

CHECKPOINT



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New Jersey Post Doubles as Free Military History Museum

SOME 10 YEARS AGO, THEN-POST COMMANDER JOHN CLIFFORD suggested cleaning up the second floor of Post 3620 in Gloucester City, N.J., located just across the Delaware River from Philadelphia. At the time, the Post's attic was mostly filled with "junk," according to Post member Ed Walens. Clifford told Walens he envisioned a museum occupying the space someday.



Top right: A local Vietnam veteran dons his uniform at Post 3620's Doherty Veterans Museum. Center: Museum exhibits encompass all war eras, from the Revolutionary War to present day conflicts. Museum curator Ed Walens doesn't turn away any artifact. Bottom right: Two students from the Gloucester Catholic High School visit the museum. PHOTOS COURTESY ED WALENS

Growing up during WWII, Walens had always been interested in military history and began his own collection of military memorabilia.

"I lived at the movies," the 83-year-old Air Force veteran said. "When I was a kid, most of the movies were on World War I."

So Walens accepted Clifford's challenge and moved his own items into the second-floor space.

"My wife was very glad to find a place for my own personal collection of things to go," Walens said.

Since it opened, the *Donald "Doc" Doherty Veterans Museum* has collected hundreds of military-related items ranging from the 1600s to today.

"It's really not a war museum," Walens said. "The goal of the museum is to

honor anyone who served. Whenever an American fought and served the country, I cover it."

He doesn't turn any items away, "even if it's just socks someone wore during World War II," Walens said. "Everyone has something in their attic." The museum exhibits include weapons, stamps, coins, and some 150 photo albums. Walens says he has more donated uniforms than he has mannequins to display them on.

The particularly rare or expensive items on display are typically on loan from family members. Walens says his favorite items are letters from the Civil War.

Perhaps the most impressive part of the museum is that it is staffed mostly by Walens alone, and is completely free to anyone who wants to visit.

Post 3620 Named for New Jersey Soldier KIA in WWI

Post 3620 in Gloucester City, N.J., is named after Pvt. Townsend C. Young of Gloucester City. In 1917, he served with the 3rd Infantry Regiment, New Jersey National Guard, and then with G Co., 114th Inf. Regt., 29th Inf. Div.

At age 20, Townsend left for France on June 15, 1918. He was killed in action at the Battle of Meuse-Argonne, on Oct. 12, 1918, only one month before the end of the war.

"I try to be there," Walens said. "If anyone calls, I'll go down there... Memorial Day, Veterans Day—any holiday except Christmas."

Walens says donations are accepted, but the Post pays for upkeep.

The museum was named for Doherty because he helped keep the Post afloat some years ago when it fell on hard financial times. Doherty was a past commander at the Post and did everything he could to see it succeed. He was present at the museum's dedication ceremony, but died shortly after.

For more information and photos of the museum, visit <http://vfw3620.org/museum.htm>.

E-mail: kgibson@vfw.org

EXTRA! EXTRA!

PUBLICATIONS CONTEST DEADLINE IS APRIL 3

The deadline for entries in the 2015 VFW National Publications Contest is April 3. The contest has been restructured for 2015, so be sure to carefully read the packet mailed to you in January. All entries must be mailed by Department adjutants, quartermasters or Department editors. Entries received from anyone else will be immediately disqualified. If you require further information before then, please call (816) 756-3390 ext. 167, or e-mail kgibson@vfw.org.

REGISTER NOW FOR NATIONAL CONVENTION

It's time to register for the 116th VFW National Convention, July 18-22, in Pittsburgh.

VFW National Headquarters mailed convention housing and registration forms in February with Post election mailings. VFW's bylaws state that each Post must register at least one delegate for the convention.



To make housing reservations, call 412-325-0316, fax 412-201-5706; international call 412-325-0316 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST

Monday through Friday, mail information to *Visit Pittsburgh Housing, 120 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2800, Pittsburgh, PA 15222* or e-mail housing@visitpittsburgh.com. The housing cut-off is **June 12, 2015**. However, do not wait until the last minute to make your reservations as there is **no guarantee** rooms will be available by that time.

Additional information is located at www.vfw.org. The website also has general convention information including the registration form, links to other convention-related material and a tentative schedule.

All advance registrations should be mailed to *VFW National Headquarters, 406 W. 34th St., Kansas City, Mo., 64111, ATTN: Convention Registration* or you may register online by visiting www.vfw.org.

TRAVEL TIPS FOR FOLKS OVER 50

Here is some foolproof advice for those of you older than 50 preparing to travel.

When flying, put your pills in your carry-on bag, not your checked luggage. You're much less likely to lose them that way.

Take more prescription medicine than you think you'll need. An extra week's worth is a good rule of thumb.

If you are susceptible to motion sickness, the best location in a boat is amidships, the best location in an airplane is over the wing.

Remember – Medicare will not cover you outside of the U.S., Canada or Mexico.

Consider purchasing a travel emergency assistance plan to protect you while you are away from home. Please call the VFW Member Benefits Department at 1-800-821-2606, option 1 for additional information.



SUPPORT VETERANS WITH YOUR WILL

Do you have veterans named in your will? A few simple words can strengthen VFW's efforts to support current troops and future generations of veterans. For details, see www.vfw.org/plannedgiving or contact the VFW Planned Giving Office at (816) 968-1119 or e-mail plannedgiving@vfw.org.

GET YOUR MEETING BAG ON WHEELS

The VFW Store now offers a back-saving bag. It's a meeting bag on wheels. Now you can transport your heavy meeting supplies like VFW bylaws, laptop, writing pad, gavel and other supplies. Laser decorated on the front with "VFW," it sports a telescoping handle and in-line scale wheels for smooth rolling. The main compartment includes a built-in laptop sleeve, which holds most 15-inch laptops. It also can be used as a carry-on when flying. To order yours today go to <http://www.vfwstore.org/products/30807> or call 1-800-821-2606 (stock number 1164).

Leadership Perspectives

John Hamilton, Adjutant General

IT Firm Seeking Vets as Employees

Our mission to help veterans succeed in the civilian world recorded an important objective in February. In a joint partnership with one of the nation's leading suppliers of health care information technology, VFW hosted a virtual career fair that was open exclusively to troops and veterans.

We joined with Cerner—a Kansas City-based company that offers IT solutions for health care providers at more than 14,000 facilities across the country—to give veterans an inside track to employment in this fast-growing field.

Cerner wants veterans, whom it describes as "talented, motivated and dedicated men and women," as employees because "they have the skills to make a difference in the health care industry."

As VFW Commander-in-Chief John Stroud said, we want to provide every opportunity for troops and veterans to succeed in their careers. Working on a large-scale hiring initiative with a company that truly appreciates the skillsets and dedication our veterans



possess certainly provides a great one.

Cerner is looking for veterans to fill positions in three main areas: technology, clinical experience and business operations. Positions include system and network engineers, technical support analysts, software developers and designers, technical project managers and a variety of operational roles.

Prior to the fair, Cerner had already hired more than 250 veterans and has a military talent program that assists vets in their corporate career.

Cerner's website (www.cerner.com) also has an online "military decoder tool" that matches a troop's enlisted position with suggested roles within the company. Part of our partnership will include Cerner helping VFW to leverage virtual platforms to connect vets with new careers at other employers in additional industries in the future.

VFW is committed to helping veterans succeed in the civilian world. Stable, well-paying employment is a crucial element in realizing that goal.

Bob Greene, Quartermaster General

VFW Store Offers Custom Products

An important revenue source for our organization continues to be the VFW Store. Based on feedback from members, we have expanded our product line and lowered our prices by searching for companies we can buy from directly, which cuts out the middle-man and passes the savings on to you. We strive to provide you with high-quality merchandise at very competitive prices.

The VFW Store offers more than 2,000 products, but if you don't find what you are looking for online or in the catalog, we can help. Our custom consultant, Kim Winston, works with members to provide unique items, such as:

- 5K and marathon race shirts
- commemorative items for Post anniversaries (T-shirts, caps, water bottles)
- sport sponsorship items (hockey jerseys, pucks, baseball t-shirts and caps, bowling shirts)
- canteen items with Post information (barware and coasters)
- officer gifts (pocket knives, executive boxes, clocks, coasters, paper weights)
- awards (Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen hoodies and jackets, plaques)

- fundraiser and giveaway items (golf tees, towels, golf bags, jar openers, Frisbees)

If our selection alone isn't enough to shop from us, think about this: VFW's logo is trademarked, and the VFW Store and select licensed vendors are the only legal sources to purchase logoed merchandise. (See Sections 803, 804 and 805 of VFW's by-laws).

Furthermore, if you don't have your own logo, we can help you design one. Have you seen something at a local store you like? We can find products at the same or reduced pricing.

We make every effort we can to help you, because your money stays within VFW to help fulfill our mission of helping veterans.

So the next time you have a fundraiser, event, or need customized products, call Kim Winston at (816) 968-1181.



CHECKPOINT

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NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

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Texas County Service Officer Helps Recover Millions

ONE HUNDRED MILES ROUND TRIP ISN'T MUCH of a drive to Randall Duckworth. His passion to help others put him on the road in 2010, when Duckworth was working as a VA service officer for Wichita County, Texas.

His call to local service came when Tommie Sappington, Montague County judge and Vietnam veteran, asked him to help turn around his hometown county office. Duckworth, a Navy veteran and member of Post 8558 in Nocona, left the hour-and-a-half drive behind and helped kick start a program that went from 47 active claims to more than 450 in just three years.

Colm Murphy, current Montague County veteran's service officer, said Duckworth was brought in "to right the ship" – and he did.

When Duckworth started, the county helped vets recover about \$1.5 million in retroactive VA claims compensation, and when he left that number grew to \$10 million. Most notably, Duckworth said one spouse received approximately \$350,000 after he helped her file a claim for her late husband's death in 1986 due to heart disease.

"That's life-changing money," he said.

But Duckworth said every claim is important.

"They're buying groceries, they're buying gas, they're buying a house," he said.

Duckworth and his wife moved back to their home state of Texas in 2009 from Virginia after he retired from the Navy as a master chief. Duckworth spent 25 years as a cryptologist serving on ships such as the *USS Midway*, *USS Reeves* and *USS Astro*. Duckworth earned his VFW eligibility aboard the *USS Hawkbill* and with 13 special ops missions, including tours in the Persian Gulf, Bosnia and Iraq.

For those considering becoming a service officer, Duckworth said your heart has to be in it.

"You've got to want to do this," he said. "You've got to want to care enough to do this."

At the county level, he and a staff of one secretary and sometimes

"That's what's so rewarding is the people getting what they deserve.

It doesn't get any better than that."

— Randall Duckworth, Post 8558, Quartermaster, District 15, Commander



Top: Randall Duckworth, in his role as Commander of District 15, works with service officers at the 10 District Posts to help grow their programs. In his time as service officer with Montague County, Duckworth helped increase the amount of retroactive VA claims compensation from about \$1.5 million to \$10 million.

PHOTO COURTESY OF COLM MURPHY, CURRENT MONTAGUE COUNTY VETERAN'S SERVICE OFFICER

Left: Randall Duckworth retired as a master chief after 25 years in the Navy. Duckworth worked as a cryptologist and served on ships such as the *USS Midway*, *USS Reeves*, *USS Astro* and *USS Hawkbill*.

up to five volunteers helped veterans and their spouses. Those volunteers were former claimants whom Duckworth helped and shared a common goal to "pay it forward."

"They saw the need," he said. "They believed in the same vision I had."

Duckworth said claims associated with heart disease, neuropathy and diabetes were most common.

Duckworth left the Montague County position in 2013 to serve as Post commander. Today, he serves as quartermaster of Post 8558 and Commander of District 15. In his latest role, he works with the service officers at the 10 District posts to help grow their programs.

When Duckworth speaks about helping others, you can hear his passion.

"I get more excited than the veteran when [his or her] claim comes in," he said. "That's what's so rewarding is the people getting what they deserve.

"It doesn't get any better than that."

E-mail: swilken@vfw.org

WANTED
Outstanding Service Officers

We would like to read about the hard work your Post and Department service officers are doing. If you would like to see them receive some much-deserved recognition, send us a brief note explaining why.

Please send information to:
Checkpoint
Attn: Outstanding Service Officers
406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
or call (816) 968-1171
or e-mail tdyhouse@vfw.org

NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE

Do you need help filing a claim?

VFW's National Veterans Service has a VFW Department service officer locator on its website. To find a service officer near you, just follow these easy steps:

1. Visit www.vfw.org/nvs.
2. Select "ASSISTANCE" from the menu.
3. Select "NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE" from the pull-down menu.
4. Locate the "FIND A SERVICE OFFICER" box on the right-hand side of the screen.
5. Select your state and hit "GO".

FIND A SERVICE OFFICER

State

GO >>

Maine Post Donates Wheelchair Ramp for Child

PHOTO COURTESY OF POST 3108

FOR 4-YEAR-OLD LILA JACKSON of Rockport, Maine, life isn't always easy. Daily, she has to take a slew of medications because of a genetic syndrome and epilepsy. She has seizures, sometimes severe enough that she stops breathing. Life isn't always easy.

But Lila's mom, Sierra, writes in her blog about the smiles and happiness her daughter shares, especially with her younger brother, Jude. "She's always happy and good-natured," Sierra writes.

It's no wonder then, that when a member of VFW Post 3108 in nearby Belfast read about the Jackson family needing a wheelchair ramp for Lila, he got his Post involved.

Sitting in storage was a heavy-duty aluminum ramp that had been donated to the Post by the family of a deceased WWII vet.

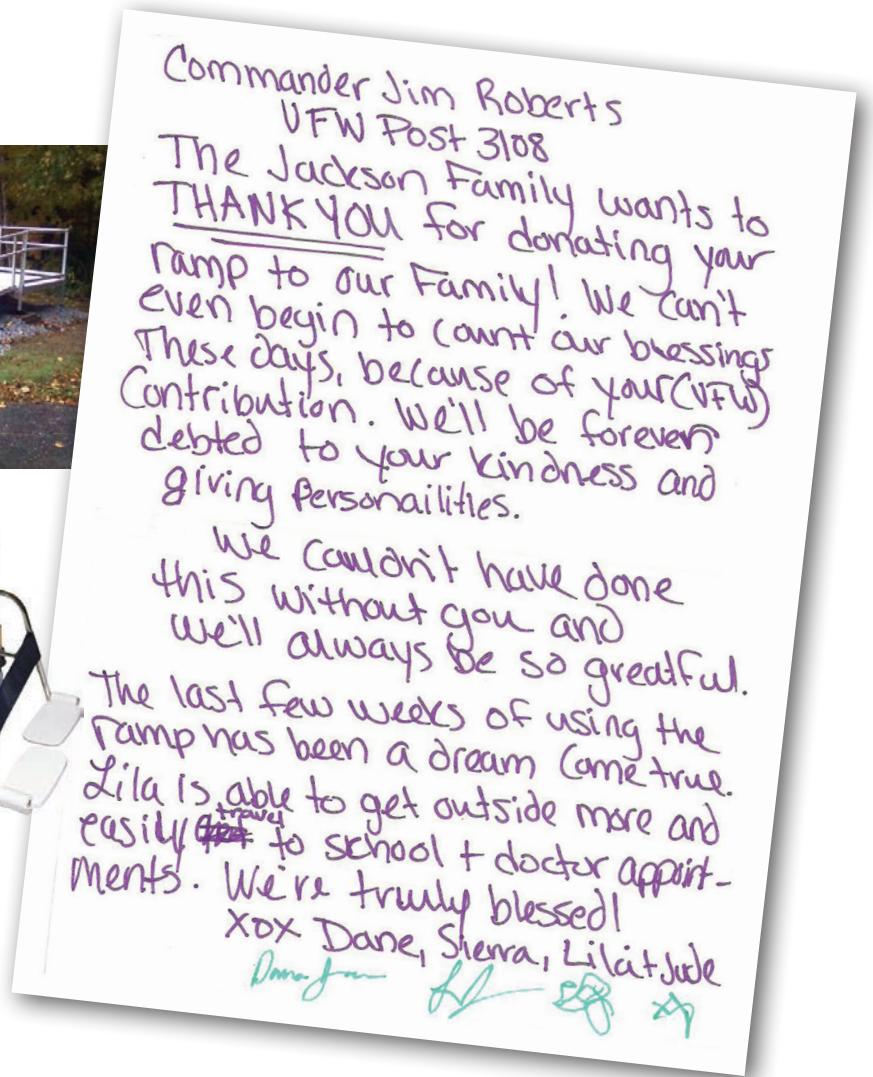
"It was a unanimous decision," Post Commander Jim Roberts said. "The family was originally from Belfast, and this is simply the right thing to do."

On Sept. 10, Post members delivered and installed the ramp at the Jackson home.

The monetary value of the ramp is between \$12,000 and \$15,000, Roberts said. But the real value is immeasurable as illustrated by this thank-you letter from the Jackson family to the Post:

"The last few weeks of using the ramp has been a dream come true," the family writes. "Lila is able to get outside more and easily travels to school and doctor's appointments. We are truly blessed."

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Crutches out of Bamboo

Members in Thailand Serve the Disabled

YEARS AGO, VFW MEMBER FOREST WILLIAMS WAS SITTING in his backyard in Khon Kaen, Thailand, when he came up with the idea of making canes and crutches out of bamboo. Thus began an endeavor that spanned decades, which helped hundreds of people in his community and expanded to surrounding towns and villages.

Eventually, Williams moved from bamboo to PVC pipe. He also saw a need for wheelchairs and designed one using the piping and recycled shopping cart casters. The first chair was donated to the Khon Kaen Center for Disabled Children.

The staff asked Williams if he could make more. A member of Post 10249 in Udon, Thailand, Williams rented a shop and filled it with PVC and parts and kept building. While his Post provided funds to help Williams, he paid for most of it out of his own pocket.

About two years ago, Williams relinquished *Project Crutch* to the Post. He provided members with his drawings and offered his expertise.

Al Fitchett, Post 10249 service officer, said Post members have made 12 wheelchairs and donated those to the Disabled Association of Udon and the Udon government hospital. They also have constructed more than 600 canes and passed them out to the "old folks" of Udon.

"We only hope that we can emulate Forest's noteworthy accomplishment and keep his legacy alive," said Delbert Marohl, Post quartermaster.

Helping the community is nothing new to the Post. The Udonthani Home for Girls just south of Udon is a frequent recipient of the Post's generosity. It is home to about 400 orphans from 19 provinces in Northeastern Thailand.

Members visit the home bearing much-needed supplies for the children whose ages range from infant to 18 years old.

The Non-Sung Nursery south of Udon also receives Post gifts including educational books, toys and games along with some baby care items.

Then there is the Ban Bung Gaew School of Udon. In the past, the Post has provided water coolers, fans and sports equipment for the students. Last year, though, the headmaster requested plates and eating utensils since the students had to bring their own from home.

Post members paid a visit to the school to present 200 aluminum lunch plates and 210 spoons. They also brought some ice cream for the students to enjoy.

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Udon Post Named for Nine Airmen

Established Jan. 8, 1972, AFTN Memorial VFW Post 10249 in Udon, Thailand, is named in memory of nine airmen killed on duty when a battle-damaged Air Force RF-4C Phantom aircraft crashed into the Armed Forces Thailand Network (AFTN) Udon Radio-TV Station on April 10, 1970.

Those men are:

- Tech. Sgt. Jack A Hawley
- Staff Sgt. James A. Howard
- A1C Andrew C. McCartney
- Staff Sgt. Alfred N. Potter
- Sgt. John Charles Rose
- Tech. Sgt. Frank D. Ryan, Jr.
- Staff Sgt. Edward W. Strain
- Tech. Sgt. Roy Walker
- A1C Thomas L. Waterman





'It's Only Time'

Illinois VFW Member Restores Memorial in His Community

IN BLOOMINGTON, ILL., THERE IS A MEMORIAL TO THE 306 McLean County residents killed in World War II. It was dedicated 17 years ago and has since fallen into a state of disrepair. Located on the east side of the McLean County Museum of History, the monument has seen its fair share of children climbing on it, not to mention skateboarders who find the slanted walls a fun place to enjoy their sport.

Needless to say, the paint that once highlighted the individual names of those killed has faded entirely. That changed a year ago when Curtis Hawk, a member of VFW Post 454 in Bloomington, began the work to fix the names.

Hawk's wife, Diane, volunteers at the museum. While visiting her one day, he learned from Greg Koos, museum director, that it would cost more than a few thousand dollars to restore the memorial. Hawk made a promise to Koos that he would get the work done.

"It's very demanding and exacting work and a tremendous amount of it," Koos told *The Pantagraph*. "One of the things that make this community the great place it is, is people like Curt Hawk who see a problem and take it on."

Hawk, who served 24 years in the Army and Army Reserve, thought he would get Boy Scouts involved, but he never found the time to organize the effort. Instead, he took on the task alone.

As director of McLean County Emergency Management Agency, Hawk left work at the end of the day and head to the memorial where he worked to scrape, prime and re-paint each letter in all 306 names occupying 24 panels. He spent weekends

working on it. When summer came and the granite was so hot that it burned Hawk's skin, he waited until evening and worked under the light of flood lamps.

Sometimes while working, people would walk by and express their shock that there were names on the wall. Since the original paint had long-ago worn off, the names were illegible.

"It took about four months to complete," Hawk said. "It's only time, though."

Hawk's wife helped on occasion, as did his grandchildren, Colin and Jami. After spraying some of the names with an airbrush, Colin, then 11, complained that his hand was cramping and hurting.

So Hawk reminded him of the hurt felt by the families of those names on the wall.

"He said to me, 'Let's continue grandpa, let's do some more,'" Hawk recalled.

Post 454 contributed \$700 to the cost of Hawk's supplies. Post Commander Robert Clark said Hawk's commitment exemplifies what VFW is all about: veterans helping veterans.

With the restoration behind him, Hawk said he plans to do touch-ups each year.

"In the end, this really was an enjoyable thing for me," Hawk said. "I got lost in my own thoughts, recognizing names on the panels with families still here. That's why I did it: for those families and the sacrifices they made."

E-mail: jblankenship@vfw.org

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LORI ANN COOK-NEISLER/THE PANTAGRAPH

Post 454 member Curtis Hawk of Bloomington, Ill., meticulously cleans and re-paints the 306 names on the WWII memorial in McLean County. For each of the 24 panels, Hawk scraped, primed and painted each letter in his free time. It took him about four months to complete.



Arizona Post Hosts Easter Fun for 350 Kids

FOR SIX YEARS, POST 6310 in Tolleson, Ariz., has hosted a community-wide Easter egg hunt. According to Post Commander Keith Roulstone, about 270-350 kids usually show up for the fun-filled event held at Tolleson Veterans Park.

He said the Post has a “good rapport” with the city, so when the water bills are mailed out, a flyer announcing the egg hunt also is included.

“The Parks and Recreation people set up craft booths for the kids,” Roulstone said. “The mayor even donates to this. And he plays in at least one of our golf tournaments each year.”

With inflatables for children to play on and free hot dogs and chips, the event costs the Post between \$3,000 and \$4,000 (most of this is in-kind donations). Roulstone said there are many businesses in the area that donate substantially to make sure this happens each year.

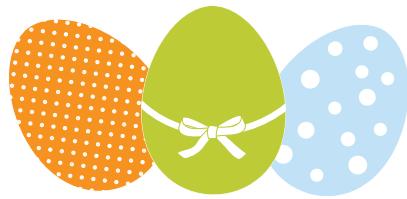
“The fire department even delivers the Easter bunny to the park before the hunt begins,” Roulstone said.

Last year, the fire department in the community of about 6,000 was out on a call. So a group of veteran-motorcycle riders picked up the bunny and escorted him to the park where 350 children were waiting.

With 3,000 filled eggs scattered throughout the park, it is a fun time for all ages, Roulstone said.

“We have always been an active Post,” he added.

E-mail: jblankenship@vfw.org



PHOTOS COURTESY POST 6310.



The children of Tolleson, Ariz., and the surrounding communities are treated annually to an Easter egg hunt, courtesy of VFW Post 6310. Hundreds of children run in search of candy-filled eggs, play games, enjoy hot dogs and even get a visit from the Easter bunny.

2,150 Recognized to Date

World War II Veterans Leading VFW Posts from Coast to Coast

THE CHECKPOINT STAFF EXTENDS A HEARTY “THANK YOU” to all our World War II Post leaders, members and veterans. And we want to recognize those who still devote time and energy to VFW causes.

Listed below are 14 WWII veterans who serve VFW Posts in official capacities. *Checkpoint* has recognized a total of 2,150 such Post leaders since the January/February 2009 issue. We will continue to feature this section in subsequent issues until every WWII Post leader whose name is submitted is recognized.

If you would like to recognize a WWII veteran who currently serves your Post, please send us his or her name, official Post position and your Post’s location. Send information to:

Checkpoint
Attn: WWII Leaders
406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
E-mail: tdyhouse@vfw.org



Name	Position	Post/Location
Duane Bjerke	Trustee	Post 5919, Excelsior, Minn.
Ernest Bruce	Chaplain	Post 2613, Columbia, Va.
Jim Castor	Commander	Post 6246, Noblesville, Ind.
George Clay	Surgeon	Post 8095, Jasper, Fla.
Clarence Johnson	Chaplain	Post 7807, Hiwassee, Ga.
Frank LaTorre	Surgeon	Post 9563, Bellmawr, N.J.
Art MacMahon	Trustee	Post 8306, Catawissa, Pa.
Paul Marabito	Quartermaster	Post 7622, New Florence, Pa.
Merlin McKone	Jr. Vice Cmdr.	Post 2777, Burton, Mich.
Clyde Quarles	Trustee	Post 2613, Columbia, Va.
Richard Simmons	Commander	Post 6902, Highlands, N.J.
Charles Wentzell	Jr. Vice Cmdr.	Post 253, Salem, N.J.
Robert Winston	Service Officer	Post 2613, Columbia, Va.
Robert Zonneville	Chaplain	Post 9295, Mentor, Ohio

VFW Salutes its WWII Members

After more than six years and almost 2,200 WWII veterans recognized, this section of *Checkpoint* will no longer be a regular feature. It appears we have accomplished the main objective.

We started this popular tribute in the January/February 2009 issue to laud the work of WWII veterans who serve their VFW Posts in official positions. These men and women—most, if not all, of whom are in their 80s and 90s—are still volunteering their time to keep the nation’s oldest major veterans organization running smoothly at the local level.

For more than 50 years—from the 1940s, when they began to join VFW in big numbers, to the early years of the new millennium, when Vietnam War vets surpassed them in membership—WWII veterans formed the core and essence of VFW. They guided the organization to its peak membership of some 2.1 million in the early 1990s and established VFW as a formidable presence on Capitol Hill in the process. Their considerable accomplishments and influence will always be a part of VFW’s heritage.

And *Checkpoint* will still publish names that are submitted, just not in every issue. When we have collected a suitable number of names to comprise a sizeable listing, we will print it. In the meantime, please continue sending us the names of your WWII members who hold official positions in your Post.

So thank you to all of VFW’s WWII members, especially those still active in the organization. Your hard work has helped make VFW what it is today.



Texas Post Offers Rental Home to Disabled Member

After his leg amputation, Allen Hancock fell on hard times. In and out of VA hospitals, the Vietnam veteran, who lost his left leg above the knee after a motorcycle accident a few years ago, suffers from chronic pain due to wartime wounds during his service with the Coast Guard off of South Vietnam. So he turned to his VFW comrades for help.



Post 4443 in Austin, Texas, of which Hancock is a member, is located on nine acres of land. It has been there since 2010, and the property includes six rental homes that generate most of the Post's income. One of those structures is now Hancock's home.

Initially, the rental house wasn't suitable for a resident bound to a wheelchair, but that hasn't been a hurdle for Post members and Hancock. As Hancock occupies the property, he identifies improvements to make the house more accessible. Post members have added new floors, a ramp and other safety equipment. Hancock also helped the Post install a fence around the yard so his dog wouldn't roam.

"Our membership is a good membership, and they've realized we can help more people if we make it a better facility," said Post Commander Gary Adam.

Adam says Hancock pays minimal rent—along the lines of half of what other tenants pay—to live on the grounds.

"We're glad he's a member of the Post," Adam said. "We do what we can for him. He's a veteran, and we show him that respect."

On top of giving Hancock a reduced price to live on the property, Adam says that the Post helps pay utilities when Hancock can't make ends meet.



PHOTO CREDIT: DORIAN DE WIND

Post 4443 member Allen Hancock helps install a fence around his rental home on the Post's property. The Post has been renovating the home to accommodate Hancock, a Vietnam veteran who lost his leg in a motorcycle accident a few years ago and uses a wheelchair.

Gary Howe, Post quartermaster, and Bennie Ellis, the Post's community service project coordinator, help with landlord duties and Post renovations. Two years ago, Home Depot awarded the Post a grant to make updates.

"Our Post is not geared toward the VFW stereotype of a bar," Adam said. "We've got a pool and a playground. We tell prospective members that we don't have a bar mentality. If you want that, you've got to go down the road."

To learn more about the Post, visit www.vfw4443.org.

E-mail: kgibson@vfw.org

Dallas-Area Post Gains Visibility in the Community

POST 4380 IN PLANO, TEXAS, HAS GIVEN EVERYTHING to stay visible in its community. After a few years of moving the Post home to several locations around town, the Post finally landed on a vacant storefront in a strip mall off of busy West Parker Road.

"This was just a wrecked out building," Gary Weger, former Post commander told the *Dallas Morning News*. "We got it all built out, and we're dead broke again."

While it might be struggling financially, Post 4380 is a survivor. Members had to dip into reserve funds for their new establishment, but they continue to work for their community.

Recently, the Post hosted a motorcycle ride for paralyzed veterans. Last October, members participated in a golf tournament to benefit the Post's Casey Joyce Memorial Scholarship Fund. In November, Post members gathered veterans at the nearby VA hospital and honored them during a Veterans Day ceremony. And

in December, the Post invited area children to have breakfast with Santa.

"The problem is dedication doesn't pay the bills," Weger said.

Weger helped the Post review its roster—once 400 members strong—to remove the names of the deceased.

"We're losing VFWs," he told the *Plano Courier*. "This is a piece of history. I believe we're losing a sense of ourselves. We're losing a piece of Americana."

Now, he says, leadership is focused on gaining younger membership through outreach and visibility. Members also are reaching out to the community for support.

"It's very healthy," Weger said. "Having this place is healthy in my opinion for veterans and families—and besides that, it's one of the most patriotic things we've got going on here. We need the energy back in it."

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Post 4380 Named for Hometown Hero

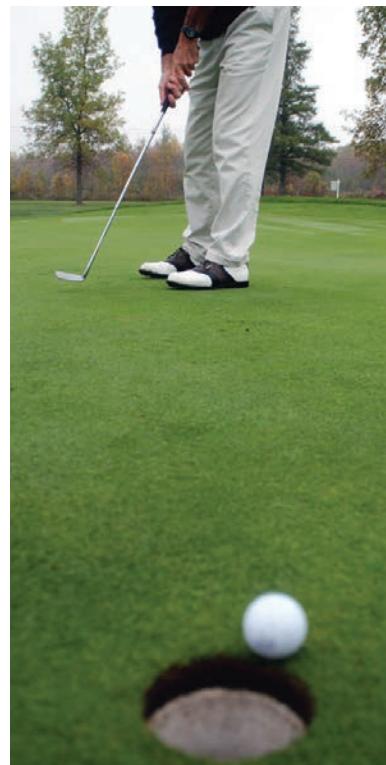
Sgt. James Casey Joyce enlisted in the Army in November 1990. He was serving with B Co., 3rd Bn., 75th Ranger Regiment in Mogadishu, Somalia, when he was killed in action during a street battle on Oct. 3, 1993. He was 24 years old.

Some 18 Americans were killed and 73 wounded during the same action, which was made famous by the film "Black Hawk Down."

Joyce was awarded a Purple Heart, a Bronze Star and the Combat Infantryman Badge. Joyce was born Aug. 15, 1969, and graduated from Plano (Texas) Senior High School. He attended the University of Texas-Austin, and the University of North Texas-Denton.

The Post was chartered in 1982 and adopted the name in 1993. There, members have created a wall adorned with photos, medals and Joyce's dog tags.

"We want to keep his spirit and memory alive," said Gary Weger, former Post commander. "We don't want to lose that."



Buddy Poppy Events Raise \$1,000

Clarence Creer and John Nanny, members of Post 4442 in Elm Grove, W. Va., man a Buddy Poppy booth at a local Tractor Supply store last March. Creer and Nanny collected some \$453 in Buddy Poppy donations. Fellow Post members Bob Haight and Delbert Chrislip also collected \$521 in donations at a Tractor Supply store in New Martinsville, W. Va.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WEST VIRGINIA VETERAN

According to Post member Larry Beck, who coordinated VFW visits to four Tractor Supply locations in the state last year, the home-improvement company is a VFW supporter.

“They are very receptive to us, as a matter-of-fact, they came to us initially,” said Beck, a former Post 4442 commander. “We hope to make this an annual event.”

Plan a Successful Buddy Poppy Campaign



The Flower of Remembrance
They Gave, Will You?



MARCH | APRIL 2015

CHECKPOINT

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VFW

Posts with the Most

VFW POSTS OF 1,000 MEMBERS
OR MORE AS OF FEB. 12, 2015

Rank	Post No.	Location	Members
1	27	Wiesbaden, Germany.....	2,732
2	1503	Dale City, VA	2,553
3	1114	Evansville, IN.....	2,187
4	9972	Sierra Vista, AZ.....	1,968
5	8862	Vicenza, Italy.....	1,764
6	392	Virginia Beach, VA.....	1,743
7	9785	Eagle River, AK.....	1,649
8	2485	Angeles City, Philippines.....	1,631
9	4372	Odessa, TX	1,626
10	10692	Grafenwoehr, Germany.....	1,531

Rank	No.	Location	Members
11	6873	Abilene, TX.....	1,461
12	63	Boise, ID	1,440
13	76	San Antonio, TX.....	1,415
14	4647	North Highlands, CA.....	1,411
15	6506	Rosedale, MD.....	1,402
16	9342	Ansbach, Germany.....	1,398
17	628	Sioux Falls, SD.....	1,343
18	10047	North Las Vegas, NV.....	1,319
19	7234	Ocean View, DE.....	1,303
20	1146	St Clair Shores, MI.....	1,277
21	10097	Fort Myers Beach, FL.....	1,239
22	972	Terre Haute, IN.....	1,233
23	4709	Conroe, TX.....	1,224
24	4809	Norfolk, VA.....	1,197
25	549	Tucson, AZ	1,171
26	2503	Omaha, NE.....	1,164
27	7968	Apache Junction, AZ.....	1,138
28	2111	Chula Vista, CA.....	1,132
29	1273	Rapid City, SD.....	1,114
30	2391	Saint Augustine, FL.....	1,112
30	1326	Bismarck, ND.....	1,112
32	7686	Alamogordo, NM.....	1,101
33	969	Tacoma, WA	1,085
34	2866	Saint Charles, MO.....	1,060
35	1512	Lemon Grove, CA.....	1,052
36	56	Leavenworth, KS.....	1,051
37	10436	Kitzingen, Germany	1,036
38	1599	Chambersburg, PA	1,029
39	3944	Overland-St. Ann, MO.....	1,024
40	1170	Middletown, KY	1,015
41	8541	San Antonio, TX	1,014
42	10216	Songtan-Si, Korea.....	1,000

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Delivering a Message on Capitol Hill

Bob Jones and his wife, Carmelita, the senior vice president for the Idaho Ladies Auxiliary, visit with Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Sen. Jim Risch (R-Idaho) at the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C., during VFW's fall Legislative Committee meeting in September 2014.

Jones, a life member of Post 3012 in Rexburg, Idaho, says he has known Risch since 2002 when Risch served as Idaho's lieutenant governor. Jones said McCain and Risch invited him and Carmelita to sit in on House and Senate committee meetings. During the visit, Jones also discussed VFW's Priority Goals—such as improving access to VA health care, veterans employment and military quality-of-life—with Risch.



PHOTO BY SUZANNE WRASSE