

Commander's Message



State Commander Harold "Butch" Schupska



Comrades and Auxiliary:

Last year during the COVID-19 pandemic, we got a lot done. Now, at the start of a new year, without all of the COVID restrictions, we can accomplish so much more. We can start going out and setting up in front of stores and doing other things that get the word out about what the VFW can do for you.

I want to let all of the Auxiliary know that the Department is here to help in any way we can, because there is no weak link in the Department of Virginia. We are family.

As we move forward, we can still use Zoom meetings because they help the people that can't make meetings because of being out of town or overseas. It shows that we have not forgotten them.

Now is the time to ensure that audits are in, putting reports in for the first half, ordering Buddy Poppies and making donations for All State. Let's not wait until the end of the period and not make it. Have your Adjutant check the dashboard for your Post to verify everything showed up.

Until next time-- Full Steam Ahead for Vets.

Butch Schupska
State Commander



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The official publication of the Virginia VFW published by the
Department of Virginia, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US

Please visit our website at

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Virginia Veteran is published tri-annually by the Department of Virginia, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US and is available in electronic format on the Department website:

www.vfwva.org.

Articles may be submitted by email to:
news@vfwva.org

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

Note: Deadline for the next newspaper is:

November 15th, 2021

From the Editor's desk



Summer time activities are in full swing. 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

Department of Virginia swears in their 2021-2022 State Commander and Auxiliary President at the VFW State Convention in Portsmouth Virginia





VFW Post 637 Hosts American Legion's Virginia Legacy Scholarship Run

VFW Post 637 in Hopewell Virginia in collaboration with American Legion Post 146 hosted the American Legion Riders as they participated in the Virginia Legacy Run. The Virginia Legacy Run raises money to give scholarships to children of military members who died while on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001, and to children of post-9/11 veterans who are significantly disabled. Participating were VFW 637 Post Commander Jim Cooper, VFW 627 Riders President - Michael "Kuma" Losoya, American Legion Post 146 President - Dave Harless, along with State reps from VFW Riders Virginia and the VFW State Commander, Butch Schupski. The event included a short ceremony and wreath laying at the traffic circle along with food and comradery supporting our Legion brothers and sisters before they departed on the next leg of their journey. VFW Post 637 members fed over 200 hungry bikers on June 25 and the VFW Riders Post 637 presented a check of \$300.00 towards the run.



Pictured above, left to right are: VFW Post 637 Commander Jim Cooper, VFW 637 Riders President Michael "Kuma" Losoya and American Legion Post 146 Commander Dave Harless.



Bikes pre-staged for the Virginia Legacy Run 2021



Short ceremony and wreath placement at the traffic circle in Hopewell

Farmville Post 7059 gets a new mural



Commander Dean Lord recently finished this mural on the wall of Post 7059 Farmville. The work honors Old Glory, those who have made the supreme sacrifice to preserve her values and the VFW's dedication to veterans and community. Great job Commander!

VFW Post 7819 CREWE Post had a busy quarter



The Crewe Veterans of Foreign Wars wants to recognize area Korea service veterans for National Korean War Veterans Day. About 140 Nottoway County men and women are identified as having served in Korea during that war, and many more have served since that time says Post 7819 Commander Greg Eanes.

The only two known Korean War veterans still living in Crewe are Army veteran Mark Tuck, 223rd Infantry Regiment from 1952 to 1953 and Marine Corps veteran R.E. (Bob) Schodt who was with Marine Attack Squadron 22 from 1952 to 1954. Eanes said they are interested in hearing from others who may still be living in the area.

Korean War Snapshot

Crewe lost two citizens and one with a Crewe connection to Korean combat. They include Private Walter M. Tuck, 1st Cavalry Division killed on October 16, 1951 and Sergeant First Class Robert L. Carter, killed January 21, 1952. Georgia native Lt. James Wesley Bracken, Jr. Company K, 8th Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, was killed on October 8, 1951 and appears to have had a Crewe connection.

Among those reported wounded in action were: Sergeant W.M. (Punk) Belcher of Crewe, 7th Infantry Regiment; 1st Lt. Tommy Harwood, 1st Cavalry Division in October 1951, who later served as a Judge on

the State Corporation Commission; John L. Lewis, 13th Engineers, of Crewe; Captain S.E. (Red) Roberts, Combat Engineers, on 30 Sept 1950 and Horace H. Ellett of Burkeville, 5th Regimental Combat Team, in 1951. Roberts and Ellett each had the unique distinction of earning two Bronze Star Medals.

The first Crewe veteran in the war zone appears to have been Air Force Technical Sergeant Irving W. Moore, with the 347th Troop Carrier Command. He was awarded the Air Medal for 15 combat support missions within weeks of the Communist invasion.

Among the local women in the war were Army nurses Audrey Clingenpeel, Crewe High School Class of '49; the late Major Virginia Duncan working at a military hospital in Japan and Captain Melba Stone with the 1453rd Medical Air Evacuation Squadron. Captain Stone, like Major Duncan, was a World War II veteran but exited after the war. She was recalled to active duty to help evacuate combat wounded from the Korean Peninsula to Japan.

Post-War Service

Commander Eanes said "We've only identified about 15 folks that have served in Korea since the armistice 68 years ago. We would really like to get a good count. Having a 'Welcome Home' meal might encourage these veterans to come forward for fellowship. These American veterans defended a democracy and democratic principles from a Communist regime. The VFW wants to ensure they are properly recognized."

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Eanes also said “The 2nd Infantry Division has been the ‘point’ of the American military spear performing combat patrols on the Demilitarized Zone. A significant number of local men and women were in that unit over the years.” Among those serving in the 2nd Infantry Division were Thomas J. Bryant (1969-70); Mark Fathbruckner (1988); Lonnie Harper, Jr (1968); Mactory Hawkes (1969-1970) and Rebecca Freeze (after 9/11).

Other identified Army veterans include John Robertson, 17th Mechanized Infantry (1969-70), Roland C. Wilkerson, Jr, 31st Infantry, (1968), Don Derflinger (1966-67), Donald Leroy Tidwell in Taegu (1970-1971), the late William H. King, long-time Nottoway County School Board member, 609th Ordnance Company (1972), William L. Jackson at Kunsan Air Base (1971), Sarah B. Wyatt of the 275th Signal Company, Yongsan (1997) and Omer H. Gowin, Petroleum Distribution Center (1966-67).

At least two local men served in the Air Force in Korea. These include Warren A. Epes, Kunsan Air Base,

(1973) and James ‘Jimmy’ Hagaman serving with a Crash Rescue Unit.

Eanes said “We’d like to compile a roster of all local veterans with Korea service. They or their families can mail their names, units, dates and place of service and current addresses to Post 7819 Korea Veterans Project c/o of VFW Post 7819, P.O. Box 271, Crewe, Va or, better yet, attend our ‘welcome home’ at 6 p.m., Monday July 26 at the Post Home on Virginia Ave.”



Crewe VFW Starts Radio Show to Promote Americanism

(Crewe) – Crewe’s Gold Star Memorial Post 7819 and WSVS Pure Country Radio (800 AM/97.1 FM) have teamed up to produce a program entitled ‘VFW’s *Command Performance*’ designed to promote Americanism and other VFW programs throughout the Southside Virginia listening area.

Shows will air generally on Friday at noon, the weekend leading into select holidays or anniversaries. The first show aired on Friday, 2 July leading into the Independence Day weekend and featured a one-half hour salute to the founding of the Republic and area veterans whose service has preserved independence.

“The patriotic musical salute to America and American veterans provides an opportunity for broad public outreach” said VFW Post 7819 Commander Greg Eanes, adding “Partnering with WSVS gives us a reach of 1.5 million potential listeners. This allows us to reach a lot of veterans and their families while educating the public

on the service of our wartime veterans. We will also publicly salute area veterans who turned their swords into ploughshares and built their communities through continued good citizenship.”

The Independence Day show contained traditional modern tunes like Greg White’s ‘4th of July’, Montgomery Gentry’s ‘Something to Be Proud Of’, Brooks and Dunn’s ‘Only in America’ and Lee Greenwood’s ‘God Bless the USA’. As July is the anniversary of the Korean War Armistice, Wilf Carter’s ‘Goodbye Maria (I’m Off to Korea)’ was featured with a dedication to Crewe Korean War veterans Mark Tuck and Bob Schodt. Promos alerted citizens to the Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline (1-800-273-82555) and Women veterans’ healthcare benefits.

Eanes also said “The shows are scheduled for quarterly production. Should we find enough sponsors, we can host a monthly show that will significantly aid veteran and veteran family outreach.”



CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION - WSVS General Manager Sherry Massaro was thanked by VFW Post 7819 Commander Greg Eanes with a Certificate of Appreciation for their partnership in the production of a quarterly radio program promoting the VFW and veterans.

100 YEARS OLD

Richard Ragan Recalls Flying Blimps in World War II

Richard Ragan of Crewe's Gold Star Memorial Post 7819 celebrated his 100th birthday on Saturday, July 10. An even greater rarity is that Mr. Ragan is one of the last living aircrew members of the United States Navy Blimp Squadrons that were a key part of the Battle of the Atlantic, the longest continuous military campaign in modern military history. The campaign lasted from September 3, 1939 until Nazi Germany's surrender on May 8, 1945 and was critical to keeping Allied supply lines open so Nazi Germany could be defeated on the battlefield. Eighty-years ago the coastal waters of the United States was a war zone.

Naval Training

Born and raised on a farm in Crewe, Mr. Ragan had been going to trade school in Green Bay, Wisconsin when he volunteered for the U.S. Navy. He jokingly recalled how he was in Navy boot camp undergoing training in late 1942 when he received notification from the Nottoway County Draft Board telling him he was categorized '1A' or a priority for selection in the draft.

He said he was among the last of the recruit inductees to sleep in hammocks in the barracks and get their fingerprints on their identification cards.

Following boot camp, he attended Aviation Metalsmith School in Chicago. He said "I did well. I already had done sheet metal work." The trade prepared men to work on aircraft and aircraft structures. This was followed by a 90-day assignment to Lakehurst, New Jersey and the Lighter Than Air (LTA)

School where he learned how to maintain blimps. "Some of it was over my head but I got through," he said recently. Training included two four-hour hops on an L-Class blimp trainer. From there he reported to Airship Squadron, later called Blimp Squadron (BLIMPRON) Z-21 at NAS Richmond outside of Miami, Florida, one of many units under the command of the region known as the Gulf Sea Frontier. The area of operations stretched from Central America, through the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean to the Atlantic. It was described as a "profitable hunting ground" for enemy submarines.

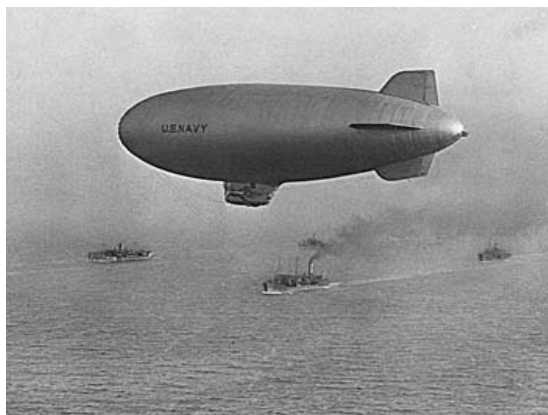
Mr. Ragan arrived in late July or early August 1943, about two months after the Z-21 Blimp K-74 was shot down by a German submarine after an unsuccessful blimp attack. "They put me in a squadron the first night," Ragan recalled. "I was 21 and one of the oldest in the group." He thinks he was a replacement for the one man that died in the K-74 incident.



100 Years young, Richard Ragan

Dropping Bombs

Mr. Ragan dropped 74 bombs during his service. Some of these were on suspected submarines, others for training purposes and for ballast. The blimps were authorized to unload munitions to regain altitude under certain circumstances. The blimps were capable of carrying four 250-pound bombs. Mr. Ra-



Richard Ragan WWII



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gan says, “We never carried but two.”

“I was the one who dropped the bombs,” he said. “I sat between the pilot and co-pilot. I was at the forward lookout place at the time and worked the rudders. The pilot and the navigator set the course and we flew it by compass.”

Mr. Ragan explained the bomb release trigger consisted of two knobs, one shorter than the other. One knob was to be pushed to ‘arm’ the weapon, so it exploded when it hit the target and the other knob was to drop the bomb. On his very first mission, he mixed the knobs up and accidentally dropped the bomb rather than ‘arm’ it. The unauthorized release of a weapon was a major issue and the entire crew had to go before Captain’s Mast – the commanding officer’s military court – to face charges. Mr. Ragan recalled another crew, about the same time, accidentally released a bomb in a Florida swamp so both crews – 18 men – were standing before the Captain having to explain what happened.

As no one was hurt and no friendly ships were hit, Mr. Ragan’s crew were admonished and returned to duty. The command pilot of Ragan’s first crew had him transferred to another crew. Of the crew, he said “We were like family.” He noted a casual officer/enlisted relationship saying “we just talked like people normally do.” Some of his shipmates used to visit him in Crewe after the war.

The other crew did not fare as well. They were grounded for a month after being tasked with finding the bomb they dropped in the swamp.

They also had practice bombs that were the equivalent of a 10-gauge shell in an iron bar. On one occasion Mr. Ragan dropped a practice bomb on an old shed situated in a large tomato field. The next thing he observed were several mules running out of the shed at high speed through the tomato field. He said “There were tomatoes flying everywhere.”

Wartime Operations

Mr. Ragan said blimp crews had the responsibility of identifying and tracking merchant and naval vessels in their area. The blimp communicated with the ship by blinker lights. He said “We had four-inch blinker lights... We checked every ship out there and logged their position.” Ships traveling alone could be sunk without anyone knowing. If the ship showed up late the positions recorded by the blimp crews aided search and rescue efforts. He said “There were so many sunk and people didn’t know. They did better in convoys.”

A Convoy Center was established at Key West, Flori-

da (a forward base for Mr. Ragan’s squadron) coordinating operations for convoys from Guantanamo, Piltown and Galveston to New York.

He vividly recalls the convoys. They came from different ports and had to consolidate into a larger convoy for better protection. The blimps would serve as their escorts and coordinate rendezvous points. “We would work them together,” he said. “We would drop instructions on a parachute on the command ship. We would get right over it and drop the message.” The convoys would eventually merge before heading out to the Atlantic and open waters or another rendezvous point on the Atlantic coast.

Mr. Ragan recalled on foggy mornings they had to fly above the mist. As the mist settled the top masts of the ships poked out of the clouds like little trees. The blimps normally had to fly at an altitude of 500 feet. At some point the earth curved in the distance. He recalled looking at various large convoys when the sea was covered in ships as far as he could visually see.

He recalled one ship that had been torpedoed and the crew abandoned it. When it did not sink, they went back onboard and were able to get it going again. Even though the front was partially awash the crew managed to sail it from its location in the Gulf of Mexico, around the Florida peninsula and up the east coast to a repair yard. Mr. Ragan said “Water was flowing over the front the whole time it moved. We thought it would sink.”

He said “We had been trained in spotting submarine telescope ‘wakes’. We had to know the difference between a wake caused by a German periscope and one by an American. One flared out more than the other. They’d always crash dive before we got there.”

He explained the wake – the ripple disturbance in the ocean when a submarine used its periscope – was different because of how they were made. He said the widths and angles of the wakes were different, one being wider than the other.

Radar was used to try to locate enemy submarines. Mr. Ragan recalled, “the radar would show a quarter-inch long and thin line. If it was a submarine, it was real bright.” He said the detection gear used early on was not as good as the late war technology. He said “Later we used a sonobuoy. It would send sound back to us. “

The crew had a procedure when trying to locate a suspected submarine. He said “We dropped sonobuoys in a five-mile box, one in each corner and one in the center. The pilots handled all that. I sat on the rudder

(Continued from page 9)

while they did it.” If a suspected submarine was identified, they would drop a bomb “mostly to scare”, he said. Navy doctrine at the time called for blimps to attack enemy submarines only after they dived to help pin them down. The blimp would call in Navy A-20 Bombers, PBYS or PBMs aircraft that could carry more bombs. He said ‘Jeep Carriers’ with aircraft were also part of convoys.

On another occasion his crew was assigned to patrol the approaches to the Mississippi River. There had been a report or reports of a German submarine attempting to interdict shipping out of the waterway which led to a large U.S. oil refinery. (In July 1942 the German submarine U-166 had sunk a ship and was itself sunk in that region. Its wreckage was discovered in 2001).

On another occasion his airship was part of a team trying to identify a ‘banana boat’ being used by the Germans to refuel submarines in the Caribbean Sea. His airship identified the boat and helped track it. The banana boat eventually landed at a location in Haiti and reportedly had its activities terminated.

He said “I flew one 24-hour hop. If you flew for more than 24-hours the crew was grounded for a week because of ‘flight fatigue’. Because of that they would try to bring us in at 23-hours. I flew a couple of those.” During the long flights, the ships would land temporarily to take on fuel for the engines.

One long mission involved providing escort to a damaged American submarine from the Pacific. The submarine transited the Panama Canal, was picked up by his airship and escorted to the Atlantic where overwatch was transferred and the submarine made its way to a repair yard.

Aircrew Life

“No two flights were the same... They wanted us out there for a long time,” Mr. Ragan said. “The Navy did not care if we flew with or without clothes but better have two dog-tags on and stay awake!”

The blimps were capable of exceptionally long flights and had loiter time over the sea lanes. Mr. Ragan explained the blimp balloons had three air compartments, the middle one containing helium and front and rear compartments holding hot air. He said “The helium came from Texas. We never used hydrogen. If you lost helium the pilot could ‘free balloon’ for a landing.”

Mr. Ragan said “They were no trouble to fly but not

everyone can navigate! We got completely lost once and found ourselves near the Yucatan Peninsula.” The skipper managed to get his bearings and get back on course returning without incident.

He said the rudder-men operated on four-hour shifts. In between shifts they could rest or grab a meal. Mr. Ragan became the ‘cook’ because he had more experience cooking than other members of the crew. He said “We had a hot plate but wouldn’t warm anything so we hooked it up to a Lawrence generator.” He became known for his culinary expertise, leading to the officer of another blimp attempting to ‘steal’ him. Mr. Ragan’s Command Pilot blocked the effort reportedly telling the culprit, “You ain’t getting my cook!”

There were canvas cots for officers and enlisted men. The officers could sleep one hour out of three but there were fewer cots for the enlisted men so they could only rest one hour out of six.

All the crew were awake and at ‘general quarters’ or ‘battle stations’ when actively conducting operations such as checking ships, anti-submarine warfare patrols or escort duty. He said there was a watchlist posted. Time off was scheduled during transits so men could rest. Mr. Ragan remembered a crewmember named ‘Bearclaw’ from North Carolina responsible for making the watchlist. He failed to give Mr. Ragan any time off on a particular flight leading to an altercation while the two men were in the air. The situation was corrected and the two men became good friends.

“Everyone helped in the landing,” he recalled. “We had two short lines hanging from the nose, two more the pilot would drop and a long line in the rear, about 500 feet long.” The lines were grabbed by ground crew as the airship came down. Mr. Ragan was part of the ‘car party’ whose job it was to hop out as the blimp got near the ground to help it land and stabilize. When not on flight duty they might be called on to help a blimp land. He recalled once holding onto the rear 500-foot long line and being dragged away as wind caught the blimp.

There was only one parachute on board. That belonged to Mr. Ragan. In case of an emergency landing, he was to strap on the chute, jump and organize a landing party from whoever was on the ground nearby. That almost happened once. He said “They had me ready to jump but I didn’t have to. That would have been my first jump.”

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Blimp Bases

Mr. Ragan's squadron ZP-21 was based out of NAS Richmond, near Miami and Homestead Air Force Base. He said there were five advanced bases to include Guantanamo Bay and Isle of Pines in Cuba, Key West and Banana River, Florida. They also operated out of Houma, Louisiana. He said "The Isle of Pines had been a big recreational area before a storm tore it all to pieces." The U.S. Navy's selection of the site provided employment for local citizens. Mr. Ragan recalled each Cuban that helped land a blimp was paid one U.S. dollar per landing. He said "They laid under the trees all day" waiting for blimps to arrive.

He recalled "the fields were full of pineapples, and they had olive trees. We had green olives on every flight. If you got air sick you ate the olives and salt crackers."

"The biggest thing you did was rest when you got on the ground," he said.

When not flying the crew would train. This included weapons training where they were instructed in the use of the .45 caliber pistol, .30 and .50 caliber machine guns and the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR). Mr. Ragan said "We shot skeet as part of our training to hit moving targets."

End of War

blimp operations were curtailed after the German surrender and limited to air/sea rescue and special missions. The war with Japan continued and some American military units were preparing to deploy to the Pacific where an invasion of Japan was likely at the projected cost of one million Allied casualties.

"The best sound I heard was when the atom bomb went off," Mr. Ragan recalled. That was August 1945. His squadron was disestablished on November 14, 1945.

As men and units began to demobilize Mr. Ragan was shifted off flight duty and assigned to the Master-At-Arms (Navy police). The commanding officer was aware food was being stolen from the Mess Hall and directed Mr. Ragan to find the thief. Within two weeks he caught the man walking out with a large country ham. He gave the individual a warning to cease his activities immediately or get charged.

He was then shifted to perform junior officer duties as the Officer of the Day before being placed in charge of the command motor pool. Things ran so

well that the Commanding Officer asked Mr. Ragan to extend his active-duty tour. Ragan recalled, "I turned him down and came home. I had enough points to get out."

Mr. Ragan was Honorably Discharged on December 23, 1945 with a total of three years, four months and eight days service that included more than 2,300 hours in the air. His squadron conducted over 7,300 flights logging more than 81,500 hours in the air while escorting 3,791 Allied naval and merchant ships through submarine infested waters.

He returned home, met the love of his life, raised a family, operated a successful business and a farm. Mr. Ragan recalled, "I loved the Navy. But I did not think it was a place to raise a family." He retained his memories, two certificates of training and his air-crew flight log. Unfortunately a mouse got to one of the certificates chewing it up and his flight log, he says, was found by his very young children who tore out the pages with writing and wrote on the unused portion.

Mr. Richard Ragan is the oldest member of Crewe's Gold Star Memorial Post 7819 and one of two members that are World War II veterans, the other being John T. Atkinson, 95, now residing in The Woodlands in Farmville.



Pictured on the left, a wreath placed at Crewe Town Hall in honor of WWII Veterans



Pictured on the right, Tohrin Spivey (6) helping veterans place flags on Veterans graves



Pictured above, Samantha Brown, Roy Turner, Laney, Kendall, Levi and Alli, honoring American heroes during Memorial Day



Pictured above, Sam & Daniel Knight of Crewe honoring American heroes

Post 7819 “Crewe” VFW Celebrates 75th Anniversary

Crewe’s Gold Star Memorial Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7819 is now celebrating its 75th anniversary year, sometimes called a ‘Diamond Jubilee’.

The Post was initiated in 1946 by the late John S. (Johnny) Ashmore of Crewe. During the war, as part of the 39th Infantry Regiment, Company C, he landed at Omaha Beach fighting through to the Hurtgen For-



An M3 Stuart Tank, proudly rests at the front door of the Post home, that was built in 1965.

est where he was seriously wounded and shipped to a stateside hospital at Fort Lee. While in the hospital he joined the VFW. When Ashmore came home, he called a meeting of World War II veterans in the Crewe Town Hall where Petersburg VFW members “gave a talk on what the VFW was all about.”

In 1996 during its 50th Anniversary celebrations, Ashmore recalled the room was packed with young men in their early 20s, many having just returned from overseas combat duties. He said the men in the room “had all kinds of wounds. Some minor, some worse.” They were “interested in promoting hospitalization. They knew in the future they would need it.” Once they heard about the VFW and its work towards preservation of medical care and veterans’ benefits, they decided to organize a Post.

It was named Gold Star Memorial Post to honor local war mothers and widows who received the Gold Service Star following the wartime sacrifices of their sons and husbands.

The official charter date is June 18, 1946. They had 67 charter members, all but one World War II veterans. The anomaly was World War I veteran Willie M. Belcher, Sr. He was a member of American Legion Post 50 (all World War I veterans at that time) and joined to provide advice as the men tried to get a new Post off the ground.

Ashmore became the first Post Commander. Since that time there have been commanders who served in Korea Vietnam, the Gulf War, the Global War on Terror and other operations.

Post 7819 will be conducting a variety of activities, public and veteran outreach during its 75th anniversary year.

Manassas Post celebrates 75 years

By Rick Raskin & Wayne Moore



War has always been an unforgettable experience and the WWII veterans of Manassas felt a need to continue their comradeship, goal-oriented spirit and sense

of community that are the bedrock of the VFW. The result was the establishment of Post 7589 on June 6, 1946. There were 27 Charter Members, the first Commander being John Gregory.

There was agreement among the founders that the namesake for the new Post should be Francis H. Cannon from Manassas. He enlisted in the Army and was the first resident of the city killed in the war on June 30, 1944, at the Battle of Saipan. He and his family were well known in the City of Manassas.

In a courageous and foresighted move the Post leadership purchased the current Post facility for \$40,000. The building now stands as a centerpiece of VFW activities in Manassas. Its current assessed value is nearly \$1 million.

The first Vietnam Veteran elected as Commander was Jerry Martin a decorated combat veteran with strong connections to the leadership of the community.

The first Desert Storm Veteran elected as Post Commander – Stephen Mires was followed by Ron Link, another Desert Storm Veteran.

Post 7589 members have gone on to fill District and Department offices, with Rick Raskin becoming State Commander in the 2019-20 year.

On August 7 the Post held a 75th anniversary celebration which was well attended. A highlight was the symbolic burning of the mortgage which was paid off in June. The \$100,000 mortgage was taken out to remodel the Post home and make it more accessible and rental attractive.

Post 7589 continues to be an asset in the community and is growing in membership. At over 500 members the Post is investing in the future by recruiting younger members and encouraging them to become active in our programs.



TINA BLIEM / POST 7589

QM Rick Raskin and Commander Wayne Moore burn the mortgage



RICK RASKIN / POST 7589

Chaplain Ron Knowles conducts Grace prior to the meal



RICK RASKIN / POST 7589

Lou Filippone, Pete MacLeod, Brad Bradshaw and Wayne Moore



Home schooled students from Crewe, help place flags during Memorial Day 2021



A local radio station recognizes Post 7819 Auxiliary for Veterans Support

POST WINS ALL-STATE & NATIONAL OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE POST... AGAIN!!!



Outgoing Post Commander, Chris Mulholland



VFW SSG DOZIER MEMORIAL POST 2894, Chesapeake, Virginia

Through everyone's efforts the Post has once again been named an All-State Post *and* a National Outstanding Community Service Post! The All-State award is our sixth in a row! The National title is awarded annually to only one Post in each state and this is our fifth in six years!!

Thanks to all of you who do the little things every day in our community! Thank you, Thank You, THANK YOU!!!! And congratulations to everyone, but especially Gary and Sandy Dunbar and Jim Ireland who are really the ones responsible for these honors to our Post!

VFW RIDERS DONATE \$20,000 — SET VANDER CLUTE RECORD FOR UNMET NEEDS

On the final night of the Commander-in-Chief's Homecoming, Virginia's VFW Riders set the record for the largest donation ever made for the VFW's Vander Clute Ride to support the VFW's Unmet Needs program. Led by outgoing State Chairman William "Shep" Shepherd, 21 members of the Riders presented Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch, himself a member of the Riders, a ceremonial check for \$20,000.

"We have always worked hard to raise the most we could each year but this was an important year for us in Virginia" Shep said. He added "With Hal being our first Chief from Virginia and with us not being able to attend the normal Vander Clute ceremony for two years, this year's check had to be huge."

Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch praised the Riders for all of their work saying they have always set the example of service in the VFW. Following the check presentation, the Commander-in-Chief presented Shep a citation honoring him for his years of service

to the organization. Shep is retiring and Jerry Ralston, who served several years as the President of the Riders, has stepped up to assume the Chairman position. Shep will continue to serve on the National HQs advisory group for issues relating to the VFW Riders.

The Vander Clute Memorial Motorcycle Ride is an annual event that serves to honor the memory of VFW advocate Howard E. Vander Clute Jr., a former VFW Commander-in-Chief and motorcycle enthusiast who passed away in 2000. Many participants ride from across the country to join the event and be a part of the check presentation at the VFW National Convention. The money raised in Virginia is raised through a number of events and is also supported by an annual sponsorship from Powerhouse Gaming and fundraising culminates with an annual Poker Run.



Pictured above is the VFW riders State Chairman, Comrade William J "Shep" Sheppard and members of the VFW Riders, presenting VFW Commander in Chief Hal Roesch the record setting check of \$20,000 raised from the famous VANDER CLUTE ride, for the VFW's UNMET needs program.

SSG Dozier Post 2894 wins multiple awards at State Convention

Many jokes were made at the Department of Virginia's awards ceremony on June 3rd about the size of the trailer Post 2894 would need to bring all of their awards home.

- National Award of Excellence, Community Service Special Project Entry (SECOND in two years!)
- All-State Post (sixth in a row!)
- First Place, Department of Virginia Community Activities Award (7th time)
- Dept of VA Life Membership Increase Award
- Dept of VA 100% Membership Retention Award
- Dept of VA William T. Allen Hospital Award (3rd award)
- Dept of VA Largest Membership Increase, Category C
- Dept of VA Clair B. Poff Public Relations Award (Newsletter – 4th time)
- Dept of VA Americanism Award (6th time)



2894 Auxiliary Wins Second Buddy Poppy Contest in a Row! VFW Auxiliary Post 2894 won 1st place for Department of Virginia Buddy Poppy Display for the 2nd year in a row! This was their "lockdown" project together. Here it is on display at the District Convention with Jean Dozier, Barbara Mulholland, and President Sandy Dunbar.



Post Commander José Vazquez and Past Post Commander Chris Mulholland attended the Homecoming of VFW National Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch in Portsmouth, 8-10 July. Hal presented Chris with the **National Outstanding Community Service Award** at Friday night's, tailgate party themed, dinner. José and Chris also reinforced their close relationships with outgoing C in C Hal and incoming C in C Fritz Mihelcic and his pal, "Momma Cass". Both Hal and Fritz are close "friends" of our Post and pledged to try and attend one of our future meetings.



NEARLY 75 YEARS OF FREE COMMUNITY PROGRAM



EMILY JENNINGS / CULPEPER STAR EXPONENT

Culpeper VFW Post 2524 Commander Keith Price eyes some of the medical equipment loaned by the veteran's group, including hospital beds

VFW's effort started with two pairs of wooden crutches in 1947, now fills two warehouses

BY EMILY JENNINGS
CULPEPER STAR-EXPONENT

For nearly three quarters of a century, a quiet but critical service operated in Culpeper, blessing countless lives.

It began in 1947, when a local World War II veteran needed some crutches and approached the Burton-Hammond Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2524 for help.

The VFW's Culpeper chapter found two pairs of wooden crutches for the vet. Chartered in 1932 by 22 World War I veterans, the post saw a greater need and began collecting used medical equipment, donated by Culpeper residents, to lend out.

Now, 74 years later, two warehouses beside the Burton-Hammond post on Sperryville Pike are filled with not only crutches, but walkers, canes, rollators, knee scooters, bedpans, bedside commodes, transfer chairs and hospital beds, among other items.

"We often get people thanking us who say they don't know what they would have done without our help," said post member Perry Smiley, who coordinates the program. "Some of this stuff can cost a lot, even with insurance. Sometimes, insurance doesn't cover it at all."

Over the past year, the post loaned an estimated \$87,000 worth of medical gear. In July alone, the items handed out were valued at \$7,300.

"We don't charge anybody anything," Smiley said. "There's no

money involved, we don't do anything with insurance. We just keep track for our own records about how much is donated and used."

Smiley, a retired Marine, has been involved with the effort for at least 20 years. Before him, well-known Culpeper resident Claude Guinn administered the program for decades.

"Initially, it was a service just for veterans, but we have so much now it's open to anybody—we put no restrictions on it at all," Smiley said. "Thanks to local thrift shops and the citizens of this county and their donations, we've been able to help a lot of people."

Full Circle Thrift Store and the Culpeper Hospital Auxiliary Thrift Shop are primary sources of donations, as well as local residents who contribute equipment they no longer need.



EMILY JENNINGS / CULPEPER STAR EXPONENT

Culpeper's Burton-Hammond VFW Post 2524 medical equipment loan program, started in 1947, now includes two warehouses full of walkers, wheelchairs and other items.

Smiley estimates he gets a half dozen calls every week offering donations, and about the same number of folks call to use something from the VFW collection.

"People sometimes call from as far away as Charlottesville or Norfolk, from all over the state, who need something and have heard about our program," he said.

The way it usually works is Smiley will get a request, and he puts that person's name on a piece of equipment and leaves it out for them to pick up when it's convenient. When they're done with it, the item will appear again in the same spot.

"I usually don't even see the person," he said. "Sometimes the equipment never comes back, but most of the time it does."

Post volunteers thoroughly clean and sanitize each item before it is loaned out again, Smiley said.

Several years ago, Reva resident Laura Hoffman, now deceased, was facing health problems that limited her ability to move

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around on her own.

“She broke her hip in 2019,” Florence Williams, Hoffman’s daughter, told the Star-Exponent. “She didn’t want to go to a home—she wanted to be independent. But we needed a hospital bed to take care of her.”

Williams knew who to call. Years before, she had heard of the Culpeper VFW program and borrowed a hospital bed in 2000 for her 94-year-old father.

Once again, her family was able to tap the VFW program, this time for Williams’ mother, who used the hospital bed free of charge for nearly two years. Hoffman, at age 108, died in November 2020.

“I’m very grateful; I’d like to really thank (the VFW) for the support they’ve given us,” Williams said. “Thanks to them, we didn’t have to spend money on a hospital bed. Instead, we could use that money on other important things. They are truly a blessing to this community.”

From Warrenton, VFW District 8 Commander Jeff Dombroff said that although many local posts will try to help members find needed medical equipment, Culpeper’s program goes far beyond the basics.

“Culpeper is very remarkable in its scope—they could almost call

themselves the Culpeper Medical Supply Company,” Dombroff said in an interview. “To my knowledge, their program is unique, and it’s been going on for a very long time. They have really extraordinary equipment, and all people have to do is ask.”

Central Virginia’s District 8 includes six local VFW posts.

If anyone in the community has an item to donate, call the VFW at 540/825-1910 or VFW Post 2524 Commander Keith Price at 540/729-5255.

Needed most, Smiley said, are wheelchairs, rollators and knee scooters.

“We only have four knee scooters; those I really do need to get back,” he said. “During the month of July, I checked out eight wheelchairs, so that’s another one I especially need to keep in stock.”

Smiley said he keeps a few items in his own garage so they’re handy in case he needs to deliver them to someone who calls him from Culpeper Medical Center, since he lives only a few blocks away.

“I just want people to know about the program, that these items are available, and they can get it at a moment’s notice,” he said.

The Culpeper’s Burton-Hammond VFW Post 2524 meets at 7:30 p.m. every first Thursday at 12210 Sperryville Pike.



EMILY JENNINGS / CULPEPERR STAR EXPONENT

VFW Post 2524 commander Keith Price displays a vintage wheelchair donated years ago that could serve as a symbol for the local veterans’ medical loan program. He estimates it is at least 75 years old, perhaps older.



EMILY JENNINGS / CULPEPERR STAR EXPONENT

A monument displaying military veteran’s dog tags stands outside Culpeper’s Burton Hammond VFW Post 2524 on Sperryville Pike.

The original article can be viewed at:

https://starexponent.com/news/vfws-medical-equipment-loan-program-has-thrived-in-culpeper-for-74-years/article_e4904489-fa38-5930-9a1c-2c4f4d4ea085.html

VFW Post 8754 in Floyd provides home repair for centenarian veteran

The Floyd VFW Post 8754 learned that Orland Phillips, a local 102 year-old WWII veteran, needed new windows in his self-built home. Phillips was a machinist in the Army in the Pacific during the war. He served from April 1941 through November 1945. Upon returning home he put his skills to work not only for employment, but to construct his own home. He traveled across Virginia to gather materials from an Army barracks that was being taken down. He built his home in 1953. His home is heated in the winter by a log stove, and the single pane windows were letting a lot of that heat escape. Local VFW Commander Richard Telling worked with Orland's

family and Wills Ridge Supply to find a solution.

On Saturday June 17 John Crawford and Johnny Reinhard arrived with the new windows. Luis Izaguirre, another local Army veteran, arrived to help out after reading about the event on the Floyd Beacon newspaper's Facebook page. Within three hours the windows were installed. Orland is thrilled with the upgrade to his home.

The Floyd VFW is dedicated to helping area veterans. The Post also participates in placing and removing the flags in Floyd for holidays, conducting military funeral honors, and delivering annual fruit baskets to widows of Floyd County veterans. The VFW meets every second Thursday at 7pm. In order to support similar projects in the future, the Floyd VFW will be co-hosting a chicken dinner as a fund raiser on Sunday, August 29, from 4-6 pm. Chicken, sides, beverage, and dessert will be served for \$8 per plate. The VFW is teaming with the Floyd American Legion Post 127 for this event. The meal will be dine-in or carry-out. Anyone with questions about the event or joining the Floyd VFW can contact Richard Telling at 540-250-5917.



Post 7589's Scouts kayak the New River

Alex Bliem

Post 7589 Scout Leader

July was a very fun and exciting month for our Scouts. After an entire year off from summer and high adventure camps because of Covid the Scouts were finally able to get back out for their week-long camps.



First was the high adventure trip that I had been planning for years for the Scouts. Two trips were canceled because of Covid, but we changed gears, adapted our plan and were able to finally go. I took a total of 15 Scouts/adults and we ended up on a week-long White-water Kayak trip up the New River in W.V. We spent 4 days whitewater kayaking on class 1-3 rapids, and one day on a large raft hitting class 4 and 5 rapids in the New River Gorge.

We met up with other Scouts and adults from around the country, new friendships were made and everyone had a great time together. Along the way we camped along the river each night and the Scouts/guides prepared breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day. On the last day the camp delivered a special dinner to our campsite, the raw ingredients for a steak and potatoes meal. This time all of the adults cooked for the Scouts, over a fire.



Along the way the Scouts performed their service by cleaning up all of the campsites while we were there and again before we left. Any large items that were found washed up or left along the river were placed in plain site so that the park rangers could see them and pick them up on their boats for disposal.

After kayaking and dinner one night a guide also took those that wanted to go on a lengthy hike out to the "Ghost" town of Thurmond. This was an important town for the area a long time ago and is in the process of being preserved/renovated. The guide told us everything there is to know about the town and it was very interesting.

On the last day we arranged it so that everyone could ride the "Big Zip" at Summit. This is one of their main attractions and is a four cable 3200' zip line. This was a blast and a perfect way to end the trip for everyone.

Everyone that participated in either trip had an absolute blast and created great memories that can last for a lifetime.



Back Bay VFW Post 1211 in Virginia Beach welcomes newest member at 100 years old



State Commander Butch Schupska wishing Bill Harrison a happy 100th birthday on 6/11/21. Then Post 1211 made Mr. Harrison a life member of their Post

VFW Post 7819 honors Korea War Veterans at picnic



TWO KOREA VETERANS – VFW Post 7819 member Mark Fathbruckner (left) served with the 2nd Infantry Division in Korea patrolling the Demilitarized Zone in 1987. These patrols occasionally involved receiving harassing fire from North Koreans or stumbling on mines relocated by Communist infiltrators. Post 7819 member Mark Tuck (on right), now 90-years-young, served with Company E, 223rd Infantry Regiment, 40th Division in the last active year (July 1952-July 1953) of the Korean War along the heights overlooking Heartbreak Ridge and the infamous Punchbowl. Mr. Tuck's tour ended, and he heard the announcement of the Armistice as he was walking up a gangplank to a ship about to take him home.

VFW National Convention — Kansas City, Mo. — July 31—August 4

Photos by Doc Crouch





MONTI ZIMMERMAN



