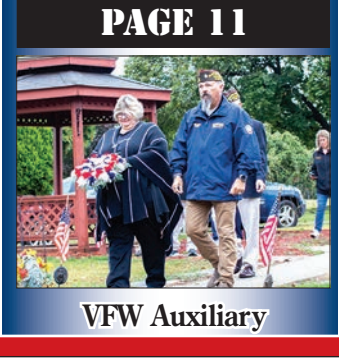
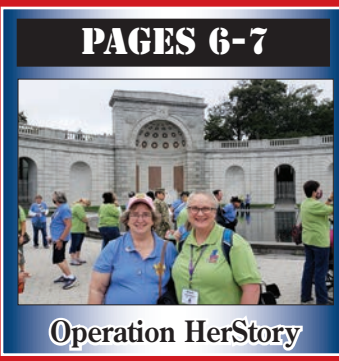
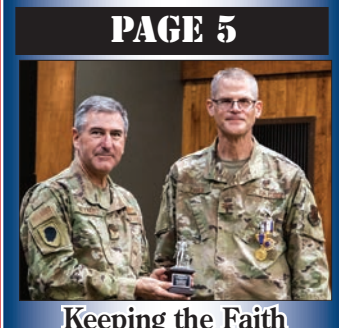


Roscoe, Rockford host exhibit featuring Post 2955, Auxiliary's award-winning Poppy Displays



A new temporary exhibit featuring VFW State Convention award-winning Poppy Displays created by Roscoe VFW Post 2955 and the Roscoe VFW Auxiliary. The exhibit consists of three separate displays.

The first display, created by the VFW Auxiliary, represents the six branches of the military, and has over 6150 Poppies on it. This display took First Place in Category 2 (displays with over 1,500 Poppies) at the State Convention held in Springfield this past June.

The second display was also created by the Auxiliary, and represents the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It features over 3,425 all-white Poppies. This display took Second Place in category 3 (displays with a decorative theme) at the State Convention, and also won the Max & Betty Snook Award at the VFW 6th District judging. The Roscoe VFW Auxiliary

Poppy Displays were created and assembled by Auxiliary members Cathy Suchoski, Ann Stenberg, Pat Ward and Vickie Suchoski.

The third display, created by Roscoe VFW Post 2955, has 1,750 Poppies, and took Second Place in Category 2. It honors Gold Star Families, and was created and assembled by Post Commander Ruben Hernandez and Post Senior Vice Commander Bill Graves.

This is not the first time Roscoe VFW Post 2955 has won First Place for a Poppy Display. They won First Place at the National VFW Convention in Reno, Nevada in 2012. That Display represented the USS Cole.

The exhibit ran through October at Veterans Memorial Hall. The displays were also shown at the 80th annual Veterans Dinner, November 6th at the Embassy Suites in downtown Rockford, IL.



From left, Auxiliary 2955 President Ann Stenberg; Post 2955 Sr. Vice Commander & Buddy Poppy Chairman Bill Graves; Auxiliary member Cathy Suchoski; Post 2955 Commander Ruben Hernandez.



Members of the Department of Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Auxiliary paid tribute to those buried in the Eaton Rapids, Michigan cemetery prior to Illinois Day at the National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan.

Postmaster: Send address changes to V.F.W. Circulation Department, 406 West 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE... TICKETS AND RETURN ENVELOPE



2022 Illinois Convention Raffle

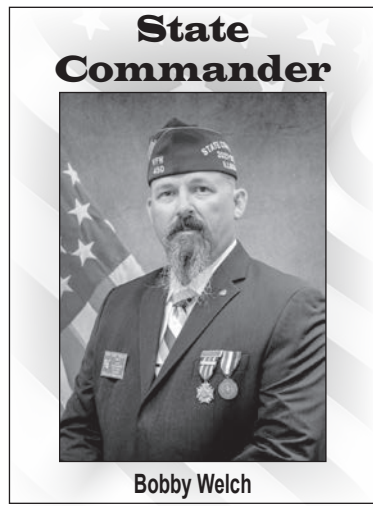
Grand Prize \$10,000

Second Prize \$3,000 • Third \$2,000 • Fourth to Tenth \$500



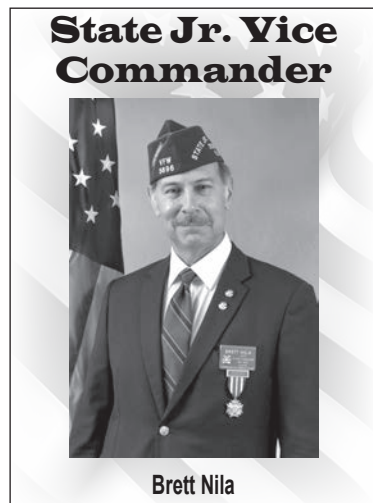
2022 Illinois Purple Heart Raffle
Proceeds go towards veterans assistance programs in Illinois

Grand Prize \$2,000



Bobby Welch

Greetings Comrades, I hope this message finds you well, a lot has happened since the last VFW News hit the street. We have started the Veteran of the Month Program and it is very exciting to read the nominations and hear about the outstanding work our members are doing in the community for Veterans and their families. Please keep the nominations coming in. The "Commander's Calls" are complete, and the leadership team and I were truly motivated by the high attendance and many great discussions that were held,



Brett Nila

We all know that communications within an organization are crucial. This year, several communications channels are being added, or improved at both National and Department levels. And members will have a hand in the effort. Facebook is one communication channel the VFW will utilize better. Posts seeking to attain All-American this year, are required to create or maintain a Facebook Page following the newly established VFW guidelines for appearance and content. Of course this helps users stay informed of Post activities. But the VFW guidelines also make each Post Facebook Page another avenue through which National can share content to reach a wider audience. The All-American requirement to be active at least 6 months, means that Pages need to be created and/or incorporate the new guidelines (listed in the 2021-22 National Membership Program) by December 31st.

Another new All-American requirement for Posts that's also intended to widen communications, is to sign-up 5 people for VFW Action Corps. They'll receive the weekly Action Corps e-newsletter along with periodic "Action Alerts" (such as the Oct. 14 email regarding the "GWOT Memorial Location Act" and the "Major Richard Star Act") outlining how to easily contact Congress

and then assisting commanders in accomplishing their missions within fiscal law. There can be no short-cuts when we do our work on behalf of the American taxpayer." Creech began his military career in 1986 as an Infantry "grunt," spending 10 years as a Soldier and then NCO with the Company A, 1st Battalion, 123rd Infantry Regiment. He was commissioned in 1996 and spent two years as an Infantry platoon leader before transitioning to logistics where he served as a platoon leader and battalion staff officer until taking command the 3637th Maintenance Co. from 2001 to 2003. He would serve as the operations and intelligence officer with the 232nd Corps Support Battalion from 2003 to 2006 during which time the battalion would deploy to Iraq. Creech would receive the Combat Action Badge during this deployment. After the deployment, Creech would hold multiple key staff positions, mostly in operations, plans, finance and logistics, including a full-time tour at National Guard Bureau from 2010 to 2012 as a program analyst. From 2013 to 2016 he would command the 405th Brigade Support Battalion. Concurrent with many of his traditional Guard military assignments, Creech would serve full-time in staff positions within contracting, finance, budgeting, logistics, human resources and

planning. Creech holds a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Illinois and a master's degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College. He is a graduate of multiple courses and certifications in the areas of finance, contracting, accounting, logistics, operations, management, law and leadership. He has been awarded the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Army Commendation Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, and the Army Achievement Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster among many other awards and decorations. Creech is married to Stephanie and they have four children; Zach, Ethan, Dylan, and Bryson. Zach is a staff sergeant in the Illinois Army National Guard's 2118th Asphalt Detachment. In addition to the VFW, Creech is a member of the American Society of Military Comptrollers, the National Guard Association of Illinois, the National Guard Association of the United States and the Military Officers Association of America. He is also active in his local church. He and Stephanie recently enrolled in ballroom dancing lessons. Creech is a member of Menard County Post 6871, Petersburg.

we will be sending out the answers to any pending questions and implementing any positive changes that arose from the discussions. Since this was a requirement for the All-State program and we have no intention of hurting anyone's chances at making All-State there will be 2 make up sessions in the spring. One up north and one down south, dates and location TBD. Enjoy this holiday season Comrades. While you are spending time with your families and loved ones, please remember those that cannot. We have "been there", we know what it is like to be forward deployed and not have the luxury of a home cooked meal with family. But also, remember those families who are here at home and will sit down to Christmas dinner... with an empty chair at the table. Maybe that's where Mom would sit or Dad, or a brother or sister. Regardless of whose chair it is, these families and these service members are why we do what we do and why we are the best at what we do. No One Does More For Veterans!

As we investigate the 2022-2023 year coming up, I would like for the Post and Districts to sional Reps when prompt action is warranted. And the 5 people don't have to be VFW members. They don't even have to be Veterans. Sign-ups can be anyone who is interested in Veterans' issues and not already subscribed to Action Corps; just have them text "VFW" to "50457". While Action Corps' "Action Alerts" address national legislative issues, our Department of Illinois Legislative Team is working with VFW National on a similar mass-email function for Illinois state issues. Many Illinois members saw the emails in mid-October concerning House Bill 2378 with links to help with identifying and contacting Legislators. This function is still a work-in-progress, but our Illinois Team is a leader in refining it. If you didn't receive that email, you should check the email address listed in your profile on "VFW.org" so that you don't miss future notifications. Another Department level effort to improve communications is through the use of the "Commander's Call." These meetings, conducted in October, allowed the Department Commander to interact informally with Post and District leaders. It was an opportunity to hear and address concerns from "the field" early in the year. A new ongoing Department effort this year is the Veteran of the Month/Quarter/Year Program. Too often, noteworthy efforts by outstanding members go unnoticed beyond the Post. This Program is designed to identify and recognize members who are doing something special; something significant that those inside and outside the VFW need to hear about. The improved communications from these efforts will do several things. Members and non-members will be better informed on Veteran issues, and they'll be better equipped to make their voices

heard by Lawmakers. We'll learn more about the exceptional work of our members—which might otherwise go unnoticed—throughout our own state. And we might just become a little better at relating the success stories of our members. There's a lot going on in the VFW to be proud of. Getting better at communicating it, is a big part of encouraging others to join us. This is something to keep in mind while out and about in our communities for all the upcoming Holiday activities. As we continue to execute our



Bobby Edwards

Where We Are? How Do We Proceed!

Hope that by the time you read this article, that you have enjoyed the beautiful summer weather, even being Hot at times, with family and friends. Overall, these first 6 months has been challenging for our organization, getting back into the swing of doing business on a daily and regular basis. The resurgence of the pandemic forced events to postpone or moved to different dates. As we investigate the 2022-2023 year coming up, I would like for the Post and Districts to

think and start planning. We know that we have year-end events planned like our Voice of Democracy / Patriots Pen Banquets at Post and District levels. The Holiday Season is upon us, let us enjoy with our families and fellow comrades. AS WE APPROACH the New Year let us remember our Vision and Mission to our Great Fraternal Organization "The Veterans of Foreign Wars." It is time we get back into our communities and show them that we CONTINUE TO "BE RELEVANT." It is time that we reach out to our members to get them back involved or even to simply catch up with them and make sure they are doing well. We need to make sure that we are always "relevant" with our Post members because our members are the lifeblood of this organization and always need to be a priority. Can tell you firsthand that when our leadership made calls to our members, they were grateful for the call and to hear from their fellow veterans. Post and District Leaders, please ensure that when your Post and District 2022-2023 Elections, are conducted during April and May, that "ALL" Election Reports are promptly completed and submitted. Please include all pertinent dates and events. This will provide the Department with key information for their planning and execution in support of you. During the recent Commander's Call Training Seminars "We" the department heard your ideas and issues. Your leadership team is rapidly developing your thoughts for the future training and execution. As we continue to execute our

As we continue to execute our

As we continue to execute our



U.S. flags can be respectfully disposed of at the flag deposit station in the parking lot of the Coal City Public Library District 85 N. Garfield St Coal City. The library also has a receptacle in the entrance to the library. The outdoor receptacle was originally purchased by Coal City American Legion Post 796 and when they disbanded it was given to St. Juvin Post 1336 VFW and moved to the library. Whitmore Ace Hardware in Coal City also will accept worn flags as they partner with St. Juvin Post in the VFW/Valley Forge Flag Company's "Million Flag" event held each Memorial Day by donating flags to St. Juvin which are used to honor the memory of those veterans interred at Braceville-Gardner Cemetery.

National Commander in Chiefs MOTTO "The Time Is Now", so let us go out and recruit the new eligible Veterans of all ages. Bring them into and get them involved in our charitable Fraternal workings and give them the challenge they have been looking for. By using today's modern technologies, social media platforms and by putting information out to your communities on what your post, districts are doing will certainly enhance your awareness. Go out and share our Mission and Vision We have adapted to innovative ways in conducting our Post, District and Department meetings. We have 41,000 plus members represented in the 17 Districts and 265 Posts in the Department of Illinois. We need to strive to increase our membership back to 50,000 plus so we have the power and leverage to provide even greater support to the veterans. Know our members, posts, and districts are out there on the front lines every day serving our veterans, their families, and our communities. We need to do a better job of capturing that data and getting credit for our service hours by filling out and submitting the X-Sheet. The Veterans of Foreign Wars should take pride in its commitment to Veterans and today's military. Our programs ensure "no one" is forgotten. We as VFW members care passionately about serving their fellow citizens. Just as we pledged serving out time in uniform, we again vow to sustain a lifelong commitment to the Nation and our Communities.

As we continue to execute our

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Iraq Combat Veteran named U.S. Property and Fiscal Officer for Illinois

The Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Gen. Daniel Hokanson, has named an Illinois Army National Guard officer who fought in Iraq and has more than 30 years' experience in finance, logistics and human resources as the United States Property and Fiscal Officer for Illinois. Colonel Brian Creech, of Petersburg, a member of VFW Post 6871, will replace Colonel Melissa Beaman as the USPFO for Illinois after Beaman retires on October 1 after more than 32 years of military service. Creech has served as the deputy USPFO since 2016. Under the leadership of Col. Beaman and Col. Creech, Illinois has been at the top or near the top of the nation for fiscal accountability and auditability. In 2018 and 2019, the USPFO for Illinois was awarded the national Fiscal Stewardship Award. In 2019, Illinois also

won the Guardian of Contract Excellence Award for its improvements in the acquisition process. "The USPFO's job is to protect the taxpayers' investment in the National Guard and no one has done that better than Col. Beaman and Col. Creech in Illinois," said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "I look forward to working with Col. Creech in his new capacity as the USPFO for Illinois and the Illinois National Guard continue to set the standard for fiscal integrity and accountability."

The USPFO occupies a unique position as the only National Guard officer within Illinois to report directly to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. Col. Creech will be responsible for receiving and accounting for all funds and property of the United States government in possession of the Illinois National Guard. He will ensure federal funds are obligated and expended in conformance with applicable statutes and regulations, and will report on federal funds and property as directed by the Chief of the National Guard Bureau or either the Secretary of the Army or Secretary of the Air Force. He will also advise and assist Illinois National Guard units and programs to ensure federal property is used in accordance with Army, Air Force and National Guard Bureau directives. "I'm excited to continue the excellent work Colonel Beaman has done and I also recognize the tremendous responsibility of the USPFO," Creech said. "The USPFO needs to ensure federal funds and property are used within the bounds of law even during emergencies. At times that means saying 'no,'



Colonel Brian Creech, of Petersburg, has been selected by the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Gen. Daniel Hokanson, to succeed Colonel Melissa Beaman as the next U.S. Property and Fiscal Officer for Illinois. Creech will assume his new duties as the USPFO on Oct. 1 when Beaman retires after more than 30 years of military service in the U.S. Army and Illinois Army National Guard.

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications) for Illinois VFW News, dated 09/30/2021. Includes fields for publication title, issue frequency, circulation data, and contact information for the publisher.

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Keeping the faith: Peoria chaplain retires after 36 years

Chaplain (Col.) Jeffrey Laible retires from the Air National Guard, but continues to serve as Vicar General to the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA

When Jeffrey Laible entered the Air Force Chaplain's Candidate program in 1985, he answered a calling, his calling, and the call to serve a greater good. Laible answered that calling for 36 years, retiring early in October.

"The book of Ecclesiastes says there's a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens," said Laible during his retirement ceremony. "It's my time now to open a new chapter in my life and make way for the next generation."

During his time in uniform, he climbed to the rank of colonel, starting after seminary and commissioning into the Air Force Reserves in 1990 as a Roman Catholic chaplain. Early in his career, he served as a chaplain at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, and Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas. Before transferring to the Illinois National Guard's 183rd Wing in 1999, Chaplain Laible served as a chaplain recruiter and the Assistant Director for the Air Force Chaplain Candidate Program.

Maj. Gen. Peter Nezamis, Assistant Adjutant General - Air, Illinois National Guard, said that he was proud to have served with such a selfless leader.

"Jeff is the very definition of

the minuteman," said Nezamis. "Jeff entered the Chaplain Candidate Program in '85 and since his commission has travelled from California to Arkansas, to Germany and everywhere else serving the Air Force and his country, and he always came back to guide his own flock as an ordained priest here in Illinois."

After transferring to Illinois, Chaplain Laible served in various positions, including Wing Chaplain for the 183rd Wing. Chaplain Laible also served on the Joint Task Force while at the 183rd. Most recently, he served as the Air National Guard Assistant to the Command Chaplain, North American Aerospace Defense Command, and U.S. Northern Command, Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado.

"It's not often you can say that someone touched service-members in every branch," said Nezamis. "Chaplain Laible did just that, though. After his first deployment in 2004, he deployed five more times to Germany between 2005 and 2011 to serve as chaplain to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center."

Nezamis said during that time, he visited Landstuhl and was touched by Laible's dedication to everyone there.

"Jeff chose to go back mul-

tiplied times to minister those at the hospital," said Nezamis. "He counseled the wounded Soldiers, Airmen, Marines, Sailors, and even Coast Guard Sailors and civilians. Through his ministry and chaplaincy he's touched hundreds, if not thousands of lives."

Laible said he's enjoyed serving, but it's time to go.

"It's been great and a wonderful experience," he said. "I love serving, but it's time. If I were 10 years younger, I'd keep going."

Laible said serving the Airmen and Soldiers of the Illinois National Guard and the reserves throughout his career has been his favorite experience.

Though he may be hanging up his uniform, Chaplain Laible will continue to serve those in uniform. In June, he was selected to be the Vicar General to the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA.

"I was sitting at home and the phone rang," Laible recalled. "The caller I.D. said 'Washington D.C.' and I thought, 'I should answer that.' It ended up being Archbishop Timothy Broglio and he asked if I would be his Vicar. I couldn't turn him down."

He reached out to his diocese in Peoria, Illinois, and they re-



Maj. Gen. Peter Nezamis, Assistant Adjutant General - Air, Illinois National Guard, pins Chaplain (Col.) Jeffrey Laible with the Defense Meritorious Service Medal during his retirement ceremony Oct. 16, 2021. Laible retired from the Illinois Air National Guard in early October after more than 30 years of service, but continues to serve as the Vicar General for the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Spreitzer, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs)

leased him to serve as the Vicar General.

As the Vicar General, Laible serves as a sort of chief of staff to the Archbishop. He's responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operation of the Archdiocese in its service to 1.8 million Catholic servicemembers, veterans and their families worldwide.

Laible said he's excited to serve as the Vicar General.

"It's like being called by a four-star general and being asked to work for him," said Laible. "It's incredibly exciting. I'll be serving about 1.8 million Catholics in the armed forces, the veteran's administration, the embassy, and all of their family members, it's a great opportunity."

Laible is a member of Gung Ho Post 6750 in Rantoul, Illinois.

Into the Sunset

Petersburg Soldier retires after three decades of military service

After more than 34 years of service in the Illinois Army National Guard, Lt. Col. Roger M. "Mike" Landon, of Petersburg, Illinois, retired in a ceremony at Camp Lincoln, in Springfield, Illinois, Sept. 30.

"I knew serving in the Illinois National Guard would be a good experience. In 1988, when I went to Beardstown to pick up my ticket to basic training, I started my car and Eddie Money's 'Two Tickets to Paradise' was playing on the radio," Landon told family and friends at the ceremony. "I knew it had to be a good sign. Basic training wasn't quite paradise, but I have had a lot of great experiences and opportunities throughout the years."

Landon enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 1987, earning a direct commission as a second lieutenant in 2004. He has served in a variety of leadership positions including 126th Maintenance Company First Sergeant, 126th Maintenance Company Platoon Leader, 1844th Transportation Company Platoon Leader, 1744th Transportation Company executive officer, Commander of the 3637th Maintenance Company, 232nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion Support Operations officer and U.S. Property and Fiscal Office Supply and Services division chief.

"We've known each other for a long time," said Col. Brian Creech, of Petersburg, the U.S. Property and Fiscal Officer for Illinois. "You'll be greatly missed."

Creech thanked Landon's family, including wife, Tara, daughter, Marlee and sons, Kane and Brody, for sacrifices they

made during Landon's career.

"You sacrificed during times when he was deployed," Creech said. "The Illinois National Guard greatly appreciates all you have done to allow him to serve over the years."

Landon thanked his family for their support.

"I want to thank my parents for their support throughout the years and my wife, Tara, who made sure I didn't have to worry about things at home while I was away. She deserves as much credit as I for all I've done over the years," he said.

He also thanked members of the Illinois National Guard for opportunities extended to him and for the friends he made during his journey.

"I want to thank the leaders for the opportunities I've been offered the past 34 years," Landon said. "I also want to thank the Soldiers I've served with for their invaluable support."

Landon said serving in the Illinois National Guard was a hobby for the first few years until the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

"Before 9/11, we all went to drill and hung out with our buddies," Landon said. "We went to annual training and extended annual training. But 9/11 happened and things got serious."

Landon said early in his career, many of the senior Soldiers in his unit were Vietnam veterans.

"They had all this knowledge and wisdom," he said. "I thought we'd never be as good as these guys. Over the years I came to realize the guys I was serving



Lt. Col. Roger "Mike" Landon, right, of Petersburg, Illinois, receives a Meritorious Service Medal from Col. Brian Creech, of Petersburg, Illinois, U.S. Property and Fiscal Officer for Illinois, during his retirement ceremony Sept. 30 at Joint Force Headquarters, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

with were a great group of Soldiers."

Landon credits the events of Sept. 11, 2001 for the transformation.

"We all took a step forward when things got bad. We all went through the training and we got ready for what was to come," he said. "Our Soldiers stepped up to any challenge facing us."

He said the difference between the reserve component and the active duty military is what the reserve forces brings to the table.

"Our Soldiers within our ranks bring so many other skills to the table," he said. "When asked for a specific skill set, oftentimes, we can fill that request from someone within our ranks."

Landon's farewell message was simple.

"This is an outstanding organization with outstanding people," he said. "I'm glad I got to be a part of it for so long."

Landon is a member of LaFore Lock Post 755 in Springfield, Illinois.

Nicholaus Fordham Promoted to Sergeant Major in Illinois Guard

Nicholaus Fordham, of Sherman, Illinois, was promoted to sergeant major in the Illinois Army National Guard, Sept. 16 at Joint Force Headquarters, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

Fordham enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 1997 as a supply specialist in the 1644th Transportation Company, Rock Falls.

In 2004, Fordham accepted an Active Guard and Reserve position.

He has deployed twice, the first from 2004-2005 with the 1644th Transportation Company and again from 2020-2021 with the 232nd Combat Support Sustainment Battalion.

"Nick is a very hard worker who puts in a lot of work to make sure the unit is

successful," said Lt. Col. Sean Welker, of Pawnee, Illinois, former commander of the 232nd CSSB, and .

Fordham thanked friends and family for attending the promotion ceremony.

"I have been fortunate to serve alongside several knowledgeable Soldiers, many of who became my mentors," Fordham said. "Each of you here today have played a part in where I'm at today."

Fordham thanked his wife, Stephanie.

"You have sacrificed so much, juggling four children as I deployed and went to school," he said. "You are truly amazing and you are my glue."

Fordham is a member of Northenders Post 10302 in Springfield, Illinois.



Stephanie Fordham, the wife of newly promoted Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. Maj. Nicholaus Fordham, of Sherman, Illinois, secures his new rank on his uniform during the promotion ceremony, Sept. 16 at Joint Force Headquarters, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

Harris Promoted to Master Sergeant in Illinois Guard

Illinois Army National Guard Soldier Matthew Harris, of Petersburg, Illinois, was promoted to Master Sergeant Sept. 16 at the Illinois State Military Museum, Springfield, Illinois.

"The master sergeant rank is like the shell of the pie. What you fill it up with is up to you," said Col. Ron Bonesz, Military Personnel Officer, Illinois Army National Guard. "I have no doubt if you keep going as you are, we will see a diamond and then a wreath and star in your future."

Harris enlisted in the ILARNG in 2000 as a Chemical Operations Specialist in the 233rd Military Police Company in Springfield. He entered the Active Guard and Reserve program in 2009 as the Readiness Non-commissioned Officer for Company N, Recruit Sustainment Program, Recruiting and Retention

Battalion. "I am excited to see what you can do. You have done a great job and I look forward to seeing your efforts over the next few years," Bonesz said.

Harris, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the Automation and Automated Records Branch, thanked friends and family for their support during his military service.

"To my wife and kids, thank you for being there the past 21 years," Harris said. "Many of you here today have been my mentors."

Harris said he looks forward to all the things the AARB will accomplish the next few years.

"The human to human contact of this job is what keeps me coming to work each day," Harris said.



Tsoetsy Harris, wife of newly promoted Illinois Army National Guard Master Sgt. Matthew Harris, of Petersburg, Illinois, secures his new rank on his uniform during the promotion ceremony Sept. 16 at the Illinois State Military Museum, Springfield, Illinois.

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Veterans on the Operation Her Story Honor Flight salute during the official group photo.

Operation HerStory: Honor, Respect, Remembrance and Joy

My Journey on Operation HerStory, Illinois' First All-Women Honor Flight

By Maj. Elaine Nussbaum

Illinois Army National Guard

Life Member, John H. Kraus VFW Post 454

The first time I visited the Military Women's Memorial was almost 20 years ago. I was at Fort Eustis, Virginia for my Transportation Officer Basic Course, and I was just three years into my Army National Guard career.

Friends were still surprised and amused that I had joined the military. I had not yet deployed. I had not yet lost brothers-and sisters-in-arms. I had barely begun to really build the bonds of military camaraderie. I had not yet served as a company commander or advised a commander as a member of a staff.

I was young, and I had so much to learn.

On Oct. 6, I had the opportunity to help escort 93 women veterans to Washington, D.C., as part of a special Honor Flight called Operation HerStory. After two decades, I would once again see the Military Women's Memorial, this time

with fellow veterans.

The 93 veterans - 84 served in Vietnam, seven from the Korean War, and two World War II veterans - began lining up in the baggage claim area of Midway at 4 a.m. There they checked in and verified any special health and mobility requirements.

Guardians and other "ground crew" volunteers assisted. As a Logistics officer, I was impressed. It was organized and seamless. At Midway I met Kris Artz, a Korean War-era veteran who joined the Women's Air Force (WAF) in 1954. She was trained as a statistician and worked at Strategic Air Command and Offutt Air Force Base auditing information reports before submitting them to the Pentagon. The line moved a little, then stopped, then moved a little, and stopped.

"Hurry up and wait!" she said. She was delighted to discover that today's military still uses the phrase.

I met Vietnam-era veterans Kathy Rutledge and Rosemary Danaher at



Vietnam Veterans Peggy Hayes and Judith Doran with Iraq Veteran Elaine Nussbaum were seated next to each other on the flight from Chicago to Washington, D.C.

"camp" - the staging area at the end of in-processing. I served as the Guardian and companion for Kathy, an Army personnel clerk during the war. Rosemary was an Air Force physical therapist. Both were from Bloomington, my hometown. They already knew each other from their involvement in local veterans' organizations. As we moved through security and to the gate, local law enforcement, emergency responders, and representatives of other local organizations wished the women well with music, salutes, waves, and color guard presentations. At the gate, the women bonded as they enjoyed patriotic music.

"It's wonderful to have women recognized for all the things they did that were sometimes behind the scenes or sometimes just ignored," Carol Ann Macola, a Vietnam-era Military Police Soldier told a local CBS reporter.

Seated next to me on the flight from Chicago were Judith Doran and Peggy Hayes, both Vietnam veterans. Judith

was an Air Force veterinary technician and Peggy was an Army administrative clerk. Both were excited to be on the flight and especially to visit the Military Women's Memorial. Judith presented her card as a charter member of the memorial, and clapped as we landed at Washington Dulles Airport. A fire engine doused the sides of the aircraft in a "water cannon salute." The women cheered and applauded.

The women were enthusiastically greeted by local law enforcement, emergency responders, and other volunteers upon entering the terminal. Guardians from the Washington, D.C. area met their veterans and merged seamlessly into the group. After loading the buses, we pulled away from the curb to the sound of more cheers and a color guard presentation. A police escort - motorcycles and squad cars with lights flashing and sirens wailing - helped us move to our first stop - the Military Women's Memorial.

Kathy Rutledge and a few others were there when the memorial was dedicated on October 18, 1997, but many of the women had never seen the memorial dedicated to their service, the military service of more than three million women from the American Revolution until today.

They eagerly explored the grounds and exhibits, and snapped photos with

their sisters-in-arms. Speakers at the indoor luncheon included Desert Storm veteran retired Army Lt. Col. Jill Henry, the Illinois representative to the Military Women's Memorial. Vietnam War veteran retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Wilma Vaught, who initiated the creation of the Military Women's Memorial, also spoke. World War II Women's Army Corps veterans 99-year-old Bette Horstman and 104-year-old Josephine Bogdanich were recognized as Military Women's Memorial "Living Legends." During the war, Bette served as a physical therapist stationed in Hawaii and Saipan and Josephine served as teletypist and mail-room clerk. One veteran from the group sang the National Anthem and another played Taps on her bugle to conclude the ceremony.

At Arlington National Cemetery's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the veterans watched the changing of the guard ceremony in respectful silence, marveling at the precision and discipline required of those in uniform assigned to this very solemn duty.

The women took their time admiring the view of the National Mall, looking from the Lincoln Memorial toward the Washington Monument and U.S. Capitol. They moved past the Korean War Memorial with its larger-than-life Soldiers on patrol and its etched images of war, quietly taking it all in. They examined the polished black surface of the Vietnam War Memorial, and paused near the statue of the Three Soldiers.

But they paused longest at the Vietnam Women's Memorial, just north of the Reflecting Pool.

Perhaps the bronze statue of three women caring for a fallen Soldier brought forth memories long obscured by civilian careers and time as mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and sisters - memories of when they served as caregivers and warriors. Perhaps they thought about this recognition after so many years of people assuming they were a veteran's wife or they belonged to a veteran's organization auxiliary. Perhaps they just thought of their time as Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, or Marines - part of a team willing to sacrifice their lives working toward something bigger than themselves. Or perhaps they thought of the military brothers and sisters they lost. I didn't ask - these thoughts and memories were theirs - and

this time together was sharing. There was no need for words.

The last stop was the World War II Memorial. Many snapped photos by the Illinois pillar and of the memorial stars, the fountains, the theater medallions... others followed the memorial's depiction of events in this epic struggle.

Several took a group photograph under a quote from Col. Oveta Culp Hobby, the organizer and first commander of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC).

"Women who stepped up were measured as citizens of the nation, not as women... This was a people's war, and everyone was in it," Col. Hobby said.

Perhaps this quote appealed to them as service members in general, but especially as woman veterans. They proved their abilities, character, toughness, strength, and resilience through hard work and dedication, regardless of gender. This was their day to celebrate those efforts.

As we boarded the bus back to Dulles, I again considered that women service members today should thank these women - these friendly, but tough, venerable ladies - for the opportunities we enjoy in the military today.

Each veteran was recognized by name, thanked her for her service, and presented with an Operation HerStory challenge coin in commemoration of her Day of Honor.

On the flight back to Chicago, I sat between Vietnam-era veterans Lisa Mattingly and Patricia Tiner. Lisa served in the Army's Military Police and Patricia was an Air Force air traffic controller and warning intercept technician. Despite the late hour, the women chatted energetically about their favorite parts of the day during the return flight. Several veterans exchanged contact information and shared photographs.

Suddenly an Honor Flight Chicago staff member announced "Mail Call!" Volunteers called out names and began passing out large manila envelopes to the veterans. The envelopes were stuffed with artwork, cards, and letters from family, friends, co-workers, school children, women's groups, military organizations, Chicago sports teams, and various other supporters including actor Gary Sinise. "I don't even know how some of these people knew about this!" Patricia said.

Lisa just hugged her envelope. "I'm going to save these and read them tomorrow," she said. Kathy and other women wiped their eyes and smiled through joyful tears as they looked through the contents of their envelopes.

As we began our descent, someone began singing "God Bless America" and we all joined in. Everyone cheered and clapped as the plane touched down and the veterans were again treated to a water cannon salute as we taxied closer to the arrival gate. The crew thanked each veteran for her service and the women made their way into the terminal.

We could immediately hear clapping and cheering. Young Sailors from Great Lakes Naval Base stepped forward to help each veteran with her bag and offered an arm to escort her through the airport. The cacophony was



Elaine Nussbaum seated between Vietnam-era veterans Lisa Mattingly and Patricia Tiner on the return flight to Chicago.

overwhelming as the women took an elevator down to the baggage claim area and proceeded through a cheering crowd gathered to welcome them home.

"I just can't believe it! Look how many people are here!" I heard one veteran say repeatedly. As we reached the "discharge" point near baggage claim, the Sailors shook the hands of the women veterans and thanked them for their service. Many received hugs and took photographs with the women.

"It's been a long time since a young man took my bag and offered me his arm!" said Kathy with a chuckle.

Several of the veterans waited together for a hotel shuttle. Korean War-era veteran Teresa Cole, an Air Force Morse Code instructor, sat with a bundle of flowers on her lap. I asked her who gave them to her.

She looked up at me, still clearly surprised. "I don't know! She just gave them to me and said 'Welcome home!' Can you believe it?" she said.

Everyone was all smiles after her Day of Honor. This was certainly a day these

women veterans will never forget. Visiting the Military Women's Memorial in 2021 with 93 fellow women veterans sparked many of my own memories and rekindled my enthusiasm for the Profession of Arms. These courageous women reminded me that each of us has something to offer, to bring to the table, to better the organization.

It was while these 93 women veterans posed for their official group picture that I was most humbled. I looked across the rows of women veterans in front of the Military Women's Memorial and saw years of experience, a mountain of knowledge, and a wide variety of skills. I saw pride, joy, and camaraderie. I thought of the historic moments witnessed by these women and their many accomplishments which, in compilation, blazed a trail for the thousands of women who have served in the U.S. military over the last 80 years.

I felt tears of pride leak down my cheeks as I stood in awe of these amazing women, my sisters-in-arms.



Elaine Nussbaum with Kris Artz, a Korean War-era veteran who joined the Women's Air Force (WAF) in 1954.



Kathy Rutledge and Maj. Elaine Nussbaum at the Military Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C. Nussbaum served as Rutledge's guardian on the recent Operation HerStory Honor Flight.

MERRY Christmas AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

From the Department of Illinois VFW and the Auxillary.

CMYK

Beauman closes books on three decade military career

More than 30 years after enlisting in the U.S. Army as a way to earn college benefits, Illinois Army National Guard (ILARNG) Col. Melissa Beauman, of Glenarm, Illinois, the U.S. Property and Fiscal Officer for Illinois, will retire Dec. 31.

"It's been a great and very rewarding career," Beauman said. "I wouldn't go back and change anything about it."

Beauman will step down as the USPFO of Illinois Oct. 1 when Col. Brian Creech, of Petersburg, Illinois, assumes duties as the USPFO of Illinois. Beauman will transfer to a temporary position until her retirement at the end of the year.

"I have always said I would retire after my term as the USPFO ends," she said.

After graduating from high school in 1988, Beauman enlisted in the U.S. Army as a supply clerk, serving four years on active duty, including a deployment in 1991 during Desert Storm with Company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Air Defense Artillery Regiment. Following her active service, Beauman joined the Illinois Army National Guard as a traditional Guardsman.

"After I got out of the Army, I attended college fulltime for a couple of years before being hired for a federal technician position in 1995," she said. "In 2001, I accepted an Active Guard and Reserve position."

In 1997, Beauman was commissioned as an ordnance officer through the Illinois Army National Guard Officer Candidate School.

"I chose ordnance because I wanted to be within the logistics field and in the maintenance company," said Beauman.

During her service in the ILARNG, Beauman has served in a variety of command and staff positions, including, 65th Transportation Battalion Personnel Officer, Inspector General

Chief of Investigations, 1144th Transportation Battalion Executive Officer, 65th Troop Command Officer in Charge, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, and Deputy USPFO.

While Beauman has achieved much in her 32 year career, she challenges herself to learn at least one new piece of information in each position she's held.

"I have always strived to learn something new in each position I've held," she said. "I don't place any one achievement above the others, but I do try to gain more knowledge with each assignment."

Maj. Gen. Mark Jackson, of Frankfort, Illinois, Deputy Commanding General - Operations, First Army, who met Beauman in 2009 when he became the Commander of the 65th TC, describes her as a great leader who is always seeking knowledge.

"When Colonel Beauman became the 65th's Officer in Charge, she was eager to learn her duties," Jackson said. "She is a great leader who inspires and motivates Soldiers to be their best."

Jackson said during that time, the Illinois National Guard stood up Joint Task Force - South, a joint mission between the 65th and the 183rd Wing in Springfield that focused on domestic operations. The units worked three missions together - the 2009 winter storm, the G-8 meeting and the NATO Summit.

The two most recently worked together when Jackson served as the Director of the Joint Staff and was activated in early 2020 for the state's COVID-19 response operations.

"I worked with her during the state's COVID-19 response operations as the director of the Joint Staff," he said. "She is a consummate professional."

Fellow-USPFO, Col. Terry Ommen, of South Dakota, first met Beauman at a contracting



Col. Melissa Beauman, of Glenarm, Illinois, is presented the Legion of Merit by Maj. Gen. Eric Little, National Guard Bureau Manpower and Personnel Directorate, during Beauman's retirement ceremony Oct. 1 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

workshop conducted at the National Postal Services Training Center in Norman, Oklahoma in 2016. He said Beauman is highly respected throughout the USPFO community.

"She has served as the Chair of the Installation Logistics Advisory Committee and also the USPFO Liaison to the Executive Advisory Group for Logistics Excellence Committee," Ommen said. "Colonel Beauman has been instrumental in working through and resolving a number of issues relevant to the USPFO community."

Ommen said during her tenure as the USPFO of Illinois, Beauman served on the USPFO Education Committee as one of the leads for planning and conducting the USPFO Logistics Course, which provides new USPFOs with an understanding of critical topics, areas of responsibility, related to both Army and Air National Guard Logistic Programs.

"Colonel Beauman is a highly effective USPFO. She is competent, caring, and leads by example," Ommen said. "She is a professional who takes great pride in her service to country and state."

Beauman said her entire life since graduating from high school has centered on the military and has made her the person she is today.

"Everything in my life has been shaped by the military. Everything I've done since high school has centered around the military," she said. "Everything I am in the military and after three decades in uniform, the military has significantly shaped my life."

Beauman said service members join the military for a variety of reasons. She offered advice for anyone who is looking to make the military a career.

"Look beyond today," she said. "You have to understand where everything fits together.

orable experience in her career happened when the 1144th Transportation Battalion returned from deployment in 2008. The unit was returning from a yearlong deployment to Kuwait during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Soldiers were riding into Delevan, Illinois, on firetrucks and the community lined the streets to welcome the troops home.

"My entire family was there," she said. "My mom made bright yellow sweatshirts for everyone and there they were, all lined up along the street as we pulled into town. It made for a great homecoming."

Beside Beauman along the journey has been her husband of 23 years and their two sons. Beauman said family support has been the catalyst driving her career.

"If my husband, Frank, and our two sons, Nathaniel and Matthew, didn't support my military career, I would not be retiring," she said. "I couldn't have stayed as a career without their support. I would have gotten out a long time ago."

Beauman said her military service impacted her family in some ways, but says her service also brought more structure in their lives as a result.

"I've missed events, birthdays and anniversaries because of my military service. I've deployed and traveled in positions I've held," she said. "However, my husband was a stay-at-home dad and he provided that constant support so there wouldn't be as great an impact as a result of my service."

When one chapter closes, another one begins. "The only thing on my list right now is retirement," she said. "Our youngest son is still in high school, so we'll wait to make future plans until he's in college. One thing we plan to do down the road is to move to somewhere warmer."

Ommen said he will miss Beauman's leadership in the USPFO community.

"I've had the opportunity to work with a number of leaders, both enlisted and officers over my 40 year military career. Colonel Beauman is one of the best officers I've had an opportunity to work with," Ommen said. "I wish Colonel Beauman the best as she retires from the military. She's a friend and I'll miss not having her as someone I can reach out to discuss a multitude of issues."

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"It was great having my parents, husband and our two sons, able to attend," she said. Beauman said the most mem-



Maj. Gen. Eric Little, National Guard Bureau, Manpower and Personnel Directorate, presents Col. Melissa Beauman the Certificate of Retirement during Beauman's retirement ceremony Oct. 1 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

Illinois VFW News Deadline

The deadline for the upcoming issue of the Illinois VFW News

March 2022 issue is February 1, 2022

Email items to: Barb Wilson - bwilson@vfwil.org or mail items to:

Barb Wilson, Editor • 802 N. 3rd St. • Riverton, IL 62561

Items not received by deadline may be held for the next issue

World War II Veteran Bette Horstman celebrating 100th birthday

During her service as a 2nd Lieutenant, Bette Horstman served as a Physical Therapist in the U.S. Army Medical Corps in the Pacific during World War II, when she was sent to Saipan to help the troops recover from their war wounds.

Bette was born in Hibbing, Minnesota in 1921, grew up in Chicago, Illinois with her younger sister and parents. She is the daughter of a Chicago businessman and entrepreneur and a stay-at-home mother. Her parents encouraged her to pursue a college-level career after graduating from high school. Horstman graduated from the University of Michigan in 1943 and was soon accepted by the Mayo Clinic's Emergency Physical Therapy (PT) program.

She entered military service on Feb 01, 1945 and preferred the Navy. "I wanted to go in the Navy because I looked better in the Navy's blue dress uniform because I was very blonde then," she stated. "The Navy turned me down because I was nearsighted. The Army took me nearsighted or not." She enlisted in the U.S. Army Medical Corps and completed a crash course in formal training, before she was sent to Harmon General Hospital in Longview, TX for her hands-on training. It was there that Horstman was first acquainted

with the physical consequences that fighting the war had yielded returning soldiers.

After Harmon General Hospital, she was sent to complete basic training at Fort Lewis along with a cohort of other enlisted female medical personnel. Despite their position in Medical Services, the women were still trained as any other GI in the U.S. Army. They were taught how to handle different weapons, perform ground maneuvers and were given the standard uniform, which included a large gas mask and equally heavy boots. The trainees had no knowledge of where they might be sent, but by the time Horstman was shipped overseas, it was clear that her contribution to both the service and the profession of Physical Therapy would be a challenge.

In 1945, her first assignment as a newly commissioned 2nd Lieutenant was treating prisoners of war at Tripler General Hospital in Oahu, Hawaii, while she awaited her final orders. Horstman would eventually be sent over 3,700 miles to Saipan. Saipan is a small mountainous island three miles wide and about seven miles long in the South Pacific and had seen heavy combat during the Battle of Saipan.

Horstman arrived barely a

month after the capture of the Island by U.S. forces still engaged in active fighting. She spent most of her Army service on the island. On Saipan, Horstman observed the ruins of bombed buildings paralleling the beautiful tropical flowers growing beside beaches. She learned of the term "Suicide Cliff" and witnessed B-29s taking off on mercy flights to Japan. She attended simple fractures, sprains, and aches from the resident civilian population and prisoners of war and treated burn patients from bombing runs gone wrong and infantrymen with self-inflicted wounds.

Her proudest moment was training her fellow corpsmen in PT methods so they could assist her in carrying out patient exercises. "I set up a clinic in one of the Quonset Hut hospitals on Saipan. Every day I treated both American soldiers and Japanese POWs. We had 10 or 12-foot barbed wire fencing around our hospital to protect us from the Japanese. The Japanese weren't interested in the American women on the island. They were only interested in the food, because the ones still hiding out in the caves on the island were starving and they didn't know that the war was over," Horstman explained.

In her post-service life, fol-

lowing her discharge from the U.S. Army on Jan 18, 1947, Horstman helped establish the PT departments at three Chicago area hospitals. A long-time member of the American Physical Therapy Association, Horstman was also the first female in the State of Illinois to open her own Physical Therapy Practice. She went back to school to complete both a Master's in Education and a Nursing Home Administrator's License.

For her service during World War II, Horstman was awarded the Meritorious Service Unit Citation with 1 Star, the Asiatic-Pacific Service Medal, the World War II Victory Medal and the American Campaign Medal.

Horstman's life continues to be about giving back and staying active in many ways. She continues to remain active and work with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion and at the North Chicago VA, where she has volunteered for nearly two decades. She's a health educator, consultant and has volunteered for the bedside care program "No Veteran Dies Alone."

Now retired, Horstman looks back on her years as a wartime Physical Therapist and maintains that her time in the Army taught her how to think outside the box. Horstman's determina-



2nd Lt. Bette Horstman

tion and the application of her military experience in civilian life contributed to a successful and meaningful career that left a lasting impact on Chicagoland healthcare. Bette Horstman will still be found volunteering with fellow veterans, attending VFW meetings and bowling twice a week.

Bette's life doesn't slow down as she approaches her 100th birthday on December 6, 2021. She recently returned from Washington, D.C. where she was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award by the American Physical Therapy Association for seventy-five years of service. She also was honored and recently returned from Honor Flight Chicago on October 06, 2021, which was an all-women military flight.

VFW Auxiliary

Auxiliary President



Rhonda Borkgren

We have instituted one new auxiliary in Carlinville. We are so happy to welcome them into our family. We are working on two more. All three of these auxiliaries were starting the process two years ago, before the world shut down. Thanks to the VFW for still working to make this happen, after the pandemic.

I am happy to say that my Chief of Staff and I are always willing to go to auxiliary meetings and help with any problems going on. If we can't go, we have awesome Deputy Chief of Staff's who are always happy to help. Our goal is to help struggling auxiliaries, work through problems they might be having and make them strong and functional again. I appreciate all the Commanders who have helped us, to work out problems. Its great to know all these Commanders don't want to lose their Auxiliaries and will help to save them.

The Auxiliary is doing an amazing job on membership this year! The dynamic duo of Danielle Krull and Sarah Higginbotham are making it fun and exciting! I have members all over the state tell me they are always checking our Department Facebook page to see what they have posted today! Great job ladies! Congratulations on a job well done! Remember, both the Auxiliary and the VFW can recruit members for each other. We have a Commander who will get a pin for recruiting 5 Auxiliary members at this time! The more we work together, the stronger we are!

I want to wish all the Auxiliary and VFW members a Happy Thanksgiving. Its hard to believe we are already at the end of the calendar year. I hope you and your families have a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year! I look forward to visiting with all of you.

Third District Auxiliary volunteer at Chicago Stand Down at Gen. Jones Armory



Johnson-Phelps VFW Auxiliary member Dinah Guzman sorting items to be handed out.



Members of the Third District VFW Auxiliary



Lisa Rivera, Third District Aux. Chaplain and Sr. Vice President of the Johnson Phelps VFW Aux., sets up Duffel Bags that will be handed out to the Veterans.



Waiting for the veterans.



Waukegan Post 1293 and Auxiliary continues to help New Orleans VFW Post 8973 following Hurricane Ida. Pictured are, from left, Robert Elliott, VFS Chairman; Peggy Gray, Secretary-Treasurer; Betty Christmas, Trustee; Stephanie Roberts, Conductress; Julius Martin, Chaplain. Back row, Billy Norwood, Junior Vice Commander; Calvin Famer, Commander; Chris Giese, Community Service Chairman; Jesse Woodley, Quartermaster; and Angelo White, Senior Vice Commander.



State Commander Bobby Welch and Auxiliary President Rhonda Borkgren lay a wreath at the flagpole during a ceremony at the cemetery during Illinois Day at the National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan.

Idea for Benefits Workshop comes to fruition in northern Illinois

About two years ago then Dist. 19 Commander George Miller had an idea for a workshop to help Illinois veterans really understand the benefits to which they were entitled.

He contacted his friend Dutch DeGroot and asked him to chair the planning committee for the workshop. DeGroot agreed to chair the committee but recognized to make the workshop special and to attract attendees he needed to have a truly outstanding group of presenters who could speak knowledgeably and effectively on subjects that were current and important to vets.

He knew from the beginning that he had to have Barry Walter,

the Past Director of the VFW Service Office of Illinois and a current VSO for the Department of Michigan. Walter quickly agreed to speak at the event. Steve Fixler, the Superintendent of the Veterans Assistance Commission of DuPage County volunteered to help fill out the list of presenters. In short order they assembled a group of the "pro's pros" to participate.

Meanwhile, Miller secured the assistance of then Junior Vice Commander of the 19th District, Brett Nila, and Jay Davis, the Commander of Post 1197 in Batavia. Davis secured the approval of his Post to host the event at their large Post building.

Other volunteers signed on, including many from Post 1197 and Post 1337, and the committee set about their work. Issues came up and were addressed, a date was set in March 2020, an informational flyer was prepared and distributed throughout the State, and veterans were registering to attend. Then came COVID.

The March date had to be cancelled as well as the next set date in May. By now the seriousness of the pandemic had become apparent to all.

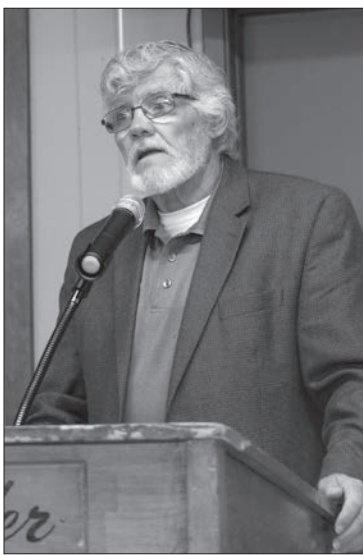
Despite that, the committee still believed in the value of the workshop and met regularly (via Zoom) to address the many issues raised by the disease and

the delays that accompanied it. During this, the committee kept up planning for seating, audiovisual, meals, beverages, and the many other necessary components of their ambitious program. They stayed at it until they were able to set a final date.

By Saturday morning, Oct. 2, 2021 everything was in place. Most of the presenters and committee members remained dedicated to the program and the veterans who had registered. Despite almost two years of unavoidable delays, only five of the more than 180 veterans who paid to attend had withdrawn and requested the return of their payments. In the end, it was worth the wait.



Derek Giffin, Director, Illinois Veterans Service Office, presents information during the Veterans Benefits Workshop.



Former Illinois Director of Veterans Service Barry Walter presented benefits information during the workshop.



Veterans attend the first Veterans Benefits workshop held at Batavia Overseas Post 1197.

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