



AARP Chapters are separately incorporated affiliates of AARP

Blacksburg Chapter AARP

Serving the Greater New River Valley, VA

www.blacksburgaarp.org

newsletter

November–December 2020



Look for a Zoom link sent through email a day before the meeting. The meeting will open at 11:45 for greetings and conversation. The program will begin at noon.

Upcoming Events

Dec. 12, Wreath laying, Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery, 1 pm (p. 4)

Jan. 20, LLI Preview of spring 2021 classes and events (Zoom)

Jan. 25, LLI online registration begins, 10 am

Nov. 17 Chapter Meeting

A Salute to Veterans and Military Families *Mike D'Ostilio*

Mike D'Ostilio retired from the U.S. Army in 1995 and from the federal government in 2015 where he served as the Chief of Investigations, Assistance, and Hot Line Branch for the Army Inspector General Agency.



He began working with AARP as a legislative volunteer in 2016. Mike has participated both at the state and federal level talking with legislative officials on healthcare and caregiving initiatives affecting seniors. He is also a member of the AARP Virginia Speakers Bureau. In 2017 Mike received the AARP Virginia Rookie of the Year Award.

Mike also is a volunteer with the National Park Service and works at the Fredericksburg Battlefield and Chatham Manor. Mike and his wife Marietta are Senior Visitor volunteers. This program provides isolated senior citizens with weekly home based visits promoting companionship and socialization.

Topics for his presentation include

- AARP's history of supporting veterans and their families
- Family caregiving resources
- Financial security planning
- Fraud scams targeting veterans
- Available resources for veterans and military families

Dec. 15 Chapter Celebration

Join AARP for our traditional holiday celebration featuring awards, music, a speaker, and highlights of our year.



Agenda

- **Music** by Becky Coffey, harpist, who will play holiday music for a sing-along
- Address by **Joyce Williams**, President, AARP Virginia
- Announcement of the recipients of the **Chapter Service Award** and the **Community Spirit Award**
- Announcement of three **statewide AARP awards**
- **Charitable Giving Donations** to eleven NRV organizations
- **Installation of new officers and board members**
- **Recognition of First Responders**
- **Highlights of our chapter year**

Look for a Zoom link a day or so before.

Upcoming Chapter Programs

(Third Tuesday, noon, via Zoom)

January 19, Wide Open Blacksburg: Providing fast gigabit fiber to homes and businesses, Dr. Andrew Cohill and Lynn Huber

February 16, Research on falling and other human factors associated with aging, Dr. Michael Madigan

March 16, Transcranial brain stimulation and implications for seniors, Dr. Alec Smith

In this issue

Poem about veterans and a reflection—2

President's Message—3

A Veteran Remembers—4

Wreath laying program—4

Board member profile: Kai Duncan—5

Downsizing and decluttering: Options for donation—6

Legislative report: Nursing home visits—7

Coronavirus and polio—7

This issue of the newsletter celebrates veterans and their service to our country in the month of Veterans Day.

Time to renew membership

Use the form on p. 8, or go online to blacksburgaarp.org/online-payments

Membership is for the year 2021.

Hunting Civil War Relics at Nimblewill Creek *James Dickey* 1923–1997

As he moves the mine detector
A few inches over the ground,
Making it vitally float
Among the ferns and weeds,
I come into this war
Slowly, with my one brother,
Watching his face grow deep
Between the earphones,
For I can tell
If we enter the buried battle
Of Nimblewill
Only by his expression.

Softly he wanders, parting
The grass with a dreaming hand.
No dead cry yet takes root
In his clapped ears
Or can be seen in his smile.
But underfoot I feel
The dead regroup,
The burst metals all in place,
The battle lines be drawn
Anew to include us
In Nimblewill,
And I carry the shovel and pick

More as if they were
Bright weapons that I bore.
A bird's cry breaks
In two, and into three parts.
We cross the creek; the cry
Shifts into another,
Nearer, bird, and is
Like the shout of a shadow—
Lived-with, appallingly close—
Or the soul, pronouncing
“Nimblewill”:
Three tones; your being changes.

We climb the bank;
A faint light glows
On my brother's mouth.
I listen, as two birds fight
For a single voice, but he
Must be hearing the grave,
In pieces, all singing
To his clamped head,
For he smiles as if
He rose from the dead within
Green Nimblewill
And stood in his grandson's shape.

No shot from the buried war
Shall kill me now,
For the dead have waited here
A hundred years to create
Only the look on the face
Of my one brother,
Who stands among them, offering
A metal dish
Afloat in the trembling weeds,
With a long-buried light on his lips
At Nimblewill
And the dead outsinging two birds.

I choke the handle
Of the pick, and fall to my knees
To dig wherever he points,
To bring up mess tin or bullet,
To go underground
Still singing, myself,
Without a sound,
Like a man who renounces war,
Or one who shall lift up the past,
Not breathing “Father,”
At Nimblewill,
But saying, “Fathers! Fathers!”

From *The Whole Motion: Collected Poems 1945–1992* (Wesleyan University Press) by James Dickey
Copyright © 1992 by James Dickey. Used with permission of Wesleyan University Press

The Burdens Veterans Carry: Unearthing Stories *Jim Dubinsky*

James Dickey's “Hunting Civil War Relics at Nimblewill Creek” graces this volume of AARP's newsletter. Originally published in *The Sewanee Review* in 1961 and later included in *Drowning with Others* in 1962, the poem describes what appears to be an autobiographical story of Dickey and his brother, Tom, searching for metal relics from the Civil War by using a mine-detector in a battlefield near Nimblewill Creek.¹

The poem opens with the persona accompanying his brother in search of “burst metals.” He waits to recognize the sound of the “dead cry[ing]” by watching his brother's face. The poet does not need a mine detector; he has his own, earned during his years at war. While his brother is “parting / The grass with a dreaming hand,” the poet is feeling “The dead regroup” and the “battle lines” redrawn “to include” him.

¹ Several sources indicate the actual battlefield was Nickajack, but Dickey changed the name for artistic purposes. Both are in Georgia, but Nimblewill was not the site of any battles in the Civil War. Tom actually collected one of the largest caches of Civil War artillery shells and ammunition.

When most people hear the name James Dickey (1923–1997), if they know his work, they think of *Deliverance*, his 1970 novel made into a major motion picture, starring Burt Reynolds, Jon Voight, and Ned Beatty, and featuring a song called “Dueling Banjos.” The movie, focusing on primal fears related to man and nature, earned three Oscar nominations and made Reynolds a star.

Before the fame from *Deliverance*, Dickey had won acclaim as a poet. And before becoming a poet, Dickey has served in two wars. At the age of 19, in 1942, just after one semester at Clemson, he joined the Army Air Corps and served as a radar operator in a night fighter squadron until the end of WWII. He also served in the U. S. Air Force during the Korean War.

This poem is a fascinating study of two brothers representing two segments of our population: those who have served in combat and those who have not. It offers readers insight into the impact of artillery shells and musket balls on humans during wars and the lingering effects of experiencing conflict on those who have fought in them.

Unlike his brother, the civilian whose focus is on artifacts of battle, the poet, as a veteran, focuses on the voices of those who died in battle. He not only feels this battlefield; he also is acutely aware of the “Bright weapons [he] bore” and their costs, which are “Like the shout of a shadow--/Lived with, appallingly close.” Successful hunting results in both men hearing “three tones.” The brother hears sounds in earphones; the poet hears a bird’s cry, which “breaks / In two, and into three parts.” These sounds, real or imagined, lead to “being changes.”

Dickey struggled with alcohol abuse all of his life; perhaps the changes he underwent during the war left him often on his knees, “still singing, [himself] / Without a sound.” When he served, few recognized or addressed the lingering mental and emotional scars of war. He dealt with those shadows all of his life. Now, at least, we are more aware.

As we approach Veterans Day, Dickey’s “Hunting Civil War Relics at Nimblewill Creek” seems an appropriate reflection on life and death, on our country’s past and the wars fought, and on the cost not only of many lives lost but also of the price paid by those who survived. The poem is also a reminder of just how easy it is to focus on the artifacts of war rather than on those who fought them, or, even if we do recognize the burdens, we are not equipped fully to recognize them for the burden they carry on our behalf.



Jim Dubinsky is an Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Writing at Virginia Tech (VT). He served 28 years in the U. S. Army. He has taught at USMA in the Department of English, the U.S. Army Field Artillery School, and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. He is a founding director of the VT

Veterans in Society (ViS) initiative, sits on the Veterans Studies Association board, and was the first director of VT-Engage, VT’s center for student engagement.

Vittles for Vets

All of the regional food banks desperately need donations (see a list with addresses in the September issue, available online at blacksburgaarp.org). But in this month and in honor of veterans, consider donating to Vittles for Vets:

7757 Walker Farms Drive
Radford, VA 24141

President’s Message *Don Creamer*

Memo to the U.S. Army

Thanks for a Life-Changing Experience



I seldom think about my time in the Army, but when I do it is with pride that I “did my bit,” as the British were fond of saying about those who served in WWI. I am proud to be a veteran, in my case, of the Korean War. I entered the Army as the Korean War was moving toward the armistice that still describes the nature of the conflict today.

Serving in the Army did several things for me. It gave me financial independence from my parents who barely had financial independence of their own. It gave me confidence that I was able to carry out adult duties and responsibilities as well as the next person. It gave me opportunities for leadership and knowledge of accountability for one’s actions. It gave me a world view that I might never have realized without the “army experience.” It taught me how to be a team member, shouldering my share of effort in the accomplishments of the group. It gave me first-hand knowledge of another culture—in this case, the German culture—where I spend two years living and working. It taught me respect for leadership of others and talents beyond my current grasp.

I was never in harm’s way during my service in the Army; rather, I had the opportunity to engage in serious intellectual activities as a member of the Army Security Agency. I lived on an Army base in Herzogenaurach, Germany, where the entire base was devoted to intercepting Morse code messages from countries all over Europe, the Balkans, Russia, and Northern Africa. Some of our members operated machines that copied the designated messages, but I served with a unit that manually intercepted these messages and copied them on paper using a manual typewriter. All of these activities were conducted on a 24/7 basis. We never shut down. Eventually, I became a Trick Chief, meaning that I supervised one of the Tricks or units that operated on a rotating basis from days, evenings, and midnight shifts.

Army life never was all work. We had ample time off from pounding on a typewriter to enjoy ourselves. We traveled throughout Europe. We gained a sense of multiple cultures. We became experts on respective beers from each European country visited. We met interesting people and learned that the universe does not just revolve around the U.S. but embraces the globe made up of unimaginably diverse peoples.

On page 4 of this newsletter there is a photo of me when I entered the army. This photo shows a young man eager to experience life but almost completely naïve about the life to follow. What did follow was rewarding professionally and personally, and today I am happy to remember my debt to the Army.

A veteran remembers *Don Creamer*

I joined the Army about six months after graduating from high school. I enrolled in college that September but soon discovered that I did not have enough money to make it on my own financial status. I had decided that I could not ask my parents for another dollar, especially since they did not have an extra dollar, and saw an opportunity to become financially independent by joining the Army. I even talked a friend to join with me who was in similar financial circumstances. There was no family history of military service prior to my joining. Interestingly, my son eventually joined the Air Force for almost identical reasons and at the same time of life that I joined the Army.



I chose to join the Army frankly because it was the only branch of military service that I knew much about at the time. I now have great respect for all military branches, but I expect that if I were making the decision to join now, I likely would make the same choice.

My basic training was conducted at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas. Toward the end of that training, I was assigned to the Army Security Agency and sent first to Fort Devens in Devens, Massachusetts, then a short time later to what is now Fort Gordon in Augusta, Georgia, where we learned to send and receive Morse code. At the time, Fort Gordon was the headquarters for the Army Signal Corps and now is the Army Cyber Corps.

My permanent assignment was in Herzogenauach, Germany, where our units intercepted Morse code signals from Europe, the Balkans region, Russia, and Northern Africa. These messages were captured and sent immediately to the National Security Agency near Washington DC for de-coding and analysis. I served in this assignment for about two years, and my total service was three years. I enjoyed my time in Germany and while on leave was able to travel to many countries in Europe and Scandinavia.

I could write a book on what I gained from my service in the Army. I entered as a teen-age boy and quickly became a man. I had no idea who I really was until I joined the Army. I gained knowledge of self that I suspect I might never have acquired had I not dumped everything and taken up the adventure of self-discovery in military service. I gained confidence, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and temperament to lead in whatever endeavor I faced. I gained a world-view that changed my entire outlook on life. All of these accomplishments continue to influence me today. I shall forever be grateful for the lessons learned in the Army.

SW Virginia Veterans Cemetery

Wreath Laying Ceremony Dec. 12

The Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Veterans Cemetery of Southwest Virginia is scheduled for Saturday, December 12, 2020 at 1 pm (with gathering of volunteers beginning at 12:30). Volunteers expect to lay 1,500 live wreaths at the graves. Masks and social distancing will be required.

The cemetery is located in Dublin Park. Directions are available at the website: www.swvavcv.org

The Ceremony includes a motorcycle drive-by, the UAW Veterans Freedom Truck, presentation of the colors, a military band, the Honor Guard, and distinguished guest speakers. Family members are invited to lay wreaths first followed by all others who wish to participate.

Ceremony volunteers advise everyone to check the website at www.swvavcv.org in case inclement weather or new coronavirus restrictions limit the ceremony. However, wreaths will be laid on the grave sites regardless of conditions.

Blacksburg AARP supports this wreath laying program as part of its annual charitable contributions. The volunteers appreciate the support, especially this year when they were unable to hold any of their yearly fundraisers.

The photograph below, by Judith Jones, is from the Wreath Laying Ceremony in 2019.



Meet Board Member Kai Duncan

Kai Duncan joined the AARP Board for a three-year term in the class of 2022. At the editor's request, he prepared this profile. You will see that he brings a lot of leadership experience to AARP. Thank you for your leadership in AARP and the community, Kai.

I am a retired educator with a BA in Music and an MS in Sports Management/Athletic Administration from Virginia Tech. I was born and raised in Christiansburg.

My first teaching job was in Craig County, Virginia. I was the high school band and choir director. I taught general music K through 8th grades at two elementary schools. I had two beginning bands and one intermediate band. I also coached the Junior Varsity Girls Basketball Team.

I spent one year as a nursing assistant at Heritage Hall Nursing Home in between my teaching jobs. Of all of the jobs that I have had, I probably learned more about myself and about life there.

My next teaching job was at Auburn High and Middle School. I was the High School and Middle School Band Director for 23 years. While there I coached the Junior Varsity Girls Basketball Team, the Girls Tennis Team, and later the Varsity Girls Basketball Team. I also was the Athletic Director for a few years and had the opportunity during that time to serve on the Virginia High School League Executive Committee.

My next position was the Montgomery County Fine Arts Supervisor. I spent 8 years working with an outstanding group of art and music teachers. I retired from Montgomery County Public Schools in 2013.

Other things about me:

- I am a member of the Blacksburg Community Band and have been a part of the group since its beginning. I play mostly brass instruments, currently the euphonium.



- I have helped manage Homeowners Associations since 1991. I am currently the treasurer for my current neighborhood.
- My parents are 92 and 93 and still living at their home. I try to keep them off the road as much as I can (yes they still drive!).
- I love to push mow my yard (it takes me at least 3 hours) but it may be time for a riding mower.
 - I finished the Master Naturalist program a few years ago and am still trying to find my niche there.
 - I am a Docent at the Montgomery Museum in Christiansburg (formally called the Lewis Miller Museum) and also organize the docent schedule each month.
 - I am the current president of the Montgomery County Retired Educators Association and find the group absolutely delightful!! We are trying to figure out how to stay active yet safe.
- I am a member of our local Dialogue on Race. Good work is being done to have important conversations to guide us in what should be next.
- I am a member of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee for the Women's Basketball Coaches Association. I have helped present LGBTQ Diversity Trainings throughout the state and in West Virginia.
- I love supporting live music in our area and find it more and more important to my wellbeing.
- I love being a part of the Lifelong Learning Institute and hope I never stop learning new things.
- I absolutely love to walk and bike outdoors. I love to plant things and watch them grow.
- I also love to watch the space station every night that it comes over and find the night sky intoxicating. We live in an amazing Universe!



Follow-up from the October Meeting

Downsizing and Decluttering: Places to Donate

At our October meeting, Lesa Wynn, President of Project Move UP, shared information about regional places to donate goods as you work on downsizing and decluttering. Lesa strongly encourages AARP members to donate not only to provide goods where they can be useful but also to keep items that may otherwise be repurposed out of the landfill.

Project Move UP assists individuals with personal transitioning of spaces—whether for a move, renovation, or to streamline space to live more efficiently. See their website for more information on their services: www.projectmoveup.com

This not a complete list of local donation centers, merely the ones where Lesa donates on a regular basis. She includes a list of items that are currently wanted or needed. Because these centers may have reduced hours during the pandemic, you might call before you take items.

The organizations welcome money donations as well as goods.

The YMCA Thrift Shop 1000 North Main Street, Blacksburg, 552-2633

- Appliances
- Furniture (it all gets sanitized)
- TVs, they can sell the newer flat screens, and they have initiated a partnership with a recycling center locally to recycle the older projector screens and tube TVs
- Mattresses and boxed springs

Habitat for Humanity ReStore 1675 North Franklin, Christiansburg, 381-1155

- Sofas
- Desks, large and small
- Entertainment centers
- Windows and screens
- Armoires
- Mattresses, boxed springs
- Dining room furniture
- China
- Ottomans
- Crystal
- Carpets
- Tools

Women's Resource Center 1217 Grove Ave, Radford, 639-9592; donations may be dropped off at the door 9–5 M–F

They desperately need the following nonperishable items and supplies

- Mac and cheese dinners
- Jell-O fruit cups, or dry packaged snack stuffs
- Pasta meals
- Clorox wipes
- Hand Sanitizer
- Soap
- Shampoo
- Conditioner

These all need to be new and unopened.

The Humane Society Second Time Around 107 Ellett Rd, Blacksburg (closed until further notice)

- furniture, knick-knacks, household goods, books, and collectables; see details at www.hsmcshelter.com/second-time-around-store

Blacksburg Interfaith Food Pantry

706 Harding Ave, Blacksburg, 951-8134; M, T 4–6 pm; W, Th 10–11:30 am

- all non-perishable food items

MCEAP Thrift Store 308 W Main St #2948, Christiansburg, 260-3173

- food, supplies, clothing, household items
- See a list at mceap.com/donate/

Goodwill Industries 255 Peppers Ferry Rd NE, Christiansburg, 381-1544 www.goodwillvalleys.com/donate/donate-goods/

- Clothing
- Accessories
- Shoes
- Toys
- Books
- Linens
- Cookware, Dishware
- Furniture
- Computers—any brand, any condition
- Small appliances
- Electronics
- Sports Equipment
- Collectibles

Floyd Friends of Asylum Seekers

PO Box 628 Floyd, VA floydfriendsofasyllumseekers.org

To coordinate dropoff or pickup of donated goods, call Tara at 540-230-7459.

A new group in the NRV has formed to help asylum seekers. Thanks to Jennie Reilly for alerting us to the group and its mission and needs.

The Floyd Friends of Asylum Seekers community supports Floyd's legal resident asylum-seekers through donations that cover medical visits, legal advice, rent and transportation costs. The community also volunteers transportation services and donations in kind in response to specific needs of the asylum seekers. Currently, this group supports 31 asylum seekers who are residents of Floyd, VA.

See their Christmas wish list at tinyurl.com/floyd-asylum

You could also purchase a gift card for Friends of Asylum Seekers at Once Upon a Child (onceuponachildchristiansburg.com) or Plato's Closet (www.platoscloset.com/location/christiansburg-va/).

New Virginia Regulations on Nursing Home Visitation

With the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic last March, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a federal moratorium on nursing home visits. The visitation restriction was put into place to limit Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) exposure and spread. Since that time, CMS has recognized that physical separation of nursing home residents from family and other loved ones has taken a toll on residents and has led to declines in their physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being. Recognizing that physical, emotional, and spiritual support from family and friends can provide significant benefit to nursing home residents, on September 17, CMS issued new guidance and recommendations on visitation. In this guidance, CMS states that “if a facility has had no COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days and its county positivity rate is low or medium, a nursing home *must* facilitate in-person visitation consistent with the regulations” and that “failure to facilitate visitation, without adequate reason related to clinical necessity or resident safety, would constitute a potential violation. and the facility would be subject to citation and enforcement actions.”

Subsequently, the Virginia General Assembly passed two identical bills adopting and giving greater definition to the new CMS visitation guidance. These bills were approved and signed into law by the Governor on October 21, 2020. The law states that the regulations “shall require each nursing home and certified nursing facility to establish a protocol to allow each patient to receive visits, consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and as directed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.” The new regulations go on to say that a nursing home must publish on its website, or communicate to its residents in writing, its plan for providing visits.

The CMS guidance is substantial and covers outdoor and indoor visitation as well as special allowances for Compassionate Care situations. It is the biggest change to date in the guidance for nursing home visitation, with the feds telling nursing homes to open up for more visits.



Positive Response to LLI Zoom Classes

Early results from fall LLI class evaluations show that most participants are happy with the Zoom format for classes and special events. Participants indicate that Zoom was easy to use and that they plan to sign up for future courses offered by Zoom.

Look for a preview of spring classes and events on January 20. Online registration begins January 25.

Coronavirus and Polio *Ben Crawford*

The coronavirus pandemic has brought back memories to me from about 1940, when polio raged and frightened parents. I entered first grade in Welch, WV, not far from Wytheville. Wytheville was in the national news because it had the highest polio rate per capita in the nation. Wytheville, on a major north-south route, would not let vehicles stop—it forced all non-residents to drive through.

To isolate me, my parents moved me to live on a relative’s farm in Virginia, near Blacksburg, and I went to school at Luster’s Gate in Montgomery County. When a child contracted polio, his or her clothes, toys, and other contents in the room were burned. I remember talk about burning homes where polio was found. I don’t know if that actually occurred but do know it was talked about.



Blacksburg Chapter #2613

Chapter meetings are the third Tuesday of each month via Zoom at noon. Members will receive the link by email a day before the meeting. Board meetings are the first Tuesday of each month at 10 am.

Chapter Officers 2020

President • Don Creamer, dgc2@vt.edu
Vice President • Leslie Pendleton, lpendleton@gmail.com
Secretary • Lisa Moose, lisa.m.moose@outlook.com
Treasurer • Pat Ballard, pballard@vt.edu
Assistant Treasurer • Ruth Anne Niles, rniles2@icloud.com

Board of Directors

2020: Isabel Berney, Jeananne Dixon Bame, Hugh VanLandingham
2021: Doug Feuerbach, Judith Jones, Lisa Moose, Leslie Pendleton
2022: Linda Correll, Chuck Burress, Kai Duncan
Newsletter editor: Carolyn Rude

AARP Website www.blacksburgaarp.org



Blacksburg Chapter #2613
 Don Creamer, President
 P.O. Box 10082
 Blacksburg, VA 24062

**Nonprofit
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**Blacksburg Chapter
 Member Application for 2021**

mail this form or join/renew online at blacksburgaarp.org/online-payments

Name: _____

Spouse/Partner: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Annual (*Calendar Year*) Dues: **\$15.00** (*includes spouse or partner*)

New ___ Renewal ___ 90+ years old (free) ___

Please consider an additional donation to support our AARP chapter and its projects. \$10___ \$25___ \$50___ \$100___ Other \$___

Donations to the Blacksburg Chapter help us carry out our mission and community service activities while keeping member dues as low as possible. However, donations to the chapter are not tax deductible.

Please make your check payable to "Blacksburg AARP Chapter #2613."
 Mail the check and this form to: .

AARP Blacksburg Chapter • P.O. Box 10082 • Blacksburg, VA 24062