

Commander's Message



Greetings Comrades and Auxiliary,

Here we are at the end of another year. COVID-19 produced trials and hardships and introduced a new way to conduct business thus keeping this world class Combat Veterans organization at the tip of the spear and continuing to charge forward. I honestly think that we have all done very well to continue our efforts within the boundaries set on us. With the restrictions we faced, and my fulltime job, I'm sorry I was not able to get out more and visit with all the Posts and Districts. This year the Department opened three new Posts and opened the door for our Auxiliary by planting seeds for new Auxiliaries to form. I really look forward to watching these three Posts grow and bring in new Auxiliaries sooner rather than later.

I would like to thank all my staff, District Commanders, Past Department Commanders, all the members of this Department and the Auxiliary for the support they gave me this year to make this a wonderful experience. I learned a lot from you all. Thanks

I would like to thank Tom Hines and Ken Wiseman for the work and support they gave in starting three Posts and revitalizing two Posts and also supporting

the membership recruiting drives throughout the Department. Job well done.

I want to remind everyone in our Department and Auxiliary that it is as important as ever that we continue to maintain and gather new members into our fold. Posts and Auxiliaries are working together. I know times have been rough and that not being able to effectively socialize and network has caused us to hit some walls, but we worked through the obstacles to make it happen.

As I exit my position as your State Commander I would say this year has not been what any of us expected. But, we have banded together and weathered this life altering pandemic with respect and communal support for one another. Hearing of the strides that each of you have made on both sides to hold meetings, attend conventions, support your communities, complete the programs and make reports genuinely makes me proud, and reinforces my belief that this truly is an amazing organization. None of this would be possible without each and every one of you and the great work you do every day.

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!!!



*Your passion is your internal compass
that will guide you from where you are towards
where you want to go.*



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From the Editor's desk



I hope everyone is staying safe through these uncertain times. Please keep the state of Virginia VFW informed of all your accomplishments, by submitting your articles and pictures to me, for the Virginia Veterans Newspaper.

Randy Coker

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We reserve the right to edit all submitted articles for timeliness, clarity and syntax.

Note: Deadline for the next newspaper is:

AUGUST 15th, 2021

VFW Post 9835 hosts awards ceremony

On February 25th, presented awards to two members of local law enforcement in Warrenton and Fauquier County. The presentations were held at their respective Departments and attended by many peers and supervisors. The Post recognized Officer Chai Fuller of the Warrenton Police Department for her exceptional activities as her Department's Community Engagement Officer. Following that presentation, the events moved to the Fauquier County Sheriff's Department where Detective Andrew McCauley was recognized for his efforts last Fall in investigating a rash of auto break-ins in the area and the rapid arrest of the perpetrators. The Post also presented the Sheriff's Department a \$500 check for use by their Explorer Post which has gained considerable recognition since it was reconstituted by Sheriff Mosier in 2017.



Officer Chai Fuller Warrenton Police Dept. and Post Commander Jeff Dombroff



Fauquier County Sheriff Bob Mosier, Detective Andrew McCauley; Post Commander Dombroff

Members of Post 1503's Military Order of the Cootie and MOCA make a surprise visit to a Life Member and Purple Heart recipient Joe Siatta.



Pictured above: Left to right, Susan Adamchzyk, Laura Adamchzyk, Joe Siatta & Sara Stanley, Kelli Levitt, Post 1503 Auxiliary President

Post 2894 in Chesapeake, joins forces to assist a needy veteran in home repairs



Post Assists with Clean-up and Remodel of Disabled Veteran's Home: About a year ago, Gary and Sandy Dunbar discovered a veteran living in squalid conditions in a group home. He was covered in bed sores – one of which had reached his bones. They called 911 who helped take him out of the home and the Dunbar's talked the VA into accepting him for treatment. They were later told that the vet was literally days away from dying if they hadn't removed him. The vet has his own home in Portsmouth but it was full of boxes and not accessible for the wheelchair that he now has to use permanently. To prepare the house for his return, Jim Ireland coordinated with VFW Post 993 Portsmouth to move hundreds of boxes from the 1st floor to the 2nd; gut the bathroom for reconstruction; raise a ceiling to accommodate a wheelchair lift; widen 4 doorways; rework kitchen plumbing; reconfigure kitchen cabinets; arrange for a donated dumpster; and clean up the debris for contractors to come in and provide donated material and labor. Jim also steam-cleaned the carpets, and arranged for the donation of a hospital bed and a Hoyer lift. The veteran finally returned home at the end of February after nearly a year in hospitals and nursing homes.

Post 2894 Service Officer Coordinates New Roof for Disabled Vet



Jim Ireland, COL, USA (ret), Service Officer, VFW Post 2894, describing the cooperative project.

By: [Margaret Kavanagh](#), Posted at 2:08 PM, Mar 02, 2021



www.wtkr.com/news/army-vet-worried-about-deteriorating-roof-for-a-year-and-then-the-community-stepped-in-to-help

Community steps in to help Portsmouth Army Veteran with deteriorating roof

We are a small Post and do not have a Post home so our complete focus is on service: service to veterans, and service to their families. We truly operate by our motto, *"Honoring the Fallen by Helping the Living."*

Whenever it rained, Ms. Danja Miller, a disabled Army veteran, would have to place pans and buckets throughout her home to catch the dripping water. Her interior ceilings all displayed water damage from the constant leaking.

In December, our Post Service Officer, Jim Ireland, was called by Habitat for Humanity South Hampton Roads (HFH SHR) and asked if the Post could help the veteran find someone to replace her roof since HFH builds houses, but does not replace or repair roofs.

Jim's answer was unequivocally yes. He said he would put Ms. Miller on his list of veterans needing roofs and would see what he could do to help her. Jim then called Jason Hanbury, Quartermaster of VFW Post 993 Portsmouth and informed him of the project since Ms. Miller lived in Portsmouth. Jason agreed to help coordinate or assist if needed.

In January, HFH SHR called Jim Ireland again letting him know that HFH International was offering a free roof to a needy veteran. They also noted another program available to a needy veteran called *"SRS Raising the Roof Foundation"*. This program was not free but would provide the materials for a new roof and the selectee would be responsible for paying for the labor.

Our Service Officer immediately proffered Ms. Danja Miller's name as the candidate since HFH SHR had given him her name a month earlier.

HFH SHR agreed and a packet for submission was quickly assembled by VFW Post 2894's Service Officer.

One issue – and a potential show stopper – was that Ms. Miller's sister had already signed a contract with An-



(Continued on page 6)

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draws Roofing of Portsmouth for \$9,000 to replace her sister's roof. She had paid half the money up front with the remaining to be paid upon completion. She asked the VFW Post 2894's Service Officer if he would talk to Mr. Andrews to see if something could be worked out so she would not lose her deposit.

Jim Ireland contacted Mr. Andrews and developed a plan that would work for all concerned. Mr. Andrews agreed to refund any money left over from her deposit of \$4,000, which is what happened. He also agreed that she would not lose her place on his work schedule and he would start work as soon as her application with SRS was approved.

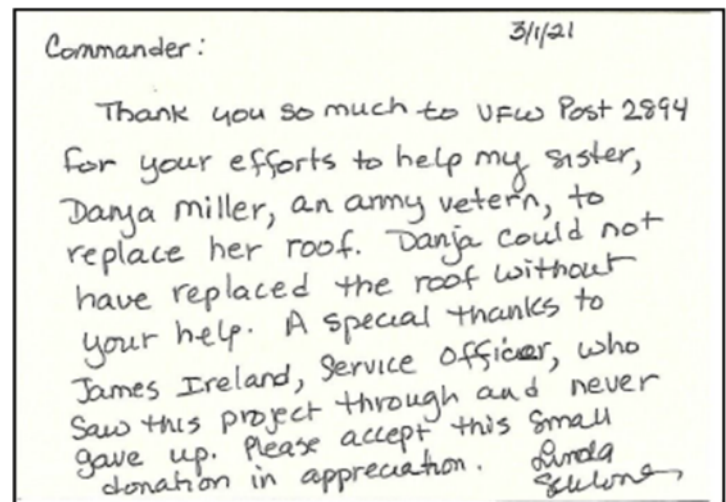
SRS was able to arrange for a donation of material from Superior Distribution. The application was approved in a matter of days, and Andrews roofing started work immediately (2 March 2021) and it was completed the same day. The entire planning process took 46 days!

The Post informed the local media of this heart-warming project and TV channels 3 (WTKR) and 13 (WVEC) sent video crews to cover the event and ran their stories on the 5 and 10 P.M. news for both stations that evening, which we were told captured the hearts of many. A station in the state capitol, Richmond, even covered the story the following day.

The Post has nominated this project for a 2021 National VFW Post Service Project award.

Needless to say, Ms. Miller and her sister were elated and overwhelmed by it all. Ms. Miller commented that *"I couldn't believe this was all happening. It has taken a tremendous burden off of my mind. It was like someone lifted a very large weight off my shoulders and I could actually breathe better."* [She had just gotten out of the hospital the previous day and was having a great deal of trouble breathing.]

She also made a statement that we will never forget. While holding her Army uniform in her arms which she proudly wore over 30 years ago, she said with a big smile *"I have never felt important, but today I feel important. To think the Army that I served over 30 years ago has come back to serve me."* Priceless!



The Post received a very nice card from the veteran's sister as well as a \$100 donation

Middle School students make blankets for veterans

Posts 7327 and 7589 have donated to this worthy cause

Lisa D. Reaves, M.Ed
7th Grade English Teacher

Purple Team Lead
South County Middle School



Vietnam veteran David Byrne received one of the blankets made by the 13-year-old sisters and was deeply touched. The exchange took place in 2019 at the World War II Memorial and involved dozens of students.

[In 2019] a couple of our students made fleece blankets to give to veterans they met at the Honor Flight. Two weeks later, Mr. Byrne from Illinois, wrote a letter to us thanking our students for their heartfelt welcome to DC. In his letter, he stated the blanket, “will always hold a special place in my heart and remind me of my trip to DC.” The blanket especially meant a lot to him because he lost his wife one week after participating in the Honor Flight.

Because of the reaction of Mr. Byrne and other veterans, we have been inspired to make more memorable moments for the men and women who served our country. Our goal for the 2019-2020 Honor Flight field trip was for each student to make and personally deliver a patriotic blanket to the veterans. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, students were not able to deliver blankets to the veterans, so we decided to deliver the blankets to the Armed Forces Retirement Home in D.C.

As we all know, there has been a social-emotional toll on students. To address these concerns, we slowly introduced the service learning project to our new 7th

graders this year. Because we were virtual most of the school year, we had to be creative by inviting only a few students to socially distance outside in order to teach them how to make blankets. Every Thursday after school, a small group met virtually, and they make the blankets at home. As you can see in the pictures below, it was not quite the same as last year, but we felt like it was a good solution given the circumstances.

Now that we’re in school twice a week, more students have become interested in making blankets for the veterans. We anticipate that we will be making approximately 60 blankets to donate to the Armed Forces Retirement Home by the beginning of



Meeting virtually to create blankets at home.

June. We wanted to see if it is possible to apply for a donation from the VFW in order to buy more fabric. Our students just love making the blankets for the veterans and the Purple Team teachers all feel that this act of giving helps with the socio-emotional health of our students. It gives them a sense of purpose as well as reinforcing the importance of honoring those who sacrificed for our country.

[@smcs_purpleteam](#) (IG) [@SPurpleteam](#) (Twitter)



Blankets produced by the Purple Team on April 15, 2021

A tale of 2 teachers: Gabrielle Patterson and Elizabeth Stone.

By Pete MacLeod

4th grade teacher Gabrielle Patterson and 6th grade teacher Elizabeth Stone, both teachers in the city of Manassas school system, have been named Virginia VFW State Teachers of the Year for 2020-2021. Both were sponsored by VFW Post 7589 in Manassas. Post 7589 has not had a state teacher of the year since Anne Carroll, Principal of Seton School, won the prize back in 2011. Gabrielle Patterson is in the K-5 Division and Elizabeth Stone is in the grades 6-8 Division.



Meet Gabrielle Patterson. She teaches 4th grade at Baldwin Elementary School in Manassas. This is a teacher who loves her state! Melissa Neal, Curriculum Specialist at Baldwin, says Gabrielle is the “go to” person for Virginia state history. On her own, she toured Mayfield Fort and Liberia Plantation in Manassas. Gabrielle is also a regular at the Manassas Museum programs for educators. She already has a Masters Degree in Education but keeps on learning. Ms. Neal says her knowledge goes right to her students and that on class projects she makes sure each student contributes equally in areas they are strong in. She has been an instructional team leader in Manassas and has devoted time to helping students who have limited proficiency in English.



Say hi to Elizabeth Stone, a 6th grade teacher at Baldwin Intermediate School in Manassas. One incident, chosen by a person nominating Ms. Stone, tells you all you need to know about the dedication of this educator. Ms. Stone loves history, but she was teaching a Science lesson to her students one day. It was close to Veterans Day, Nov. 11th and in the classroom conversation she was alarmed at the lack of knowledge her students had about the meaning of Veterans Day, World War I, and the sacrifices of so many veterans. She stopped the Science class and spent the remaining time on the history of World War I and why the War and the soldiers who fought it are so important. The person nominating Ms. Stone was observing the class and was amazed at how quickly this teacher shifted gears.

These two teachers have won the VFW Teacher of the Year competition in Manassas, in VFW District 8 and in the state of Virginia.

Post 7589 member Elizabeth Lewis turned 100 on December 12.

Veterans celebrate with drive-by greetings

WWII veteran Elizabeth Lewis marked 100 years of age on December 12. A current resident of Manassas, Elizabeth is a member of both VFW Post 7589 and American Legion Post 10. To honor her 100th birthday Post 10 organized a drive by celebration that was attended by scores of people who lined the streets and cheered as the celebration progressed. Because of COVID-19 concerns Elizabeth, was unable to attend outside so she viewed the event from a nearby window. It is truly a milestone to have one of our veterans reach the century mark and we wish her well for the future.



Elizabeth Lewis observes the drive-by from a nearby window.

VFW Post 7059 member donates vehicle to the Vets to Vets Vehicle Program

Vietnam vet and VFW Post 7059 member John Hedrick and wife, VFW Auxiliary member Julia recently donated an SUV to the non-profit program developed, organized and operated by VFW Post 8446 member Josh and wife Amanda Jones. This program accepts donated vehicles, makes all necessary repairs and donates them to needy area veterans. To date, Vets to Vets has donated four refurbished vehicles free of charge, to needy vets. Automobiles, useful auto parts and financial donations are always welcome for this "Vets Helping Vets" program.



L to R) Victor Moss, Buckingham Post 8446 Commander, VFW Post 7059 member John Hedrick, wife and VFW Post 7059 Auxiliary member, Julia Hedrick and Vet to Vet program founder and director, VFW Post 8446 member Josh Jones



Virginia's new VFW Post 12200 Emporia receives their Charter



Proud members of Virginia's newest post 12200 Emporia, show off their Charter.

District 4 Commander congratulates the Officers of Post 12200 on the organization of the newest District 4 Post and receipt of their Charter. All the best to this eager group of veterans as they continue to serve their fellow veterans, their community and the VFW!



(Back L to R, Jr. Vice Cody Sowards and QM/Adj. Bobby Plagmann)
(Front L to R) District 4 Commander Fred Hill, Post 12200 Commander, Timothy Powell)

The Assault on Firebase David

By Joel Chase, Post 7589

In early May 1970, the 1st Air Cavalry Division was inserted deep inside Cambodia to search and destroy caches of NVA food, weapons and munitions in preparation for the withdrawal of all US troops from South Vietnam. Due to the draw-down of personnel and lack of replacements, all elements were less than half their allocated strength.

I was a platoon leader with D Co. 1st of the 5th, and our Battalion Fire Support Base (FSB) David was located ten miles inside the Cambodian border. FSB David consisted of fifteen bunkers circling about four acres of real estate. The bunkers were linked together by a berm about three feet high to offer defilade from enemy fire. There were two glaring deficiencies as to FSB David's position: it was beyond fan fire support from any other firebase and there was a steep ravine about fifty meters from the berm in one sector of the perimeter that offered natural cover to the enemy. Approximately two hundred personnel manned the firebase.

When my Company was pulled out of the jungle and assigned security at FSB David, guess who got the bunkers facing the ravine? We immediately began making improvements to our position by building secondary fighting positions between our four assigned bunkers. The bunkers were like magnets to NVA B-40 rockets, so I instructed my men to stay out of them if we were attacked. Claymore mines were brought back and dug into the berm to deter the enemy from turning them around toward us. We installed fifty trip flares in front of each bunker in every direction possible. Our organic mortar tubes were zeroed in on the ravine. I suspected that the enemy planned to attack FSB David and had mapped the location of our defensive positions, so after darkness fell we moved everything around. Each man was assigned a place to be and a field of fire. We were as ready as we could be.

At 0300 hours on 14 June a trip flare went off in front of one of my bunkers and the guard took a shot when he thought he saw something move. I recommended we go to 100% alert on the perimeter. Dense fog limited visibility to about fifty feet, and mortar illumination was of no help. We visually searched the area for nearly thirty minutes with no results. As I stood behind the berm, a burst of AK-47 fire erupted which was intended to give me a new belly button. However, the rounds struck the berm and grazed my scalp. Suddenly the darkness was filled with red and green tracers and men were scurrying to their assigned positions. I got on the radio to the mortar guys and asked them to commence their preplanned fire into the ravine. My CO called and asked me: "What the hell is going on?" My sector was the only one under attack at the time, but soon the entire firebase was under siege by NVA. About five minutes later a Chi-com grenade took me out of the fight, but my guys continued to perform marvelously until dawn and the enemy withdrew. During the three hour battle, gunships circled above FB

David but could not fire due to the dense fog.

Due to the extent of my injuries I was unable to witness the damage the Cav had inflicted on the enemy, but I had read the Daily Log, Manning Report and After-Action reports that told the story. There were 28 NVA to bury and numerous blood and drag trails to illustrate the carnage we brought on the enemy. There were 29 wounded Americans needing evacuation when the fog cleared but not one man was killed during the battle. Later that morning the Commanding General of the 5th Cav flew in with a footlocker full of medals to present including ten Silver Stars. He was giddy with praise for the troops who had beaten the NVA's best at their own game saying: "This was the finest defense of a firebase he could imagine".

The After-Action report said the NVA hit us with 250 to 300 of their regular army. Our troops fought a great fight, but a little luck and a single trip flare played a huge role in preventing the firebase from being completely overrun.

Was I prepared to become a platoon leader after graduating from OCS? **HELL NO!** However, I was blessed with great NCOs and an understanding Company Commander who helped me learn how to get from point A to point B while keeping my men from getting killed or accidentally killing one another. After nine months of OJT I kind of knew what I was doing and could smell trouble a mile away. That was the "luck" we experienced at FSB David. After visually searching the area for thirty minutes following the trip flare going off, everyone wanted to call it quits and go back to bed - except me. I knew the NVA was there just waiting to unleash their deadly attack. I was unwilling to ignore the warning signal of the trip flare. I had listened on the radio as other fire bases such as Eagle and Illingworth were being overrun. I had vowed not to let that happen at David and neither did my troopers. I know I'm probably obsessive about this but it was an important event not just in my life, but in the lives of many other American soldiers.



SGT Nicholas C. Mason VFW Post 12202 Opens In King George

Ken Wiseman, Past State Commander

On a sunny Saturday afternoon that also marked the first day of May, 33 veterans raised their right hand and became chartering members of the VFW's newest Post, the SGT Nicholas C. Mason Memorial VFW Post 12202 in King George County. With Past State Commander Ken Wiseman as the Master of Ceremonies and State Commander Eric Mallett serving as the installing officer, it was a day few will forget.

Commemorating the memory and legacy of beloved native Nick Mason, who was killed in Iraq in 2004 while serving with C Company, 276th Engineering Battalion, Virginia Army National Guard, elected officials and members of the community joined the VFW in opening the Post with pomp fitting for such an occasion. SGT Mason's parents and sister were the distinguished guests for the event that saw nearly 100 people assemble at King George High School where Nick had been a star athlete.

Past State Commander Wiseman gave the keynote address and he encouraged the members of the Post to hold their officers to the same standards that Nick Mason lived his life and to take the opening of the Post as "a blank canvas allowing you to do so many things".

State Commander Mallett noted that there has not been such a large group installed nor has Virginia seen a Post come together this fast. "It is amazing what you were able to do with social media and local connections to overcome the COVID pandemic and deliver a new Post" Mallett said.

SGT Mason's mom presented the Post with American flags that had been flown over her son's grave earlier that morning. Nick's mom and dad both commented on how proud they were to see another effort to commemorate their son. They ended their comments by saying they looked forward to becoming members of the Auxiliary which will soon open and be part of the Post.

Also in attendance was Nick's then-platoon leader, Beau Mason, who is now a Lieutenant Colonel in the Virginia Army National Guard. "Nick was the kind of Soldier everyone could respect for his service but also the one who was just fun to be around, which is to say he also was a joker" LTC Mason said, causing the crowd to laugh. He added "I have spent hours with Nick's family trading stories about the things he did and I look forward to being a member of a Post named after Nick."

While the Post is only just starting, the fact was clear that this Post will fit very well within the King George County community and the VFW as a whole. With the namesake of SGT Nicholas C. Mason, the beloved local boy who served with honor, there is only positivity that lies ahead for them.



Department of Virginia's leadership on hand for the newest Post 12202 in King George, swearing in.

Pictured from left to right: Department Chaplain, Harold Sayles, Department Jr Vice, Geoffrey Lyster, Department Inspector, Doug Hoffman, Department Commander Eric Mallett, Department Sr. Vice Butch Schupska, Department Adjutant Quartermaster, Ed Mann, Manassas Post Commander, Monty Zimmerman.



Pictured above, Comrades and Commander being sworn in, by repeating the VFW Oath of office.



Pictured above, Comrades and Commander being sworn in with their hands on the American Flag being held by the Department Honor Guard Commander, Phil Arendson.



Pictured above, Department Commander pins a VFW Cross of Malta pin onto a Korean War Veteran that transferred his membership into the King George Post.



Pictured above, Department Commander addresses the attendees at the Post Induction ceremony.

Continued from previous page



Department Commander, Eric Mallett introduces the Newest Post Commander of the Department of Virginia



Department Commander, Eric Mallett presents the Post with a National Commander's certificate of recognition to the Newest Post Commander of the Department of Virginia, Alex McKenna



The parents, Vic and Christine Mason address the Comrades, Auxiliary and guests during the ceremony.



Vic and Christine Mason present Commander McKenna with a flag that was flown over their son Nick's grave.



Pictured from left to right: Department Commander, Eric Mallett, Past Department Commander Ken Wiseman, Christine Mason, Vic Mason, Carley Mason and former Platoon Leader, Army LTC Beau Mason. (not related)



SGT Nicholas Mason

Marine laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery, supported by local VFW

A lady in California posted a message for her brother's funeral on a VFW Post 3150 bulletin board (It is unknown if she also posted on other sites.) Due to age and COVID, family members could not attend the funeral. The Post passed her request to our members and to other local veteran organizations. John McCarthy (maroon jacket, center) and Nick Knowles (right behind him) were among the members of John Lyon Post attending the funeral. Others included Doc Crouch, Cathy Graham, Royes Gernadt, Thomas Liu, and Nancy Springer. Zac Mathews did a training tribute fly-over in a Coast Guard helicopter. Chaplain Crouch reported to her and sent photos. There were over 100 persons in attendance: members from at least two VFW Posts (VFW-3150, Aux-3150 and VFW 7327), two American Legion Posts (176, 177 and Riders), Military Order of the Purple Heart and Marine Corps League as well as numerous active duty and retired military personnel. She wrote back: "Thank you for all of the photos and your attendance at the committal service. I don't have enough words to express the amount of thanks I have for all of the attendees."



John Lyon Post 3150, Arlington conducts their Highway clean up

Post 3150 and Auxiliary members pause before going out to our section of Lee Highway in Arlington for spring Highway Cleanup. Seen are (L-R) Jody Daniels, Nick Knowles, Nancy Springer, Jake Monaco, John McCarthy, Michael Bouchard, and Cathy Graham. Photo taken by Bouchard's son, Adam.



