Virginia Legionnaire

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Department of Virginia

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Stepping into history at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

By Ashley Gorbulja-Maldonado

Dyer-Gunnell Post 180 Legionnaire Ashley Gorbulja-Maldonodo placing white roses in front of the Tomb. (Photo courtesy American Legion)

It was a cool crisp morning in Arlington, Va., Nov. 9, 2021, 100 years after the Unknown Soldier arrived in the United States. The sun poked through the oaks, maples, and elms, catching the white marble headstones in a soft vignette focus, glistening among the rolling, neatly kept green knolls. This was not my first visit to this particular hallowed ground, Arlington National Cemetery, nor would it be my last.

I made haste up Roosevelt Drive. My heels clicked in a rhythmic beat, clutching white roses in my arms. Fixated on the roses, I felt a sense of eternal peace; I clenched the stems close to my chest. Not a word was spoken. I quietly turned inward in reflection as birds chirped, and distant rumblings of trolly engines warmed up. With each step, I grew closer to my destination, and soon I reached the top of the hill.

There was something electric in the air as Tomb guards were scattered about, their awards and buttons catching the morning light, as they provided guidance and maintained order. The marble pillars of the Memorial Amphitheater have a way of making me feel reverential. Respect mixed with wonder. My thoughts were interrupted by the cemetery staff instructing visitors forward, toward the Tomb.

The short murmurs of travelers sharing how far they had come to be a part of this event grew louder as I drew closer to the Tomb. I approached the two parallel tents layered with hundreds of roses, Gerber daisies, carnations and assorted flowers. The fragrances of roses around me *(Continued on page 3)*

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Put a Local Face on The American Legion

By Scott Maddrea, Department Membership Chair

Welcome to the new year! It has been a challenging two years. The global coronavirus pandemic has affected Legion programs, meeting attendance and membership, but we have persevered.

As a result of your efforts the Department entered 2022 with a total membership of just over 29,700, which includes more than 1,100 new Legionnaires. Our renewal rate is sitting right at 76%, which means three out of every four eligible members has renewed their membership for 2022. But we still have a lot of work ahead of us.

We are currently 8,841 members shy of our goal for the year and National Commander Paul Dillard has challenged us to renew 90% of our eligible members. These remain realistic and achievable goals, but it will take a renewed effort.

Another national membership renewal mailing will be going out to members later this month and we know that there are members in each of our Posts that wait until January to renew their membership for the coming year. But we are past the point in the membership year where we can expect a trip to the mailbox to yield 10, 12, 15 or 20 renewals.

We are NOT going to meet our goals by relying on national renewal mailings or broad appeals!

The members who were anxious and excited about renewing have done so. Those members who have not renewed are hesitant. They may not see the Legion as relevant. In many places their local Posts are not the same vibrant hub of activity they were before the pandemic. These members have ignored previous national appeals and another appeal is unlikely to change their mind.

Whatever it is, each of these members has a reason why they have yet to renew, but it isn't because they haven't been asked. It is a reason that is unique and personal to them. Getting them to renew is going to take an approach that is equally as individual and personalized.

It is going to take phone calls and face-to-face conversations. And it is going to take telling our story.

For the last 20 months many of our parking lots have been empty. Our kitchens and cantinas have been eerily quiet. Meeting halls and social quarters have largely been empty. To the naked eye, many Posts appeared closed, and it is understandable that some members might not see the value in joining or rejoining a Post that appears closed.

It is up to each one of us to remind our members that even at the height of the pandemic and the most strenuous of government restrictions it was the only the building that closed, never the Post.

My American Legion Post isn't a building or even a charter hanging on the wall of the entryway. My Post is a community of veterans – an extended family – and families don't close, though we may sometimes be separated.

We need to communicate to those members who may be reluctant to renew their membership because they perceive the American Legion as inactive that nothing could be further from the truth. The pandemic surely impacted Post activities, functions and programs but it couldn't close our Posts.

The pandemic has changed the ways we conducted our meetings. It forced us to adapt to new technologies and many of our activities and programs took on a different look. At the end of the day, we did what American servicemen and women have done for centuries – whatever it took to continue the program so vital to our veterans and our community. In short, we persevered in the face of adversity!

And I can prove it!

The national impact reports are available on-line at https://www.legion.org/membership/impact. These reports are published monthly and are a great tool for reminding members that their membership in the American Legion is having on communities across the country.

More impressive are the numbers found in your local impact reports – your annual Americanism Report, the Children and Youth Report, and your Consolidated Post Report. District Commanders file quarterly reports with the Department highlighting the work being done by Posts in each of the 17 Districts across Virginia. How many of your Posts share those reports with your membership? These reports reflect not what national or even the Department is doing but what YOUR Post is doing in YOUR community.

We will not get another 9,000 members by asking veterans to join the faceless national entity that is The American Legion. We will get there by getting members to renew THEIR membership in THEIR American Legion Post. It is up to you to put not just a face on the American Legion, but a local face.

From the Desk of the Department Adjutant

By David M. Stein

I hope that everyone had a wonderful Holiday Season. As the new year is upon us it is time to concentrate on our upcoming year and success of your Post, District, and the Department. It has been a few short but very busy and educational months since I became your Adjutant. Still in a learning phase but things are getting easier. We are going to be trying new things this year one of them being that we are taking the Department to online Membership processing. There has been complaining about numbers not matching hopefully this will help solve that problem. I can assure you that when your membership is received at headquarters it is processed that day. I ask that you all be patient as we work through the personify issues. It is getting better and eventually it will work well for all of us.

The Department Spring Conference is coming up in March. We will be back in Portsmouth, checkout the valegion.org website for details and registration information. We will have the Department Oratorical contest on that Friday evening at 7pm. We will also be visited by the Leading Candidate for National Commander James Troiola from New York. Our programs are going to start to pick up with Boy's State and Baseball and Oratorical and Junior shooters check out the website for details. It is an important time of the year lets engage our children and youth in our Americanism programs.

We will soon be starting a revision of our Constitution and By-Laws at the Department to follow with the Post Constitution and By-laws if you do not have a current copy of them at the headquarters, please make sure that you submit them, we will calling if we do not have them.

The next thing is to be an officer within this organization you must show proof of eligibility in the American Legion so if you are a Commander or Adjutant of a Post, you will be required to submit a copy of your DD214 with your SSN# redacted so we can verify the information. We want only those that are eligible and deserve to hold office to do so.

You will be hearing soon about a program that your Department Commander is going to be pushing for a fundraiser. It is the Veterans and Children's Foundation. It is a national program that we have been tasked with raising money for. I ask that each Post and District start to think of a way to raise money to donate we are looking to raise around $6000.00 this year. Legion Riders and Sons as always, your help in this endeavor is well appreciated.

Legionnaires time to push hard as we always do in membership and programs lets continue to make the Department of Virginia the best Department of this organization.

David M Stein

YCLE Updates

Good Morning All Department of Virginia posts.

I am happy to announce that the dates for the 2022 Youth Cadet Law Enforcement (YCLE) Academy have been confirmed with the Virginia State Police. Sunday, June 26 to Friday, July 1 has been confirmed.

Please continue to reach out to all your HS contacts, Resource Officers, JROTC liaisons, Criminal Justice instructors, as well as your local police department and sheriff office. You may refer to the YCLE page on the Department website for more information or contact me directly.

Be advised that there is no prohibition for cadets who have also participated in Boys or Girls State the week prior.

The program provides first-hand experiences and insight into the operations of law enforcement agencies.

The program also affords these highly motivated young people an opportunity to consider law enforcement as a potential career choice.

Thank you all for your continued support of this outstanding program.

Bill Feasenmyer

YCLE Academy Director

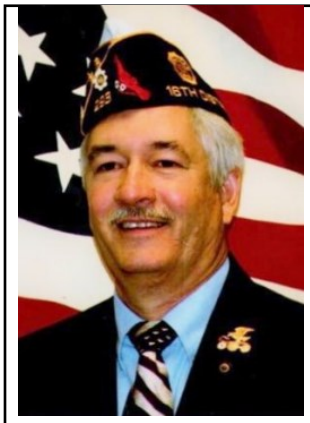
Passing of Past Department Commander Robert “Bob” Hannon

On Dec. 14, 2021, Past Department Commander Robert “Bob” Charles Hannon, was called for duty by the Supreme Commander and transferred to the Post Everlasting. He was surrounded by family and close friends, as he passed peacefully in his home in Smithfield, Virginia. Born in Hartford, Conn., Oct. 17, 1941, from the late Edgar and Alice Hannon, he was the third of four children. Upon graduation, he joined the Navy, serving over 22 years. Retiring as a chief warrant officer in 1982, he then joined Newport News Shipbuilding and retired after 21 years of service. Bob was a loyal servant and life member of the American Legion, holding both state and national positions, most notably the Virginia State Commander 2003-2004. Bob continued to serve his community in many ways. A staple patron of many Smithfield establishments, Bob touched many lives and will be greatly missed.

He was predeceased by his loving wife of 40 years, Alice Hannon; sister, Marianne Burr; brother, John Hannon and William Cordle. Left to cherish his memory are his God-given family, daughter, Peg Cordle; grandson, Bobby Cordle; granddaughter, Kathryn Wright (John Paul); grandson, Bryan Cordle (Lauren); great-grandchildren, JP and Regan; sister, Eileen Hannon; special nieces, Jennifer and Sharon; and many other close friends.

A memorial service with military honors was held on Jan. 8, 2022, at American Legion Post 49 in Smithfield, Virginia.

Past 16th District Commander Charles King called to The High Command



Charles Alan King passed away at home on November 23, 2021. He was born on January 3, 1951, in Chestertown, MD, son of the late Charles and Doris Mench King. He grew up in Rock Hall and Chestertown, MD. He loved his family and his country.

In 1975, he joined the United States Air Force and continued his education in the fields of communication and munitions systems. During that time, he met and married his first wife and had 2 children. He retired from the military after 20 years of service and then worked for defense contractors. In 2011, he finally retired, much to the delight of his beloved beagle, Bandit. For those fortunate enough to know him, he will be remembered for his energy, compassion, and eager willingness to always help others.

His was a life of service in the purest sense. He was a member of The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and fraternal Moose, Elks and Eagles organizations. He was an active volunteer with The American Legion Post 293 in Purcellville, VA, where he met his current wife, Staci. They married in 2008 and lived together in both Northern Virginia and Kennedyville, MD. Mr. King loved “cars and trucks and things that go fast". He enjoyed working on and collecting classic cars, attending car shows and fishing as much as he possibly could. He also loved painting ceramics and will be remembered as an incredible artist and a gifted mechanic. He could build just about anything and helped so many people doing all sorts of handy man activities. He had a passion for demolition work - it was his favorite!

Charles was an avid traveler during his life as he visited dozens of countries. He was preceded in death by a daughter Leslie King, a brother, Steven King and a half sister, Paula Bennett. He is survived by his wife, Staci King of Herndon, VA; son, Charles Alan King II of Hope Mills, NC; brother Dennis King (Ann) of Hot Springs, AR; stepmother Rose Marie Metcalf of Chestertown, MD; and half-brother Wayne Slagle of New Castle, DE.

A celebration of life will be held following his interment in Leesburg, VA in April 2022.

Core Guidance for American Legion Mission

As you develop training and education programs at the district and post level, it's important to align your goals with the overall mission of The American Legion. Four documents produced by National Headquarters will provide you with most of the information you need to understand how our great organization functions and operates. All are available to download for free at: legion.org/publications.

Read, familiarize yourself, and own the information found in these important documents. Then you will successfully understand, and be able to convey to your training audience, how The American Legion works.

An Americanism Memory

By John Schenck, Department Americanism Chair

Americanism: "When I was a Chief Petty Officer, in the United States Navy, active duty 1965-1990, I had the privilege of visiting Pearl Harbor onboard the U.S.S. Tripoli (LPH-7). We transited in and out of the U.S.S. Arizona Monument four times. Ships Company, HM14 and the embarked U.S.M.C. BLT manned the rails in dress uniforms.

The following was the sequence of events that we went through as we approached:

"All Hands, change into the dress uniform of the day. There will be no one outside the skin of the ship in working uniform."

"Man the rail." As we approached the monument!

"This is the Captain, Boatswain Mate of the Watch – All Stop, Silence about the decks"

Now, the only noise heard was the humming of the engines and air conditioners onboard.

"Boatswain, pipe Attention to Port,"

"All Hands – Present Arms"

We stayed at Present Arms until the entire length of our ship passed the monument.

"All Hands – Carry on"

"Boatswain – ahead one third. Officer of the Deck, prepare to make up tugs. All Hands, there will be no working uniforms topside, except for loading stores for the remainder of this port visit."

While in port, one of our Chief Petty Officers re-enlisted for his last time onboard the U.S.S. Arizona monument. Every E-7-E9 Chief Petty Officer and Marine was in attendance in class A's

We performed the same ceremony when we departed Pearl Harbor, except on the starboard side.

You would have had to be there to understand the goose bumps all over my body!

I also had the privilege of visiting the monument three more times as a Civil Service employee"

Stepping into history at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

(Continued from page 1)

felt as if I were smelling them for the first time. At this moment, I became a bit nervous.

For the first time in almost 100 years in part of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Centennial Commemoration, I was able to cross the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Plaza and walk the line paced and worn in stone where the 24-hours-a-day soldiers from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, known as "The Old Guard," stand watch over the Tomb. The thought of me walking that same line left me awestruck, nervous and patriotic.

Few know that the Old Guard is a combat unit. In 1994, the decorated 289th Military Police Company became attached to the Old Guard. This MP branch is a combat-support unit that includes women. As a former MP, I knew that the reactivation and attachment of the 289th MP Company provided the first opportunity for women to serve as sentinels.

Only five women have been chosen to guard the Tomb. Sgt. Heather Johnson (1996), Sgt. Danyell Wilson (1997), the first Black woman to earn the badge, Staff Sgt. Tonya Bell (1998) first woman to serve as relief commander, Sgt. Ruth Hanks (2015), and Sgt. 1st Class Chelsea Porterfield (2021), the first women sergeant of the guard, and the women who would lead the first all-women shift change in 84 years, on the 30,770th day of continuous protection.

It is funny what floats through your mind to distract you at times like this. A few weeks ago, I looked onward to the steps and memorial display room, where I was finishing the final details of my artwork depicting the sacred duty to guard the Tomb. I was inspired by a recent event at the Military Women's Memorial collaborating with The Society of the Honor Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I remember going through multiple drafts, sketching the Tomb, inspired to capture the united diversity of past wars. I wanted to capture the best that each generation has offered in exemplifying selflessness, courage and character.

The next thing I knew, I was standing in front of the line, about to lay down my flower in honor of a soldier whose name will never be known, but who represents all who have served and sacrificed for our nation.

For 100 years, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier has served as the heart of Arlington National Cemetery. As a sacred memorial site and the grave of three unknown American service members, the Tomb connects visitors with the legacy of the U.S. Armed Forces throughout our nation's history. I was about to be a part of that history. I adjusted my American Legion cap, and in a moment, I stood in front of two men in dress blues. "Ma'am, you may approach the Tomb," the sergeant instructed. I stepped forward, one foot in front of another, emulating my best 30-inch step. I glided along.

"Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God."

Velvet ropes formed the perimeter around the three tombs. I stood in front of the center of three crypts, staring at the sarcophagus inscription: "Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God."

I paused in reflection and stared at the carved words. I thought about how you arrived this day, 100 years ago on the USS Olympia at the Navy Yard in Washington D.C., the spray of white roses still resting upon the flag-draped casket, as the National Anthem played, welcoming home its long-awaited son. Here, you rest along with those of subsequent wars.

I clutched my white roses one last time. I knelt to rest them on the cold ground. I spread them out and stood back up, let out a deep breath, lowered my head to my hands and counted 21 seconds. I turned to my right and stepped away. As I did, I glanced back, reflecting on service, valor and sacrifice – a moment in my personal history that has everlasting meaning for all of us who have served and sacrificed, regardless of our military occupational specialty, branch of service, gender or name, known or not.

Around the Department

After placing Flags on Veterans Day at Albert G , Horton Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery, 4th District Vice Commander James Knowlton sits on a nearby bench with fellow participant Trenton. (Photo courtesy Tia McMillan)

American Legion Post 2 Legion Family members participated in Wreaths Across America at Grove National Cemetery in Petersburg, VA. , (Photo courtesy Unknown)

Legion sponsoring virtual job fair March 9th

The American Legion is hosting a virtual career fair from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. CT on March 9, open to job seekers and employers worldwide.

The American Legion Department of Texas, Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Veterans Commission, Texas Operation Welcome Home, and Texas Veterans Leadership Program are also collaborating in the event.

Registration is free for all veterans, transitioning servicemembers, active duty, National Guard, reservists and working-age military dependents. A resume is required to register.

Registration for job seekers and prospective employers is available by going the following page and clicking on the link in the story:

https://www.legion.org/careers/254810/legion-sponsoring-virtual-job-fair-march-9

Around the Department

The American Legion Post 175's Color Guard participated in the Veterans Day Ceremony held at the Heritage Green Senior Facility in Mechanicsville, VA, on November 11, 2021. Pictured (L to R): James Legg, Thomas Rummel, Colin Williamson, Garnet Fowlkes, Raymond Lewter, Bob White, Abraham Smith, Douglas Stansbury, Douglas Snell, and Edward Baggett. (Photo courtesy George Navas)

The Mechanicsville American Legion Auxiliary Unit and Legion Riders Chapter 175 joined forces to raffle a hand-made quilt called "Peace on Earth." Pictured (L to R): Auxiliary Unit 175 member Faye Heath, Melvin Huffman, Quilt Winner, and Ms. Jennifer Helborn, All American Lady Pageant Winner. (Photo courtesy Unknown)

Here's to the Dawn of an Awesome Year

By Pamela Elam Lipscombe

Greetings!

Happy New Year! We made it to 2022! It is my honor to bring greetings on behalf of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Virginia.

It is natural instinct to reflect on the past year and think about the goals that we wish to achieve for the new year. 2021 was a challenging year for many of us. Those challenging times made the year interesting and overcoming them made the year more meaningful. We remained vigilant to our mission: "Service not Self."

We will enter 2022 with renewed energy and motivation to continue building on our successes. We will renew our commitment to be of service to our veterans, military, and their families. We will support National President Kathy Daudistel's initiative to celebrate our caregivers and recognize their labor of love for our veterans. We will develop innovative ways to move our American Legion Auxiliary's programs forward. We will renew, recruit, and retain members. We will engage with our local communities. We will work

We have the power to make a positive difference in all that we do. It only takes a small commitment to begin seeing results. As we see the positive results, our dedication and motivation to our organization will become stronger. We only need to remember why we joined the American Legion Auxiliary.

This is the dawn of a new day. Here's to the dawn of an awesome year!

For God and Country,

Pamela Elam Lipscombe

Department Vice-President

American Legion Auxiliary

Jim Davenport with Post 270 Commander Marshall Hyman (left) and Past National Commander Brett Reistad (right) at American Legion Post 270 award ceremony on December 14, 2021. After Jim received the 70-Year pin, he spoke about the importance of American Legion to WW II veterans, who made Post 270 a central part of their social and service life in McLean. (Photo courtesy Jonathan Berkson.)

Gravesite Visit of First American Killed During Vietnam War

By Ron Perkins

As a former member of the US Army Security Agency (ASA) who served in Vietnam, I have always had this item on my "Bucket List." That was to visit the gravesite of the first American killed in ground combat during the Vietnam War, an ASA Direction Finding Specialist, SP4 James T. (Tom) Davis on the anniversary of his death, December 22, 1961. (See: https://www.nsa.gov/Portals/75/documents/about/cryptologic-heritage/cryptologic-memorial/davis.pdf)

In conjunction with the Sons of the American Legion (SAL) National Commander Michael Fox's "Flying Flags for Heroes" initiative to place 1 million US flags on veteran's graves in local cemeteries, I conducted a road trip to Good Hope Cemetery, Livingston, TN where SP4 Davis is buried.

The Unknown Rider Ron Perkins (above) renders a salute to SP4 Davis' gravesite. (Below) Ron poses for Flag placement at gravesite for the "Flying Flags for Heroes" initiative. (Photo courtesy Ron Perkins)

December 22, 2021 (the 60th anniversary of the ambush that took SP4 Davis' life) turned out to be a beautiful, but cold and windy day in rural north/central Tennessee. I was quite disappointed to find nobody else at the Good Hope Cemetery, however it did resolve the issue of how I was going to document my activities there: Tripod and Selfies!

I began by locating SP4 Davis' grave which has both a civilian headstone and a military grave marker, placing a small US flag on each, as well as a US/ASA banner at the headstone.

After rendering the appropriate honors and taking a few moments to reflect on SP4 Davis' ultimate sacrifice, I located and placed US flags on nine other veterans' graves: Gunner Captain Harold D. Williams, SK3 Daniel M. Williams, US Navy; SGT Byrd W. Bohannon, US Army; PFC Tommy Earl Parrish, US Army; TSGT Kent W. McDonald, USAF; PFC John Q. McDonald, US Army; PFC Hollis O. Hunter, US Army; Wiley White, US Navy; and PN3 Allon White, US Navy. I also placed a flag on a memorial to "James Thomas Davis and all patriots who rest here", dedicated in 2006, by the Southeast Asia Army Security Agency Veterans Association.

While I was packing up to leave, a little old lady arrived and went to one of the graves at which I had placed a flag – that of PN3 Allon White, her late husband of 67 years. Her name is Ethel, and she thanked The American Legion and me for remembering and honoring our veterans by placing these flags on their sometimes-forgotten graves. Come to find out, she had been a classmate of Tom Davis, remembered him well, and had liked him very much. --- Ron Perkins (AKA The Unknown Rider)

Spotlight on Berryville Unit 41

By Dr. Lisa Chaplin, Past Department Auxiliary President

Virginia ALA Unit 41 in Berryville – a relatively small Unit - has done a lot of great work for veterans and their community. Their monthly report for December alone reads like a recipe for success in mission delivery. Members contributed to a women's shelter and to a hospice facility, participated in the local Christmas parade, provided meals to individuals in need, purchased wreaths for a Wreaths Across America location, donated blood, made contributions to St. Jude's, Wounded Warriors, Tunnel to Towers, Paws for Purple Hearts, the Salvation Army, and worked in conjunction with a local Rotary club collecting socks for the Martinsburg VA Medical Center.

Pictured (L to R) Unit 41 President Sherry Chapman, Unit 41 Member Dale Coumes, and Unit 41 Vice President Margaret Jeffries (Photo courtesy Unknown)

The Martinsburg VAMC benefitted from Unit 41's donation of 211 items of clothing for men and women, ranging from undergarments and socks to sweats and ball caps, and everything in between. And to keep everyone on track, they also donated 209 calendars from pocket size to wall size. And that's not all!

Unit 41 members provided and decorated a Christmas Tree at the Martinsburg VAMC and in addition, they organized and conducted a Christmas Wrap event.

Also happening in December was Martinsburg VAMC's quarterly food drive. Unit 41 members purchased and delivered over $350 of non-perishables to the Food Bank for Veterans.

Not only does every activity and donation count toward our mission as American Legion Family members, but also establishes a positive impression within the community. Put forth an image that proudly demonstrates our mission, passion, positivity, and our brand. Be like Berryville!

2021-2022 Department Membership Standings

Current as of: January 27, 2022

Northern Region: 84.58%

Eastern Region: 84.07%

Western Region: 83.84%

Overall: 80.74%

Next Goal: 85% of 2022 goal on February 2, 2022

Needed to meet 2022 100% goal: 7,422

Priorities Need Addressed Across the Detachment

By Joe Gallagher, Detachment Commander

Comrades, I want to wish each of you a most Happy, Wonderful, and Hopeful New Year. It's hard to believe that we are almost halfway through our Legion Year. There are some areas that we all need to accomplish together and I would like to touch on those below and ask that everyone please put these on your lists as PRIORITES to happen quickly.

First and foremost is to get your membership turned in. There is no mystery that both on the National Level and Department Level that we have some major opportunities to improve on processing membership. I can tell you from personal experience at our Squadron 284 that we have been able to accomplish this via processing online via My SAL/My Legion.org. I can also tell you that Department is working diligently on changes to improve the process for all membership that is transmitted via paper as we have for years. Regardless of which way you choose to process your membership, it is most important that you keep copies of everything until you are assured that it has posted at National showing the Membership being paid and active. This ensures that if there is a cyber issue or paper transaction that gets lost, that we have the documentation needed to quickly address the issue and rectify it for all. I am asking as well that if you don't see your transmitted membership show up on the reports that you notify myself or our adjutant Kevin Chaplin at once so that we can find out what is going on and begin the process of getting recorded. We all know that change can be difficult, as we learn new ways etc. but I am asking for everyone to embrace the online membership transmission process. It is the way of the future and will quickly be the required way to transmit membership. With all this said it is imperative that each Squadron turns in their SDR form so that it is properly recorded as to who your officers are and what your respective dues are so that each Squadron gets their portion of the dues as expected. REMEMBER when everyone has access online to renewal of membership, they can pay online, print their membership cards, etc. So, we want to make sure that each squadron's dues are captured, and payment of that amount returned to the squadron. Otherwise, the system will only collect the National amount and the Detachment amount, and the squadron will not be receiving anything. Let's get it in. Virginia is trailing near the bottom Nationally, if you have turned in membership and it isn't showing in the reports let us know ASAP.

Lastly on this subject, if you need assistance with processing/transmitting membership online, please reach out to myself, Kevin Chaplin our Adjutant/membership chair and as always to your respective Vice Commanders. We all stand ready to assist in anyway possible.

Secondly, each year the Commander chooses a project and asks all squadrons in the Detachment to support the project. This year my project is one that combines Children and Youth with Americanism. I am asking each Squadron in the Detachment of Virginia to raise a few bucks and buy small American flags on a pencil size sticks, NOTE: (Only FLAGS made in the USA.), and flag etiquette children's leaflets, (found on Emblem Sales). Then reach out to an elementary school close to your post home, contact the principal, and ask if your squadron can come in and do a program for the entire first grade class on Flag Etiquette and Education, while doing so, leave one of the flags with each 1st grader and the leaflet. The goal is to build and shape respect for our flag, and in doing so, to mold our next generation starting with these first graders. I would ask that we give them info as well about the SAL and how they might consider joining our ranks. Please just drop me a quick email telling me that your squadron has made this happen. If you need to know where to get the flags and handout booklets on Flag Etiquette, just go to Emblem Sales.com. If you need help let me know. You can reach me at anytime via email at SALJGallagher@gmail.com, or call me at 804-741-4680. Remember this should be counted as a Children and Youth in your yearly CDR that we encourage all to fill out each year showing the impact you and

New Legion Rider Chapter Added at Post 88

By Randy "BB" Gunn, Virginia Legacy Run Founder

Saturday, November 13,2021 dawned with clear skies and mild temperatures to greet the riders who gathered at Bob Christie's home in Madison Place neighborhood in the Harbor View area of Suffolk, Va. The five riders were going "kick stands up" to the Elk Lodge in Suffolk Virginia . They would be participating in their Chartering Ceremony and be sworn in as American Legion Riders with the Nansemond Post 88.

New Riders getting ready to be sworn in by Department Adjutant Dave Stein. (Photo courtesy Debby Christy)

Riders converged from all over the State of Virginia to celebrate with the new Legion Riders. Christie reported 9 new riders would become Charter Members in ALR Chapter 88. They, along with over 90 other riders, celebrated the new chapter. Christie requested permission in June of this year and began recruiting, immediately. In just five months they had nine riders ready to roll. The American Legion Riders is the fastest growing segment of The American Legion and creates awareness in the Legion programs for veterans and community. Over 1400 riders are members in the State of Virginia. Chapter 88 became the 49th Rider Chapter in the state.

Christie reported his reason for beginning the task of building this Rider Chapter was inspired on Memorial Day weekend when he attended a dedication of a statue called "The Road Warrior" as he presented to the new Rider's Chapter members, along with over 100 Riders and guests from LaGrange, Kentucky. The statue is on the grounds of the Historical Society and was placed there to honor the spirit of veterans and a hometown son, Dr. E. Bruce Heilman who was a friend, a fellow veteran and a fellow rider and member of Bob's first post. Dr. Heilman was often referred to as " Motorcycle Man". Bruce was a high school drop out who joined the Marines in WWII. He served in the Pacific. He earned his GED after the war and through the GI Bill worked his way through college and graduate school. He went on to become president of Meredith College in NC and then president of the University of Richmond. When most seniors are sitting in a rocker , Bruce was riding across the U.S. in honor of the " Spirit of 45" and Gold Star Families on his Marine Special edition Harley. The Legion Riders had teamed up with Dr. Heilman on two cross country trips when he was 89 and 91 years of age.

"It was at the dedication where I decided that I needed to get off my butt and start another Chapter. Being a resident of Suffolk I decided I had to give it a try. It would be easier than riding across country as my friend Bruce had done and I was twenty years his junior." said Bob Christie. So in the Spirit of Dr. Heilman another Rider Chapter was ready to ride to benefit our veterans and the overall community.

Department Constitution & By-laws Review

By the time you receive this newsletter, the Department Internal Affairs Committee will have appointed an ad hoc Constitution & Bylaws Review Committee to examine the Department's C & Bs and make recommendations for any changes/updates for adoption at the 2022 Department Convention. We invite input from our membership for the committee's consideration. Comments should be emailed to Adjutant Dave Stein at adjutant@valegion.org no later than Monday, February 28, 2022. The Department's C&Bs can be found at www.valegion.org under Forms and Downloads.

Bringing Santa to the Troops and Their Kids in the 1950's

By Doug Osborn

After the end of World War II and the Korean War my father Ray D. (Dave) Osborn found himself assigned to the usual garrison assignments both in the United States and around the world. As a former Sergeant in the Marine Corps, he was a bit more skilled than the average young Army Lieutenant and would often find himself with the most important details with the highest profile of the entire year: Santa Claus Coordinator.

Ray D. Osborn (left) during his first Santa Detail in 1955. (Photo provided by Doug Osborn.)

The first time executing the Santa Detail was Christmas 1955 while stationed at Camp Zama, Japan. His boss was the Post Commander Colonel Albert G. Marin – also a World War II veteran who sported an 82nd Airborne Division Combat Patch. As a Major, Marin served as the Assistant Chief of Staff, Logistics, responsible for the Air Movement Table which coordinated the parachute and glider missions for Operation Market (the airborne component of Market Garden). Santa was portrayed by Mr. Richard Ellis III, an employee at the Post Exchange. With the same degree of military precision Operation Santa was flawlessly executed. After the arrival of Santa my brother David was able to meet Santa and provide him his Wish List.

Mr. Richard Ellis "Santa" speaking to a young boy in 1956. (Photo provided by Doug Osborn)

The second Santa Detail was the following year in 1956. This time my father saw an opportunity for my brother David to get into the act, but this time as an Elf. Being an Elf had its responsibilities such as maintaining proper Elf etiquette and behavior; and maintaining balance while waving to the crowd at the parade atop a Camp Zama Fire Engine. This year Santa was portrayed by Army SP-3 Mark C. Biermann from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and again Operation Santa was executed flawlessly by all.

The last and final time Dad got to coordinate the arrival of Santa for military families on base was after the family was transferred state-side to Fort Belvoir, VA. There, Santa arrived once again by helicopter, and once again my brother David got to be one of Santa's Elves. The event attracted a Brigadier General and of course the Post Commander – and Army Engineer, as at the time Fort Belvoir was the Home of the Army Engineer Corps.

With all my Father's military adventures – from a Marine on Guadalcanal, Bougainville, and Iwo Jima, to an Army Lieutenant in the Korean War, to a Lieutenant Colonel in Vietnam I believe it was the Santa Detail that brought him the greatest joy. For it was during these times he had an "in" with Jolly ol' Saint Nick. And it was then he got to personally tell him his Christmas Wish List.

Eagle Scout of the Year Nominations

The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year nomination window is from November 1st to March 1st, annually.

Nomination packets must be received by each applicant's respective American Legion department (state) headquarters no later than March 1st.

Then each respective American Legion Department (state) Selection Committee will determine the Eagle Scout judged to be the best in their department (state) and the department will send that packet, along with a list of the members serving on that Selection Committee, to The American Legion National Headquarters no later than April 1st.

For more information contact Program Chairman Lowell Badgley at (434) 295-5952.

The application link can be found at: www.valegion.org/programs/boyscout/

Department Historian Edward Thompson pictured with one of his prized Post History Books. (Photo courtesy Unknown)

Department Historian Focuses on Historian Contest

By Edward Thompson

My most important objective on being appointed Department Historian, was to improve and expand the program. The past year's objective, mainly focused on the Historian Contest. My vision expanded that uncomplicated role of the Post Historian to a higher degree. At the very first Department Conference, we distributed over two hundred Historian education books, preciously explaining our purpose to every Legion Post .

The Distribution was assisted by District Commanders, who made the arrangements to distribute the History books to each Post in the Department. These books contain the duties that will be expected by Post Historians in the future. The book contents are, Post Historians expected duties, instruction for entry into the Department History contest, and instructional history of the American Legion. These books are Post property and are expected to be passed on to newly elected Historians. However, arrangements have been made in case of lost or misplaced books, a replacement can be attained from the Department Adjutant.

The original cost for educational book came out of the Department Historian budget.

For God and Country

Edward Thompson

Legendary Legionnaire Transfers to Post Everlasting

By Joe Garlitz

The American Legion Department of Virginia lost a living legend recently. Edward Shames was a member of Post 35 (12yrs), District 2 in the Eastern Region. Colonel Ed Shames (Ret) World War II Veteran lived in Virginia Beach (from Norfolk). He was the last living officer of "Easy Company" of the book "Band of Brothers" notoriety. He was 99 years old. He began his Army career as an enlisted soldier and received a field commission, 2nd lieutenant. An obituary posted by the Holomon-Brown Funeral Home said Shames of Norfolk, Virginia died peacefully at his home on Friday, December 3, 2021. His Funeral was held on December 5, 2021 at Forest Lawn, Norfolk.

Pictured (L to R): John Stewart, Joe Garlitz, James Knowlton, Gerald Rhoads, John Shenk, Otha Newton, and Roger Kelly. (Photo courtesy Unknown)

The obituary continued; Shames was involved in some of the most important battles of World War II. During the War, he was a member of the renowned Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division. He made the first combat jump into Normandy on D-Day as part of Operation Overlord. He volunteered for Operation Pegasus and then fought with Easy Company in Operation Market Garden and the Battle of the Bulge in Bastogne. Further, according to his obituary, when Germany surrendered, Ed and his men of Easy Company entered Hitler's Eagles Nest where Ed managed to acquire a few bottles of cognac, a label indicating they were "for the Fuhrer's use only". Later, he would use the cognac to toast his oldest son's Bar Mitzvah. The obituary said after the War, Shames worked for the National Security Agency as Middle East affairs. He also served in a U.S. Army Reserve Division and later retired as a Colonel.

Easy Company was the subject of Stephen Ambrose's 1992 book, Band of Brothers, upon which the HBO miniseries was based. They followed Easy Company from its training in Georgia in 1942 all the way to the War's end in 1945, according to the obituary.

Finally, it was an honor for each one of us to represent the American Legion at the funeral of this legendary Legionnaire, highly decorated WWII Veteran and, one of the best of the "greatest generation". There were over 100 attendees at the grave site funeral service.

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Department Vice Commander Joe Garlitz poses for a photo with Smithfield ALA Unit member Taylor Cruro and Junior ALA member Danika during the Wreaths Across America event. (Photo courtesy Unknown)

If you are interested in joining the Virginia American Legion Media Association (VALMA), please reach out to VALMA President Dave Wallace at:

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