

PRESS RELEASE

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Santa Barbara, D-Day Veteran Retires as Longtime Volunteer at VA Santa Barbara Clinic

LOS ANGELES - Santa Barbara resident Art Petersen retires after two decades of volunteering for the VA Santa Barbara clinic on Jan 10. Petersen, a World War II Veteran who dropped into Normandy on D-Day, will be honored by the VA staff for his service.

“He has proven to be one of the most hard-working, devoted, dedicated individuals with whom I have ever worked with,” said Mary Hershey, Administrative officer for VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System Northern Clinics. “His energy and passion for his work as a volunteer with Veterans is extraordinary.”

As a paratrooper and machine gunner in WWII, Petersen made jumps in Normandy on D-Day and participated in the Battle of the Bulge. He was awarded two Purple Hearts, and two Presidential Citations. During his tours, Petersen was shot twice; the second time he almost lost his left leg. According to Petersen, he is one of only two surviving members of the 101st Airborne Screaming Eagles, 506 Fox Company.

“His contributions to this country were nearly super-human,” Hershey said. “Art could have retired years ago to bask in his accomplishments but instead, he came to our VA Santa Barbara Clinic, week after week, making us smile, and reminding all of the VA staff why we do the work that we do.”

Petersen has recorded close to 10,000 hours of volunteer service with the VA Santa Barbara Clinic. Some of his duties included relocating and filing medical records, disposing of paper waste, packing snacks and toiletries for homeless Veterans and brewing coffee for patients while they waited for their appointment. The 89-year old also insured the clinic’s POW flag was replaced regularly to avoid it becoming tattered or bedraggled.

Petersen officially retired from his service at the VA clinic on Christmas Eve 2013 but the VA staff and fellow Veterans are hosting an intimate retirement luncheon ceremony at the VA Santa Barbara Clinic to honor his service and present him with a special token of their appreciation.

“Over the years, his *humility* and enthusiasm to do any task inspires us all—He inspired us to be better than we are. He is so much better than we are. The man literally bleeds red, white and blue!” Hershey exclaimed.