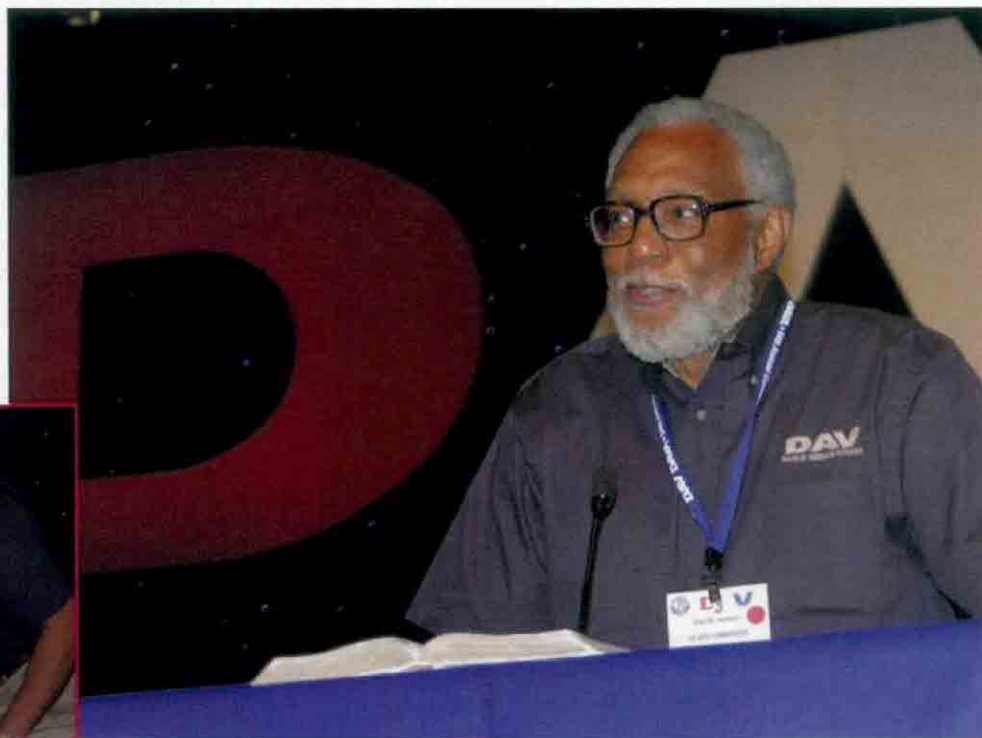


*Below, DAV Immediate Past National Commander James E. Sursely, left, congratulates Paul W. Jackson moments after Jackson was unanimously elected DAV National Commander by delegates at the 84th National Convention in Las Vegas.*



## Paul Jackson Elected National Commander

**T**he brightest moment of a stellar 84th National Convention in Las Vegas was the unanimous election of National Commander Paul W. Jackson of Colorado. The combat veteran vowed to launch a year of determined leadership on behalf of our nation's disabled veterans and their families.

"How humbled I am that you have chosen me to represent the DAV as your National Commander," Jackson said to the throng of convention delegates. "Thank you for the confidence you have placed in me. I will do all in my power to be worthy of this truly great honor."

The U.S. Marine Corps and Army veteran of the Korean and Vietnam wars said he shared a strong commitment to serving fellow veterans and their families because they are linked by a common bond.

Commander Jackson praised his predecessor, Past National Commander James E. Sursely, for his dedicated service. "Thank you, for your commitment and service," he said. "I wish you all the good things in life."

Sursely said his year of service as National Commander has been the culmination of his life's dream. "It goes without saying that I couldn't have accomplished what I have

without your support this past year," he said. "Thank you for your devotion to duty and all your dedicated work on behalf of this fine organization of ours."

Commander Jackson's election culminated an exciting and productive four-day National Convention, featuring seminars, workshops, awards presentations, and the hard work and planning required to protect the rights and benefits of the nation's disabled veterans, including the newest generation of war wounded now returning from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Reminding the 5,000 DAV and Auxiliary delegates and guests of their responsibility to act in the interest and support of veterans, Commander Jackson said, "We need to focus on taking an active part, both individually and collectively, in direct service to veterans," he said. "We need to redouble our efforts to build greater awareness and support for veterans programs, both in Washington and among the American public."

Judy M. Steinhouse of Fargo, N.D., was elected Auxiliary National Commander 2005-2006. (See page 24 for a complete list of DAV and Auxiliary National Officers.)



In addition, convention delegates enacted by-law changes designed to help improve Department and Chapter business practices that will ensure the public's trust in the organization is maintained by the highest standards. Included will be annual audits of Department and Chapter spending and fundraising activities, reviewed by the National Organization.

"I really like the emphasis put on all the things this organization stands for," said Francis X. O'Connell, a DAV member from Pompano Beach, Fla., attending his first National Convention.

The National Convention got underway Saturday, Aug. 13, with the Board of Directors meeting, featuring a financial report by National Headquarters Executive Director Richard E. Patterson, who said that Americans continue to recognize the DAV's mission of service to disabled veterans through their generous contributions.

Board Chairman Alan W. Bowers,

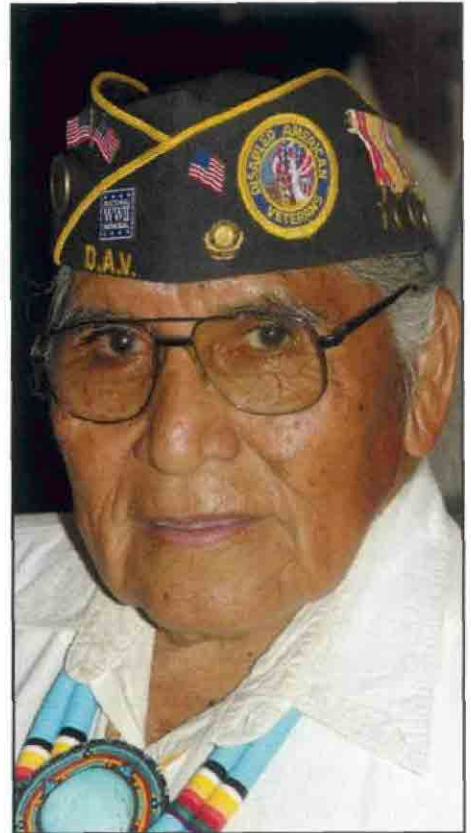
noted that the public's contributions demonstrate strong support for the organization's programs of service to disabled veterans and their families.

"This is an amazing report," said board member and National Judge Advocate Michael E. Dobmeier. "It shows the trust the American people have in our organization."

Later, hundreds gathered at the Leadership Seminar to hear retired Army Gen. James L. Anderson focus on the tools necessary to develop future leaders for the organization. "The one point I want to make is that a leader must have a servant's heart," he said. "It is only by being a servant to your people that you can become a true leader."

The seminar was the first of several offered at the National Convention covering Membership, Communications, Benefits Protection, Service and Legislative issues, POW/MIAs, and Women Veterans.

The Opening Session of the National Convention began Sunday, Aug. 14. Convention Chairman Gerald Ogle welcomed the large crowd and addressed the history of the city of Las Vegas, highlighting its role in the defense of our nation.



*Below, Department of Massachusetts Color Guard opens the 84th National Convention in Las Vegas. Below right, retired Army Gen. James L. Anderson addresses the Leadership Seminar, which focused on the tools necessary to develop future leaders for the organization. Right, a delegate from the DAV Department of New Mexico listens attentively during one of the many information seminars presented at the 84th National Convention.*





*Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year John Devine, center, accepts his award from National Commander James E. Sursely, left, and National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson. Right, Ethel H. Bussey, a member of Unit 10 in Augusta, Ga., accepts the Past National Commander's Outstanding Auxiliary Member of the Year Award presented by Auxiliary National Adjutant Maria Tedrow, left.*

National Commander Sursely, who was completing his year of leadership, said he was tremendously honored to serve disabled veterans.

He added that America strongly supports disabled veterans, but needs the knowledge to help. "It falls to us to take the lead and to ensure that the American people know of the plans proposed by the Administration and our elected leaders in Washington to shortchange veterans health care, services, and benefits," he said.

Sursely, a triple amputee of the Vietnam War, said one of the most heart-warming events of his life was visiting the wounded from Iraq and Afghanistan at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. "One of the veterans I met was Brian Kolfage who also is a triple amputee," he said. "I could see both courage and pain in his eyes. His spirit was overwhelming, as was his determination to live a full life. There were many others I visited, along with their parents, wives, and other loved ones. In them, I saw the future of our organization."

Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson told the delegates he had great pride in serving veterans on the national level. "As Secretary, I have the wonderful opportunity to serve, to

give back to our country's greatest treasures – its veterans," he said.

Addressing the funding shortages for VA health care, Nicholson said efforts were underway to resolve the problem. "At the VA, we know you're concerned about the budget for 2005 and beyond," he said. "We hear you, we agree, and we are taking action."

Nicholson also promised a VA health care system that will meet the needs of the newest generation of disabled veterans. "We will make sure that the soldiers, when they return, will

have adequate health care," he said.

Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation Chairman Lois Pope updated delegates on the planned American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial. "The Foundation is working to create the one and only memorial in Washington, D.C., to commemorate your sacrifices for our freedoms," she said. "You have earned our nation's undying gratitude."

Auxiliary National Commander Gertrude Tidwell praised the Auxiliary's tremendous dedication on behalf of disabled veterans.



*Massachusetts DAV Chapter 40 Commander Ralph Barrett, left, learns more about Freedom Team Salute from Army Colonel Bruce Kramme. The program, which seeks to saluting those who support soldiers and recognizing army veterans who have served, was among many information booths set up to provide information to delegates and guests attending the 8th DAV National Convention.*

“Our members are determined to continue our mission to disabled veterans,” she said. “The Auxiliary supports our service, legislative, and voluntary service programs. The only way to make things happen is to stand strong with DAV members.” The first Bugle Award was presented to Fox Television host Oliver North and Producer/Director Steven Tierney of “War Stories with Oliver North” to recognize their contributions on behalf of our nation’s veterans.

The Bugle Award was created this year to recognize outstanding reporting and programming on vital public policy issues relating to veterans as well as telling the stories of the courage and honor of our nation’s disabled veterans and their families.

North noted the term “hero” is often stretched beyond its definition. “The real heroes are those who put themselves in harm’s way for others,” he said. “This is a room full of heroes. What the DAV does is help people use their skills and talents who would otherwise not have had the chance.”

Dennis Cirbes of Ford Motor Company again demonstrated the firm’s commitment to the DAV’s Transportation Network with a donation of eight new 12-passenger vans. Two of the vans were unveiled amid fanfare to the delegates. The vans will be used by VA medical centers in Washington, D.C.; Iron Mountain, Mich.; Chillicothe, Ohio;

Portland, Ore.; Fort Meade, S.D.; Spokane, Wash.; Clarksburg, W. Va.; and Cheyenne, Wyo. Since 1996, Ford has donated to the DAV a total of 106 vans worth approximately \$2.5 million.

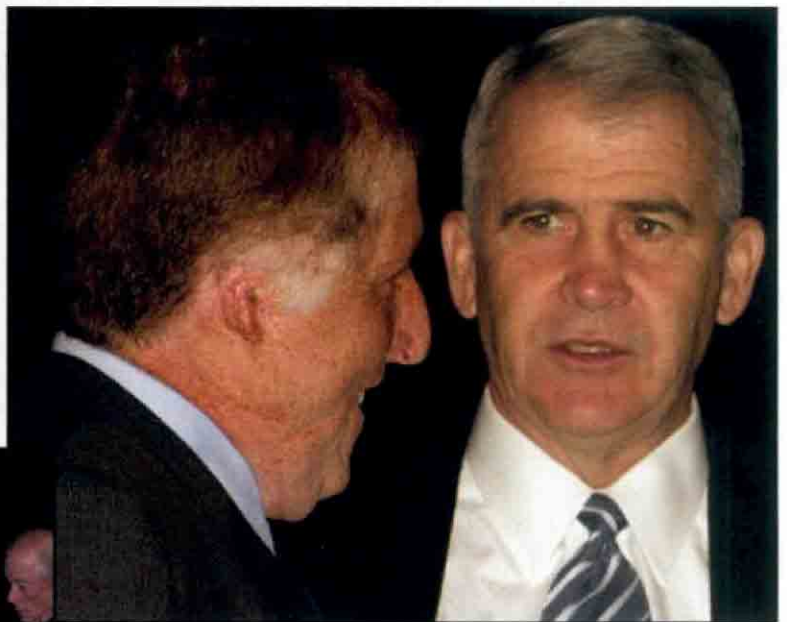
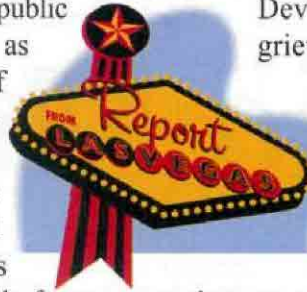
Cirbes also presented \$50,000 to the Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship Program. These scholarships recognize outstanding young volunteers who are active participants in the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Program.

Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year, John Devine told his touching story of recovery from grievous wounds received during the Vietnam War.

Suffering the loss of his right leg, severe injuries to his left leg, and significant hearing loss, Devine said, “Everyone is faced with a challenge. When faced with a challenge, just go for it. Do it.”

Devine said after he returned home, he had to learn to enjoy life slowly over the first year. Many people helped him during his recovery and rehabilitation, including members of DAV National Amputee Chapter 76 in Malverne, N.Y., where he has served three terms as Chapter Commander. Despite his disability, his competitive spirit led him to become an outstanding ski instructor, avid bowler, and superior golfer. (See the July/August *DAV Magazine*.)

*(Continued on page 23)*



*Top left, members take advantage of the Information Technology services available at the National Convention to learn how to contact their elected representatives in Congress. Left, POW-MIA Committee Chairman William B. Taylor of Colorado, left, presents a Flag of Honor to National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson. Above, 4th Jr. Vice Commander Roberto Barrera, left, talks with Oliver North of Fox News prior to the presentation of the new DAV Bugle Award to North and colleague Steven Tierney.*

## National Convention

*(Continued from page 13)*

The Past National Commander's Outstanding Auxiliary member of the Year Award was presented to an overjoyed Ethel H. Bussey, of Unit 10, Augusta., Ga., who is noted for her work with junior Auxiliary members. "We all want to achieve anything that is possible," she said in accepting what she called her "highest honor."

The prestigious George H. Seal awards, honoring remarkable DAV and Auxiliary volunteers, recognized Troy Bowling of Lexington, Ky., and Ruth Bier of Austin, Texas.

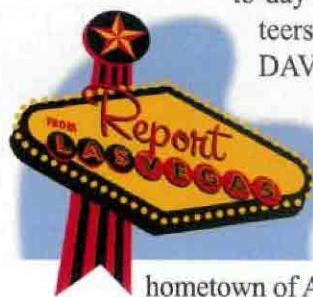
Bowling, 78, has donated more than 56,000 hours volunteering at VA medical centers, spending the last 40 years contributing as a volunteer at the Lexington VAMC.

As a Marine wounded on Iwo Jima, Bowling said he promised that if he could survive the combat, he would live a life of service. "Volunteering has saved my life," he said. "Working for others keeps me alive."

Bier, with nearly 36,000 hours as an Auxiliary volunteer, works at the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System outpatient clinic in Austin. She is responsible for the day-to-day activities and services for volunteers and patients and coordinates the DAV Transportation Network at the clinic.

Bier was unable to attend the National Convention due to ill health. Her award was later presented to her in her

hometown of Austin.



Andrew B. Layton, 17, of Battle Creek, Mich., with more than 182 hours of service at the VA medical center in Battle Creek, Mich., was presented the first place award in the Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship Program.

The annual awards recognize 12 outstanding young volunteers who are active in the VA Voluntary Service program. (See the July/August *DAV Magazine*.)

National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson opened the National Convention's business session on Sunday, Aug. 14, with his report on the National Organization's activities for 2004-2005.

"It's been another successful year for the DAV," he said. "And you can be very proud of your role in our successes. Because everything we do is a team effort, it is your hard work that makes it happen for all of us."

Wilson said DAV membership has grown to a record 1,300,727 and the number of fully-paid life members was approaching a record 1 million mark. "We, more than anyone else, understand why there needs to be a DAV, especially now with so many of our fellow Americans returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, and all over the world bearing the wounds and scars of war.

"War is an ugly business, made even more so when it affects someone you know," he said. "The DAV is just as important today as it was in the beginning ... those who come home from war wounded and sick need the care and attention of a grateful nation.

*(Continued on page 29)*



Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation Chairman Lois Pope, right, talks with a DAV Auxiliary member about the planned American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial.



National Commander James E. Sursely, left, and National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson, right, present the \$15,000 first place award in the Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship Program to Andrew B. Layton, 17, of Battle Creek, Mich. Layton volunteered more than 182 hours of service at the VA medical center in Battle Creek.



*"Mr. Las Vegas," entertainer Wayne Newton, right, receives the DAV National Commander's Special Recognition Award from newly elected National Commander Paul W. Jackson, accompanied by Past National Commander James E. Sursely, seated, and National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson. Newton was recognized for his tremendous entertainment contributions to active duty military men and women and veterans worldwide, during closing ceremonies at Las Vegas.*

## National Convention

*(Continued from page 23)*

Noting that membership has reached an all-time high, National Membership Director Michael J. Walsh said there will be many DAV members serving the newest generation of disabled veterans.

He attributed the continuing growth in membership to the outstanding work of

recruiters and National Service Officers. "They have proved yet again that innovation and leadership can overcome adversity...and that membership in the DAV is a valuable asset."

U.S. Congressman Jon C. Porter (R-Nev.) began his remarks at the National Convention session on Monday, Aug. 15, by praising the delegates for "reaching out to veterans all over the nation, and you touch the veteran's heart."

"As a member of Congress, I am so proud of you and share your pride," he said. "You are truly America's heroes."

Gerri Schroder, an aide to U.S. Congresswoman Shelley Berkley (D-Nev.) brought National Convention delegates a message of praise. Schroder said Rep. Berkley, a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee "believes we should honor the commitment to care for our veterans."

National Service Director Randy Reese emceed the annual Employment Awards and the new VA Employee Awards.

"It is crucial that veterans – especially disabled veterans – enjoy the satisfaction and self-esteem of earning a fair living," said Reese. "The National Commander's Employment Awards recognize truly worthy individuals and companies for their efforts toward employing veterans."

The Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year, James E. Gilmer, an employment specialist at the Gainesville Career Center, Gainesville, Ga., was recognized for his remarkable record in finding jobs for disabled veterans. Gilmer told delegates he was grateful for "the honor to work with veterans."



*Above, Joseph F. Wallace, right, a member of the DAV Chapter 1, the National Blind Chapter, listens intently to information provided by a medical technician as part of the free health fair provided to delegates attending the 84th National Convention. Right, a hit with everyone at the National Convention, Stage and screen actor Gary Sines and the Lt. Dan Band wowed delegates and guests with a high energy music concert.*



*Top left, Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson addresses the 84th National Convention. Actor and musician Gary Sinise, top right, greets some of the youngsters attending Fun Night. Right, National Commander James E. Sursely, left, and National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson, center, accept a ceremonial key to eight new 12-passenger vans donated to the DAV by Ford Motor Company. Presenting the key is retired Ford executive Dennis Cirbes.*



John Heritage, Jr., of the Texas Workforce Center, Richardson, Texas, received the Outstanding Local Veterans Employment Representative Award for his compassion and professionalism helping unemployed veterans find suitable employment.

AKAL Security was named the Outstanding Large Employer of the Year. The Espanola, N.M., company has a remarkable record of employing veterans. Accepting the award for AKAL Security, Army Contracts Division Director Rick W. Durham, said "the best workers are our veterans. They are the kind of workers we look for."

West-Tek Company Police of Smithfield, N.C., received Outstanding Small Employer of the Year, but was unable to send a representative to accept the award. It was presented later at the company's headquarters.

For the first time, the DAV honored VA employees for their dedication to

improving lives for disabled veterans and their families. Three outstanding VA employees were presented the new National Commander's Outstanding VA Employee awards. Nancy Reissener, Associate Director of the Northern Florida and Southern Georgia Veterans Health System in Lake City, Fla., received the National Commander's Award for outstanding performance as an employee of the Veterans Health Administration in recognition of her compassionate and consistent advocacy for veterans using VA health care facilities.

Veterans Benefits Administration employee Douglas B. Wadsworth, Salt Lake City, Utah, Regional Office Director, received the National Commander's Award for his outstanding performance and extraordinary advocacy on behalf of more than 339,000 veterans in Utah, Alaska, and Montana.

The National Commander's Award for the outstanding VA National

Cemetery Administration employee was awarded to Alan S. Sumitomo, a project director for the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii. Sumitomo began a Compensated Work Therapy program there to help disabled veterans make the adjustment back to the community workforce and further contribute to society.

"I was deeply impressed by the professionalism of our organization in honoring the VA employees," said David W. Irby, a member of Chapter 61 in Mt. Airy, N.C.

The National Convention also included a variety of seminars and workshops, and the opportunity to enjoy some of the great entertainment Las Vegas offers.

The Fun Night reception featured actor Gary Sinise and his Lt. Dan Band. Sinise, who portrayed Lt. Dan Taylor in the 1994 film *Forrest Gump*, entertained the crowd with a variety of music and dancing.

Business resumed on Wednesday, Aug. 17, with the National Service Foundation annual report by President Gary Burns, who praised the corps of National Service Officers, who are important assets of the Foundation and its fund raising efforts. "They accounted for more than \$1 million in donations in the last year," said Burns, recognizing the five top division fund raising offices.

"War has made the Charitable Service Trust more necessary," said Chairman Richard E. Marbes in presenting the Trust's annual report. "The Charitable Service Trust is there for our newest generation of disabled veterans, with \$2.2 million in revenue. The true measure of the Trust is its support."

Keeping with tradition, after the reports DAV Departments, Chapters, and individual members made donations to the programs, including \$82,000 to the National Service Foundation, \$65,550 to the Colorado Trust, \$5,100 to the Charitable Service Trust, and \$9,150 to the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation.

The unanimous election of National Officers at the afternoon session marked a spirited beginning for the new membership year. Joining National Commander Jackson as National Officers are Senior Vice Commander Bradley S. Barton, 1st

Jr. Vice Commander Robert T. Reynolds, 2nd Jr. Vice Commander Raymond E. Dempsey, 3rd Jr. Vice Commander Roberto Barrera, 4th Jr. Vice Commander Wallace E. Tyson of Raleigh, N.C., National Judge Advocate Michael E. Dobmeier, and National Chaplain Rev. Dr. Edward Bastille of San Mateo, Calif.

At the Executive Committee meeting following the election of National Officers, National Adjutant Wilson offered his congratulations and noted the beginning of another historic year for the DAV.

"We stand at the beginning of exciting challenges and possibilities to fulfill our mission of service to disabled veterans and their families," Wilson said.

"The camaraderie at the National Convention is what's best," said Leonard F. Humes, a member of Chapter 114 in San Antonio, Texas.

"The Board of Directors meeting concluded the work of the National Convention with the election of Past National Commander Sursely as Chairman and Senior Vice Commander Barton as Vice Chairman.


Later, National Convention delegates and guests kicked up their heels at a banquet featuring a special presentation to entertainer Wayne Newton and a performance by the USO's show troupe "American Spirit."

The DAV recognized Newton's long

career of dedication, patriotism, and compassionate service to America's veterans. As Chairman of the USO Celebrity Circle, Newton spearheads efforts to bring entertainment and appreciation to the thousands of brave men and women serving overseas.

"Wayne has led 14 USO foreign tours and was the first performer to entertain American troops during the height of the fighting in Afghanistan in 2001," said National Adjutant Wilson. "He led USO tours to Iraq twice in 2003 and then returned in 2004. Wayne is committed to serving those who serve and sacrifice for our country."

Newton said he was thrilled and honored to receive the DAV award from National Commander Jackson and Past National Commander Sursely. "I must tell you this is one of the highlights of my life," he said. "I am humbled beyond words because so many of you have given so much more than I. We wouldn't be here without you."

"It's been a wonderful convention." Timothy D. Hedgecock, a member of Chapter 56 in Lawton, Okla., said. I hope everyone encourages the younger veterans to be a part of our great organization." 



*DAV Department of Virginia delegates get in early for front row seats at one of numerous National Convention information seminars.*



*National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson, right, escorts Auxiliary National Adjutant Maria Tedrow at the introduction of National Officers concluding the 84th National Convention in Las Vegas, Nev.*