



Brad Barton Pledges Service with Honor

Left, Past National Commander Paul W. Jackson, left, presents new National Commander Bradley S. Barton with his National Commander's pin at the 85th National Convention. Above, National Commander Barton salutes the delegates who unanimously elected him to the DAV's highest National Office.

By Thom Wilborn

Amid Chicago's towering skyscrapers, an enthusiastic crowd of thousands attending the 85th DAV National Convention unanimously elected Bradley S. Barton to the pinnacle of leadership as National Commander.

"I am touched and deeply honored to be selected by my fellow disabled veterans as your National Commander," said Barton. "I will do my very best to serve you and carry on our mission of service and hope."

More than 3,000 delegates and their guests converged on the Hilton Chicago Hotel Aug. 12- 15 to conduct the crucial business of the DAV, elect national officers, recognize those who support disabled veterans, establish the legislative priorities of the organization and expand their knowledge of the important issues affecting our nation's veterans.

In accepting the mantle as National Commander, Barton affirmed the DAV "is still a vital force in the lives of disabled veterans and their families."

"As I think about this new generation of Americans serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and all around the world, I am more convinced than ever that the DAV needs to be there for them, just as it was for you and me," said Barton. "By connecting with the new generation of disabled veterans,

we will be able to grow well beyond our historic one million life-member mark."

"We will continue to build an even stronger, more active membership that truly is the very best veterans service organization on the face of the earth."

National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson told the Board of Directors meeting on Aug. 11 that the DAV continues to be successful in its mission supporting disabled veterans and their families. "We're extremely proud of the outstanding year the DAV has had," Adjutant Wilson said. "We have spent more and more on service programs each year, thanks to our 1.3 million members nationwide for their continued support."

The colorful National Convention Business Sessions—from the red, white and blue of the opening ceremonies to the rainbow of colors of the National Order of Trench Rats robes to the brightly colored lights of the concluding presentation of National Officers—were filled with stirring moments of patriotism and vital information on the future for disabled veterans.

Contrasting the hard work during the day, evenings were filled with entertainment at the National Commander's

reception, Fun Night with actor Gary Sinise and his Lt. Dan Band and the music of the Spectrum Singers at the Presentation of National Officers dinner.

Then-National Commander Paul W. Jackson opened the National Convention saying he reached an “important milestone” in his life when membership this year reached his goal of one million fully paid life members. “This was a momentous year in my life, and the DAV,” he said.

“This milestone shows to Congress and the administration that we are a force to be reckoned with when it comes to disabled veterans and their families,” said Jackson. “It is especially important for today’s and tomorrow’s disabled veterans because so many of our young men and women are fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and other places around the world. They deserve nothing but our best.”

Thanking the membership for their generous support during his year as National Commander, Jackson said

the DAV’s emphasis on service and advocacy in action for fellow disabled veterans made his term a really great year.

“You have given me a great opportunity to work on behalf of our disabled veterans and their families,” he said. “I have seen a glimpse of the future, and I can tell you that there is much to offer.”

Sharing memories of his year as National Commander, Jackson noted his trip to Iraq where he witnessed first hand the courage and sacrifice of today’s service members.

“I was immediately impressed with the spirit of the young men and women who are putting their lives on the line in a war against a ruthless enemy,” he said. “I believe each new generation is the Greatest Generation. I can report to you that this generation serving in Iraq is among the finest in a long line of Greatest Generations.”

“I saw the confidence and dedication in each of them,” said Jackson. “And I told them that if they ever need us, the

DAV is here to help.”

“There were some great speeches at the National Convention,” said Clyde C. Hishok, a delegate from Chapter 60 in Warren, Mich. “Paul Jackson is a great speaker. I think he really got the point across.”

Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson praised the delegates as those who have “a unity of mission to those who serve in uniform.”

“It’s abundantly clear that the members of the DAV are devoted to one’s highest calling—helping your fellow veteran,” he said. “I think the most prized segment of our society is our veterans. While there is disagreement on the [Iraq] war, there is no disagreement about the warriors.”

Secretary Nicholson said the VA is facing the challenges of increasing claims and providing medical services to veterans. He said the VA is trying to be more timely and more accurate in deciding claims and working with more than one million VA patient appointments each week.



Above National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson, left, and then-National Commander Paul W. Jackson pause for a few minutes before the start of the 85th National Convention. Center, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund president Jan Scruggs tells National Convention delegates about the proposed Vietnam Memorial Museum addition.



Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson addresses delegates to the National Convention.

One of the greatest challenges according to Nicholson is the management of veterans' personal computerized information which was inadvertently compromised this summer when a laptop computer containing data on 26 million veterans and active duty military personnel was stolen from the home of a VA employee. An investigation ultimately determined the personal information was not accessed, but the VA realized there was a dangerous risk of personal identity theft as a result. "We are making top to bottom changes, he said. "We are changing the culture of this organization."

Auxiliary National Commander Judy M. Steinhouse told the National Convention she was ending a year of service that was "filled with many wonderful experiences."

She said the Auxiliary fulfills its mission of service to disabled veterans better than ever before. "We're there to step up to the plate whenever needed," she said. "The Auxiliary will always be there to honor, serve and protect our disabled veterans."

Ford Motor Company Fund continued its long history of supporting the DAV when it donated 11 new vans to the Transportation Network and \$50,000 to the Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship Program, which each year awards 12 scholarships to deserving young men and women who have generously donated their time and compassion to the disabled veterans in their community.

"Your work helps build better communities for all of us," said Fund Contribution Manager Sandra Nicholls. "Ford knows what you do is extremely important. The DAV has always stood up for America and those who serve liberty and so will Ford Motor Company."

The vans, valued at more than \$250,000 and donated without cost to the DAV, continue more than 80 years of partnership between Ford and the DAV. The DAV has purchased 1,795 vans, at a cost of nearly \$37 million, that have been donated to VA medical centers nationwide since the transportation program began in 1987. The

vans are used in the DAV's Transportation Network to take sick and disabled veterans to VA medical centers and return them safely home. Since 1996, Ford Motor Co. has donated 117 vans to the Transportation Network.

Life-long veterans' advocate and Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Gordon H. Mansfield was honored as the Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year for 2006 during the opening session.

Mansfield, a decorated, combat-wounded Vietnam veteran, has dedicated his life to helping disabled veterans and their families by serving in many leadership roles in private and government agencies. He also became involved with forming a DAV Chapter in Marion County, Fla., and is a life member of the DAV.

"Gordon Mansfield has exhibited a lifetime of outstanding determination to serve the needs of our nation's disabled veterans," said Commander Jackson. "This is the DAV's most

(Continued on page 21)



Above, then-National Commander Paul W. Jackson congratulates then-Auxiliary National Commander Judy M. Steinhouse who summed her year of service as "filled with many wonderful experiences." Above right, Golden Corral Marketing Manager Dolly Mercer thanks the DAV for its partnership on "Military Appreciation Monday" hosted by the restaurant chain each November.



National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson, right, and then-National Commander Jackson accept a ceremonial key from Ford Motor Company Fund Contribution Manager Sandra Nicholls, center, for the donation of 11 new vans to the Transportation Network.

National Convention

(Continued from page 9)

prestigious award, and Deputy Secretary Mansfield's life of service only adds to its distinction."

"The opening Business Session was great," said Gregory K. Lyle, a member of Chapter 11 in Mt. Vernon, Va. "The whole package was just great. We got everything we wanted to know about the DAV and our mission."

National Adjutant Wilson opened the National Convention's Aug. 12 afternoon session with his report on the activities of the DAV. Introducing an informative video presentation about the work of the DAV, Wilson said that the fall elections are greatly important to the future of veterans. "We have the right and obligation to inform our members how elected officials vote on issues affecting disabled veterans and their families."

"There are some very big challenges up ahead," said Wilson. "We must stand shoulder to shoulder on everything we do to help disabled veterans and their families."

National Membership Director Anthony L. Baskerville in his report to the National Convention praised DAV recruiters for reaching the goal of one million fully paid Life Members among the rapidly changing veteran population.

"We closed the membership year ahead of our goals, bringing DAV's total membership to nearly 1.4 million members," Baskerville said. "With 1,006,935 fully paid life members, our membership continues to flourish because of the tireless efforts put forth by our recruiters."

Assessing the current generation of veterans, Baskerville said that "modern disabled veterans have less in common with Vietnam veterans than Vietnam veterans had with World War II and Korean War veterans."

"We're going to have to recognize the needs of this younger, dynamic generation," he said. "If we're going to remain relevant, and truly build better lives for disabled veterans and their families, we're going to have to evolve and be willing to change to meet new realities."

Baskerville said that while Vietnam veterans now make up the largest percentage of DAV membership, they do remain only a part of the organization. "We cannot afford to be divided by the periods of time in which we volunteered to fight for our nation," he said. "For the evolution we must make in the coming years may be the most critical period of time in our history."



Baskerville recognized Samuel C. Bordeaux of Chapter 5 in Gulfport, Miss., who recruited the one-millionth fully paid DAV life member, Brian K. Thomas of Pascagoula, Miss. Also recognized as the Recruiter of the Year was Department of California Adjutant Kenneth G. Musselmann for signing up 346 new members.

A powerful report on the status of veterans' legislation in Washington was delivered by Washington Headquarters Executive Director David W. Gorman during the second day of the National Convention.

Gorman warned veterans that the very core and future of veterans health care and benefits were threatened by legislation pending in Congress. "Some members of Congress advocate programs and policies that are insulting,



Left, Washington Headquarters Executive Director David W. Gorman delivers a powerful report on the status of veterans' legislation to the National Convention. Center, then-National Commander Paul W. Jackson, left, and National Membership Director Anthony L. Baskerville, right, recognize Samuel C. Bordeaux, of Chapter 5 in Gulfport, Miss., who recruited the one-millionth fully paid DAV life member, Brian K. Thomas of Pascagoula, Miss. Right, National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson presents his report on the activities of the DAV to build better lives for disabled veterans and their families.

disrespectful and a slap in the face to disabled veterans," he said.

"Today, veterans' benefits and health care are viewed by many as a vast resource that some in Congress hope to loot for other purposes," Gorman said. "Veterans programs are under assault at unprecedented levels, and only you can prevent it."

Urging National Convention delegates and guests to vote in the November elections, Gorman said a vote for those who don't support veterans programs is a vote against veterans.

He said that legislation allowing attorneys to represent veterans with disability claims would "dramatically increase VA spending and not benefit veterans. It will guarantee taking real dollars out of the pockets of disabled veterans and surviving spouses."

Gorman said legislative attempts to shift the burden of responsibility from Congress to unelected, appointed commissions would abandon the constitutional guarantees of representative government. "It shifts congressional powers to the President and unelected commissions," he said. "Congress would have to do nothing."

"We see no justification to subject veterans programs to the whims of unelected, uninformed commissions that may not fully appreciate our nation's obligation to care for its veterans," he said. "Make no mistake about it, it's money out of your pocket and it's medical care denied when you and your family most need it."

Gorman warned that the trend to merge VA medical centers and military hospitals could cost veterans their identity in health care. "Will veterans be absorbed into the military health care system?" Gorman asked. "The next logical step would be to absorb veterans into the Medicare system."

"We cannot allow the wave of the future to be fewer benefits and inadequate health care," he said. "We must do our best to communicate the needs of veterans to our elected representatives and to withhold our votes from those who seek to take away our rightful benefits."

"Dave Gorman's report was truthful and bold," said Kent A. Hoffman, a member of Chapter 5 in San Antonio, Texas. "He was articulate and left no questions unanswered. We need to tell

it like it is, and Dave Gorman did."

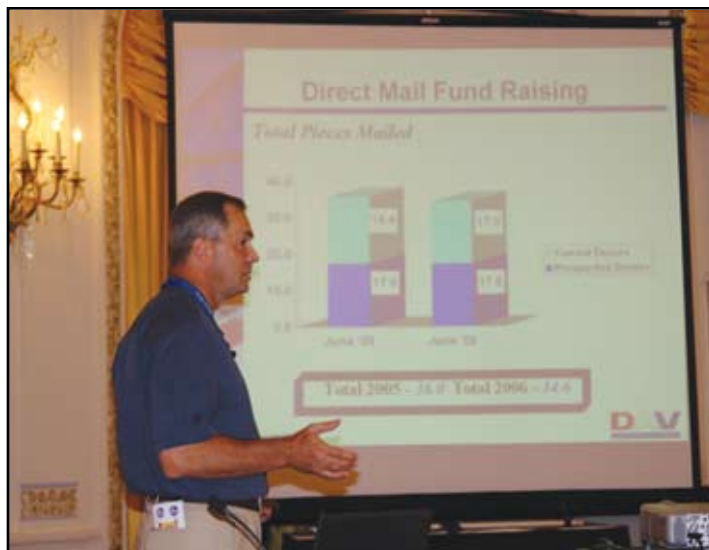
After the recess of business sessions, convention delegates were treated to a series of informative and educational seminars which sparked lively discussions of the issues affecting disabled veterans and their families.

The Service and Legislative Seminar was highlighted with an appearance by U.S. Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales, who thanked disabled veterans for their sacrifice and reassured them that the Justice Department will enforce all laws protecting the employment rights of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"We feel it is an honor to serve those veterans this way," he said. "I hope that knowledge of these laws will become universal. Federal law prohibits discrimination against these returning soldiers."

The seminar continued with presentations by officials from VA, other government departments and key staff members from the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees discussing a variety of veterans issues, including allowing attorneys to represent veterans' claim cases.

"We disagree that attorneys will



Left, National Headquarters Executive Director Richard E. Patterson updates the Board of Directors on DAV's successful fundraising activities. Right, new DAV National Blind Chapter leaders are sworn in.

increase claims case backlogs,” said Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee Professional Staff Member Jonathan A. Towers. “It’s a right that should not be denied to veterans.”

But House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Majority Counsel Director Kingston E. Smith opposed paying the earned benefits of veterans to attorneys for representation. “Veterans should not have to spend a dime of their money on getting their benefits,” he said.

The final day of the National Convention began with the annual reports of the National Service Foundation and the Charitable Service Trust. National Service Foundation President Gary Burns reported a new high in contributions last year, and Charitable Service Trust Chairman Richard Marbes reported Internet donations had increased 95 percent. Marbes said income from donor advised funds had increased by 74 percent and unsolicited gifts increased by 82 percent from last year.

Following the introduction of the National Order of the Trench Rats officers, DAV members, Chapters and Departments made their traditional donations to DAV’s programs, contrib-

uting \$74,852 to the National Service Foundation; \$40,500 to the Colorado Trust; \$13,250 to the Disabled Veterans Life Memorial Foudation and \$1,000 to the Charitable Service Trust.

During the afternoon business session the rousing election of National Officers showed the pride and confidence of the delegates in their elected leaders. Stirred by rounds of applause, the new officers were unanimously elected by the enthusiastic membership.


National Senior Vice Commander Robert T. Reynolds looked forward to a “banner year” under National Commander Barton. “There is no better organization than the DAV,” he said. Meanwhile, National First Junior Vice Commander Raymond E. Dempsey praised the “extraordinary leadership” of National Adjutant Wilson and the DAV management.

During the Executive Committee meeting following the election, National Adjutant Wilson reminded the new National Officers that they were beginning “a momentous period of service—a year in which each of you will leave a mark on the legacy of the DAV.”

“Your term of office will be challeng-

ing, rewarding and gratifying,” he said. “You have an obligation given to you by our membership to lead—and you are proven leaders.”

“We once again stand at the beginning of a year of challenges and possibilities—seasoned with responsibility and duty—to fulfill our mission of service to disabled veterans and their families,” Wilson said. “As we embark on this mission, let us remain constant in our purpose to always seek excellence in service.”

“I think the mission of the DAV is very important,” said Lawton before returning home to Michigan. “Without the DAV in the future, we all could lose our rights. We need to join with the newest generation of veterans returning home from the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere.” 



Left, Department of Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) Senior Intelligence Officer Dian Corneliusen-James, right, joins POW/MIA Committee member Frank C. Tracy in addressing the POW-MIA Seminar at the National Convention. Right, noted actor Gary Sinise entertains DAV delegates with his Lt. Dan Band during the National Convention’s Fun Night.



"I am humbled by those who have served this country. Thank you for your deep unwavering commitment to disabled veterans." -- Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Gordon H. Mansfield Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year for 2006

Awards

"In all of the stories I have ever covered, none are as inspiring as the Winter Sports Clinic. You are an inspiration. You never give up."
 -- MSNBC reporter David Shuster and producer Kristina Weischadle
 2nd Annual Bugle Award

"It is always a privilege to serve as a source of comfort and support to those brave veterans. I want to use my skills to help."
 -- Vincent D. Senegar, 2006 Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Volunteer Scholarship winner.



"I promise with all my heart to continue to serve veterans. I will continue to do the things that are pleasing in your eyes. My heart is filled with joy."
 -- Mary Burns-Michael of Unit 128 in San Antonio, Texas
 DAV Auxiliary Past National Commander Outstanding Member of Year.



The three recipients of the 2006 National Commander's Outstanding VA Employee of the Year awards proudly show off their plaques. From the left, William H. Francis of the Fort Custer National Cemetery in Augusta, Mich., Michael Bucolo, Supervisor Veterans Service Representative at the VA Regional Office in New York City, and James W. Kidwell, a social worker with the Togus VA Medical Center in Augusta, Maine.



Alfred Faticoni of Newington, Conn., 2006 George H. Seal Memorial Trophy



Above, the recipients of the National Commander's Employment Awards include, from the left, Shawn Deabay, Texas Workforce Center, Lufkin, Texas, the Outstanding Local Veterans' Employment Representative; Charles W. Eldridge, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Nashville, Tenn., the Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year; and Mike Busque, Senior Vice President of Human Resources, accepting the Outstanding Large Employer of the Year Award for The Home Dept.

Right, Past National Commander Kenneth G. Musselmann, center, accepts a bomber jacket in recognition for being the Recruiter of the Year from then-National Commander Paul W. Jackson, left, and National Membership Director Anthony L. Baskerville.



Joan Antonaccio of Islip, N.Y. 2006 DAV Auxiliary George H. Seal Memorial Trophy.

