



# News for U.S. Military Widows in Korea

- 1. Increased Benefits:** Effective December 1, 1999, all benefits are increased by 2.4%. For example the VA DIC, currently \$861 for a widow without children, will increase by about \$20. The VA pension, currently \$490 for a widow without children, will increase by about \$11. You will see the increase in the check you receive in January.
- 2. Flu Shot:** Have you received your flu shot yet? If not, go to your local military hospital's Immunization Clinic and ask for yours. You will need to bring your medical records with you.
- 3. Ration Cards for Widows' Families:** All widows are eligible only for individual ration cards. If you are a widow with children, your children are not eligible to receive a ration card. If your children currently have ration cards, they will not be issued a new card when the current ration card expires. Only the widow is authorized a ration card, and she is limited to Commissary purchases of \$350 per month, and alcohol purchases of three bottles of liquor and eight cases of beer per month.
- 4. Renewing Ration Cards:** If you are a Korean citizen and have a citizen's ID card, when it is time to renew your ration card, you will need only the Korean ID card and military ID card. If you do not have a Korean citizen's ID card, then you will need other proof such as a resident passport, rental agreement, key money contract or home ownership paper. This change to the regulation, effective December 15, 1999, adds the Korean citizen's ID card as proof you live in Korea.
- 5. Important Letters:** Widows receiving Veterans Administration (VA) benefits are required to complete, sign and mail an Eligibility Verification Report (EVR) that the VA sends. Widows receiving the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) in Denver are required to complete, sign and mail a Certificate of Existence (COE) that DFAS sends. These two letters are very important for you. They must be signed and returned quickly to continue receiving your benefits. If you do not sign and return the letter you receive, your benefits will stop. As always, if you have any question about any mail you receive, call the Retiree Activities Office (RAO) at 0333-661-1441, or fax the letter to the RAO at 0333-661-3894.
- 6. Important Papers:** You should keep your important papers in a fireproof container. These can be bought at the Exchange and are not expensive. The Sentry Model 1100 is small and sells for \$19.95. The larger Sentry Model 1170, with hanging file folders, sells for \$44.50. If you don't want to buy a fireproof container, then one retiree passes on the suggestion to keep the

important papers in the freezer. That way, if there's a fire, the freezer would provide the most protection -- better than if you keep the papers in a drawer or closet.

**7. Social Security Number:** Your Social Security Number (SSN) does not expire. If you ever had one, but have forgotten it, we can obtain the number and a replacement card from Social Security. To find your number, the RAO needs your name and birth date. To obtain a replacement card, the RAO will assist you in filling out a request form. All you need is a certified copy of your ID card, that can be obtained at the Legal Office, to send with the request form.

**8. 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.

**9. Income Tax:** By the end of January 2000, all tax statements must be mailed. If you are required to file U.S. income tax, you should have your tax statements by the end of February. If you have not received them, then contact the RAO to obtain a replacement.

As a reminder, if you are receiving SBP, and you are not a U.S. citizen and you live in Korea, you should not be paying tax on the SBP. If tax is being withheld from your SBP, contact the RAO to complete a tax exemption form.

On the other hand, if you are receiving Social Security benefits and you are not a US citizen and you live in Korea, you should be paying tax on your Social Security benefits. These benefits are taxed at 25.5%

As always, VA benefits are not taxable.

**10. Social Security Offset for SBP:** When your husband signed up for SBP, he had the option of selecting Full SBP, which is 55% of retired pay. However, this Full SBP is reduced to 35% when the widow reaches age 62, because people who are eligible to receive Social Security would start receiving it at age 62. If you receive reduced SBP starting at age 62, but are not eligible to receive Social Security, then the SBP could be restored to the full amount. However, you must first apply for Social Security. You will receive a letter that you are not eligible for Social Security. Send this letter to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service in Denver and they will remove the offset and restore the SBP to the normal amount.

**11. Seoul Visit Schedule for 2000:** Once per month on the second Tuesday, the RAO is available in the lobby of the Dragon Hill Lodge between 9am-noon. Following is the schedule for 2000:

January 11  
February 8  
March 14  
April 11  
May 9  
June 13  
July 11  
August 8  
September 5 or 19  
October 10  
November 14  
December 12

**12. RAO Holidays in 2000:** Following is the RAO holiday schedule for 2000.

Monday, January 3  
Monday, January 17  
Friday, February 4  
Monday, February 14  
Monday, May 29  
Tuesday, July 4  
Monday, September 4  
Monday and Tuesday, September 13-14  
Monday, October 9  
Friday, November 10  
Thursday and Friday, November 23-24  
Monday, December 24 - Tuesday, January 2

**13. Veterans Administration (VA) Changes.** Part of the US government budget for 2000 includes a large increase for the VA. This will allow them to add 440 new employees as claims processors, which should speed up the VA claims that we send on your behalf. We are seeing delays of a year or more from the time we send the claim until the widow starts receiving her money. Although all back benefits are paid, it does not help when you need the money to pay for food, clothing and shelter. We are hopeful that the coming year will see much better service from the VA for initial claims processing and for follow-up service.

**14. Holiday Wishes.** As we come to the end of our second year of operating the Retiree Activities Office, we want to thank all those people whose kindness and understanding has made this a very enjoyable job. Above all, we want to thank you for your patience when events don't happen as quickly as we would like. This is especially true for the VA actions, which often have been slower than a snail's pace.

The holidays are a time for good time and cheer, but we should also take time to remember those special people who have made our lives better. David Downing Jr. is one person who helped hundreds of widows and thousands of retirees in the more than twenty years from his retirement

until his death last year. We hope he will be in your thoughts, as he will be in ours, for all the kindness and generosity he gave to the widows and retirees of Korea.

Most especially, we want to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year filled with health, happiness and prosperity. We look forward to serving you in the coming year.

Jack and Puneer Terwiel

# Season's Greetings

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**MPS**