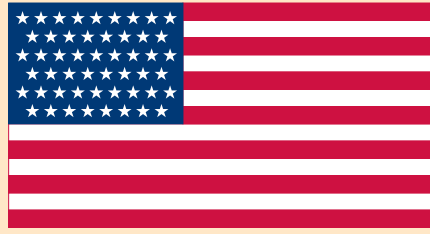


VETERANS OF MOUNT PROSPECT ILLINOIS



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In Remembrance Editor Emeritus Bob Fey



Large Crowd Attends Mount Prospect's Annual Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony

by Jim Parker—Photos Mike Zarnek

Last year village residents were happy to see the return of this annual event after a two year, Covid related, absence. A crowd of about 4,000 were treated to an amazing parade and ceremony at the Veterans Memorial Band Shell, the Grand Marshall and Keynote Speaker of which was Medal of Honor recipient Allen Lynch. This year the Village and the organizing veteran groups, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1337 and American Legion Post 525, had "tough act to follow". They were up to the task.

Starting at the Village Hall, the parade marched south to East Lincoln Street and then east to the Band Shell. Leading the parade were the Mount Prospect Police and Fire Departments, then came Color Guards of active duty recruiters from the U.S. Army, Navy and Marine Corps, followed by Post 1337 and Post 525. Also participating, among many others, were this year's Grand Marshall and Keynote Speaker, 84th Illinois State District Representative Stephanie Kifowit, military vehicles, scouting groups, the Mount Prospect Lions Club and the Marching Knights of Prospect High School.

The parade concluded at Band Shell where a great many of spectators who had been lining the streets followed to attend the Ceremony of Remembrance. Post 525 Commander and Post 1337 member, Bill Starr, Lt. Col. U.S. Army (Ret.), acted as the MC and welcomed everyone in attendance to the ceremony. After the Invocation, by

Pastor Russ Bechtold of the Northwest Assembly of God, the Pledge of Allegiance and a medley of patriotic music by the Marching Knights, guest soloist Debbie Schreiner and the Mount Prospect Community Band followed with a beautiful rendition of America the Beautiful.

Lt. Col. Starr then introduced Representative Kifowit, the Keynote Speaker, with a description of her service in the U.S. Marine Corps, her membership in several veteran organizations and a list of the many contributions to her local community made by Representative Kifowit. She began her Keynote address by pointing out that this was her first visit to Mount Prospect and that she was honored to address the crowd about the importance of women who serve in the armed forces. Representative Kifowit said also that she was very proud of her four-year term of service in the USMC during which she served stateside. She said that her administrative job was not very glamorous but her fellow Marines were always happy when their paychecks arrived on time and their orders were properly processed. She added that during her enlistment over 40,000 women served in the military and 18 paid the ultimate sacrifice. Representative Kifowit said that Memorial Day was not just a day to remember the fallen but also to honor all vets who served to protect our freedoms. It is much more than a holiday for picnics, bar-b-ques or shopping. Representative Kifowit concluded by asking everyone in attendance to

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Mount Prospect Honors Vietnam Veterans



The 29th of March every year has been designated Vietnam Veterans day. This year Mount Prospect Village honored those veterans with a special proclamation at the village hall board meeting. Some of our post members attended this meeting on 21 March.

The Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017 was signed into law by 45th U.S. President Donald J. Trump, designating every March 29 as National Vietnam War Veterans Day.

This special day joins six other military-centric annual observances codified in Title 4 of the United States Code §6, among them Memorial Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day.

29 March is a fitting choice to honor Vietnam veterans. It was chosen to be observed in perpetuity since March 29, 1973 was the day United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam was disestablished and also the day the last U.S. combat troops departed Vietnam. In addition, on and around this same day, Hanoi released the last of its acknowledged prisoners of war.

The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration honors all veterans and their families who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time from November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of location.

November 1, 1955 was selected to coincide with the official designation of Military Assistance Advisory Group-Vietnam (MAAG-V); May 15, 1975 marks the end of the battle precipitated by the seizure of the SS Mayaguez.

The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that today there are more than 7 million U.S. Vietnam veterans living in America and abroad, along with 10 million families of those who served during this timeframe.

We make no distinction between veterans who served in-country, in-theater, or who were stationed elsewhere during the Vietnam War period. All were called to serve and none could self-determine where they would serve.

Additional Background: U.S. involvement in Vietnam started slowly with an initial deployment of advisors in the early 1950s, grew incrementally through the early 1960s and expanded with the deployment of full combat units in July 1965. The last U.S. personnel were evacuated from Vietnam in April 1975.

This national commemoration was authorized by Congress, established under the Secretary of Defense, and launched by the President to thank and honor our Nation's Vietnam veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice.

In 2007, the 110th Congress incorporated language in House of Representatives (H.R.) 4986 authorizing the secretary of defense to conduct a program commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.

H.R. 4986 was signed into law as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2008 by 43rd U.S. President George W. Bush on January 28, 2008.

44th U.S. President Barack Obama officially inaugurated this Commemoration at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. on Memorial Day, May 28, 2012.

Section 598 (Public Law 110-181) of the 2008 NDAA specifically addresses Commemoration activities.

Congress outlined a total of five objectives for The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration, with the primary objective being to thank and honor Vietnam veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the Nation, with distinct recognition of former prisoners of war and families of those still listed as missing in action.

The four remaining objectives highlight the service of our Armed Forces and support organizations during the war; pay tribute to wartime contributions at home by American citizens; highlight technology, science and medical advances made during the war; and recognize contributions by our Allies.



Our Publications Awards

	VFW	American Legion
State	National	State
2021 1 ST	2021 Grand	2022 2 ND
2022 1 ST	2022 Silver	2023 1 ST
2023 1 ST	2023 Grand	

Veterans Groups Honor Local Vets at Luncheon by Jim Parker—Photos Mike Zarnek



The Outstanding VFW 4th District Color Guard



The Naval Orchestra Great Lakes NS provided entertainment



Dutch DeGroot & Helen Buss with Medal of Honor Recipient Allen Lynch



DeGroot receives Reagan award from Mike Peck



Sean Magee from the Chicago Bears keynote speaker

Sunday 21 May, eight veterans organizations bestowed one of their group's significant awards to a distinguished array of local veterans. For the first time, as the NE Illinois Veterans Coalition, they chose to make the presentations in a collaborative event at the Rolling Green Country Club in Arlington Heights. In attendance were the honorees, officers of the various organizations and many other area vets. Invited guests included Medal of Honor recipient Allen Lynch, 53rd District Representative and Vice Chair of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mark Walker, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, Terry Prince, and the Chief of Staff of the Chicago Bears, Sean Magee, who was the Keynote Speaker.

The awards were announced by Master of Ceremonies Michael Peck, Col., US Army (Ret.), the Legislative Chairman of Legislation for the VFW Department of Illinois. He was assisted in the presentations by Mr. Lynch and Mr. Prince. The awards, applicable veteran organizations, and recipients were:

Department of Defense, Seven Seals Award to Andrew Tangen and Gregory Patavoni.

- Military Order of the World Wars, Pershing Award to Lee Lopez, CW2, USA (Ret.).

- Reserve Officers Association, Lincoln Award to Arthur Dutkovic, CW4, USA (Ret.) & Fred Zehnder, Col., USA (Ret.).

- Military Officers Association of America, Eisenhower Award to George Gill, Col., USA (Ret.).

- Association of the United States Army, Mac Arthur Award, Dr. Joyce Johnson, Illinois Senator and members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

- Veteran of Foreign Wars, Ronald (Dutch) Reagan Award to John (Dutch) DeGroot, M/Sgt., USAF (Ret.).

Sean Magee was then introduced to delivered the Keynote address. His remarks began with a statement that there were many similarities in military life and football which was the theme of his presentation. He is certainly qualified to discuss the similarities because he played in the offensive line at the US Naval Academy and served many years in the Navy 12+ years in a variety of duty assignments onboard a ship and on land filling administrative roles. After concluding his naval career in 2017 he became the Associate Athletic Director for Football at the University of Michigan, a position he held until May, 2022, when he assumed his current job with the Chicago Bears.

At the conclusion of the festivities one of the honorees, Dutch DeGroot, a member of Mount Prospect VFW Post 1337 and a Vice Chair of Legislation for the Illinois VFW remarked, "What a great day for our vets!" He added that recent legislation has significantly improved benefits and services for Illinois veterans thanks to the diligent efforts of veterans like these. *And "next year we can do even more."*

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Annual Memorial Day (cont)

hold all of our veterans and active duty soldiers, sailors and airmen in their prayers and to be grateful for the gifts they have bestowed on all Americans.

Following Representative Kifowit's address, members of Post 525 and 1337 read the names of their comrades who passed away this past year. Post members then placed flowers on a ceremonial gravesite in their honor. Mayor Paul Hoefert and Mt. Prospect Park District Executive Director, Jim Jarog, added special bouquets from their organizations. The program also included the announcing of the winners of the Post 1337 Memorial Day Essay Contest. First Place winner, Marta Szamaski, an 8th grader at St. Raymond School, read her essay, on this year's topic, "What Memorial Day Means to Me." The second and third place winners were, respectively, Ashley Laski and Yuliana Manzanaries, both 7th grade students at St. Emily School. Throughout the program the Marching Knights and the Mount Prospect Community Band, accompanied by Ms. Schreiner, entertained the crowd with inspirational and patriotic songs. In keeping with tradition, the ceremony concluded with a 21 Gun Rifle Salute, bagpipe music and the playing of a special version of Taps by the Marching Knights. Pastor Fred Joob of the Christian Life Church gave the closing Benediction.

Lt. Col. Starr expressed special thanks to this year's event sponsors, including both Posts, the Village, the Mt. Prospect Parks Foundation, the Mount Prospect Lions Club, Prospect Moose Lodge 660, Humana, Mike Zarnek Photography, creator of many great photos of the day's events (including those that accompany this article), and the many musical contributors and volunteers whose diligent efforts made this year's Memorial Day tributes so memorable.

All attendees were then invited to join Lt. Col. Starr and Representative Kifowit for the dedication of a plaque honoring the service and sacrifices of all female veterans of the United States armed forces. The plaque is located on one of the brick pillars located in the Veterans Memorial that contain remembrances of other veterans who served our country placed by their respective families and friends.



Laura Matuszek Major, USA Retired

This was a special year where we highlighted Women Veterans and honored them with a Plaque. Our lady post members and Representative Kifowit laid the flowers on our mock grave.



Katie Cantanzano USA



Dana Betzner USA



Kathy Schwerman USA



Stephine A. Kifowit USMC





**Moose Governor Burke, Cmd. Starr, Mayor Hoefert
& Nicholas Papanicholas—President
Nicholas & Associates Pole Donor**

A great turn out for the dedication



Mount Prospect Veterans Dedicate Flagpole

On June 12, a couple of days before Flag Day, members of Post 525, VFW Post 1337 and representatives of Moose Lodge 660 gathered to dedicate a new flagpole at the Lodge building which also serves as the headquarters of both Posts. The project concluded a joint effort that included Nicholas & Associates of Mount Prospect who donated the 25 foot flagpole, W.G.N Flag & Decorating Co. who was contracted to do the construction, erection and made some important repairs to the pole, a member of the Moose Lodge donated his services as an electrician to make sure the flag is illuminate 24/7, along with many volunteers who contributed to the effort. The ceremony was short but quite moving for the attendees. Local soloist, Debbie Schreiner, led the group in singing the National Anthem, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The honor of raising Old Glory and the MIA/POW flags went to Dan Betzner, Sergeant at Arms of Post 525, and Mike Burke of Moose Lodge 660 whose pride shone on their faces and those of all present.

Mount Prospect Veterans Honor Departed Comrades

Mount Prospect's American Legion Post 525 and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1337 gathered last Thursday to place flags of honor and remembrance on the graves of many local veterans. Twenty members of both Posts, including some friends and family members, assembled early in the morning and received their assignments. By late afternoon they had placed 307 American flags at locations in 20 area cemeteries. At St. John Cemetery and St. Paul Cemetery flags were placed on the graves of all veterans that could be identified from cemetery records. At others, including All Saints, Memory Gardens, and Wheeling Township cemeteries, the final resting places of deceased members of both Posts were honored.

The practice of decorating veteran's graves began in America soon after the Revolutionary War. Over the next several years many more towns and villages did the same and it became an annual event. After the Civil War in 1868 General (later, president) James Garfield delivered a speech about veterans to about 5,000 people gathered at Arlington National Cemetery. After the speech those in attendance decorated graves of about 20,000 soldiers from both sides. The event became known as Decoration Day. Following WWI observers began to honor the dead of all of America's wars and both the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars made it an annual ceremony. In 1971 the U.S. Congress officially made "Memorial Day" a national holiday to be celebrated on the last Monday of May.

Long before that, however, the Village of Mt Prospect, proudly the home of a great many American veterans, began to honor its fallen heroes in a similar fashion. This has been part of the traditions of both posts since their inception. VFW Post 1337 was chartered in April 1925. American Legion Post 525 was formed in November of 1930.

Post 525 and Post 1337 chose to decorate graves, not on the official Memorial Day but, rather, on a quiet weekday, like last Thursday, when they can place their flags with somber respect and remember their departed comrades. As veterans, they understand, perhaps better than most, the true meaning of Memorial Day.

Mount Prospect Veterans Lead July 4th Parade

This Independence Day morning, July 4, 2023, the sun shone brightly and quite warmly on the marchers and spectators who lined W. Prospect Avenue to W. Central Road, winding up at Melas Park. Color Guards of Mount Prospect's VFW Post 1337 and American Legion Post 525 again led the marching veterans in the Village parade as it stepped off from main Steet at 1:00pm. Each uniformed color guard carried the Stars & Stripes, the national MIA flag and the flag of their respective organization. They were followed by several military style vehicles that contained other happy vets who smiled and waived at the enthusiastic crowd who responded with cheers and waves.

The parade also featured, among many other things, Mount Prospect Community Band, the Marching Knights of Prospect HS, local scout groups, sports teams, businesses and, of course, vehicles of the Mount Prospect, Fire Department, Police Department and several other service units of the Village and the Mt. Park District. As the parade concluded a Viet Nam veteran was heard to say that "patriotism is very much alive and well in Mount Prospect."

Post 1337 and VFW Day of Service



The Simmons Children pitched in and impressed all with their work ethic



Jim Parker & Mike Relaz



Putting in a new walkway



Once again 1337 members Jim Parker & Mike Relaz led the way organizing membership to support the national VFW Still Serving Campaign. Post 1337 gathered for a Spring clean up at a house in Mount Prospect owned by Clearbrook and used to provide housing for the disabled. Thanks to all the members that came out to help. They got together on Sunday, 7 May at 1000hrs at 309 S. Can Dota until the job was completed that afternoon. Volunteers just needed only to bring a pair of work gloves and a few gardening tools, everything else was provided.

Bottom right Commander Durov was invited to read to the Early Learning Center. There were 31 students from 2 to 5 years old. He read and interacted with the students for their reading classes.

From the Commander of VFW Post 1337



The start of another new year, 2023 – 2024. VFW Post 1337 is on the move to receive for the 6TH year in a row All State and All American designations. We are out of the gates running. A great Memorial Day with a parade and ceremony in Lions Park. July 4th we had another Parade and July 4th fest with the Lions Club. This is a great fund raiser with the Lions Club that has donated over \$100,000 to the Mount Prospect Community.

Our post helped with serving wine and margaritas to the patrons at the fest. We had a membership tent set up and we recruited one new member for our post. We also have several other veterans who may join. They want to get more information on what our post does to help veterans and the community. Our post always welcomes Veterans with any help that they may need.

We have one of the busiest posts in the state. Helping veterans and the community is a high priority on our list. Looking forward to this year with many events on our agenda. Our post picnic is in August, Honor Flight is in August, Golf outing in October, Navy Recruits from Great Lakes Training center for Thanksgiving Dinner, Veterans Day with at least 15 schools and a ceremony at Lions Park. That's just a few events. Stop on by and get more information on all events. Looking for our Patriots Pen and Voice of Democracy entries. We can't forget the Teacher of the year. If you know of a teacher, let us know and we will contact them.

April of 2025 will be our Posts 100-year anniversary. A Grand Gala is being planned with a banquet and all the bells and whistles. Hope to see you there. This will be a great well attended event. See you there.

No one dose more for Veterans than the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Contact Commander Durov for membership.

Email at les@vfw1337.us.

Les Durov, All State-All American Commander

From the Service Officer



The more time I spend as a member of our two posts, the more that I'm amazed. Truly everyone contributes with their skills. My years as a service officer and now legislative advocate, I have assisted many veterans. Many of us come together with our specific skills; I use my skills as a graphic artist, Jim Parker has the writing skills, Mike Relaz trade skills, Les Durov's

tenacity, Bill Starr's oratory skills, Chuck Ohrn & Dennis Kane keep the books, the list goes on and on with members contributing. We also get a lot of help from people and organizations outside of membership.... Carol Ohrn, Marcie Kane, Jan DeGroot, Vicky Durov, the Lions Club, The Moose Lodge, Village Hall **plus many that I don't have space to print.** Just give this a moment to sink in, it's incredible.

To celebrate our again taking 1st place in newsletter publication from the VFW State & National and American Legion State, I decided to do this version in 4-color. We couldn't get this award without Jimmy "the Hammer" Parker's writing skills or my Jan's help with the mailing. We are also constantly getting new members and utilizing their skills to keep our posts vibrant.

Another milestone on the Service Officer side is that we now have one of the top VSO's in Illinois helping our veterans. Director Derek Giffin is coming to the **Frisbie Senior Center, 52 E Northwest Hwy, Des Plaines, IL 60016.** Veterans can walk in from 0900-1400 the **first Monday of the month** to receive help with VA claims. Pass the word!

We also continue to make amazing progress in our support of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County, which effect thousands of veterans. **Thanks to all, Dutch**

From the Commander of the American Legion



WOW! We have done it again! Post 525 had an exceptional period of appropriate involvement in the community of Mount Prospect. BE PROUD! It was no easy task to finally get the flag pole (donated by Nicholas & Associates) evaluated, corrected, altered for proper use and erected ceremonially on Monday 12 June at the Moose Lodge. Thanks again to VFW/AML member **Kyle Brooks**. Then since the village, through strong encouragement from our own Dutch DeGroot, had **3 flag disposal containers** located around the village, the post was proud to host our very first "Flag Day" ceremony on Wednesday 14 June to properly dispose of the worn flags. Boy Scout Troop 23

played a big part and a special thanks out to Sean Dorsey at Public Works and Mike Burke of the Moose. Well done by all. Memorial Day went very well and please see the write up herein. Not done yet! Post 525 was represented at 5 Junior High and Middle School graduation ceremonies here in Mount Prospect. In all 35 medals for Academic achievement, Citizenship achievement and the Overall Excellence Medallion were awarded. Post 525 is very well received each year as we enhance each graduation ceremony. Please note that Dutch's tireless work on Veterans periodic newsletter won 1st Place in the Division. Congratulations Dutch!

We welcome Jack Vrett as the new Senior Vice Commander and relocate Joe Schmidt to fill the Chaplain's position. Lee Jensen will get a well-deserved rest. So, thanks again to all for your support. I am proud to be the commander of Post 525. **Bill Starr, Commander**



**Service Office Director
Derek Giffin
Frisbie Senior Center
1st Monday
of the Month**

Invitation Mount Prospect Veterans

Annual Picnic



**Enjoy a day with us. food, beverages. Side dishes welcome!
Kids Games, Bouncy House**

**Who: Vets and Spouses
Family Kids G-Kids
When: Sunday 6 August
1200 noon**

**Where:
Moose Lodge #660
601 N Main St,
Mt Prospect, IL**

RSVP jandegroot@comcast.net