

Music boxes, dancing dolls and once played a part in the holidays

WASHINGTON—Few things evoke the spirit of holidays past better than an old-fashioned music box.

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Thinking with the sound of holidays past, a Swiss craftsman adjusts the mechanism of an antique music box. The elaborate machine plays tiny drums, bells, a flute, and harp.

By Thomas J. Abernethy in National Geographic

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Name, rank, serial number handy, VA says

If your last name is Johnson and you plan to check with the Veterans Administration about possible benefits, better be specific.

The old "name, rank and military serial number" list will come in handy—especially the serial number—because the VA has about 20,000,000 VA's named Johnson on its rolls.

With 34 million veterans names in VA agency records, it's easy to see why the VA needs so much specific information about a veteran's service record so that his or her claim for benefits can be processed.

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ADMITTED: Nancy Berber, Robert Thompson, Linda Walters, Sonya Coker, Harry Duncan, Ronald Duncan, Susan Ashby, Len Truesell, George Carter, Irvin King, Carlisle; Michael Sauer; Michael Mitchell, David Wilcox, Dwight; Melville Spencer, M. Olivet.

Following given names: John, Robert, William, James, Charles, Joseph, Richard, George, Edward or Thomas. If your name happened to be Charles Edward Thomas, for instance, the computer might really be confused, since there are nearly 75,000 Thomases in its memory banks.

Veterans with less common names than Smith, Jones or Brown are nonetheless well represented in the VA's files, the agency said.

There are approximately 24,100 Sanders, over 27,000 Myers, about 36,000 Rogers, nearly 47,000 Wrights, around 42,000 Murphys and over 20,000 Schmidts in the VA files, to name only a few.

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