

# The Veteran's Friend



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## Vietnam Veteran To Get \$23,396

When Jerry Batanian served in Vietnam more than 44 years ago, he had no idea the government would pay him back during his senior citizen years.

With the help of a community service organization known as The Veteran's Friend, Batanian has applied for and will eventually receive tax-free approximately \$23,396 annually.

The windfall comes from a little-known Veteran's Administration program known as the Aid and Attendance Pension Benefit. The program earmarks money for such things as assisted living, home health care and senior living communities.

A 30-year Navy veteran, Batanian and his gregarious wife, Marie, are currently residing at Aegis Living Shadowridge, a senior living community in Vista.

They learned about the benefit when their daughter, Linda Miller, attended a workshop by Veteran's Friend founder Galen Maddy.

Maddy, a financial advisor and former Marine, started The Veteran's Friend after helping his uncle receive benefits. He was astounded at the number of forms, government regulations and conditions that must be met in order to qualify for benefits and vowed that he would help his fellow veterans.

"The service they provide is extremely valuable," Renato Alesiani, vice-president of operations at Aegis Liv-

ing said. "It (the benefit) is not known by many and I applaud them for the work they do."

"He is a blessing to our family," Jerry Batanian said. Raised in Ohio, Batanian joined the Navy and came to San Diego in 1959. He has to be one of the few servicemen who were deployed in Vietnam in the early going (1965) and was there at the end (1974). In all, he had three tours of duty in Vietnam.

And like any sailor worth his salt, Batanian has a tanker full of stories; like the first time he crossed the ePquator on the USS Cleveland to the time he almost saw ground combat in Danang. "I worked in supply," Batanian recalled. "I would work in the laundry, do dry cleaning, barbering and tailoring."

He was so skilled as a barber an officer had him transferred to Camp Tien Shaw inside of Danang. One night, the camp came under attack and Batanian was handed a gun and told to be ready to move out with the third unit.

"It was very intense," he said. "The first unit goes out and then the second unit was ordered to go out. I was praying, 'Lord, don't let the third squad go.'"

His prayers were answered as an all-clear was signaled before he got into the fray. "That was as close as I wanted to get into combat," he said.

A strong faith has been a part of Jerry's life. He was a lay Chaplain during his Navy days and met Marie at a Bible study she was hosting.

Marie Batanian is a story in her own right – a former model, nurse, restaurant owner and Bible scholar. The two have been married for 16 years, but act like newlyweds, always laughing and supporting each other.

"We are like George Burns and Gracie Allen," laughed Jerry Batanian.

They seemed to have found the perfect fit with



L-R: Marie Batanian, Linda Miller, Renato Alesiani and Jerry Batanian