



“Proud Possessors of a Priceless Heritage”
Supporting the Principles of The American Legion Since 1932
Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Colorado
A 2013 Triple Nickle Detachment
Home to Past National Commanders
Michael Moss and Danny Smith
2022-23 National Vice Commander Michael Kirsehner
Richard Humphrey, Commander
Colorado Sons Electronic Update January, 2023



This publication does not express the official position of the SAL Detachment of Colorado, The American Legion Department of Colorado or their respective National Organizations. It is a forum to share information about events and happenings within the Detachment of Colorado, the National Organization of the Sons of The American Legion, and information that is pertinent to the programs and four pillars of The American Legion. This publication is compiled and published as a volunteer service by Detachment Adjutant Mark A Kilstrom. Submit questions, comments, photos and stories to saladj@coloradolegion.org.

Commanders Mission Objective: Rekindle the Spark

Mission Statement: To not only honor our fathers, mothers and grandparents by our continued service to God And Country, but to rekindle the spark of our veterans and community with the ideas of patriotism, citizenship and the American Flag

National Commander Troiola: “Buddy Checks, ‘Be the One’ are Working”

From Legion.org

By [Steven B. Brooks](#)

OCT 12, 2022

Standing in front of The American Legion National Executive Committee in Indianapolis on Oct. 12, National Commander Vincent J. “James” Troiola shared the news of another suicide by a current or former U.S. servicemember: that of a Texas National Guardsman who took his own life while serving in Operation Lone Star. Troiola used the moment to reamplify the Legion’s need to continue with [Buddy Checks](#) while promoting its [“Be the One”](#) suicide prevention initiative.



American Legion National Commander Vincent J (James) Troiola

“I wish I could say it was an isolated incident, but we all know it is not,” Troiola said of the suicide. “Last year (Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin) said ‘Mental health *is* health.’ Period. The stigma needs to end.

If we are going to stop suicide, it is crucial that we look at this issue much differently than prior generations. If we wait for someone to make an attempt before we reach out, there is a very good chance that it will be too late.”

That’s where Buddy Checks and “Be the One” come into play. “Buddy Checks work,” Troiola said. “We have heard from Legionnaires who credit buddy checks with saving their lives. I don’t care what it’s called. Peer-support, wellness checks or something else. It’s looking out for your fellow veterans. I encourage the military to do the same with all who are on duty.

“If you have military bases in your department, visit them. Don’t make it a one-and-done, but establish a continuing relationship. The same goes for Guard and Reserve centers. The statistics that VA use each year to count veteran suicides do not include active-duty, so the situation far exceeds the 17-a-day number we often hear.”

Troiola shared that the “Be the One” initiative now has a [website that provides resources](#) available to share by American Legion Family members in their communities throughout the nation.

“Veterans value courage and it takes courage

to ask for help,” Troiola said. “We must be proactive. Ask and encourage veterans to seek help before they pass a point of no return. We need to do more to prevent veterans from taking their lives. We owe them more. We owe their loved ones more.

“Very few of us are trained counselors or mental health professionals. But we are capable of listening, referring and following up. Our ‘Be the One’ message is resonating. I have met Legionnaires and relatives of veterans who have told me they attempted or contemplated suicide. Our Buddy Checks and support has made a difference. It must continue.”

Shifting his attention to the recent hurricanes that have devastated Florida and Puerto Rico, Troiola noted that the Legion Family again has been at the center of relief efforts in those areas.

“Our posts, squadrons, units and departments always come through,” he said. “Your generosity is amazing. On a national level, we have our (National Emergency Fund) and (Temporary Financial Assistance) to deliver grants to help with emergency lodging and other immediate needs.”

But those needs will continue as residents of those areas continue to need assistance. “Visit [legion.org](#) often for updates. A recent article there listed some of our posts in Niceville, Navarre, Avon Park and Punta Gorda, Fla., that are serving as collection points and relief centers,” he said. “Most useful is water and non-perishable or canned goods. The Department of Florida also has its own Hurricane Relief Fund and Disaster Preparedness Committee.

“Unlike Florida, you can’t just drive a truck of supplies to Puerto Rico. The people there were still not fully recovered from Maria and recent earthquakes when Fiona hit. So please keep that department in mind when you are offering assistance from your departments.”

Troiola also urged Legionnaires to cultivate relationships with servicemembers before they transition into the civilian world – but do so in a way that shows a desire to assist, not to recruit membership.

“A lot of military officials are leery of us at first. They think we want to come on base for a membership drive. That’s not it at all,” he said. “We cannot properly advocate for their needs before Congress and the White House if we do not know what those needs

are. We do know from media reports that some of the barracks are in deplorable condition. Mold, faulty air conditioning and overcrowding has been an issue at several installations.

“This is 2022. Our troops deserve better. Just because Vietnam veterans had it rough does not mean that today’s servicemember should have to live in the same unrenovated facilities. If we do not advocate for better living conditions for our military personnel and their families, than we may as well not advocate for anything.”

When visiting a military installation, Troiola said it’s important to let those serving know they are appreciated. “We can go on base and just thank them for their service,” he said. “Maybe deliver a few gift cards to troops that could use them. Sporting goods and video games are always popular in military communities.”

Troiola reminded Legionnaires about his initiative he unveiled during the national convention in Milwaukee: V.E.T.S., or Veterans, Education, Teamwork and Sponsor. “Through this concept aimed at those who served (veterans), training our members (education), working together (teamwork), mentoring (sponsor) and befriending all of our members, we will become a better and stronger American Legion,” he said. “Posts that achieve 90 percent retention this membership year will receive a national commander’s V.E.T.S. pin. Those that achieve 95 percent will receive a V.E.T.S. coin. Membership Excellence pins will go to posts that recruit five members from expired rosters. If post excellence is achieved, the post will receive an autographed national commander’s license plate. Departments will also receive numbered V.E.T.S. coins to be given to the Legionnaire of their choice, who has gone beyond for membership.”

Troiola said that his early tenure as national commander has been met with amazing hospitality during his official department visits. “I have had many Legionnaires express to me the pride that they have in their post and what they are doing for their local communities,” he said. “The posts that I enjoy visiting the most are the ones that are often overlooked. They are in small communities and may not have hosted national commanders before. They may not get the attention of the larger metropolitan posts, but they are making an

(Continued on page 2)

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Be the One Initiative is Working

(Continued from page 1)

impact.”
 During his report, National Legislative Commission Chairman Daniel Seehafer praised Legionnaires for their lobbying efforts in gaining passage of the Sergeant Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act. Legion Family members sent out more than 34,000 messages to members of Congress in support of the legislation, prompting Seehafer to say it was “a crucible in which we reasserted our standing as America’s most powerful voice for our veterans.” But, he added, “that number should have been 340,000.”
 Seehafer also urged members of the NEC to go back to their departments and find Legionnaires willing to both serve on and be active within the Legion’s National Legislative Council, a 535-member group designated to serve as direct liaisons to every member of the U.S. Congress. He said only around 100 of the

members have been regularly active. “There’s an application on our website,” Seehafer said. “The point of this council is to make those communications to the people in Congress. This has to change.”

(Click [here](#) for more information on the National Legislative Council and how to apply).

In other business:

- Membership & Post Activities Committee Chairman Jay Bowen stressed the need not only to recruit new members into the organization, but to keep those already a part of the Legion’s membership. “Once we recruit (new members) ... we must work diligently to give them cause to continue their membership,” he said. “Recruiting veterans into The American Legion is about making a promise to take care of them. Retaining them in The American Legion is delivering on that promise.”

- The NEC passed Resolution 24, which states the Legion will “seek and support any

legislative or administrative proposal providing Post 9/11 GI Bill eligibility for National Guard and reserve service”. “Under the law as currently written, National Guard and reserve servicemembers only accrue GI Bill entitlements when called on active duty under federal orders,” Veterans Employment & Education Commission Chairman James LaCourse said. “When National Guard and reserve servicemembers are activated under state orders, they do not accrue eligibility for GI Bill benefits. Every servicemember that dons the American uniform, regardless of what administrative authority they were mobilized under, deserves the ability to count each day toward their education benefits.”

American Legion Auxiliary National President Vickie Koutz presented Troiola with a \$10,000 donation to the Veterans & Children Foundation on behalf of the Auxiliary.



Just Like Dad’s” Beef Jerky Program Partners With SOWW

From Military.com

We will be contributing to Special Operations Wounded Warriors (SOWW) by providing the delicious, Just Like Dad’s beef jerky to the wounded warriors participating in SOWW’s programs. Our first event is a hog hunt in February called “Takin’ Bacon.” About a dozen troops gather to participate in the event and designed to bring some much-needed healing as well, and some delicious beef jerky. Just Like Dad’s will be in their



gear on the hunt. We are so blessed and excited about this new venture. For more information about Special Operations Wounded Warriors go to sowwcharity.org. —Randy Kipp

Commanders Message

Hope everyone has had a great Christmas and New Year coming. The following is my schedule for the month of January visitations. I'm still going to try and make as many visitations as possible the rest of the coming year to those Squadrons that are holding meetings. Those of you that have Squadrons around you that do not have regular meetings, please try and get hold of them and see if they will get their group together for a special meeting if that is what they would like to call it so that we can do a visit. There is still a lot to do, and it takes all of us to accomplish the mission. The Detachment of Colorado has been able to meet every membership goal so far this year, but



our numbers are still down, and the renewal rate is not up where it should be. We have two new Squadrons, Brush 68 and Limon 2017. Two other Squadrons are in the process of being chartered, Windsor 109 and Castle Rock 1187. Please, Please, Please, get with the Squadrons in your area and ask that they get their membership in as soon as possible. The year 2022 has officially ended as of the December 31, so their membership is void and they need to renew to become active members again. Hope to see you all at Mid-Year.

Jan 10 Longmont Squad 32 6:00pm

Jan 12 Ft Morgan Squad 19 6:00pm

Jan 16 Ft Collins Squad 4 6:00pm

Jan 20 Akron Squad 66 0700 hrs

Jan 25 Fountain Squad 38 6:00pm

Jan 27 - 29 Mid-Year Conference Longmont Post 32

Richard L. Humphrey
Sons of The American Legion
Detachment Commander

Chaplain's Message

By Brad Henderson, Detachment Chaplain

There's nothing quite like the magic of a new beginning. Numerous symbols represent it: the sunrise of a new dawn, a baby's smile, a butterfly, or the bud of a beautiful flower.



A new beginning can come in the form of a promotion, career change, a new relationship, moving to a new city, or venturing out on your own.

Sometimes, change can make us anxious, especially when it takes us out of our comfort zone. We fear the unknown; we are afraid of failure. I pondered the unknown when Pam and I married, when we bought our first house, and when I transitioned from an enlisted soldier to an Army officer. I remember the first time I ventured into the Officer's Club for lunch. I was a Warrant Officer One (WO1 - known by more senior Warrant Officers, as a "Wobbly One"). I was so nervous, that I almost couldn't eat. Everybody there was more senior than me. They had come for a leisurely lunch. At that moment, I felt like I was the main course. Was my fork in the right place? Was I holding it correctly?

Change is everywhere: the world changes, seasons change, history changes, people change. In my belief system, when the Good Lord gives you a new beginning, it sometimes starts with an ending. Some endings are wonderful, and worth celebrating. Others (ending a relationship, leaving a job that you really loved, saying goodbye to a loved one) can be especially difficult. Change can be a reminder that sometimes, our strength isn't enough. We're reminded to exercise our faith and leave the burden to His shoulders.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles who were driven from Jerusalem to Babylon. Their leaders had brought the nation to the brink of disaster, and the people had been exiled. They were on the verge of giving up – but in a test of faith, God guided the people that He had disciplined, to be patient and accept their situation. For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11-13) "...He who scattered Israel will gather them and watch over his flock like a shepherd." (Jeremiah 31:10, NIV)

In my religious teaching, the greatest new beginning of all time occurred in a stable in Bethlehem. When Christ came to earth as a

man, His goal was to change the hearts and minds and lives of every single human being to walk this world then and now. With His sacrifice on the cross and His victory over death, all who believe can have a new beginning in this life, and in the life to come. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

We live in a changing world, in a changing life, but He does not change. The author of the book of Hebrews says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)

As you encounter difficult endings and new beginnings, have the courage to move forward,

even when it feels challenging. Even if you loved the path behind you, the path ahead is filled with opportunity. "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10).

Whatever your new beginning, may it bring you strength, guidance, grace, and fulfillment, because you are worthy of these things. Happy New Year!



Congress Agrees to Scrap Military Coronavirus Vaccine Mandate, Advances Largest Troop Pay Increase in 20 Years

From military.com

Svetlana Shkolnikova
DEC 07, 2022

Lawmakers in Congress agreed Tuesday night to scrap the military's coronavirus vaccine mandate in a \$847 billion compromise defense policy bill that also boosts pay for troops. The agreement, hammered out during months of bicameral negotiations, adds \$45 billion to the fiscal 2023 budget request from the White House for defense programs, and notably rebukes the administration's stance on coronavirus vaccinations for service members. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin enacted the vaccine mandate in August 2021 and remains strongly supportive of the policy. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters this week that Austin and President Joe Biden opposed repealing the requirement, calling it "a health and readiness issue for the force."

Still, lawmakers moved to end mandatory shots after fervent lobbying by Republicans, who blamed the requirement for exacerbating

the military's recruiting and retention woes. Though 98% of active-duty service members are vaccinated against the coronavirus, some 8,000 have been dismissed for refusing to get the shot, according to the Defense Department.

"We are pleased that the final conferenced bill includes language mirroring our... efforts to protect troops from being fired due to Biden's COVID vaccine mandate without fair appeal and to the harm of service readiness," 11 Republican senators said in a statement.

The provision to end the vaccine mandate is rolled into the mammoth 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, which outlines defense priorities for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1.

The House is set to take up the bill this week, followed by a vote in the Senate. If approved, the legislation will move to the White House for Biden's signature.

Lawmakers in the House and Senate negotiated a \$45 billion overall increase to the bill to account for inflation and additional expenses, matching the budget hike proposed

by the Senate Armed Services Committee in a vote in June. The House signed off on a smaller boost — \$37 billion — later in the summer. "This year's agreement continues the armed services committees' 62-year tradition of working together to support our troops and strengthen America's national security," the committees' leaders said in a statement on Tuesday night.

A 4.6% pay increase for troops and the Defense Department's civilian employees is included in the final version of the legislation, marking the largest department-wide raise in 20 years. It would take effect Jan. 1.

Other provisions for troops include wider eligibility for the military's Basic Needs Allowance for low-income service members, a new pilot program to reimburse families for child care costs related to a permanent change of station, extra aid for children with severe disabilities, and more flexibility in housing allowances for high-cost areas.

Congress also wants the Pentagon to report on the rate of suicide in the military since Sept. 11, 2001, breaking down rates by occupation

(Continued on page 4)

Defense Budget, Troop Pay Increase

(Continued from page 3)

specialty, service and grade. Service members stationed in Alaska, a focal point of the military's suicide crisis, would get special duty pay for cold-weather climate conditions and airfare reimbursement for trips home, according to the bill.

The legislation authorizes the number of troops for each service — 452,000 for the Army, 354,000 for the Navy, 325,344 for the Air Force, 177,000 for the Marine Corps and 8,600 for the Space Force.

A provision requiring women to register for the draft, which was featured in the Senate Armed Services Committee's version of the bill, was nixed. Lawmakers in both chambers had included the measure in a draft of the 2022 annual defense authorization bill before scrapping it.

"I fought to ensure for a second year that the 'women in the draft' provision was left out of the final agreement," said Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, the top Republican on the commit-

tee. "We should not force our daughters and granddaughters to register for the Selective Service."

This year's defense policy bill is named after Inhofe, who is retiring in January.

The legislation also bolsters support for Ukraine as it nears a year of fighting Russia's invasion. Lawmakers want to authorize \$500 million more for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative than requested by the White House, bringing total funding to \$800 million. The program allows the Pentagon to purchase weapons for the war-torn country.

Nearly \$3 billion is being earmarked for procuring new munitions to backfill equipment sent to Ukraine and expanding production capacity for future needs. The Pentagon will be given temporary waivers to go around certain restrictions on munitions contracts, according to the bill.

Lawmakers are asking the Defense Department to produce reports on its plans for security assistance to Ukraine in the short and medium term and how it is overseeing that

aid. The White House last month asked Congress to allocate an additional \$37.7 billion for Ukraine.

The \$45 billion overall increase to the defense bill adds \$7 billion for funding military construction projects, \$5 billion to purchase additional Air Force and Navy aircraft, \$5 billion to expand the Navy's fleet, \$1.5 billion for Space Force programs and billions more for advanced technology research.

Congress is refusing to allow the Navy to retire 12 vessels, according to the bill. It is also blocking the Biden administration's plans to kill the development of the nuclear sea-launched cruise missile, an initiative the White House had criticized as costly and redundant despite support from top military leaders.

In addition to the defense policy bill, Congress still needs to pass appropriations legislation for the 2023 fiscal year to provide the Pentagon with the authorized funds.



Be The One Initiative Guide

From Legion.org

The program will destigmatize asking for mental health support, provide peer-to-peer support and resources, and educate everyone on how they can Be the One.

Why is this a priority right now?

Today, the No. 1 issue facing the veteran community is suicide, according to the **National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report**. It is estimated that between 17 and 22 veterans or servicemembers take their lives each day. That's more than 6,000 annually. The rate of suicide for veterans is more than 50% higher than that of non-veteran adults. As the Global War on Terrorism continues, there will be more veterans facing mental-health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

What will Be the One achieve?

At its core, The American Legion is activating a national platform to reduce the rate of veteran suicide. The Be the One campaign will: Destigmatize asking for mental health support, creating opportunity for those with mental health issues to speak freely and get the support they need.

Provide peer-to-peer support and resources in local communities.

Deploy FDA-approved therapeutics for veterans to identify issues and find resources for support.

I'm a veteran. What can I do to support this initiative?

While this program is designed to help all veterans, we know that everyone responds differently to stresses, have different life experiences and have varying results in types of treatment. However, the following are guidelines intended to provide help before a crisis situation develops. The American Legion encourages you to Be the One to:

Talk with others about how you are feeling.

Ask for help when you know you need it.

Know there are millions of people ready to help you.

Remember your family and friends care.

I'm a spouse, partner, family member, caregiver, friend of a veteran, or interested civilian. What can I do to support this initiative?

The stigma associated with mental health issues is a barrier to veterans seeking assistance. They fear loss of their job, think they can handle their situation themselves, or don't believe others can understand their situation. Family members may be the first to recognize the signs that their loved one needs help, but they may lack the knowledge of how to approach the situation. If you have a family member, friend, business associate or have another connection with someone who is a veteran, The American Legion encourages you to Be the One to:

Ask veterans in your life how they are doing.

Listen when a veteran needs to talk.

Reach out when a veteran is struggling

What can my American Legion post do to help?

American Legion posts will be instrumental in the success of this campaign. They have the power to foster unity and camaraderie, and get support quickly to veterans in crisis. In non-emergency situations, posts can also:

Educate members, other veterans and civilians about the campaign.

Display resources at your post or in your community.

Share events or success stories on the legiontown.org platform.

My post is conducting an event to raise awareness about PTSD and/or suicide prevention. Is there a brochure we can provide to attendees?

Yes, there is a brochure in development now that will be available for a free download soon. Check back for more information.

Where can I get more information?

Keep checking in for new resources, stories and other information at legion.org/betheone. You can also sign up to receive email about new announcements.

What's the quickest way to get help in an emergency?

If you are a veteran in crisis, resources are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week:

Call 988 and press 1

Text 838255

Visit the [VA Crisis Line website](https://www.va.gov/crisisline)



National Commander's Pin Incentive Program

American Legion National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola will award his national commander "Be The One" membership excellence pin to any Legionnaire who obtains three new members into The American Legion.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2023 membership year who was not a mem-

ber of The American Legion during the 2022 membership year. Transfers do not count as new members.

Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion. Forward names of Sons of The American Legion members or Auxiliary members to your squadron or unit for use in their respective incentive programs.

Only one pin will be awarded per individual. Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names in the national database and

mail the pin directly to the person who earned it.



[Download the "Be the One" membership incentive form.](#)



New Be the One Resources Available

The American Legion

JAN 05, 2023

American Legion posts, districts and departments are planning various activities to promote the organization's "[Be the One](#)" initiative to reduce the rate of veteran suicide.

Events are being planned for mid-winter conferences, around American Legion Birthday in March and other times in the first months of 2023. National Headquarters is interested in hearing about, promoting and supporting Be the One activities. Let us know your plans by sending an email to magazine@legion.org or sharing a story [on the Legiontown website](#).

There are many resources available for American Legion Family members to use in support of Be the One. Among those that can be found at [the web page](#):

- **A set of brochures available for download:** One brochure is a PDF that can be used to educate agencies with mental health ser-



vices, community partners, local government leaders and others about Be the One. The other brochure is a Word document that can be downloaded and customized for posts to use at suicide awareness events. The entire back page of the trifold is intentionally left blank (other than directions, which can be deleted) so that posts can fill it with local resources.

- **Branding materials:** A variety of approved American Legion Be the One promo-

tional materials that posts can use to promote the initiative.

- **Banner stand:** This is a print-ready file to send to a local or online vendor for a two-foot by six-foot banner that is vinyl or fabric pop-up display

- **Posters:** These can be downloaded and printed individually or as the front and back of a sign board for an event.

- **Wallet cards:** Business-card sized printables with Be the One branding and QR codes. Can be used as single-sided cards, combined for double-sided cards, or added to the back side of a personal business card.

- **Video links:** Vimeo playlist includes videos that can be downloaded and played while offline. They can be shared on social media, posted to the web and played at post events.

- **A QR Code:** This can be used to direct others to the web page to find information and resources related to the campaign.



Legion-supported Legislation Capping Fees for Lawyers Representing Camp Lejeune Marines Introduced

On Nov. 17, U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan introduced American Legion-supported legislation that would cap the fees trial lawyers can charge in cases representing sick Marines and other individuals impacted by water contamination at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. Less than two weeks later, on Nov. 30, [Sullivan made a motion for unanimous consent for his newly introduced bill](#). S. 5130, the [Protect Camp Lejeune Victims Ensnared by Trial-lawyers' Scams \(VETS\) Act](#), amends the Camp Lejeune Justice Act and caps legal fees at a maximum of 10% and ensures that attorneys are not paid before a veteran or family member as a result of any award made.

The Camp Lejeune Justice Act became law in August in the larger Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act. "U.S. Marines and their families are being preyed upon by unscrupulous trial lawyers," said Sullivan, Alaska's former attorney general and currently a colonel in the U.S. Marine

Corps Reserve. "They're grabbing all the money, and the sick Marines and their families aren't getting it. (They're) using sick Marines to get rich. That's what my bill's going to change."

Sullivan, a member of American Legion Post 28 in Anchorage, called for unanimous consent for the legislation and cited specific American Legion support for it. He quoted directly from [Resolution 15: Oversight of Camp Lejeune Justice Act](#), which was passed by The American Legion National Executive Committee during its 2022 Fall Meetings, reading, "Whereas, predatory law firms charging exorbitant fees have engaged in aggressive marketing campaigns ... The American Legion urges Congress to provide the necessary oversight during the implementation of the Camp Lejeune Justice Act to ensure veterans receive fair consideration of their lawsuits and protections against predatory law firms."

In a press release issued prior to Sullivan's remarks, Chanin Nuntavong – executive di-

rector of government affairs for The American Legion – also expressed the organization's support for the bill. "With the passage of the Camp Lejeune Justice Act, veterans and their families were finally able to pursue legal action against the government for their exposure to toxic contaminated water at Camp Lejeune," he said. "After decades of waiting, and suffering the realities of life-threatening medical conditions, they were bombarded by advertisements from unscrupulous law firms charging exorbitant fees. We commend Sen. Sullivan for correcting this injustice by introducing legislation that caps legal fees at a reasonable amount to ensure our veterans and their families are not taken advantage of."

The American Legion [submitted congressional testimony](#) to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee in mid-November during a hearing on PACT Act oversight that called for the capping of legal fees on Camp Lejeune Justice Act cases.



Five Things to Know, Dec. 12, 2022

The American Legion

DEC 12, 2022

1. [American forces on Sunday killed two Islamic State militants](#) in eastern Syria in a helicopter raid, U.S. Central Command said in a statement. IS sleeper cells continue to carry out deadly attacks in Syria and Iraq. For a few years, the group ruled swathes of both countries but lost its last stronghold in 2019. U.S. Central Command did not specify the location of the overnight operation, and claimed there were no civilian casualties in its initial assessments of the operation.

2. [The announcement Sunday that a Libyan man suspected in the 1988 bombing of a passenger jet has been taken into U.S. custody](#) put the spotlight back on the notorious terrorist attack and longstanding efforts to pursue those responsible. The suspect, Abu Agila Mas'ud

Kheir Al-Marimi, is accused of building the bomb that destroyed a Pan Am flight over the Scottish town of Lockerbie. The attack killed all 259 people aboard the plane and 11 on the ground. The majority of those killed were Americans.

3. [Russian forces pounded targets in eastern and southern Ukraine with missiles, drones and artillery, Ukraine's General Staff said on Monday](#), while millions remained without power in subzero temperatures after further strikes on key infrastructure. In a flurry of weekend diplomacy, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy spoke with the leaders of the United States, France and Turkey ahead of planned Group of Seven (G7) and EU meetings on Monday that could agree further sanctions on Russia.

4. [Land forces from the United States, Ja-](#)

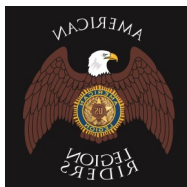
[pan and the Philippines are teaming up to address security challenges in the Indo-Pacific, military leaders from the three nations told reporters Sunday](#). Five generals from the three democracies discussed land force cooperation at Camp Asaka, a Japan Ground Self-Defense Force base in Saitama prefecture near the Japanese capital.

5. [Retired Air Force Col. Joseph Kittinger, whose 1960 parachute jump from almost 20 miles above the Earth stood as a world record for more than 50 years, died Friday in Florida](#). He was 94. His death was announced by former U.S. Rep. John Mica and other friends. The cause was lung cancer.

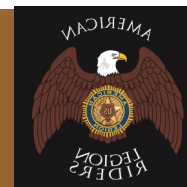


"To the with soldier in battle, his courage is rewarded with mortal decorations: But to the Christian warrior, who keeps God's commandments, the prize is eternal life and never loses value in the eyes of God"

Charles H. Cooledge, U.S. Army; Medal of Honor



Colorado American Legion Riders Ride On Military Pride (ROMP)



From alrco.org

Our 5th annual Colorado American Legion Rider Ride on Military Pride (ROMP) was AWESOME!!! From the Friday night Bobby Henline Comedy Show, to the Breakfast and 9-11 remembrance at American Legion Post 55 Saturday morning, to the ride through the Colorado Mountains, to the Bike Rodeo and dinner at



VFW Post 1166, this was a super fun and very memorable weekend. This annual event is a chance for riders to relax and enjoy the accomplishments they've achieved this year. This is a fun weekend event to celebrate all the hard work delivering on American Legion Programs throughout the year.

Any and All proceeds above expenses from the 2022 ROMP are going to Combat Hero Bike Build <https://www.combatherobikebuild.org/> (75%) and Forging Forward <https://forgingforward.org/> (25%). Both of these 501(c)(3) non-profits provide invaluable services and support to our nation's Veterans. ***Mark your calendars now for the 6th annual Colorado ROMP September 8-9 2023!***



Legion Rider's 'Be the One' Moment is on a Bracelet

The American Legion
NOV 15, 2022

Larry "Grumpy" Haitz knew he had to stop talking and do something about saving the lives of veterans from suicide. He endured the loss of a son-in-law who died by suicide, stood in flag lines for veterans who died by suicide, and supported a fellow American Legion Rider who lost his son from suicide.

Haitz, an American Legion Rider of Chapter 241 in Le Mars, Iowa, created a bracelet to help people who encounter a veteran in crisis quickly remember the suicide prevention hotline number so veterans know they are not alone.

The bracelet's message is: Call 988 Option 1 – UR NEVER ALONE.

"All this together made me decide to try to do something, anything, to address the horrendous number of veteran suicides in my Legion district and beyond," Haitz said. "The hope is that the 988 press 1 message would 'click'

with the wearer if they encountered a vet who was depressed for whatever reason. Every opportunity I get, I hand them out."

Haitz ordered 1,000 wristbands to hand out for free. When he shared what he was doing with fellow Post 241 members and Riders, "the support was overwhelming," he said. "The wristbands are a big success and have gone out not only to this area but well beyond."

And with a grant from Northwest Iowa American Legion Riders and donations from other Legion Family members, Haitz purchased key fobs and lanyards with the same message to hand out. The merchandise is from a Legion Rider-owned company called Wicked Graphix.

The bracelet, lanyard and key chain with the



suicide prevention hotline is how Haitz is saving the live of veterans. It's his way to Be the One.

The American Legion's Be the One initiative aims to eliminate the stigma associated with mental health wellness and, in turn, reduce the rate of veteran suicide. Learn more at betheone.org.

"Five years ago, when we started talking about 22 a day (veteran suicide numbers), that's all talk. If somebody doesn't pick it up and do something, it's only going to get worse. That's what Be the One is to me – it's I have to do something. I feel the need to Be the One to do something so this is what I'm doing."

"I hope this resonates with other people, and they start doing something so they can Be the One. If we all do something, anything, it's going to help. If we save one life, it's all worth it."



Pennsylvania Legion Riders Chapter Engaging Community While Honoring Veterans

The American Legion
DEC 06, 2022

In 2013, members of Shiloh American Legion Riders Chapter 791 in York, Pa., began placing wreaths on the gravesites at veterans buried in Shiloh Lutheran Cemetery. Initially, the chapter placed around 50 wreaths, but heading into last year Post Commander Marc Firestone and fellow post member Carrie Kwiatkowski decided they wanted to cover every veteran's grave.

In 2021, the post's American Legion Family was able to fundraise enough to provide a wreath on every veteran's grave. And on Dec. 11, the chapter will join others in the community in again hitting that goal – placing wreaths on 247 graves – at the cemetery.

"(They) were placing wreaths on the graves and said, 'It really looks pretty, but wouldn't it be great to put a wreath on every veteran's grave,'" said Tiffani

Yeager, a charter member of Chapter 791 and the first sergeant-at-arms for Auxiliary Unit 791. "I think it's important to honor these people and show them we haven't forgotten them. And to teach the next generation."

It costs around \$2,800 to buy the wreaths and the bows. A member of Chapter 791 has taken on the responsibility of locating all the veteran's graves in the cemetery. The oldest dates back to the War of 1812, while the newest are from the Vietnam War.

"We have one guy who served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam," said Yeager, who served as Chapter 791's treasurer for seven

years. "We have fathers, grandfathers and sons. Fathers and daughters, husbands and wives. We have all the branches of service covered, other than the Space Force. And there are at least three women. We're working to find records to see if there are any more. But it's a nice range."

The chapter has included members of the



community to be involved, including youth from local baseball and softball teams who assist in both assembly and placing of the wreaths. Each wreath has a red bow on it, along with a tag on the wreath's stand that states the wreath is from the Shiloh American Legion Family.

Yeager said the placing of the wreaths by the local youth serves as a teaching moment. "I stress that this isn't something that we're going to rush through. This is to honor and respect those people, and to show them some respect," she said. "I tell them, 'When you lay that wreath, pause a minute, say a prayer,

thank them for their service, at least say their name.' We encourage everyone to take a picture of the wreath they've laid and put it on Facebook as well. Sometimes the families (of the deceased veterans) are from out of the area, or they're just unable to come to the gravesite. So it's kind of cool they're able to see that gravesite even if they're not able to go there."

Each person who lays a wreath is given a laminated sheet of paper that has a photo of the veteran, if possible, and a picture of the gravestone or marker; the veteran's obituary, and their branch of service and job they performed in the military.

"It's so they can read a little about who they were and know that person," Yeager said. "And we've got nine (veterans) who are Purple Heart recipients, and another five we're trying to confirm. We've got a special Purple Heart background on those laminated sheets. That's new for this year."

Yeager said Chapter 791's work at the cemetery is part of a bigger effort to engage and assist others in the area. "We all live in the same community. You've got to help each other and teach each other," she said. "We'll team up with other organizations in the community and help with their events. We've already sponsored a family for Christmas through one of the homeless shelters. Another family we sponsored their Christmas through another veterans organization. We just try to help out whenever we can."



Mid-Year Conference Information



Sons of The American Legion
Detachment of Colorado
Mid-Winter DEC
Schedule of Events and Information

Dates: January 28-29, 2033

Meeting Location: American Legion John Harold Buckley Post 32, 315 S. Bowen St. Longmont, CO 80503

Lodging Accommodations: Hilton Garden Inn, 570 South Martin Rd, Longmont, CO 80501. Phone (720) 759-4422. Room Cost \$109.00 plus tax. Room rate is available until 12-26-2022. Book with hotel directly under CAL Block.

https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/denlci-hilton-garden-inn-longmont/?SEO_id=GMB-AMER-GI-DENLCGI&y_source=1_MTY2Njg2NjktNzE1LWxvY2F0aW9uLndlYnNpdGU%3D

The hotel is approx. 1.5 miles from Post 32. Post 32 will be operating shuttles.

Activity/Meeting Schedule
(Subject to change, cost of meals at Post 32 TBA)

Friday, January 27

1:00-4:00 p.m. Department DEC meetings - Legion in banquet hall. ALA in the Aux room.

5:00-7:00 p.m. 7:00-10:00 Normal Friday night dinner served in banquet room. Entertainment in the lounge.

Saturday, Jan 28, 2023

Breakfast is available at the hotel 7:30-9:00 am. Light breakfast available at Post 32

8:30-10:00 am Joint Opening—Post 32 Banquet Hall

10:15- 11:50 am SAL training Post 32 game room (no darts allowed):

VA&R awards and recognition programs/award criteria/nomination process –ANEC Nick Arceo (103)

On-line membership processing—Ken Taylor (209)

10 Ideas and 5 Points of Service—Commander Richard Humphrey

SAL Reports and Online Resources—Adjutant Mark Kilstrom

12:00-1:30 pm Past Commander's Lunch. Post 32 Banquet Hall

1:30-2:00 pm Continue training if needed, Post 32 game room

2:00-3:30 pm (approx.) DEC meeting—Post 32 game room.

4:30-5:30pm Drawing and Hippy haircut. (information to be provided separately)

5:30 -6:15 pm Social Hour in banquet hall.

6:15-8:30 pm Media Awards Banquet in banquet hall Adjutant Lish to MC the banquet and keep on schedule.

8:30-11:00 pm Entertainment in lounge.

Sunday, January 29

7:30- 10:00 am Breakfast by Post 32 in Banquet Hall.

8:30-9:30 am Memorial Service, Chaplain Ron Wunsch, in ALA room.

Oregon Legionnaires Honor Legion Founding Father George A. White

From Legion.org

By Cory Brockmann

DEC 06, 2022

The American Legion Department of Oregon paid tribute to one of the Legion's founding fathers, Maj. Gen. George Ared White, by conducting a memorial remembrance ceremony at his grave at River View Cemetery in Portland on Nov. 17.

On a sunshine-filled autumn day, with temperatures hovering in the mid-40s, a 26-mph east wind made for a blustery chill but did not deter those gathered at the White family plot, nestled within the wooded, rolling slopes at beautiful River View to honor White.

The ceremony was opened with a presentation of the colors by the Milwaukie Post 180 color guard and followed by an invocation. Included within the ceremony was a reading of the original memorial resolution, which was read at the National Executive Committee meeting in Indianapolis in May 1942, furthering the remembrance of White's commitment and service to The American Legion and the nation.

Department of Oregon Commander Larry Wittmayer and Department Adjutant S.

Flynn Phillips had the honor of placing a memorial wreath adorned with the United States and State of Oregon flags at the White family gravestone. Taps was then sounded, and the ceremony concluded with a benediction.

George A. White (1880-1941) was a journalist who subsequently spent a significant portion of his adult life in military service to Oregon and the nation. It was a life of service that saw him rise from the ranks of newly enlisted to attain the rank of major general.

White served during the Spanish-American War, having enlisted in the U.S. Volunteers, and later during World War I. It was during

his service overseas that he worked with then-LTC Theodore Roosevelt Jr. and other officers to form what is today our nation's largest veterans service organization, The American Legion.

In time, White would return to Oregon and continue serving as commander of the 41st Division and resume duties as Oregon's adjutant general. While commanding the 41st Division and deployed for training to Hunter-Liggett Military Reservation (now known as Fort Hunter Liggett) in California, White became ill and passed away later that year at his home in Clackamas, Ore., at 61. He is Oregon's longest-serving adjutant general, holding the position from 1915-1918 and 1920-1941.

Read more about George A. White:

[The namesake of Oregon's Camp White](#)

[An Oregonian's place in the Legion's birth](#)

[It all began in Paris a century ago](#)



Taps

We honor and mourn our brothers from the Detachment of Colorado who have passed on to the Squadron everlasting in 2022. Say their names in that they will not be forgotten.

Norris M Nevils Jr.	28
Tom Williams	20
Ernest Clark	87
Jim Coke	38
Richard Luna	10
Richard Karle	10
Dan Stansbury	1992

The family of Past Detachment Commander Ernie Clark will be having a Celebration of Life for Ernie on January 7th at the Elks Lodge located at 1455 Newland in Lakewood from 4 – 8 pm. The family request in-leu of flowers donations to help with expenses and relocation of the Second Chance Bicycle Shop. The Detachment is dedicating our Mid-year DEC meeting to Ernie and will be performing the Squadron Everlasting Ceremony at the opening of the Detachment meeting.

From "119 'Quates' from American Legion Post 119"

#24. *He looked like the kinda man in a beauty contest that couldn't beat the man with that carries the ugly stick.*

#25. *I take warfarin, which means I can't eat veggies, especially the ones high in Vitamin K, because they could make my blood thick, send a clot to my brain and turn me into a Republican.*

Online Membership Renewal for Individual SAL Members Goes Live

From the SAL National Liaison, Kevin Mook

Effective January 2, 2023, SAL members will be able to renew online via their individual myLegion account and an SAL quick renewal website. I will send out a notification as soon as that website is available. Squadrons and detachments can still conduct transmittals to renew members. Dual and junior payments are to be processed at the squadron as it is today and will not be available for renewal online.

There has been a change! Originally, the fee of \$50-\$70 was intended to get people's attention that their squadron had not submitted their SDR. The SAL National Commander Carlton being the voice of reason asked, "why we were penalizing the members for something their squadron neglected to do"?

As a result, *dues for squadrons that have NOT submitted an Squadron Data Report (SDR) are now set to the national and detachment fee only.* For example, national is \$5.00 and a detachment is \$5.00 the squadron fee is now \$10.00 and it will up to the squadron to acquire any additional fees. (Note: for Colorado it will be \$12.00, the Squadron will have to collect it's dues from the member.)

Squadron Data Reports and Officer List

From Detachment Adjutant Mark Kilstrom

The Squadron Data Report is required by the national organization every year. This document is what allows the national organization to input information required to allow online renewals by individuals and Squadron Adjutants. Without it, if a member renews on line, the Squadron will not get any funds back from the national organization, but the member can print his valid membership card. This document must be completed in full and sent to the Detachment Adjutant each year. The Squadron Officer list is required as specified in the Detachment By-laws to be submitted to the Detachment Adjutant each year. This document provides the Detachment leadership and the Detachment Directory with needed information as to who to contact and share important information with. It also provides the Detachment Adjutant with who is authorized to represent your Squadron and vote at Detachment meetings. Each Squadron is entitled a voting representative at the Detachment Executive Committee meetings.

Article IV of the Detachment By-laws

"SECTION 3: Each Squadron shall have a Constitution and By-Laws to govern its affairs and shall have officers known as Commander, Vice Commander, Adjutant, Finance Officer, and an Executive Committeeman. *Each year Squadron shall provide notice to the Detachment organization the names and complete contact information for these officers immediately following their annual election or appointment of said officers. Any Squadron which does not submit the officer list to the Detachment Adjutant will not have a vote at any Detachment meeting.* The Squadron shall subscribe to the Constitution and By-Laws and regulations of the Detachment organization."

Submitting the forms with "Same as last year" or "No Changes" is not acceptable. The national organization will not recognize it. At the Detachment level, using the same comments or not providing phone numbers or mailing address, which everybody has, will not be accepted as a valid report and the Squadron will not be allowed a vote at Detachment meetings. Keep in mind that the Detachment Convention is a Detachment meeting. If a member is willing to hold a Squadron office, why would he not be willing to provide his phone number, mailing address and email address? It only takes a few minutes to complete the form, please take the time to complete it properly. If your squadron does not have a full slate of officers, which happens, provide the person who is the best contact for the Squadron with a simple note that there are no

Auxiliary Unit 178 Serves over 100 Meals on Veterans Day

The Auxiliary served a delicious Spaghetti



Post members gather around Tuskegee Airman Col. James Harvey (seated) and daughter Kathy on Veterans Day.

Dinner to 57 Veterans and 51 non-Vets. Thank you to all Auxiliary members preparing, cooking, serving, and cleaning up afterwards. The volunteers were Dee Yurko, Shauna Stockmar, Beth Nalty, Jeannie Whittenburg, Leslie Moore, Sue Vacilek, Carol and Brian Conway, Penny Polston and Granddaughter Ayala, Nickie Donnell, Nancy Marshall, Tanya Kiger, Belinda Tessean, Beth Hall, and Judy Myers.

VA Reaches 1 million in Military Exposure Screenings

From Legion.org
Department of Veterans Affairs
JAN 04, 2023

The Department of Veterans Affairs marks a historic milestone by screening 1 million veterans for military exposures as part of the [PACT Act](#) signed into law Aug. 10.

The screenings are a key component of the law — which empowers VA to deliver care and benefits to millions of toxic exposed veterans and their survivors.

“Since we launched the toxic exposure screening program, VA connected with 1 million Veterans around the country,” said VA Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, MD. “Our health-care teams reached an incredible breakthrough in a short length of time. These screenings are paramount to improving the health outcomes for veterans and providing them with the health care and benefits they’ve earned as quickly as possible. This is among the first steps we have taken to deliver even more benefits and health care to veterans who have been exposed to toxins during their service.”

VA surpassed initial screening expectations through extensive outreach campaigns to include hosting more than [90 Week of Action events](#) across all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. While The PACT Act Week of Action ended Dec. 17, 2022, veterans can obtain screenings at any time of the year with their VA health care provider.

Veterans enrolled in VA health care will be offered an initial toxic exposure screening then follow-up screenings at least once every five years.

The screening takes an average of five to 10 minutes and begins by asking veterans if they believe they experienced any toxic exposures while serving in the armed forces. Veterans who answer “yes” are then asked about specific exposures, including open burn pits, Agent Orange, radiation, contaminated water and other exposures. If a veteran has been exposed to toxins during their time of service, VA wants to know. It not only impacts their indi-

5 Legion Alumni on Contemporary Era Baseball Hall of Fame ballot

The American Legion
NOV 08, 2022

Five former American Legion Baseball players are on the Contemporary Baseball Era player ballot to be considered for induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, Don Mattingly, Fred McGriff, and Dale Murphy are on the ballot along with Albert Belle, Rafael Palmeiro and Curt Schilling.

The Contemporary Baseball Era Players Committee will vote on those players on Dec. 4 at the Baseball Winter Meetings. Those players who receive votes on 75 percent of the 16-member committee’s ballots will be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2023; the induction ceremony in Cooperstown, N.Y., is scheduled for July 23, 2023.

The Contemporary Baseball Era Players Committee considers retired players who played after 1980 and who are no longer eligible for election to the Hall of Fame by the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA). Finalists for the BBWAA ballot are expected to be announced this month with results announced on Jan. 24, 2023.

The Legion Baseball alumni on the ballot:

Barry Bonds played American Legion Baseball in San Mateo, Calif. He is Major League

Baseball’s all-time leader in home runs with 762. Bonds played 22 seasons with Pittsburgh and San Francisco and was a 14-time All-Star, seven-time National League MVP, eight-time Gold Glove Award winner and 12-time Silver Slugger Award winner.

Roger Clemens played American Legion Baseball in Spring Woods, Ohio, and was the ALB Graduate of the Year in 1988. The 11-time All-Star and seven-time Cy Young Award winner played 24 seasons with Boston, Toronto, the Yankees and Houston.

Don Mattingly played American Legion Baseball in Evansville, Ind., and was the 1987 ALB Graduate of the Year. A six-time All-Star during his 14 seasons as a player with the New York Yankees, he managed for 12 seasons with the Dodgers and Miami. During his time managing the Dodgers, he talked about his ALB experience in this [video](#).

Fred McGriff played American Legion Baseball for Post 248 in Tampa Bay, Fla. He was a five-time All-Star during his 19 seasons in the majors with Toronto, San Diego, Atlanta, Tampa Bay, the Cubs and the Dodgers.

Dale Murphy played American Legion Baseball in Portland, Ore., and was the 1986 ALB Graduate of the Year. A seven-time All-Star and two-time NL MVP, Murphy played 18 seasons with Atlanta, Philadelphia and Colorado.



What’s new in Legion newsletters in 2023?

The American Legion
JAN 04, 2023

In an effort to deliver more timely news and information to American Legion Family members and friends, an expanded newsletter program was rolled out in the first quarter of 2022.

Changes included launching the weekly Monday Briefing and expanding the Commander’s Message newsletter from once or twice monthly to weekly. (Background information on the change [can be found here](#).) Now the subscriber lists for those two newsletters are being grouped with the weekly American Legion Online Update, which is distributed on Thursdays.

Here is what subscribers need to know about the changes:

Question: What exactly is changing?

Answer: The content of the newsletters is not changing. However, each of the three will be streamlined and named Online Update. On Mondays, the Online Update will contain the weekly weekend wrapup of the top five stories from the previous weekend. The Wednesday version of Online Update will lead off with the weekly Commander’s Message. And the American Legion Online Update will continue on Thursdays as it has for more than a decade.

Question: If I’m already a subscriber, do I need to do anything to receive these newsletters?

Answer: No. If you already subscribe to any one or more of these, you will start receiving

each one in early January.

Question: What happens if I unsubscribe from one or two of the newsletters?

Answer: We’re consolidating our email lists to be more efficient. Unfortunately, if you now unsubscribe to any of the three weekly newsletters, you will unsubscribe to all of them.

Question: What can I expect in Monday’s Online Update (Monday Briefing) newsletter?

Answer: Monday Briefing always leads off with a recap of the top five stories from the past weekend of interest to the veteran and military community. It also contains links to stories, videos, promotions and ads of interest to American Legion Family members, friends and military supporters.

Question: What can I expect in Wednesday’s Online Update (Commander’s Message) newsletter?

Answer: The Wednesday version of the Online Update will feature a message from The American Legion national commander about a priority, initiative, program or other topic of vital interest to the organization. Like the other two weekly newsletters, it also will include links to other stories, videos, promotions and ads of interest to Legion Family members, friends and military supporters.

Question: Where can I find out more information about newsletters?

Answer: To check your subscriptions and see a list of all American Legion newsletters, [go to legion.org/newsletters](#). For questions about the newsletter content, send an email to magazine@legion.org.



vidual future care, but it can also improve overall toxic exposure-related care and outcomes.

If you are a veteran who has not been screened for toxic exposure or has never received care at VA, we encourage you to contact VA about enrolling in the VA health care system and about obtaining a toxic exposure screening. VA encourages

all [eligible](#) veterans and survivors to apply for their earned PACT Act-related health care and benefits now. Don’t wait until something is wrong before coming to VA — our providers are trained to recognize issues and concerns unique to Veterans.

Veterans and survivors may apply or learn more about the PACT Act by visiting [VA.gov/PACT](#) or calling 1-800-



OUR KOREAN WAR STORY: *Combat Christmas*

The American Legion
DEC 19, 2022

The December 2000 *American Legion Magazine* continued its 50th anniversary tribute to those who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during the Korean War. A two-page presentation of letters from veterans recollected holiday memories from a half-century earlier.

One came from a former prisoner of war who told of unsuccessful enemy attempts to break the spirit of Americans in captivity. He sent in a card from the Chinese that on the front wished Americans “A Merry Christmas & A Peaceful New Year” and on the back asked “Why are you ... freezing and dying 5,000 miles from home when you belong with your families?”

Other letters were submitted in gratitude for media interviews from the front that delighted families at home. And one combat veteran told how much an expected government check meant to him and his wife as they struggled to make ends meet in the winter of 1951.

Card can't break POW's spirit

The Korean War was not only fought with weapons – it was fought with the mind. A Christmas card was given to me and other U.S. POWs in 1951 during our captivity in a camp on the Manchurian border. I was in the POW camp for about six months.

The Chinese used propaganda like the Christmas card to try to break our will. Receiving that on Christmas, 5,000 miles away from home, was tough. The Chinese hoped it would be a morale-breaker, but it didn't work.

Nineteen of us escaped when we were ordered to pick up new Allied prisoners. A surprise artillery barrage disrupted their arrival and gave us an opportunity to flee. A few miles away, we met up with three U.S. tanks and rode out on them.

I went home after the escape and then to Washington, D.C., where I informed officials about POW locations and conditions.

Thank you, Armed Forces Radio

We all have our special Christmas song that we enjoy during the holidays. Mine is “I'll Be Home for Christmas.” Being away from home at Christmas is difficult for anyone, but for a service member overseas in a war zone, it can

be traumatic.

Christmas was only a few days away, and I was in a far-off, hostile land called Korea. I was cold, frightened and lonely. I longed to be home with my loving family to share the warmth and security of their love.

While shivering in my foxhole, I dreamt of being at midnight Mass and opening the presents under the tree with my family. I could taste the delicious turkey dinner with all the trimmings that my dear mother cooked for me. While standing under the mistletoe, singing carols with family and friends and drinking hot chocolate, I could feel the tender kiss of my sweetheart on my cheek and the loving embrace of my kid brother.

All was wonderful when suddenly I was shocked back to reality.

“Hey, soldier, we're from Armed Forces Ra-

As seen on TV

On Christmas 1951, I was serving with the 7th Division, 31st Infantry Regiment, Fox Company. My buddies and I went to Christmas Mass and were thrilled to find it being served by Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York. He was a wonderful priest. He took time to shake hands with as many of us as possible.

A few days later, on New Year's Eve, my mother was watching television and suddenly realized she was seeing me and the cardinal. Screaming, she yelled to my father so he could see this wonderful gift. Seeing her son so many miles away when she was missing him so much was the best Christmas present my mother could get – or I could ever give.

– Philip Kinsella Jr., *Barnegat, N.J.*

Surprise in the mail

In December 1952, the holiday season ahead looked bleak.

Dot and I had married the previous January, not long after I returned from Korea, and I was now a freshman at the University of Maine. We were both working to keep our heads above water – she in the daytime and me in the evenings – to supplement the GI Bill stipend, which just about covered out-of-state tuition, books and supplies.

After reviewing our finances, even counting deposits on the soda bottles we had ready to turn in, we didn't have enough left over to buy presents for our families. We couldn't even afford the postage to send the presents. Then one day I received an official government envelope.

Did the Marine Corps want me back? After all, the Korean War was still going on.

Imagine our delight when we opened the envelope to find a check for \$495. For what, we wondered? It was combat pay at the rate of \$45 a month from September 1950 through July 1951. Those 11 months tracked me from Inchon to Seoul, to Wonsan and the Chosin Reservoir, and back south to battle the Chinese in the spring and summer of 1951.

We bought some presents and mailed them home first-class. Dot bought a maternity dress, and we went for Christmas dinner at the fanciest restaurant in town. The first was a necessity, but the last was pure extravagance.

– Norman J. Van Valkenburg, *Saugerties, N.Y.*



Left to right: Mike King, American Legion post commander/Marine Corps League; Don Couillard, Squadron 71 second vice commander; Lewis Carrol, post membership chairman; John Pickard, squadron membership chairman; and Art Menard, commander, Marine Corps League.

dio. Would you like to send a message home?” One guy shoved a microphone in my face while the other operated the recorder. “Say anything you like,” he said. With a cracking voice and tears in my eyes, I spoke to my mother and family.

AFR notified my family that I would be talking to them on the radio on Christmas. All my family, friends and neighbors crowded around the radio to listen to me. It was the best present they had that Christmas. By the way, the last verse “I'll Be Home for Christmas” is “If only in my dreams.” And it was. Thanks, Armed Forces Radio.

– Martin Francis Farricker Sr., *Woodbridge, N.J.*

Three Marines Walk Over 3,300 Miles to Raise Awareness of POW/MIAs

The American Legion
DEC 22, 2022

On June 6, three Marine veterans embarked on a 3,365-mile walk from USS *Constitution* in Boston Harbor to Newport, Ore. Their mission: create awareness about the nation's more than 81,000 POWs and MIAs, and to raise funds for History Flight, a nonprofit dedicated to researching, recovering and repatriating U.S. servicemembers.

For Justin “J.D.” LeHew, a highly decorated Marine and chief operating officer of History Flight, the journey reinforced “the principle of never leaving a fallen comrade behind, and that I am my brother and sister's keeper.”

Called “Team Long Road,” LeHew, Coleman “Rocky” Kinzer and Ray Shinohara walked



American Legion Auxiliary National President Vicki Koutz and American Legion National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division Director Mario Marquez joined three Marines on their journey to raise awareness about the more than 81,000 U.S. POW/MIAs on Nov. 21 in Vale, Ore. Photo by Kyle Green/The American Legion

Highway 20, the Medal of Honor Highway. Along the way, they were celebrated by

American Legion posts and members – especially in Oregon, their final leg.

Dan Burks, the department's second vice commander, greeted the team at the state line Nov. 18. National Auxiliary President Vickie Koutz and National Security Commission Director Mario Marquez joined them as they walked into Vale, where Past National Commander Charles Schmidt and his wife, Linda, gave a warm welcome.

“The rucksacks we carry represent the heavy burden carried by generations of warriors who have served in our nation's ranks since 1775, as well as the weight of a nation ... to live up to the promise that we will never leave a fallen comrade behind, [LeHew wrote](#).”

Team Long Road finished their journey the week of Christmas. Read more at teamlongroad.com.



Army edges Navy 20-17 in 123rd Meeting Between Two Teams

From *Military.com*
By John Chuhran
DEC 12, 2022

If you wanted offensive brilliance, the 123rd Army-Navy Game will not rank high on your list of favorite college football games. But the 69,117 fans in attendance at “America’s Game” saw one of the most exciting finishes in the history of this annual competition, the first between the two teams to be settled in extra play since the series began in 1890.

Army’s 20-17, double-overtime triumph at Lincoln Financial Field in the 2022 edition of the contest embodied the highest ideals anyone could want for the military leaders of tomorrow – probably more than any other game of at least the last half century. Few things short of actual combat could be a better example of the old saying “you don’t go into battle with the military forces, the equipment and the geography you want – you go with what you have.” These two teams were filled with less than perfect players, but all played with a tenacity and commitment that pushed their intellectual and physical performances to the maximum and enabled their teams to play a game that will not be forgotten soon.

“What a game,” said Army Head Coach Jeff Monken, now 5-4 in Army-Navy Games. “That was two football teams that fought just as hard as they possibly could. It was an epic battle. It’s one that I’ll remember for a long time, probably forever, just how we managed to win. When people ask me what’s different about this game, (I tell them) the difference is the players. Every one of these players and every one of those young people that were sitting up in the stands that are their classmates have made a pledge to serve this nation and to perhaps pay the ultimate price for all the rest of us who haven’t made that pledge.

“That’s what makes this game different. It makes the way they play this game different. They’re fighting as hard as they can on every snap. That’s both sides. Tough kids, tough people that care so much about who they represent.

It feels like every single play, that the game is hanging in the balance. That’s the intensity of this game. It was fought that way from start to finish. They never wavered. I look and I see their eyes on the sideline, and I can see their body language. They just never stop believing.”

Navy Head Coach Ken Niumatalolo, who was fired from his position Sunday, said on Media Day that the game would be “a slugfest.” That was a gross understatement. Army and Navy both posted struggled on offense. Army (6-6), which entered the contest ranked second in the nation with an average of 304.4 rushing yards per game, amassed just 33 yards on 14 carries on the ground in the first half and advanced just 153 total yards for the game (vs. an average of 385.5 per game coming into Saturday’s competition), while Navy (4-8) gained just 284 total yards – well below its 330.7 per

game average for the first 11 games.

Those performances did not occur because the players on offense forgot how to play or stopped trying. Football is not played in vacuum – there is always a cause and an effect. In this case, fantastic punting and extraordinary defensive play carried the day. Brief



Photo by Warren.Rosenberg

outbursts of offense came from rare defensive failures. It was classic, hard-defense Army-Navy football.

The punters – Riley Riethman for Navy, Billy Boehlke for Army – both had nine boots, and the vast majority of them pinned the opposition inside its own 30-yard-line. Knowing that a turnover could easily allow the other team to score, the offenses were forced to play ultra-conservatively.

Defensive play is often a matter of anticipation mixed with quick reactions, correct recognition of the threat, and proper execution of fundamental training – characteristics that those who serve in the military utilize every day. Army defenders Leo Lowin (16 tackles), Marquel Broughton (10), Chris Fey (10), Jimmy Ciarolo (nine), and Camden O’Gara (eight) were matched by Navy’s Nick Straw (nine), John Marshall, Gianni Woodson-Brooks and Colin Ramos (eight apiece), and Clay Cromwell (six). They all excelled.

With the score tied 17-17, the second overtime began with a series that ultimately proved decisive. After six running plays, Navy was on the Army 3 in a third-and-goal situation. Anton Hall Jr. took the handoff and tried to fill a gap made by his linemen, but he collided with Army’s Austin Hill, who punched the ball loose. Army’s Darius Richardson recovered it on the Army 1 to end the series. On the ensuing possession that began on the Navy 25, Army knew that a field goal could win, so the offense was more concerned about keeping possession than scoring a touchdown. Gaining just three yards, kicker Quinn Marezki came on and nailed a 39-yard kick just inside the right upright to end a memorable game. It was a case of sweet redemption.

“I was wide right against Troy and it was really tough to let the team down that way,” said the soft-spoken Marezki, referencing a missed field goal in November that cost Army a victory. “I’m really grateful to the team and the coaching staff who put their trust in

me and to the team for putting me in the position to do it again.”

Tied 10-10, the game headed to overtime. On the very first play, the Army offensive line opened a hole and Markel Johnson galloped 25 yards to the left corner of the end zone. Navy immediately responded with QB Xavier

Arline completing his first pass of the day to a wide-open Maquel Haywood on the Army 2, who walked in the endzone to even the score.

Army led 7-3 at the break and appeared to pad its advantage at 8:47 of the third quarter on a 40-yard roll left by Tyhier Tyler into the Navy end zone, but the play was nullified when the Black Knights were assessed a penalty for a block in the back. Momentum shifted at the 4:09 mark when Navy’s Ahmad Bradley pulled out his left guard slot and crossed to the right of center, holding off two Army defenders while Hall

charged 77 yards through the hole and down the middle – the longest running play by Navy in the history of “America’s Game” – for the touchdown and a 10-7 Navy lead. In the final stanza of regulation, Army advanced 25 yards in 7 plays to the Navy 21, setting up Marezki for a 37-yard field goal that knotted the tally at 10-10 with just 1:53 remaining before the end of regular play.

After a scoreless first quarter, Navy took the lead at 12:36 of the second on a 44-yard field goal by Bijan Nichols. With just 1:06 left before intermission, Navy stalled on its own 14 and a late shift of the line enabled Army’s Noah Short to charge through untouched and block the Navy punt. The ball bounced back into the Navy end zone and looked like it might trickle out the back for a touchback, but Jabril Williams got a hand on it, lost it, and finally fell on the pigskin with barely an inch to spare for an Army touchdown.

“They kept fighting,” Monken added. “That’s what’s awesome about this game, what’s awesome about this team. For this senior class, every one of those guys – we’ve got one guy graduating this coming Friday, Tyhier Tyler; the rest of the guys are going to graduate in May. They’re going to take command of soldiers, have to lead soldiers. They will be in much tougher fights with stakes much higher than they were in tonight. To be able to have that grit and that toughness and that belief as leaders, soldiers are going to follow them, and they’re going to follow that lead. That’s what was on display tonight.

“It wasn’t just on our sideline. The other team was fighting that way, too. That’s what’s great about this game and about these teams. We want to win this game. We want to beat their pants off. I want to beat them every time we play ‘em. But I respect the fight that the competitors have in this game. Their guys, our guys. It’s what makes our military the best fighting force this world has ever known, because of people like that leading soldiers.”



From “119 ‘Quotes’ from American Legion Post 119”

#40 I gotta quit drinkin’ these beers — to many calories — I drive down the road with the winder open and gotta deal with a chin flappin’ in the breeze.