Message from the Commander

It’s hard to believe that this is my final article for the Legion Times in my role as Commander. The year has flown by and a new Legionnaire will replace me in less than a month.

Thank you to all the Legion Family members who supported me from the start... a start that was not typical Texas Legion! Your confidence in me, your smiles, your cooperation made my year one that was a team effort.

Your confidence in me gave me the strength to keep moving when some have yet to even acknowledge my victory.

Thank you to those who gave me a chance to use my time and my talents for OUR Legion. Working with many of you was a mutual positive relationship and our Legion grew.

Thank you to our Vice Commander Tom Marty who has traveled our beloved Texas getting members, sharing programs and even working job fairs.

Thank you to OUR state staff for always being there and for helping me make it through these 12 months. I may just stop by on Wednesday to see your smiles and bring donuts! Changing the day of the week for the Commander visit which was historically Thursday. That is also my Bush Library commitment and our Austin crew worked so I could stay on my 18-year-old team. THANK YOU ALL! You made me feel part of the good you all do on a daily basis.

Finally THANK YOU to the better half of the Hince team. 50 years and counting and the American Legion has been a part of the Hince schedule for 30 of those years....

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY. AMEN.

Gerry Hince
Department Commander
hince57@msn.com
(817)266-6893
Post 164 Celebrates Women Veterans Day
Submitted by Jim McGuire

American Legion Post 164 in Katy Texas is very proud to have one of the oldest Woman Veterans to be recognized by the City of Houston this year at their Women Veterans Day Celebration. She is Thelma Williams, and she is 104 years young. Thelma is a 35-year member of The American Legion. She served from 1943 to 1947 in the Women’s Army Corp.

Thelma was born in September of 1918 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. She graduated in the top 10 percent of her high school class. She joined the WAC in 1943 when she was 24 years old. She attended administration school in Arkansas. Then she was transferred to Fort Oglethorpe Georgia. There she did office work for a motor transport company that taught the WACs to drive jeeps, trucks and staff cars. Two years later she went through overseas training and was in the middle of the Atlantic when Japan surrendered. She served in Germany for about a year then headed back to Pennsylvania.

During her 4 1/2 years of service, she served as Assistant Supply Sergeant to Supply Sergeant to Acting First Sergeant and finally First Sergeant. She enrolled in Business school when she was discharged. She hated it. So when she saw an article in the newspaper looking for WACs to go to Japan she inquired and was shipped out. Thelma was able to keep her First Sergeant stripes.

Thelma met Marion “Tex” Williams in Japan Saint Patrick’s Day 1947. They were married 3 months later and spent the next 32 years together, until his death. That was 43 years ago. They had a son and a daughter.

One of Thelma greatest honors was to place a Wreath at The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery several years ago.

During the City of Houston’s Women’s Veterans Day Thelma received a Crystal Plaque and a Proclamation signed by Mayor Sylvester Turner.

Pictured with Thelma are Mayor Turner and 22nd District Commander Jim McGuire.
Do you have an article or news announcement to share with the rest of the Department of Texas? If so, please follow these guidelines for submissions.

- Submit your text in Word format (.doc, .docx) or as a text file (.txt or .rtf) or as a PDF.

- The ideal word count for our format is 200 - 500 words (maximum), preferably with NO DOUBLE SPACING.

- Give your article a TITLE! Create a HEADLINE and save with a proper file name so we can easily recognize it.

- Tell us who the author is, whether it’s you or if you are just forwarding it to us.

- Attach any photos and/or artwork for your article separately in your email. DO NOT simply embed them in your Word or PDF file. Larger photos are best, and high resolution JPG files of 300 dpi or better are preferred. Please name these files accordingly so we can track them along with your article.

- Let us know in your e-mail of any corresponding photo captions, name of the photographer, etc. Please note that due to spacing and layout requirements, we may not be able to use every photo submitted (preferably 2 - 3 photos per article).

- Please spell check everything! Especially people’s names, web addresses, etc. We do our best to catch typos, and make corrections, but sometimes they still slip by. You can help us greatly by simply running the spell check function in your word processing software.

- We PUBLISH on our Website on the FIRST FRIDAY of the Month, with few exceptions. E-mail everything directly to times@txlegion.org by the 20th of every month, for it to appear in the following issue. This way we have plenty of time to work with in case we need to clarify anything with you.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and hope you continue to help us grow and improve The Legion Times!
Castroville Honors America’s Fallen
By Olivia Stone, Anvil Herald Reporter

The Memorial Day Ceremony held Monday, May 29 at September Square opened with Post Commander Jerome Iltis stating, “Historians will remind us that the Declaration of Independence makes reference to God four times. The founding fathers of our country understood that it is by God’s grace that the United States of America would thrive as a nation. They knew that if our nation will be for God, then God will be for our nation; and if God is for us, who can be against us?”

St. Louis Catholic Church pastor Father Jim Fischler, reminded those present of what the day is truly about: “On this day of remembrance, we honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms we enjoy every day.”

Castroville residents gathered to honor the brave men and women, who have given their life to ensure our safety and security.

Mayor Darrin Schroeder read a letter from Governor Abbott that stated, “No one has given more to our nation and the cause of freedom, than our men and women of the US military, especially those who have made the ultimate sacrifice … we must never forget the price they paid.”

“On this day of remembrance, our hearts are torn with sorrow for our lost heroes, yet we are also filled with pride and gratitude for the selfless and courageous way these heroes lived.”

Mayor Schroeder added, “May we honor their sacrifice by living up to the ideals they died defending. By coming together in unity to build a stronger, unified, more prosperous nation.”

Guest speaker, Henry Hernandez, joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1963 and served in Vietnam in 1966-67. He received numerous awards and recognition during his military service.

He said that on his second tour in Vietnam, he knew there was a high probability that he would not return home, so he decided to see a priest and go to confession. This was the day that he met Father Vincent Capodanno.

For his penance, he was to say the Rosary. Mr. Hernandez said he told the Father he did not have a Rosary and told the Father such. Father Capodanno reached into his pocket and gave him his own personal Rosary that he received in Rome. Mr. Hernandez carries it to this day.

Hernandez recalled that after some time, Father Capodanno requested that he be his assistant and bodyguard. Hernandez accepted. Much to his surprise, Father Capodanno chose to spend his time in the field with the Marines because he felt that was where he was needed the most. If a Marine was wounded, Father would turn his back on incoming fire and speak words of comfort to the soldier, Hernandez said. He would also give last rites when needed. Father Capodanno always followed the action, without fear.

Hernandez said he had told him, “You’ve got good connections up there, I don’t.” Father responded with, “Ye of little faith.”

When the Father asked if he had had a chance to say the Rosary, Hernandez responded, “No, we’ve been very busy, to which the Father replied, “So if you need something and you pray to God and God says, I can’t listen to you right now, I’m too busy…”

Father Capodanno’s main message to Hernandez and all Marines, was to say the Rosary as often as you can. “In order to be saved, you must have a daily relationship with God,” Hernandez said.

Orders came for Hernandez to go home. He said he tried to extend his stay, but Father Capodanno refused to put him or any other Marine in harm’s way to protect him.

On September 4, 1967 Father Capodanno was killed in action. He was a posthumous recipient of America’s highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor, for heroic actions above and beyond the call of duty.

“Not only did Father Capodanno save my life,” Hernandez concluded, “he saved my soul.”

May we always remember where our freedom comes from and who is ultimately in charge.
When Post 21 Commander Mary Garcia read that Memorial Day was the most misunderstood holiday, she decided to change that concept.

Holley-Riddle Post 21 and Squadron 21 in the Colony, TX orchestrated an amazing ceremony to bring back the true meaning of Memorial Day and plant the seed for continued reverent remembrance in the future.

“I consider this a teaching moment,” Commander Garcia said. “I believe that veterans and all Americans have an inherent responsibility to keep the spirit of Memorial Day alive and to help prepare our future generations to do the same. Memorial Day is not just about mattress sales and picnics. President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, ‘Those who have long enjoyed such privileges as we enjoy forget in time that men have died to win them.’ Post 21 believes it is our mission to continue to honor and value the sacrifice and contributions of each and every one of them.”

This year’s ceremony, hosted by NFM/Grandscape and held on their outdoor stage in front of about 700 people, included a ceremonial flag folding by the Post Honor Guard with an explanation of the 13 folds. Most people do not know that each fold has a particular meaning. For example, the third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veterans departing our ranks who gave a portion of their lives for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world. The seventh fold is a tribute to our Armed Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that we protect our country and our flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our Republic. Skyla Hood, Post 21 member, explained each fold individually as the Honor Guard slowly and meticulously folded the flag.

This particular funeral flag had its own unique meaning. In May 2007, The American Legion’s National Executive Committee passed Resolution 24, formally endorsing the Missing in America Project (MIAP). This past April, Commander Garcia and Post 21 Legionnaire Jeanie Beal attended a special memorial service at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio. They had the distinct honor of receiving the burial flag of Army Spc 4 Chris Bensing. Specialist Bensing died on August 11, 2021. His cremains were eventually recovered and identified through the efforts of the MIAP program. His flag was folded to pay tribute to all veterans who are finally at rest in their place of honor through the efforts of the Missing in America Project.

For the first time, Post 21 included the Battlefield Cross in their ceremony with a description of the significance of each item. Sgt-at-Arms Mike Korns and Post 21 member Paul Bustos assembled the cross piece by piece, then knelt in honor of the many servicemen and women for whom a Battlefield cross signified their ultimate sacrifice in battle.

(continued next page)
Commander Garcia knew that in order to change the mindset about Memorial Day, she needed to engage the community. “We cannot expect people to remember or understand our military traditions if we stay locked behind our Post doors. We need to reach out and provide opportunities for community organizations to partner with veterans. Many times they truly want to help us - they’re just not sure how.” She called upon The Colony Police Department Honor Guard to present the Colors for the singing of the National Anthem, and Police Department Bagpiper Preston White to end the ceremony with the solemn tones of Amazing Grace on the bagpipes.

Thanks to a great connection between Post 21 and The Daughters of the American Revolution, the Sarah-Kincaid Cooke Chapter in The Colony graciously volunteered to help by making 500 felt poppies by hand and distributing all of them to the attendees. As part of the Memorial Day ceremony, DAR Chapter regent Sally Czerwinski did a heartfelt reading of “We Shall Keep the Faith”, a poem penned by Moina Michael in November 1918.

Relationships have no boundaries. Commander Garcia first met Senior Pastor Dono Pelham and Life Changing Faith Christian Fellowship Church of Frisco, TX when the Post 21 Honor Guard performed military honors for one of the Church members. Since then, Pastor Dono and the Praise team have joined with Post 21 for three different events. The dynamic Praise Team engaged the crowd with songs of praise and worship, bringing another aspect of remembrance and honor to Memorial Day. Senior Pastor Dono Pelham assured everyone that the service of our veterans who have passed on will never be forgotten, and we can all find peace and comfort in this day of reverence.

Mayor of The Colony Richard Boyer presented Commander Garcia with a city proclamation and, together with Pastor Pelham, placed the memorial wreath on the stage.

Perhaps the moment with the biggest emotional impact was the playing of Taps because, with the help of the DAR, hundreds of “In Honor Of” signs were passed out to the crowd where they could write the names of their deceased veterans. As the Honor Guard bugler played Taps and the mournful notes echoed across the landscape, everyone raised their signs in silent homage. Tears flowed among the participants as they honored their loved ones in the reverent tribute.

After the ceremony, dozens of attendees expressed their thanks to Post 21 members for teaching them what the different traditions mean. “I never knew that each fold of the flag had a special meaning, or how the Battlefield cross honors someone killed in battle” said one man, “This event has made such an impact on me because I learned so much about traditions related to Memorial Day.”

Holley-Riddle Post 21 – Leading the way with community outreach, teaching, and involvement.

Veterans strengthening America.
SAN ANTONIO – (June 20, 2023) – The Fred Brock American Legion Post No. 828 Family held their Joint Installations of Officers Ceremony at the post located at 3415 Martin Luther King Drive.


“In June of 2022, I delivered my vision, which is and will continue to be that our Post improves upon itself, which means that we must improve upon ourselves to not only plan and execute the programs of The American Legion but also our local initiatives and programs to help our Veterans and their families,” said Parmer, who also serves as the District 2 representative on the City of San Antonio’s Veterans Advisory Commission. “My theme continues to be “Trust, Transparency and Teamwork” along with my motto of “We are more than just a Bar.”

(continued next page)
Parmer thanked all those who worked with him to make the Post better.

“I am very proud and appreciative of our team, from the executive committee, board of trustees, bar manager and staff, Auxiliary, and Sons of the American Legion, and those who volunteer to prepare meals on Blues Mondays,” said Parmer. “All have put in countless hours of time, and money, to ensure that Post 828 will continue to function.”

Other officers installed were the post’s Board of Trustees and Sons of The American Legion Squadron 828.

Newly elected Auxiliary President Pamela Money and officers of Unit 828 were installed by Past 3rd Division and 20th District President Thelma Harris (828).

Prior to the joint installations, the membership and guests had an opportunity to hear from three of six students, sponsored by the post, who attended Texas Boy State, June 11 – 16.

The Post, which received a Temporary Charter as Post 420-A on Jan. 1, 1946, is named in honor of San Antonio native, U.S. Army Sgt. Fred Brock of the 598th Field Artillery Battalion, 92nd Infantry Division, who died in the line of duty at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., on Aug. 18, 1943. On Aug. 23, 1950, Fred Brock Post No. 420-A was granted a full charter and was redesignated as Post No. 828.

The mission of Post 828 is to enhance the well-being of San Antonio’s veterans, their families, the military, and the community by its devotion to mutual helpfulness.

Hours of operation are Monday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 4 pm – midnight.

For more information about Fred Brock Post 828 visit www.fredbrockpost828.org.
Tynetta Runnels, National Legislative Council Member-Department of Texas Delegation hosted a Forum on June 10th in honor of the 75th Anniversary of Women Veterans Recognition Day. The theme was, “Another Look at Women Veterans of Today”.

In March, while fulfilling her duties as a councilmember in Washington, D.C., she met with her assigned Congressional Representative, Jasmine Crockett.

In their meeting, Runnels was able to give her a rundown of The American Legion’s Legislative agenda and how we could use her support and the support of her colleagues in helping to address The Legion’s cares and concerns when it comes to our nation’s veterans. Both decided to schedule an event for June 10th to speak with veterans.

Panelists:
From Congresswoman Crockett’s Office-Isabella Rios
Barbara Robinson, RN-VA-Federal Women’s Program
Dave Etter-12th District Commander-The American Legion Department of Texas Moderator: Claudia Fowler-Former Radio Host/Community Activist

The panelists and moderator were very knowledgeable in answering the questions that came from the floor of female and male veterans. To include discussion on the expansion of our National Cemeteries, which The Legion supports.

(continued next page)
Today’s Forum, “Another Look at Women Veterans of Today” is to Honor the 75th anniversary of the signing of the Women’s Armed Service Integration Act which legally permitted women to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces in a number of official capacities. Most do not realize that over 2 million women veterans have served our country and this number is rapidly growing.

In addition, over 200,000 are currently defending our freedom at home and abroad. As a society, when Veterans are thought of women almost never come to mind. Things are changing, especially in our Veteran Service Organizations, but more work needs to be done. This is why we are here today – to see how we can help make Women Veterans even more visible throughout our Nation, especially in the States that still do not recognize June 12th as Women Veterans Day.

We are thankful for the hard work and efforts put in to getting Texas to officially observe June 12th as Women Veterans’ Day. Let’s continue with strong efforts to assist others States in doing the same.

THANK YOU to all who assisted in helping to make this event a complete success: Women & Men Veteran attendees, Mrs. Kathy Jones-City of Desoto, Strike A Pose Photo Booth (Fred & Velinda Williams), AaRon’s Catering, Commander Dupree & Metropolitan Post #581, Commander Angelia Herndon & Tommie Robinson Post #802 & its Auxiliary, Ms. Debra Smith, Cupcakes by Frances and SMSgt. Sennie Cox, Jr. for your continued support the past 4 years.
On 28 Jun 2023, members from The American Legion Darren Tate Post 425 Canyon, TX with support from Amarillo VFW Post 1475, came together to donate a WWI Bugle for the Amarillo VA to play TAPS.

Post 425 Member Wayne Powell was contacted by Past VFW West Texas District 9 Commander Rich Herman asking if Wayne was still in possession of the WWI Bugle with speaker. Herman and Powell got together with the VA Hospice in Amarillo and worked the details to make the donation the Amarillo VA Hospital.

Up until now, the Amarillo VA Hospice has been using either a cell phone or a computer to play TAPS as they rolled our Veterans one last time down the hallways. The TAPS was often interrupted by someone calling the cell phone or an ad would start to play.

Now thanks to Darren Tate Post 425 and Amarillo VFW Post 1475, our Hero’s will have TAPS played without interruption on their final stroll through the hallway of the Amarillo VA.
Memorial Day Flag Placement - Dorie E. Miller Post 817
By Cheryl Williams, Adjutant Post 817

The solemn occasion of Memorial Day is special to all of our nation; especially Dorie E. Miller Post 817. It is a tradition of remembrance of those who have sacrificed all for the sake of liberty and justice. Our annual Memorial Day Flag Distribution was held on 2 separate dates due to the expansive nature of the remembrance. The distribution for the south end of the city was held on Thursday, May 25th, with the placement of over 2,000 flags and fresh carnations upon the graves of those who have served this nation. Beaumont United High School’s NJROTC cadets came out to help with this monumental effort.

Beaumont United High School NJROTC cadets with Commander Glen Capenter (L), Gunnery Sergeant Michael Triplett (2nd from R), and Post 817 Member Barry Nix (R).

Commander Clifton Guillory (Far right) and 1st Vice Commander Jerry Tatman (2nd from right) and Motorcyclists prepare to place flags on graves.

A few of the motorcycles
On May 3, 2023, Pack 151 chartered by American Legion Post 174, Den Chiefs had the honor of being the first Scouts, BSA unit to serve as the color guard for the Austin Honor Flight. It was the 83rd Austin Honor Flight.

The Den Chiefs are from Troop 1096 and work with the Cub Scouts in Pack 151. The Scouts did an outstanding job. After the welcome home ceremony, the Scouts stayed to talk to the Veterans and thank them for their service.

American Legion Post 174 Recognizes Scholarship Winner

American Legion Post 174 presented Mary Mackey Decker with a scholarship certificate and a Post Coin for winning the Post $1,000 Scholarship. Mary is the daughter of Colonel John and Mrs. Elizabeth Decker. Mary recently graduated from Georgetown High School. She plans to attend Samford University’s Moffett School of Nursing in Birmingham, AL to pursue her goal of becoming a pediatric nurse practitioner.

Flag Day 2023 at Post 640

McCluskey Post 640 Commander Steve Storey held a Flag Day presentation for local youth at the Navasota Public Library. Children were introduced to flag etiquette and how to show proper respect to our country’s flag. Storey also serves as the 7th District Commander, Department of Texas.
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