



News for U.S. Military Widows in Korea

1. RAO Cell Phone: Jack Terwiel now has a cell phone. His number is 017-477-1441. Please write the number down or enter it into your cell phone list of important telephone numbers.

2. RAO on the Internet: The RAO also has a new Internet site for those who use computers. It is at <http://www-rao-osan.com>. All past issues of the widow newsletter are available in both Korean and English. There is also an Internet site for Internet-capable cell phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs) at <http://rao-osan.com/~wap/>.

3. BIDS Update: Do you remember when you had to get your ID card updated with your fingerprint? We have learned that you have to have it updated. So if you have not been to your local BIDS office, please go. Be sure they update your BIDS date to the date your ID card expires. Then, when you have to get a new ID card, you can take it directly to the BIDS office and have it updated.

4. Reminder: If you don't live in the Pyongtaek area, then it's probably not easy for you to visit Osan AB. When you get a letter that you don't understand, remember that you can fax the letter to the RAO and you might not have to visit the RAO. You should be able to send a fax from an office in the nearest military base, or from an office near where you live. If you send from a base, the RAO fax number is 784-3894. If you send from outside the base, the number is 031-661-3894.

5. VA Death Pension and Income: If you receive the VA Death Pension of \$533 per month, you must remember that this is a special pension given to low-income widows. If you earn money for which U.S. income tax is paid, you may lose all or part of the VA Death Pension.

A widow came to the RAO recently with a letter from the VA. They had received information from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that the widow received income in 1996. She did not include the income on her Eligibility Verification Report (EVR) for 1996, and VA thought she was trying to hide income that she was receiving from working. What really happened was that the widow won a Bingo jackpot and the winnings were reported to the IRS on Form W-2G. I wrote a letter to the VA for the widow explaining that this was a one-time income, and that she forgot to report it on her EVR.

6. Social Security Eligibility: There are five common situations that I see which would make you eligible to receive social security benefits as a widow.

a. If there is a child under the age of 16 when your husband dies, both you and the child would receive benefits. Your benefits would stop at the child's age of 16. The child's benefits

would stop when he or she finishes school. You could become eligible to receive benefits again at age 60, as described below in b, c, d, or e.

b. If your husband dies on active duty, or dies as a result of a service connected illness recognized by the VA or from a VA-rated disability, you are eligible to receive widow's benefits starting at your age 60, that is, 60 years after your birth date.

c. If you lived together with your husband for at least five years in the United States, you are eligible to receive the widow's pension at age 60.

d. If you are a US citizen, you are eligible to receive the widow's pension at age 60.

e. If you are disabled and are otherwise eligible to receive a widow's benefits, you can receive disabled widow benefits starting at age 50.

If you worked in the US for at least 10 years and paid social security tax, you could earn social security benefits on you own work record starting at age 62. You could also be eligible for social security disability benefits at any age if you worked in the US for five of the previous 10 years before becoming disabled. Disability benefits would start six months after you become too disabled to work, as verified by a doctor's statement.

7. Green Card: In the event of the member's death, the widow must return to the U.S. within four month of the death in order to maintain her alien registration (green card). There is, however, a special category that allows widows to apply for a U.S. immigration visa within two years after the member's death. The only restrictions on this visa is that the marriage must have lasted at least two years, and that they were not divorced, legally separated, or had the marriage annulled.

8. Check Your Mail: There are two important reasons you need to check your mail often. The first reason is that something important may arrive that needs your immediate attention. Failing to check the mail could result in a delay or loss of benefits. The second reason is that if you are not checking your mail regularly, the post office or postal center may close your mailbox. Also, the yearly change of military postal clerks means that new clerks may not know the rules and start closing mailboxes of people who are not on active duty. This has happened at one installation where mailboxes were being assigned to unauthorized people.

9. Agent Orange and Cancer: If you are not receiving VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) (\$935) and your husband served in Vietnam and later died of cancer, you may have become eligible for DIC. More different types of cancer are now being blamed on Agent Orange exposure. All military personnel who served in Vietnam are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange. If your husband suffered from or died from Prostate Cancer, that was recently added to the list and is now considered a service-connected disability caused by Agent Orange. Other types of skin and respiratory cancers have been attributed to Agent Orange, and a recent Air Force study may soon add diabetes to the list of illnesses caused by Agent Orange.

If you have any doubts about your eligibility for DIC, please contact the RAO. If you have your husband's medical records, and especially if you have an autopsy performed at the time he died, these should be reviewed by the RAO to determine eligibility.

Remember that if you become eligible for DIC, you will also probably be eligible for the Social Security widow's benefit, which can be paid starting at age 60.

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