground acting like I was in extreme pain, which was no lie. Finally, someone who was in charge told them to let my boots go."

His ankle and wrist were broken and his shoulder was smashed. They took him to a check point and while riding in the jeep, one of the guards tried to get smart with him. He tried to push him out of the jeep, which didn't go over too well.

"We made it to what I think was a school. I was shot down about 11:45 in the morning and it was now 9 or 10 at night. I think we were close to Hanoi. We arrived at the building and this is where they first tried to interrogate me: I never had the rush or heart pounding that I expected. The first thing I thought was, Hell I am going to be here a long time, at least a month or two. Was I surprised."

"They asked me all kinds of questions and didn't get nothing. I began to think the way they were talking they might even send me back home if I talked straight to them, but I knew that was a lie. I was in seven survival schools so I was aware of their tricks. So they took me on to Hanoi and that is where they started to get rough, tying you up, beating you, and in my case, they threw me in one of those little cells where it looked like rats had gnawed through the bottom of the door."

"Finally after all this time, they took me over to Heartbreak and I had nothing but my flight suit to sleep on. No cots or blankets and I was getting beat every day and they didn't do or give me anything for my ankle, wrist, or shoulders, but I kind of expected that treatment."

He was kept at heartbreak for a few days. About 6 weeks later, he was moved to another camp. He had not been to a bath area for at least four weeks. One night the door opened and they pushed in a young man. He wondered if he was there to try to get some information from him.

"I didn't trust him at first, but he was actually the one who saved my life. He was navy, shot down in a F-4 five days before I went down in 1965. We played cat and mouse for a while cause I didn't trust him. The Vietnamese put him in there to find out information from me but I didn't give him any."

The Vietnamese figured if they put a young white navy guy in with an older black air force guy, sooner or later they would be at each others throat and they could get information from them. But, it worked out the opposite. They became and still are the best of friends. From 1965 to July of 1966 they shared the same cell. Until then, they had not done anything for his shoulder or ankle. He didn't know his wrist was broke until he got back to the states and was checked out there.

"I was given one of those blue sweat shirts to wear. My cell mate used his to make bandages for my shoulder and changed the dressing as much as he could. In just a matter of hours it was soaked with blood, my shoulder was still bleeding and leaking from the infection and it was really getting bad."

"Finally they took me for my first surgery and cleaned the wound with gasoline or alcohol and stuck an instrument in me to drain the infection out and put a compress on it. Then I returned to the cell."


"After the 93 days of torture and beatings and surgery I was moved into another cell. I was coughing up blood and my cell mate said he wanted to call the commander. Later I found out that I had a punctured lung. He took a white pot he had water in and told me to spit in the pot every time I coughed. He showed it to the commander of the base."

"I was taken to surgery and they opened me up from my shoulder blade all the way around and they removed my seventh rib. I thought this time I would not survive. They told me I had to have surgery or the bone chip that punctured my lung could puncture my heart and I would be dead, so I told them to go for it."

"I made it through that but things didn't get better for a while, until October. President Ho Chi Minh was rumored to have died around September of that year. But they didn't tell the people until the New Year. Then things started to get better. They knocked out some walls. They gave us six cigarettes instead of three, they didn't keep us separated as much, communications got better, we wrote letters home."

"We were moved to another camp with more POW's and while there we learned who was prisoners and about other camps and organized ourselves into a group and helped each other as much as we could."

"One night the B-52 bombing started again and the SAMS were going up after them, hundreds of them. Some of them flew right over our camp on their way to the bombers. Some of the bombs came close to our camp and we could see them going off in the distance."



"Then the cease fire was signed and we were told we would know what was in it within five days. They told us and we just stood there and listened without showing any emotions. They got nicer to us as the days passed and we waited. Then we started to leave but still were not sure that we were actually going anywhere. They took us to the airport and we could see the C-141's sitting on the runway and we processed through and loaded onto the airplane."

"We saw Americans and nurses and the plane started taking off but no one said a thing until we heard the wheels lock into the plane then everyone let out a scream. When we got to the Philippines, we were finally briefed on what was going on."

"But it was great to get back and we never ... never gave up on the American public. We knew what the guys in uniform were doing in the country trying to get us out but we knew they had their hands tied. We all know that freedom is high ... high priced and a lot of us proved that. Thank you. End of Speech ...

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ANSWERS TO THE TRIVIA QUESTIONS
>>>>>>>>>>>

1. The Pucker Factor
2. Carling's Black Label
3. S-5
4. 4th Infantry Division
5. Also known as a "Bladder Bird," it was a C-130 with a collapsible rubber tank used to carry liquids.
6. "Zippo."

A police stopped a motorist who was really speeding down the main street in the small town.

"But Officer," the frail young man said, "I can explain.

"Just be quiet while I write you a ticket," the Officer started to say as the young man continued to push on the gas pedal.

"Turn that car off!" exclaimed the police officer, yet the young man let it run. "I said, turn that damn car off and step outside the car."

"But Officer, I have to go, I am in a really big hurry," the young man yelled back at the policeman.

"That's it buddy, outta the car," the Policeman said, pulling him out and pushing him into the back of his police car.

"But, ... But" stuttered the young man, "I can explain all ..."

"Shut up," yelled the cop, "One more word outta you and you are going to be sorry. You are going to jail until I sort this out."

A few hours later, the policeman walks back to the cell where the young man had been sitting very impatiently. "Lucky for you," he said to the young man, "The Police Chief went to his daughter's wedding today, so he should be in a real good mood when he gets back here."

"Don't count on it," the young man yelled at the cop, "I'm the groom!"



 VETERANS AFFAIRS
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One of the questions veterans most frequently asked the National Veterans Service Staff pertained to facts about the National Cemetery System (NCS).

It is comprised of 114 cemeteries in 38 states (and Puerto Rico), as well as 33 soldiers lots and monument sites.

Burial in a National Cemetery is open to all members of the Armed Forces and Veterans discharged under conditions other than dishonorable as well as their un-remarried widows or widowers, minor children, and under certain conditions, unmarried adult children.

Also eligible for burial in National Cemeteries are members of the reserves, National Guard, and Reserve Officers Training Corps who die while on active duty training or have 20 years of service in the reserves credible for retired pay.

VA does not arrange funerals for veterans or their dependents. VA cemetery directors can assist family members in contacting military bases or VFW posts that may provide these services.

A copy of the Military Discharge Document bearing an Official Seal or a DD-214 is usually sufficient to establish eligibility for burial in a VA National Cemetery, on a military base or in a state veteran's cemetery. The Cemetery Director can order the appropriate headstone or marker. VA Form 40-1330, application for standard government headstone or marker, is submitted along with a copy of the DD-214 when burial takes place in a private cemetery.

Your VFW Service Officer can answer any questions you might have regarding internment, headstones, or markers.

SURVIVING SPOUSE ENTITLED TO ONE-TIME PAYMENT

Public Law 104-275 also provides that if a surviving spouse is not entitled to death benefits, the surviving spouse is entitled to the veteran's rate for the month of death, if the death occurred after December 31, 1996. If a veteran was in receipt of a compensation or pension and the surviving spouse claim for death benefits is disallowed, the VA will consider the application for death benefits to be a claim for the veteran's rate the month of death.

