



# Virginia VETERAN

Official Publication of Virginia Veterans of Foreign Wars

Official Publication of the Department of Virginia ★ Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States  
Volume 9, Issue 10 January 2023

## Commander's Message



**State Commander Geoffrey D Lyster**  
**US Navy, Post 9835**

As we close out the previous year and begin anew, I hope that everyone had a productive 2022. As a quick review, we finished the year at nearly 94 percent membership. That was ahead of where we were last year and puts us in the top ten nationwide. We were 100 percent reported in our required reports and 100 percent in inspections. As part of commitment to improve service to veterans, we hired a new full-time Services Officer Laurie Clay. We participated in several Yellow Ribbon events to greet returning veterans from deployment.

We made an official visit to Hampton VA Medical Center and presented them with a check on behalf of the Department of Virginia.

I am excited about our prospects in the VFW for this year. 2023 marks the 100th Anniversary of the Department of Virginia. We intend to celebrate this milestone with centennial celebrations across the state throughout 2023. Most of these events are sponsored by outside organizations. The Centennial Committee has released the following schedule of events for 2023:

- February 1, 2023, Post 9808, Mechanicsville
- March 4, 2023, Post 1503, Dale City
- April 22, 2023, Post 2447, Edinburg, VA
- June 3, 2023, State Convention Portsmouth
- August 26, 2023, Post 8163, Clarksville
- September 16, 2023, Post 1264, Roanoke
- September 23, 2023, Post 4667, Marion

Earlier this month we had a very successful Winter Council of Administration (COA) meeting at the Renaissance Portsmouth Waterside Hotel. We conducted some valuable training, held constructive business meetings, celebrated a great Homecoming, and enjoyed a nice Banquet to honor our youth and educator winners. Joining us was Nat'l SVC Sarmiento; Supreme Cmdr MOC Hora, and Southern Conference Chairman Loverne. We had a very good turnout, and a good time was had by all. The next gathering of the COA will be the State Convention June 1-4 in Portsmouth, VA.

We are working hard on establishing new VFW posts. As demographics and growth areas change, sometimes there is a need and desire to start up a fresh new post. On February 25 we will be instituting (new) Post 12217, Holland. Your State Commander will be the Instituting Officer. Light refreshments will be provided. If you are interested in attending RSVP to [cdr@vfwva.org](mailto:cdr@vfwva.org). Additionally, we are working hard to establish a new post in Western Prince William County. We hope to get this one instituted in the coming quarter.

This year we are committed to making 100 percent in membership and earning Department All-American Honors. At the time of this writing, we are currently at 94.22 percent. We are working hard on recruiting and reinstating members with 1192 and 242 respectively. We must also work hard on our retention if we are to succeed. I encourage you to reach out to all members nearing expiration or recently expired and attempt to renew them. Sometimes all it takes is a phone call letting them know you care.

As I write this article, the Department is off to a great start and doing extraordinary things. I hope you will continue to work hard, inspire your members and make a difference for veterans!

Geoffrey Lyster  
State Commander



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## From the Editor's desk

I am excited to continue as your Newspaper editor for another great year. Please keep the Department of Virginia VFW informed of all your accomplishments by submitting your articles and pictures to me, for the Virginia Veterans Newspaper.



*Randy Coker*

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

[www.vfwva.org](http://www.vfwva.org)

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Articles may be submitted by email to: [news@vfwva.org](mailto:news@vfwva.org) or [rwcocker1@gmail.com](mailto:rwcocker1@gmail.com)

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

*Note: Deadline for the next newspaper is:*

**April 24, 2023**



State Surgeon Mark Maggio along with 4<sup>th</sup> District Commander Gus Villalobos and Comrade Greg Eanes showing a poster board from Operation DAP which takes Disabled Veterans to the woods on an assisted hunt. Photo was taken at the 4<sup>th</sup> District Meeting November 5th



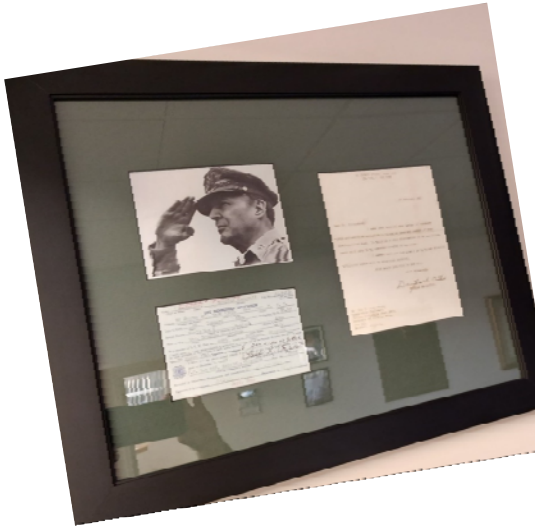
## Douglas MacArthur: A Virginia VFW Member

*"I cannot tell you how glad I am to become directly affiliated again with my Virginian ancestry."*

Douglas MacArthur

General of the Army

By Greg Eanes, Senior Vice-Commander, Fourth District



Name MacArthur, Douglas (General) Life No. 16956  
 (Type or Print) (Last) (First) (Middle) (Do not write in this space)

**LIFE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Address 90 Church St., Room 1303, New York 7, N. Y.  
 (Number and Street) (City or Town) (Zone) (State)

Date of Birth 26 January 1880 Life Membership Fee \$ 50.00  
 (Day) (Month) (Year)

Service Record World War I Retired (Branch of Service) Army  
 (Dates of Induction and Discharge)

Next of Kin Mrs. Douglas MacArthur Wife  
 (First) (Middle) (Last Name) (Relationship)

As a member of V. F. W. Post No. 6975 located at Bristol, Virginia  
 (City) (State)

I hereby apply for LIFE MEMBERSHIP as authorized by Section 111 of the National By-Laws and agree to abide by the same as now written or later legally amended.

Date 20 March 1961 Signature of Applicant See copy of letter  
 (Date)

I certify that the above named comrade is a member of this Post in good standing with dues paid to December 31, 19 61.  
 (Date)

Paul L. Freeman  
 (Post Quartermaster's Signature)

P.O. Box 918, Bristol, Virginia Post No. 6975  
 (Post Quartermaster's Address)

Recorded at Department Headquarters and transmitted March 27, 1961 (date).

Signature of Quartermaster W. Mansell Department of Virginia  
 (Signature) (Department)

Dept. Copy

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in a small rural Virginia post in a region that had no historical connection to him or his family. His membership card and a letter accepting membership was found in State VFW member archives by Past State Commander Ken Wiseman and was properly mounted and now displayed in Department of Virginia VFW headquarters in Staunton.

### Virginia Ancestry

Douglas MacArthur's father was a Medal of Honor recipient, Union Army veteran and future Spanish-American War general Arthur MacArthur (1845- 1912), a native of Wisconsin. In the post-Civil War period he was stationed near Norfolk, Va where he met and married Mary Pinkney 'Pinkie' Hardy (1852-1935) in May 1875.

The marriage was not without some family controversy as Pinkie's three brothers, all former VMI Cadets, and several cousins were all proud Confederate veterans. One of the brothers had been severely wounded, another a POW in Point Lookout Prison and one a participant of New Market and the 'field of lost shoes.' Two brothers did not attend the wedding because of her marriage to the Union war hero!

Douglas was born in 1880 and his mother was reportedly a dominant force in his life, pushing him to achieve greatness. He had personal relationships with his uncles and regaled as much in their exploits as those of his own father. These family military influences, and personal drive facilitated a military career that found him the youngest Brigadier General in Army leading the Rainbow Division in World War I, to Chief of Staff of the Army in 1930 to leading the U.S. mission to the Philippines to organize their Army. He retired in 1937, still working for the Philippines, but was recalled in 1941 to command U.S. Pacific forces Bataan, Corregidor, and the great battles of World War II that followed. Among his personal correspondents during this period was *Richmond News Leader* editor, George Washington and Robert E.

Lee biographer and Pulitzer Prize winning author Dr. Douglas Southall Freeman (1886-1953). Freeman's three volume work *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command* was released in 1942, 43 and 44 respectively, was much sought after by professional soldiers and also led to relationships with George C. Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower.

In a personal letter to MacArthur, Freeman wrote, "the mantle of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson has now fallen on your shoulders." MacArthur said it was the most prized message he ever received, noting to Freeman, "I think you know the reverence I feel for Lee and Jackson."

Three days after the invasion of Leyte Gulf, MacArthur wrote to Freeman saying;

"I am of Virginia and all my professional life I have studied of Lee and Jackson...I have more and more turned back to those great figures of the Civil War who were my boyhood heroes. In some of my lonely vigils at night with momentous decisions impending, when even the most faithful of staff officers will sleep, it has seemed to me almost as though those great Chieftains of the Grey were there to comfort and sustain me."

The Philippines was liberated and Japan defeated. MacArthur becomes military governor of Japan and helps them work towards democratic institutions. The Korea War starts in June 1950, and he leads the Allied forces to Inchon. Chinese intervention followed but lines were stabilized along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. MacArthur's public comments on U.S. National policy matters after having been ordered not to make such statements led to his firing in 1951 by President Harry Truman. Thus ended 52 years of military service.

He and his wife moved to the Waldorf Towers in New York City

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where he served on boards and consulted Presidents. But ties to the Commonwealth of Virginia called. MacArthur made known he wanted to be buried in Norfolk, birthplace of his mother and the site of his parents' matrimony. In 1960 the Mayor of Norfolk proposed using money raised by public donations to remodel the old Norfolk City Hall into a suitable repository of MacArthur's military memorabilia including archival papers. It had been inferred that MacArthur would also move to Virginia.

### Enter the VFW

It was during this period that Dr. Guy C. Richardson, membership chairman of the VFW Patton-Crosswhite Post 6975 in Bristol, Virginia and Post Commander James E. Ludlow entered the picture. Ludlow has been described as a "force" in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a former Department Commander and a guy who knew how to get things done. Dr. Richardson was a former World War II Flight Surgeon with the U.S. Fifth Air Force which fell under MacArthur's command in the Pacific.

On February 16, 1961, the Bristol VFW Post voted unanimously to extend an invitation to MacArthur to join their post as a Life Member. The next day Richardson had a letter in the mail stating,

"We are more than pleased to read that you are moving to the State of Virginia for your future home. May we join the other Virginias that are welcoming you to our wonderful state? We know that you have, in the past and probably at present, affiliated yourself with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and have a membership now in some other Post and Department. It is quite possible, and I trust appropriate, that you will consider changing your VFW membership to the Department of Virginia, as you change your residence."

MacArthur responded on February 20<sup>th</sup>

"I have just received your letter of February 17<sup>th</sup> and would be delighted to become an honorary member of your distinguished Post. It would be a rare distinction to be associated again with many of my comrades-in-arms of our wars I cannot tell you how glad I am to become directly affiliated again with my Virginian ancestry.

With every good wish to you all, Most Sincerely,  
Douglas MacArthur."

Bristol Post 6975 submitted MacArthur's application and a \$50 check to cover his Life Membership which was duly recorded by the Department on March 27, 1961. The application cited MacArthur's World War I service as the qualifying period, and he

was awarded Membership number 16956.

MacArthur died at the age of 84 in April 1964 and was buried with military honors at the MacArthur Memorial in Norfolk

### Over 50 Years Later

Nearly 55 years later Department of Virginia Commander Ken Wiseman has determined all the old VFW applications, which the organization is required to maintain, should be catalogued by last name rather than individually by Post.

So, he physically initiates the grunt work of going through each application when he stumbles on the one belonging to Douglas MacArthur. He was taken aback to see such a historic name affiliated with the Department of Virginia. He pulled the document, which was attached to MacArthur's letter.

In time, State Adjutant Ed Mann had both documents, along with a photo of MacArthur suitably framed. That framed piece of Department of Virginia VFW history is now prominently displayed in the state headquarters in Staunton where all who enter can view this unique element of the proud history of a Virginia veteran.

**(Special thanks to James Zobel, archivist at the MacArthur Memorial for providing a copy of the February 17, 1961, letter from the Patton-Crosswhite VFW Post 6975 in Bristol to General MacArthur. For more information on the MacArthur Memorial visit <https://macarthurmemorial.org>)**



State Quartermaster and Chief of Staff Ken Wiseman at the framed documents on General MacArthur's VFW membership on display at State headquarters.



## SGT Nicholas C. Mason Memorial Post 12202 Honored as Co-Guest of Honor at the 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual King George Fall Festival

On October 8 the VFW was featured prominently as Post 12202 was honored as Co-Guest of honor for this years King George Fall Festival. The theme of this year's festival was Peace and Liberty for All. Post 12202 along with their Auxiliary had a float in the parade and children of Post members sat on the float and handed out candy to other children along the parade route. State Commander Geoff Lyster was also in attendance and marched in the parade and then helped to recruit new members during the festival. In all, Post 12202 recruited 17 New/Reinstated members during the festival and became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Post in Virginia to reach or exceed 100% in membership!



Post 12202 Auxiliary President Christine Mason, Post 12202 Commander Alex McKenna, Dept CDR Geoff Lyster

## First Veterans Day Parade



Drakes Branch VFW Post 8902 hosted what is believed to be the very first Veterans Day parade in Drakes Branch and possibly Charlotte Court House. The idea for the event originated with Julie Hamlett, wife of VFW Post 8902's Garland H. 'Butch' Hamlett who is also a member of the Charlotte County Board of Supervisors. The photo is one of 28 units that participated in the event which also included participation by the Randolph-Henry High School cheerleaders. The Drakes Branch Post is in the Fourth District. (Contributed photo).





**VFW CHANGES FLAGS**

Members of Gold Star Memorial VFW Post 7819 in Crewe changed out the flags at the Town of Crewe veterans memorial on Thursday, October 27. The VFW and Leon A. Harper Post 50 in Crewe alternate years in replacing the flags. Pictured from left to right are, Post Service Officer Micky Altizer, Senior Vice Commander Roy Turner and Post Commander Wayne E. 'Beanie' Roberts. (Photo by Greg Eanes)



**FLAG RETIREMENT CEREMONY**

Gold Star Memorial VFW Post 7819 in Crewe in a joint operation with Amelia Boy Scout Troop 6504 and a member of Blackstone Cub Scout Pack 6540 conducted a flag retirement ceremony in Crewe recently. The formal ceremony is used to retire United States national flags that are tattered, worn and ripped and are no longer suitable for public display. Over 100 flags were disposed of in this service. VFW Post 7819 has a mailbox where tattered flags can be dropped off for periodic retirement ceremonies. (Photo by Greg Eanes)

**FAMILY ACTIVITY**

The recent retirement ceremony for old, tattered and worn American flags was something of a family activity for VFW Service Officer Micky Altizer. His grandson Joseph Dhier is a member of the Boy Scout Troop that worked with the VFW to ensure the flags were properly disposed of in a manner consistent with respect due the National Colors. (Photo by Greg Eanes)



## Veterans Day ceremonies in Fairfax City

are always moving and heartfelt – and the one Friday, Nov. 11, at American Legion Post 177 was no exception. That post, plus VFW Post 8469, hosted the event before a packed room.

Besides local residents, attendees included U.S. Rep Gerry Connolly (D-11th), Del. David Bulova (D-37th), Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34th), Del. Dan Helmer (D-40<sup>th</sup>), Fairfax Mayor David Meyer, Mayor-Elect Catherine Read, and City Councilmembers Sang Yi, Janice Miller, Joe Harmon and Tom Ross.

“Today we honor every man and woman who has proudly worn the uniform and bravely defended our nation, while protecting its people from the many threats we have faced – and will face – in the future,” said VFW Post 8469 Commander Mac McCarl. “The world is beautiful, fascinating and wonderful, but also dangerous.”

He said nowhere is that fact clearer than in the current conflict in Ukraine, “where a supposedly responsible nation, occupying a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council, has chosen to invade and destroy another sovereign nation, with only the flimsiest of justifications. These threats are real and omnipresent and, on occasion, necessitate a call to duty of our own armed forces.”

In August 1990, I never imagined that six months later, I’d be crossing into Iraq with the 1st Armored Division and engaging in the second-largest tank battle in history,” said McCarl. “It serves as a reminder that a veteran’s job is never done. But just as the security of our nation is a continuous process, so is the support to those who stepped up to ensure that security.

“Last year, I stood here and noted the need to pass the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act. That bill expanded the conditions experienced by veterans from toxic exposures like burn pits for treatment by the VA [Veterans Administration]. I’m happy that legislation passed, and I thank Congressman Connolly for his, and all the other votes, from both parties that passed that bill into law. It’s an example of what right looks like.”

Basically, said McCarl, “This contract between the veteran and the government is as critical to national security as any new weapon system, because it’s central to morale and the future readiness of the force. Today we celebrate and honor our veterans, along with thousands of others across this country, in cities large and small, in a way that transcends our differences. Let that continue to be our collective way forward as citizens of this great country.”

Next, Connolly said, “No conflict in history equaled what soldiers went through in WWI. In every way, until that point, we were unprepared. And today we witness the power of war begun by one, delusional man who doesn’t recognize Ukraine’s independence. The Ukraine people desire to do what we did – become free. It’s a battle between liberal, democratic values vs. authoritarianism – and we must win it.”

So, continued Connolly, “As we celebrate and remember Veterans Day, we must also remember our country, its role in the world and how it can help others. Those veterans fought and died for the republic we were given in the Constitution of the United States. We pledge in the Constitution to be indivisible, and we’ve fought and died for that liberty.”

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U.S. Representative  
Gerry Connolly

Speaking next, Del. Helmer noted he’s a proud VFW member. “My dad’s an immigrant and my family members are Holocaust survivors – and only in America could they survive,” he said. “I graduated from West Point and served tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. The freedoms we enjoy

are ours to keep, and there’s a wall between those who’d take them away and us. We watch with alarm at what’s happening in Ukraine; but we raise our hands and say, ‘No more.’”

He thanked Virginia’s General Assembly for passing a tax break on former military members’ retired pay and also for exempting 100-percent, service-disabled veterans from paying the car tax. “We want to make Virginia the best state for veterans,” said Helmer. “And we want to raise another generation of people proud to be here for you and proud of our veterans.”

At previous Veterans Day ceremonies in Fairfax, Mayor Meyer said his father-in-law, Charles Collins – an Air Force veteran who transported Agent Orange in Vietnam – later contracted bladder cancer. This year, he related that Collins died in July. “He served 31 years in the Air Force, from 1953-1985, including in the Korean War and in Vietnam,” said Meyer. “And my wife’s sister, Pamela Rhodes, also served 31 years in the Air Force and participated in Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. We depend on our veterans to ensure that our civil liberties are protected and passed down to the next generation. Thank you to all our veterans.”

Next at the podium, Councilmember Yi said Friday’s event was probably the largest crowd the City has ever had for this event. Noting that his father served with the Korean army in Vietnam, Yi said his dad encouraged him to join the military and serve his new country, America. Yi did, attending the Naval Academy. And now, 19 years in, the community I’m proudest to be in is the veterans community because they’re some of the most selfless people and because veterans have grit,” he explained. “And when people thank me for my service, I thank them for being worth serving. So be that American worth serving so that spirit of those veterans can live on in America. What all our veterans have done has impacted millions of people – and for generations. Thank you.”

Post 177 Commander Jeff White also thanked the politicians who passed the PACT Act. “We civilians should live in a way that

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honors our veterans,” he said. “For example, on Election Day, voters in Fairfax City had a nearly 70-percent turnout, and I’m proud of that. To make sure our veterans’ sacrifices weren’t made in vain, live the rights that you were given.”

Next, female barbershop group, The Sound Advice, performed an armed forces medley, with veterans in the audience standing when they heard their branch of the service’s song. Then VFW

Post 8469’s Hank Roeder played “Taps” from another room. Giving the closing prayer, VFW Chaplain Marcus Kuiper asked God to bless the veterans and their families and friends. “Fill their homes with Your strength and love,” he said. “Help us to remember and respect their sacrifices, which can carry forward in the present with physical and mental battlefield scars. Bring healing to those that still hurt and help them know You to find peace and happiness in their hearts.”

### BUCKINGHAM VFW PATRIOT'S

**PEN WINNERS** - The Post level Patriot Pen contest winners from Buckingham Post 8446 are from the Central Virginia Christian School. Left to right: Sierra Petersheim (Third place), Tessa Harris (2nd place) and Elora Walker (First Place) and Vic Moss, Commander. Miss Walker won First Place in District competitions and her essay has been forwarded to State competition. (Contributed Photo).



## VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNERS:

Judging for state-level winners of Voice of Democracy contest occurred on 17 December 2022. The winners are listed below:

1st Place John P. McGraw - District 8 - Sponsored by Post 7589 in Manassas, VA

2nd Place Anish S. Aradhey - District 11 - Sponsored by Post 8644 in Bridgewater, VA

3rd Place Jillian R. Taylor - District 7 - Sponsored by Post 2123 in Winchester, VA



John McGraw—1st Place VOD





### POPPY DISTRIBUTIONS

Crewe Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7819 members Micky Altizer (left) and Roy Turner (right) flank Crewe resident Dale Bowman for a photo. The VFW was distributing the Buddy Poppy and recruiting at Crewe Station in support of local Veterans Day activities. (Photo by Greg Eanes)



### WORKING FOR OTHERS

Crewe's Gold Star Memorial VFW Post 7819 Commander 'Beanie' Roberts (left) and Trustee Mark Fathbruckner (right) were among the Crewe VFW members distributing the Buddy Poppy in recognition of Veterans Day. Roberts explained the Poppy is made by disabled veterans and the monies raised by the VFW are dedicated to local veteran relief programs. All monies raised are dedicated to those humanitarian efforts. (Photo by Greg Eanes)



### HAMPDEN-SYDNEY REMEMBERS

Some Hampden-Sydney College students and staff received a Buddy Poppy from Fourth District VFW Post 7819 in Crewe in support of Veterans Day remembrance and educational efforts. A small number were distributed and proudly worn. Pictured, from left to right, are student Zachary Mace of Asheville, NC; staff member Linda Easter Davis of Buckingham (formerly of Crewe) and student Michael Harris of North Chesterfield. (Photo by Greg Eanes)



During the October monthly meeting held on Wednesday 19 OCT, Post 12202 Commander Alex McKenna conducted an Initiation Ceremony for 10 new members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. During this ceremony, these 10 new members recited the Members Obligation and received the Cross of Malta making them official members of Post 12202 and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.



#### **SWEARING IN**

Clarksville Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8163 Commander 'Dusty' Forbes (left) delivers the VFW oath of membership to retired Air Force Master Sergeant James Bullock at a recent meeting. Bullock is a veteran of DESERT STORM (first Gulf War), Iraq and Afghanistan and was sworn in the day before Veterans Day. Post 8163 is in the Fourth District. (Photo by Greg Eanes)



## SGT Nicholas C. Mason Memorial Post 12202 Veterans Day Weekend

King George Post 12202 had a very busy Veterans Day weekend! Our Veterans Day events began on Thursday 10 NOV when we helped the King George Middle School Leadership Club with their Veterans Day Penny Wars Fundraiser. This fundraiser raised just over \$3000, half of which will be donated to Post 12202, and the other half will be donated to the Some Gave All Foundation! After the fundraiser we stayed and met with each of the 7th grade civics classes and answered their questions about being in the military and being a Veteran of a foreign war.

We also attended the King George Elementary School Veterans Day Flag Raising event where Post Commander Alex McKenna and Life Member/Korean War Purple Heart recipient Ray Moreno spoke to the attendees about being a Veteran and Jr. Vice Commander Jeff Shapiro and Post Member Andrew Mastarone attended the Potomac Elementary School Veterans Day event. Later that night we worked the grills during the King George High School Football game. Since it was Veterans Day weekend, King George High School invited us to set up our recruiting tent during the game and we signed up three new members!

On Veterans Day our scheduled Buddy Poppy event was rained out, but we were able to attend a BBQ hosted by King George American Legion Post 89 later in the day. On Saturday 12 NOV



we held a Buddy Poppy event at El Charro Mexican Restaurant and signed up two new members and to close out our Veterans Day weekend we held a Flag Retirement Ceremony with the Cub Scouts and Girls Scouts. During the ceremony we retired over 130 American flags. After the ceremony we had a BBQ and answered questions from the Scouts about being in the military and signed up three new members



Korean War Purple Heart recipient Ray Moreno with Post 12202 Commander Alex McKenna



Korean War Purple Heart recipient Ray Moreno





King George VFW Post 12202 conducting Veterans Day events, Flag retirement and Buddy Poppies



Post 12202 Veterans Day Cookout



King George Post 12202 Conducts Flag Retirement ceremony during Veterans Day events



## VFW Post 9835: Serving the Community for Nearly 75 Years

All honorably discharged veterans deserve to be recognized, but those who have risked their lives during their military service should be especially revered. Originally founded in 1899 by veterans of the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) is the nation's oldest major war veterans' organization.

Next May, the Warrenton-based Robert E. Laing Memorial VFW Post 9835 will turn 75. Post 9835 Commander Tony Lunn and Quartermaster Jeff Dombroff share some of this post's illustrious history of carrying out its core values, which include promoting patriotism; honoring military service; putting the interests of its members first; ensuring the care of veterans and their families; serving their communities, and more.

Post 9835 focuses on making a difference in the lives of local veterans by interacting with and making financial donations to a variety of local organizations. They participate in veteran-related events, including Veterans Day ceremonies and the Veterans in the Classroom program as well as many community functions, including parades and 1st Friday events. And of course, they manage and fund various annual award programs for youth and adults: Patriot's Pen Awards for middle school students; Voice of Democracy Awards for high school students; Teacher of the Year awards; and awards for Boy Scouts, law enforcement personnel, and first responders.

It's important to note that while VFW membership is restricted to veterans who have served in a combat zone or other area where a campaign medal was authorized, or to anyone who served in Korea for at least 30 days, there are still plenty of veterans who haven't taken advantage of this organization's programs and services. Virginia alone has nearly 32,000 VFW members, but there are approximately 40,000 additional eligible veterans. Jeff and Tony actively seek new members in our area and are proud that Post 9835, which just 10 years ago had 136 members, currently has over 300!

However, although Post 9835 lives out the VFW's mission and vision on a daily basis and has been regularly recognized for its outstanding service, it lacks something significant: a permanent home.

They currently hold meetings on the second Thursday of each month at the Warrenton Police Department Training Center, but they would prefer to have a space they can call their own to instill a truer sense of identity for the post and its members. The Post has long sought someone who can donate space—a building, land, or decent-sized office—where it can meet and maintain operational headquarters. All VFW posts are 501(c)(19) entities, so donations can be written off on the donor's taxes. But fundraising for this purpose requires having a confirmed designated space—even if it's a plot of land with water and sewer possibilities—*before* they can fundraise. This is further complicated by how the organization can use its funds. While donations to the general fund can be used for anything, relief fund dollars are limited to specific purposes related to veterans or the betterment of the local community.



Tony Lunn and Jeff Dombroff

For example, from November 11–13, you'll see VFW members at Giant, Walmart, and Safeway in Warrenton for the Veterans Day Buddy Poppy Drive, as they have done for more than five decades. Ninety-seven percent of all drive donations go back into the Fauquier community serving various causes; the remaining 3% supports national veterans' service.

As Post 9835 seeks a place to hang their hats, they must adhere to certain limitations. Because they're chartered in Fauquier County, any headquarters must be here, and their preference is to stay within a five-mile radius of Old Town Warrenton. Even modest office space could fit the bill, providing these veterans a place to enjoy the camaraderie they so richly deserve while continuing to carry out the services to which they remain dedicated. If you know of a possibility, contact Tony at [cdrpost9835@vfwva.org](mailto:cdrpost9835@vfwva.org) or Jeff at [cdrdist8@vfwva.org](mailto:cdrdist8@vfwva.org). To learn more, visit [vfwpost9835.org](http://vfwpost9835.org). 📍





**VETERANS DAY DINNER** - Harry and Grace Seymour of Crewe enjoyed a Veterans Day at Bravo's Restaurant in Crewe. Harry is a Past Commander of Gold Star Memorial VFW Post 7819 and a Navy veteran who operated small boats in Vietnam and supported combat operations by providing supplies to American soldiers and Marines by way of the many rivers that dominated Vietnam. That logistical lifeline kept men alive with necessary medical supplies as well as food and ammunition. Harry and Grace are now in a tougher fight. Harry battles leukemia likely resulting from Agent Orange exposure in Vietnam. They had just returned from a chemotherapy session when this photo was taken. The prayers of the extended VFW family are with them daily. (Photo by Greg Eanes)



### REMEMBERING FAMILY ON VETERANS DAY

One of the toughest jobs is being the parent, wife or child of a military veteran deployed overseas. Fourth District VFW Senior Vice Commander Greg Eanes (right) presented a small bouquet of flowers to his mother Jane Chandler Eanes (left) of Burkeville as a small token of recognition of her love and support for the many children and grandchildren who served in the military over the years. She and her husband host seven stars on their Blue Star flag for those who served or are currently serving in uniform and nearly all of them have served in combat zones over the years. (Photo by Jim Eanes)

**GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY** - Amelia Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8759 Adjutant Mathew Rowe documents a vote by members to make \$1,250 in donations to various community activities. Donations included \$100 to the Amelia Community Thanksgiving; \$250 to a Homeless Veteran program at the McGuire VA hospital; \$100 Amelia Fire Department; \$100 to the Amelia Emergency Squad; \$100 to the USO; \$150 for the VFW National Home for Children; \$100 to the local Christmas Mother program; \$140 to the Virginia Veterans Care Center; \$100 to Wounded Warriors and \$100 to the Amelia Food Pantry. (Photo by Greg Eanes)



### BUSY VFW SCHEDULE

Dean Lord, Commander of Farmville VFW Post 7059 shows Fourth District Commander Gus Villalobos their schedule for the next weeks. It includes supporting a church activity, a veterans lunch, distributing Buddy Poppies on Veterans Day, placing flags on graves for Veterans Day, the Farmville Christmas Parade and a VFW dance for members and the VFW Auxiliary. The Post likely set a record for Halloween where it distributed candy to over 1,100 young people at the Hampden Sydney College 'Trunk or Treat' and the Farmville Costume Parade. Commander Lord says they bought so much candy they have enough to distribute along the Christmas parade route. (Photo by Greg Eanes)



### OVER 1,000 CHILDREN SERVED!

Farmville VFW Post 7059 provided candy to over 1,100 children in two Halloween events in Farmville. Showing the VFW flag in the greater community, the post participated in the Hampden-Sydney College 'Trunk or Treat' in which about 450 kids were given candy and the next day in the Town of Farmville Halloween Costume Parade servicing over 750 children. Pictured is Post Commander Dean Lord, in costume and VFW hat, distributing candy to a young 'caped crusader'. (VFW Post 7059 photo)





## IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO PLAN YOUR OWN FUNERAL

by Chris Mulholland



This may sound like a morbid subject but, if you think about it, most of you reading this have already taken actions to make things easier for your family after you are gone. You bought life insurance to take care of your family's financial needs. You made out a will and likely a power of attorney to help your family with legal issues.

So why, in their most grievous time right after death, are you forcing them to guess what you would want for your funeral? Things like: which funeral home to use; where you wish to be buried; what your obituary will say; what photo of you to use; do you desire a religious service; if yes, what are your preferred songs and readings; do you desire to be buried in uniform and, if so, which one; and even more details.

When I was diagnosed with ALS, aka Lou Gehrig's disease, two years ago, it forced me to look at the world and my future - especially my family's - in a new light. While a virtual death sentence it did offer me a silver lining... it gave me time to plan out my own funeral. Before then, if I had been hit by a bus, my family would have been left to make a myriad of decisions when all they would want to do is grieve in private.

After I wrote down all my desires, my wife and I met with my selected funeral director, who also happens to be a friend of mine. (Much to my astonishment, was how little my wife knew of my wishes.) It wasn't a subject which had ever come up for discussion between us, and it probably doesn't in most families.

But surprisingly, once I broached the subject with her, it turned out to be an easy discussion. I am sure the same will be true in most households.

Funeral directors welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss funeral planning. Too often they experience meetings with distraught spouses and children who are unsure of their loved one's desires.

If you desire to be buried in a national cemetery, fill out in advance a VA Form 40-10007, "*Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery*".

The VA pays a flat rate for burial and plot or interment that includes a \$300 payment for non-service-connected death in addition to a \$300 plot allowance or interment allowance. A service-connected death qualifies for a burial benefit of \$2,000. These payments are subject to yearly revisions based on the Consumer Price Index for the preceding 12-month period.



There are two ways to apply for the VA burial benefit. You can apply online at [Vets.gov](https://www.vets.gov), or you can fill out and mail in a paper application, VA Form 21P-530, "*Application for Burial Allowance*," via U.S. postal mail to the VA Pension Management Center in your state.

VA benefit rules state that proof of death is required to claim the VA burial benefit, and all applicants for this benefit will need to submit bills and receipts showing that the applicant was financially responsible for burial.

This must include a statement from the funeral home or other service provider that shows the following information:

- The name of the deceased Veteran
- The nature and cost of the funeral or memorial services
- Nature and cost of any merchandise purchased
- The amount of any credits offered to the payer
- The amount of any remaining unpaid balance for services, merchandise, etc.

You can also visit a regional VA benefit office, or get the help of an accredited Veterans Service Officer at an agency such as the VFW, state veterans' affairs offices, etc.

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If you die in the line of duty while still on active duty or from a service-related injury or illness as a veteran, your surviving spouse, child, or parent may be able to get a tax-free monetary benefit called VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA DIC).

If you die while on active duty, a military casualty assistance officer will help your family to complete an "Application for DIC, Death Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits by a Surviving Spouse or Child" (VA Form 21P-534a). The officer will also help mail the form to the correct VA regional office.

If you're a Veteran, your surviving spouse or child family can fill out an "Application for DIC, Death Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits" (VA Form 21P-534EZ). Or a surviving parent can fill out an "Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation by Parent(s)" (VA Form 21P-535).

If you desire and are eligible for burial in Arlington National Cemetery be aware that there is a 5 to 7 month wait from time of death to the burial; this is regardless of rank or seniority. Everyone starts at the back of the line. Reputable funeral homes will store your body and make the transportation arrangements to Arlington.

The bottom line is this: ***make things easier for your family and don't hesitate! The time to start planning your funeral is now!*** Here is an example of a planning checklist you can use:

- Choose the type of disposition you'd like:
  - Burial (in the ground or at sea)
  - Cremation
  - Green burial (eco-friendly)
- Anatomical donation (ending in cremation)
- Choose the type of gathering, service, ceremony, or memorial you'd like to have:
  - Visitation, viewing, wake, or rosary
    - Do you want a private family viewing or public viewing?
    - Do you want a wake at home or a visitation at the funeral home?
  - Celebration of life service personalized to reflect the life lived
  - Traditional funeral service
    - Do you want your body present or not?
    - Do you want the casket open or closed?
  - Military service with flag, honor guard and Taps - let your funeral director know and he/she will make the arrangements.
  - What clothes do you want to be buried in?
    - If a uniform, put it together now with all your ribbons or medals, and badges - you're likely the only one in the family who can set up your uniform properly. Then store it in a garment bag or plastic storage tote until it's needed.
  - Graveside service or a service at the crematory
  - Memorial service (takes place after burial or cremation)
  - Any special honorary services like Knights of Columbus, Masons, VFW, American Legion, etc.
  - Home funeral service and/or burial
  - Scattering of ashes ceremony at a place which reflects your interests such as a park, a golf course, a lake, garden, beach, event center, theater, art gallery, church, or stadium. Choose an alternate location if you want to have the service outdoors in case of inclement weather.
  - Speaker such as a clergy member or funeral celebrant
  - Pallbearers, eulogist, assistants, and attendees

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- Catered or pot luck meal
- Prayers, poems, or other readings
- Songs, hymns, live or recorded
- Memorial video set to special music
- Monument, memorial, or virtual memorials, such as a grave marker, headstone, video tribute, or online memorial website
  - Veterans are eligible for a free headstone or marker. Your funeral director will help you with this. See <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/headstones-markers-medallions/> for details and options. Decide on what you want inscribed on your headstone/marker.
- Collect and scan all the photos/videos you wish to include in your memorial tribute on a thumb drive and store with your funeral plans.
- Identify what you desire to have on display during any of the services such as shadow box, plaques, etc.
- Memorial contributions to charity organization(s)
- Choose the place of final rest:
  - Burial in a private cemetery, veterans cemetery, at sea, or on private property
  - Keepsake jewelry, such as cremation jewelry
  - Organ donation or anatomical donation
- Choose a method of payment:
  - If you want to prearrange your funeral, you can opt for funeral insurance through a funeral home, which sometimes offers a guarantee of their current prices. Other options include a funeral trust or pay on death account.
  - If you are paying for services during a time of need, you can ask family members to help pay for different parts of the funeral or to contribute in different ways, such as bringing food or sending flowers. Sites like [www.youcaring.com](http://www.youcaring.com) or [gofundme.com](http://gofundme.com) can assist with crowdfunding to help pay for services if money is tight.
- Choose a way to record your final wishes:
  - Contact a funeral provider to help you create a plan that ensures your wishes will be followed.
  - Complete a funeral planning guide.
  - Verbally share your final wishes (but do not rely solely on verbal instructions, as loved ones may forget or disagree on what you said you wanted!)
  - Record your wishes in a voice or video recording.
- To assist loved ones:
  - Collect important documents and notify your next of kin about where they are held.
  - Store a copy of your will, marriage and birth certificates, DD-214(s), military service records, life and health insurance policies, social security information, and other estate planning documents where your next of kin can easily find them.
  - Write your own obituary or gather important biographical information for your obituary.
  - Select a photograph to accompany the obituary - the higher the resolution the better.
  - Keep a copy of your funeral plans on file with a funeral provider and notify at least two other emergency contacts of where your funeral will be held and where your final wishes are recorded.
  - Inform your funeral director that you desire 10 copies of your death certificate for your family, they will need at least that many to settle all your accounts.



Chris Mulholland is a VFW National Deputy Chief of Staff and Gold Legacy Life Member of Post 2894 in Chesapeake, Virginia.

# The ALS Box

A Short Story

by Chris Mulholland



The box is growing smaller around me and squeezing me in.

Not long ago, I looked up and noticed a wall was stretching all around my horizon. But I paid it no mind since it wasn't affecting me and, besides, I was growing older and expected to begin seeing the end of the road.

But then, suddenly, the walls were moving faster and faster towards me and I became nervous. I could still do most things but not some of the things I used to love like running and lifting large weights.

Then the walls came closer and a roof formed overhead like a box and I became even more alarmed. I stumbled around inside this room and, for the first time in my life, I fell down for no apparent reason.

Then we – my wife and I, we're a lifelong team – received devastating news: not only was the box permanent but it would continue to shrink. I had been diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis - ALS. I was told to make sure my affairs were in order and to do as many things on my bucket list as I could before I couldn't.

And still, the box grows tighter.

I faced two choices:

Despair, anger, denial, frustration. Scream, yell, and fight against the walls until my fingers are bloody, my body bruised, and my will broken.

Or

Accept my fate and make my eventual transition as easy as possible for those around me. In some respects my box is a gift since it allows me to plan out and make all the final arrangements and relieve that eventual burden from my wife, partner, buddy, pal, lover, & best friend of the past 40 years.

I chose the latter.

But being human, Barbara and I shed a bunch of tears and spent many long hours agonizing over "What next?" We then made a conscious decision to make the best of the time we have left together.

My oldest son has been living the last 30 years in a box of his own. His is called DMD – Duchenne muscular dystrophy. And although my box started much later than his, it soon became as small as his and then even smaller. As he points out, what took his box years to become, took mine only months.

I went thru the 5 phases of grief pretty quickly: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. We'd gone through this once before when we were told not to expect our son to live beyond his twenties. After something like that, everything else seems easy.

My son became my role model. He lives every day with grace, empathy, and serenity – and the faith of the ecstasy to come. I can't do anything less.

In actuality, my box sets things "right" again. For the past 30 years I'd had to live with the thought that my son would pass on before me. Now it appears he will outlive me – like every child should do with his parent.

My box grows tighter still.

There's nothing I can do to get out of my box but I can decide how I'll live my life here on out. I chose to have quality time with my family, make my peace with God, and become an advocate for veterans battling ALS.

Watching my young granddaughter grow up, I find it ironic:

- As she learns to walk, I lose the ability to do so or even to stand;
- As she learns to use a fork and cup, I have to be spoon fed by hand;

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- As she learns to talk, I lose my ability to be understood;
- As she begins potty training, I can't do anything without someone wiping my behind.
- She and I are on different trajectories, her's ascending, mine declining.

Now the box encases me.

What is really difficult is when people - even friends of many years - talk to you like you're a simpleton because of the drooling and grunting little realizing that the same me is still present in this husk of a body and fully cognizant. I AM STILL HERE!

I cannot raise my arms and legs. My grunting is only understood by those closest to me. I wake my wife multiple times a night so she can adjust my body position and bedding. I use a respirator because my breathing ability is so reduced. I have a feeding tube sticking out of the middle of my abdomen which is how I am fed with medical formulas. I carry around a portable suction machine for when my phlegm builds up and causes me to cough and gag.

I have a second tube coming out of my abdomen that drains my bladder and yet another tube sticking out of my neck which helps me to breathe when I am in distress.

The bug crawling on my forehead has more freedom than I. I can't lift a finger to brush it off while it's free to do and go wherever it pleases.

And now, my body has become the box – it's become my coffin.

I still have my mind, my brain, my eyes, my heart and the unwavering support and unconditional love from my wife, my family, and my friends.

And always, I know, God has something greater in store for me.

I lie here unable to move, to speak, to wrap my arms around the love of my life and tell her how much she means to me.

My pain, anxiety, and stress dissolve in the haze of morphine. I feel the presence of my loved ones around me, the touch of their fingertips against my face, their hands holding mine. A bright light appears in the distance and I can tell it's coming towards me; and, reaching out to me, a hand with a hole in the palm.

Thankfully the box isn't so tight that I cannot br-e--a---t.....

**Chris Mulholland is a proud husband, father, and grandfather. He was a decorated Marine Corps infantry officer with tours in Beirut and northern Iraq. He was a VFW National Chief of Staff. He was a Past Grand Knight and Sir Knight with the Knights of Columbus. He was diagnosed with ALS on Friday the 13th, November 2020.**