



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
(202) 273-6000
www.va.gov

VA's Qs & As

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**Questions and Answers:
*The Veterans Pride Initiative***

Q. What is the Veterans Pride initiative?

A. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched the Veterans Pride initiative to rally America's veterans and their survivors around the cause of expressing patriotism and pride in past military service. Veterans Affairs Secretary the Honorable R. James Nicholson has encouraged both combat and peacetime veterans -- and the survivors of those veterans who have passed away -- to join in wearing their medals or miniature replicas on national holidays beginning with the nation's Nov. 11 celebration of Veterans Day 2006. Veterans organizations are cosponsoring the show of pride and will be urging members to proudly display their decorations on their civilian attire on patriotic national holidays.

Q. Where did the Veterans Pride initiative come from?

A. During recent international travel, Secretary Nicholson became aware of a similar tradition in Australia and New Zealand. In observing the annual April 25 holiday in those countries honoring the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), a tradition evolved wearing medals on ANZAC Day at ceremonies and marches as a show of pride and, in more recent years, with children of veterans wearing a deceased parent's medals.

Q. I have misplaced one or more of my medals. How can I get replacements?

A. An Internet search for "military medals" will generate considerable advertising links from private firms selling replica medals including miniatures. Retirees may wish to check with military exchanges or military clothing stores. Under certain circumstances official replacements for lost or damaged medals may be obtained from the government by veterans by sending a request to the appropriate branch of service. More information and links to initiate requests are available at <http://www.va.gov/veteranspride/>.

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Q. If I request my duplicate medals from the government, will I receive them in time for Veterans Day this year?

A. The speed of fulfillment varies by military service and the availability of records. But order now to be ready for next year if you qualify for replacements at government expense.

Q. On what holidays does VA recommend veterans or family members wear their medals?

A. VA encourages veterans to wear decorations on Veterans Day, July Fourth and Memorial Day.

Q. I'm not sure I recall correctly what medals I received. Where can I obtain this information?

A. Service histories are available from government archives to veterans and to their next of kin. Information about these sources and request procedures is available at VA's Web page on the Veterans Pride initiative at <http://www.va.gov/veteranspride/>.

Q. My request for my dad's service history came back with the news that my father's records were lost in a fire at the National Personnel Records Center. However, I know he was receiving payments each month from VA before he died. Are there other channels that I can pursue to determine exactly when he served and what medals he may have received?

A. The Records Center in its notification may describe additional information that could be provided to assist in reconstruction of records. In addition, check for information on the Veterans Pride Web page at <http://www.va.gov/veteranspride/>.

Q. How should the medals be worn?

A. Veterans are encouraged to wear their decorations on their civilian clothing over the left breast. Family members of deceased veterans are encouraged to wear their loved ones' medals over their right breasts. Other guidance such as order of precedence of various decorations is available in links at the above-referenced Web site.

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Q. I have seen news articles reporting on concerns about veterans wearing medals they did not earn, including possible legislation. How does that work with this initiative, and particularly the wearing of a veteran's medals by a family member who is not a veteran?

A. The primary concern you reference has been where individuals have represented themselves to have had military service -- combat zone or other experience -- that is not true, or claiming high-profile medals that they did not earn. VA views this as a different matter than a child honoring a living or deceased parent's earned honors. However, VA does not encourage veterans or family members to wear medals where there is uncertainty about the veteran's service record.