

From the Director

We are in the midst of preparing for the VAVS National Advisory Committee meeting. In planning for the meeting, it affords me the opportunity to take stock of all VAVS does in Service to Veterans and their families.

I am amazed at how much volunteers do, how much the community does and the unbelievable creativity VAVS staff and volunteers have to provide service.

Did you know that during the week of Salute, Tucson VAMC arranged for volunteers to deliver balloons to home bound Veterans seeking care at their VA? Tremendous idea and tremendous recognition to the home-bound Veterans, they were not left out!

Thank you Deborah staff and volunteers for making this creative idea happen.

Volunteers and VAVS staff make a terrific impact in service to Veterans.
Thank You!

Laura B. Belter



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The Eagle

Voluntary Service Central Office Newsletter
Leaders in Volunteer Management



TV Star Volunteers at Albuquerque VA Hospital

By Bill Armstrong, NMVAHCS Public Affairs Specialist

Hollywood celebrities frequently visit patients at VA hospitals, shaking hands, signing autographs and posing for photographs. But one famous television celebrity enjoys visiting with Veterans in Albuquerque, N.M., so much that he became a hospital volunteer.

Bill Daily starred as Major Roger Healey on television's "I Dream of Jeannie" starting in 1965. The series about two astronauts and a beautiful genie in a bottle ended in 1970, after which he was a regular on "The Bob Newhart Show" from 1972 to 1978.

These days, the 82-year-old actor makes Albuquerque his home and continues to make his fans laugh every Wednesday when he visits Veterans at the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center. Daily's warm heart and gift of gab keep patients entertained for about four hours each week. Making patients laugh was just what Daily said he needed at this point in his life.

"In my time, people died at age 50, and 60 was considered old," Daily said. "So, all of a sudden, I'm 75 and I thought I could live another 15 years and I've got to do something. This year was the best Christmas I've ever had because I felt like I'm finally doing something."

He's been a hospital volunteer for nearly one year, and the room-to-room visits with Veterans fills a void in his life, he said. Some friends of his also volunteer at the medical center, and suggested he join them. When Daily first thought about coming to volunteer, he worried about doing just a stand-up routine. Realizing a routine would work just one time, he decided to simply meet with patients.

"I love to talk," he said. "I can't remember jokes, but I have a story about everything. So when I'd go in, some people would be angry about something, but they would be laughing by the time I left. So then I decided that I was in and

this was it."

The number one topic patients bring up with Daily is "I Dream of Jeannie," he said. And Daily doesn't disappoint, bringing an armful of photographs of himself, flanked by costars Barbara Eden and Larry Hagman, to give away.

"This works out perfectly, because 99 percent of the patients are fans of "Jeannie," and only about one percent liked the Newhart show," he said.

After 45 years since "Jeannie" first aired on NBC, Daily said he remains friends with Eden and Hagman, but one of his closest friends from his show business days is Bob Newhart.

"Let me tell you how brilliant he (Newhart) is. I was 16 years old when I met him at a Halloween party. He comes in dressed as Leonardo Da Vinci. Under his arm, he has a painting of the Mona Lisa. Half of the painting is done, and half of it is paint by the numbers. I said to myself, 'I've got to meet this guy' because he was so brilliant!"

The two friends' paths would cross again nearly 30 years later when Daily played "Howard Borden," a flight navigator for a commercial carrier and Newhart's neighbor, on "The Bob Newhart Show."

The patients he visits are well aware of Daily's successful entertainment career. What many of them may not know is that Daily served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. Before the war began, Daily was a professional bass player. Because of his musical talent, the Army sent him to Special Services School.

The Special Services Agency began after World War II to increase troop morale through crafts, theatrical productions and parties. But instead of immediately using that training, Daily was shocked to learn that his first assignment was to an artillery unit in Korea. He said he cleaned howitzers until an Army jazz band picked him up as an entertainer. As an Army entertainer, Daily sang, did standup comedy and played bass.

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Just One of the Million and One Reasons

By Kim Rusiecki, Hines VA Voluntary Service Specialist

VA Voluntary Service Central Office recently released a new video called "A Million and One Reasons to Volunteer." The video features volunteers from around the country telling us why they give of their time and talents. The stories are heartwarming and motivational.

Below is an excerpt from an online inquiry regarding potential volunteer opportunities at the Hines VA Hospital. Just one more reason to step up and volunteer.

To Whom This May Concern,

Re: Patient Assistance Volunteer Opportunity

I would like an opportunity to volunteer in gratitude of all that the Hines VA hospital has done for both my grandparents. I have previously been to this facility on a regular basis for years with both my grandfathers for many tests, surgeries, their lengthy hospital stays, and chemotherapy treatments. Although they have passed on, the memories I have of the Hines VA hospital still warms my heart. Every visit I was there I received such friendly and helpful service and assistance from all of your staff and volunteers. When I see all the veterans whose selfless and silent acts of heroism suffering from sickness and the effects of war both physically and mentally, all I can be is thankful for all that they have done for me and this country. I would like to attempt to show my gratitude to the Veterans there and to the Hines VA for caring for my both my grandparents by assisting with any help you may need.

So, what's your reason to volunteer?

A Christmas Story

By Bill Browning, Detroit VA Medical Center

Your eyes do not deceive you. In the box pictured below is an authentic chocolate leg! It was donated to the Detroit VA Medical Center by Nieman Marcus.

I received a call on Christmas Eve from Patricia Gallagher, manager in the shoe department at Nieman Marcus in Troy, MI. She told me they had a special treat they would like to donate to the Veterans at the Detroit VAMC.

Little information was given, except that it was big and it was chocolate, and that they would like me to pick it up before the close of business on December 24.

Much to my surprise when I arrived to see the box and in it was the solid chocolate leg! We had our kitchen break it (no pun) into pieces and Rose Solak, one of our volunteers, distributed it to the Veterans in our atrium.

If you ever saw the movie "A Christmas Story" you will definitely understand how important this is!



VAVS Program Manager Bill Browning with Volunteer Rose Sloak and "The Chocolate Leg."



Women's History Month

MARCH

	1	2	3 The Star Spangled Banner was adopted by Congress as the national anthem in 1931	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 Daylight Savings Time begins	15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19	20 1st Day of Spring
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

TV Star continued

"It was better than what you see on "MASH" – a big improvement to that artillery unit," Daily said.

But the current source of fun and fulfillment for Bill Daily is the time he spends signing autographs and swapping tales with fellow Veterans.

"People here are so happy to see me and I'm so grateful. It's beyond wonderful and I can't believe I'm not crying now. I feel so good."



Actor Bill Daily volunteers at the Albuquerque VA Medical Center. (inset: Daily with his "I Dream of Jeanie" co-stars)

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