

Korean War & Korea Defense Service Veterans of Lake County, Chapter 169



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To: KWVA Leaders and All Members

From: Tom Thiel, KWVA of Lake County (FL), Chapter 169, Inc.

Subject: The KWVA Database as a Tool for Chapters and Departments

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God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can, and
the wisdom to know the difference.

Reinhold Niebuhr

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The KWVA Database (DB) is an internal file used by the Korean War Veterans Association, Inc., to manage membership, publication distribution, and numerous other functions. Access to this DB has been granted to selected individuals at not only the Association level, but also at Department and Chapter levels as well.

My goal in writing this document is to make the reader more aware of the tremendous tool the DB truly is now, but more importantly, to make the reader cognizant of what the DB truly could be.

It is also to make an honest appeal to the leaders of KWVA to extend its usefulness so that Chapters and Departments can actually use it to manage their Chapters and Departments.

They cannot do that now!

My computer experience began with analog computers to study water movement in soils in the late 1950's for USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) at The Ohio State University. I first began using digital computers about 1965, at the University of Minne-

sota. In the early 1980's, I was managing, designing and programming a Datapoint distributed architecture system at one of ARS' regional offices in Peoria, IL. In 1984, I retired from ARS, and became a Computer Consultant for an 8a firm in Arlington, VA, designing systems for the Office of the Secretary of Defense's (OSD) Office Automation Division in the Pentagon, and other government agencies in the DC area. That assignment also included managing a New Technologies lab for the OSD.

It is interesting that no official definition of the KWVA Database, or its intended purpose, has ever been published, at least I can find no such document. I can find nothing on the website. It is not mentioned in the Bylaws. It is mentioned in the Standard Procedures Manual as well as numerous times in Graybeards, but only as it has been or is being implemented. Suffice it to say it has been implemented to ensure primarily Chapter compliance, that is over and above the overall Membership and Publication (Graybeards) distribution processes.

I have been using the DB for about eight years now. I have used it as both a Chapter (access +1), and a Department (access +2) user. For almost that same period, Mr. Doppelhammer made me a +3 level access user to provide him with feedback on the system.

Because I have not been able to find any documentation of the DB, and have never received any training whatsoever on using the DB, I have written and posted on the internet "KWVA Association Membership Database (MDB) User Manual" that is available to anyone at: http://cid169.kwva.org/Manual/000_cover_manual.htm

Like the DB itself, my Manual has not received any publicity, other than an AD I submitted to Graybeards.

I also understand Chapter and to a lesser extent Department management. I have served as Secretary, Treasurer, and President of my Chapter, CID169, and in several capacities at the Department of Florida.

So, I feel not only well-qualified to speak to using the KWVA Database, I feel equally qualified to understand what it takes to manage a viable KWVA Chapter. Early in my term as 169 president, membership had fallen to less than 40 members when we implemented the requirement that all Chapter members maintain Association membership; today (October 25, 2015), it is 113 members and growing.

So, what do I mean when I say that Chapters and Departments could GREATLY use the KWVA DB to manage their units? Let me give you some examples.

For example, if I, as a Chapter manager, am able to use the DB to email and/or snail-mail my members, I would ensure that every one of my members is in the DB, and that

their information—address, phone, email, etc.—is entered correctly! The DB access I am provided as a Chapter user will not allow me to do that now!

As Chapter Secretary, I would like to report my Chapter's Election results so that all I need to enter would be the member number of each chapter officer or director to be entered in the form. The computer would then complete the line, but only if that person is 1) in Active status, and 2) eligible to serve in that position. I would be really happy to report my election results that way.

I would welcome the opportunity to do that because I want to use that information for my own purposes. And, I would want Department to be able, and to actually use, that information also. As a side benefit, no one would have to do an eyeball check of those election reports!

None of that is available now, even with the new procedure put into operation recently. Why did the designers of that system not enter into dialog with Chapters and Departments about what we would like to do with the data entered into the Election Report Form?

I could go on and on here, but the point I want to make is that if the KWVA DB system could truly become my Chapter or my Department DB, I would be very happy to use it regularly and thereby ensure that my information is up to date, and a priori it is also up to date at all other levels.

Some say, "not everybody has your computer smarts, and that Chapter and Department officials will not be computer proficient... and that field level managers will continue to ignore the system."

Maybe. But I do not believe it. Here is where awareness and training comes into the picture.

And, when the leaders are not proficient, I do not propose we attempt to make them so. Instead, they should be encouraged to find members who are proficient, and give them access and let them do it. Or, even bring a computer-smart person into the Chapter as an Associate Member who is interested in Korea Veterans. We have done that in CID169 also. It works!

I am not talking about simply seeing the information in printed form, or even on a computer screen. What I am talking about is being able to use the DB to manage my Chapter. To be able mail my members directly from the addresses I get from the DB, both email and snail mail.

The additional capabilities this proposal suggests will not allow anyone at the Department and Chapter levels to change any information in the DB itself, just to be able to better use what is already there.

It also discloses that Department level search systems produce erroneous results, and a no-cost way to correct this.

In the following sections I will as briefly and as accurately as I can, talk about

- retrieving information,
- email and snail mail retrievals and use,
- DB System output capacities and needs,
- Election Reports and how they relate to this proposal, and
- publicity and training.

Each of these sections is essentially a summary of its facet of the subject.

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