A rare flying experience, 75 years after the war

Jake Greeling, member of Post 341, Belle Vista recently had a unique experience thanks to his membership with The American Legion Media Alliance (TALMA) and the Fayetteville, Ark., Air Museum. He relates his adventure in the following story.

"On Labor Day weekend, the museum was hosting a display of World War II aircraft at Drake Field in Fayetteville in honor of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. Being a fan of history and having a love of photography, I called the Air Museum to see if I could get media credentials. When I identified myself as a member of TALMA, the museum representative came back with an offer I couldn’t refuse. I was offered a spot on the B-17 for a short flight into Missouri and back to Fayetteville. Obviously, I was elated and graciously accepted.

However, just like in the military, the best-laid plans often have to be modified. The B-17 lost its No. 3 engine in route from Houston to Fayetteville and landed instead in Texarkana for repairs. Needless to say, I was disappointed. But Laci Shuffield, director of the Air Museum, came to my rescue and coordinated a spot for me on the B29 Superfortress, which was flying at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 5. The B-29 was joined by a T-6 Texan and a twin-engine Beech Navy Transport.

There were coronavirus-related procedures to follow. So after being tested for temperature and given a mask I was ready to board. Now I must say boarding the B-29 is a lot different than modern day aircraft. You actually use ladders to climb up and get into the plane. The crews who flew these planes had to be on the slim side and very agile.

Unlike its predecessor the B-29 Superfortress was designed as a high-altitude bomber. And unlike the B-17 it was pressurized so it could fly in excess of 30,000 feet. This may have been one of its best defense’s as the Japanese fighters couldn’t fly that high in most cases and if they did, they couldn’t catch the Superfortress.

The B-29 joined the war effort in May 1944. Like the B-17 did in the European campaign, the B-29 served as the workhorse in the Pacific. In fact, it was the plane that delivered the atomic bombs on Japan that put an end to World War II.

After a briefing from pilot Tim Wiebe, we boarded and then taxied to runway one six. As the pilots went through their checklist, we listened to the roar of the huge piston engines. When they revved up the engines, this 70-plus-year-old aircraft began to shudder and shake. Once they released the brakes, we zoomed down the runway, reaching 130 mph before lifting off.

This was truly an awesome experience for me. After reaching cruising altitude we were allowed to unbuckle and move about the airplane to get better views. The best view I had was in the tail gunners’ seat. The difficult part was getting there. The opening is so small you have to literally crawl on your hands and knees to get there. But once there, you were treated to an unobstructed view of the world below and behind you.

The tail gunners couldn’t make it to their seats with a parachute because it was so constricted that they wouldn’t fit. They would have had to leave their parachute near the rear exit door. If something happened and the crew had to bail out, the tail gunner was in real trouble. Not only would he have to crawl through a small tube, then he would have to put on his parachute. Chances are that many of them didn’t have enough time.

This whole experience gave me a real appreciation for the crews of the Army Air Corps.

Reprinted from The American Legion website Pictures on page 4
Message from the Commander

Doyle Batey, Commander-
Department of Arkansas

My fellow Legionnaires, here we are nearly eight months since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in the U.S... It doesn’t seem like things are getting much better. One thing for sure, there are no true experts on this virus. The medical world is learning as they go. The impact on our way of life has been enormous. So many events have been cancelled. The Department Executive Committee has not been able to meet in person since last January. We hope to have a Mid-Winter Conference this coming January but even that is in doubt at this time. I encourage you all to be safe and follow city, state, and national guidelines involving COVID-19. I ask you all to pray for national healing and Divine guidance in these troubling times.

It is time to begin the membership renewal process. Check your membership card to see if you have your 2021 card. If you do not have a 2021 membership card, call your post adjutant or post membership chairman and let them know that you want to renew your membership. It is more important than ever that we keep our membership numbers up so that we can lobby our state legislature and our congress to preserve our veterans’ benefits. We cannot allow congress to make budget cuts at the expense of national defense or the care of our veterans. We need you to renew and support our efforts to preserve our hard won benefits.

It is important that you perform a couple of critical functions at your post meetings. As a minimum, we should salute the colors, say the pledge of allegiance (including “under God”), say a prayer, remember the POWs/MIA, and recite our preamble. The preamble is a reminder of why we are here and what we stand for. We should be ever mindful of those values. Our preamble does not differentiate between class, creed, rank, color, or sex. We are all legionnaires with the same rights and benefits as all other legionnaires. We must work together to overcome any prejudices that might be harbored. Welcome all comrades to your post. United we stand, divided we fall.

Lastly, we have a new membership chairman for the 2020-2021 membership year. Chris Affolter, from Post 29 in Siloam Springs, is stepping up to take on the enormous task of increasing our membership. Chris is a young legionnaire with lots of energy, enthusiasm and ideas. I am impressed with his level of motivation and eagerness to make our department bigger and better. Area Commanders, District Commanders, and Post Commanders, I encourage you to work closely with Chris as he attempts to increase your/our membership. Shortly, you will be hearing from Chris. Be prepared to roll up your sleeves and go to work on membership with him. Until we meet again in person, may God bless you all and keep you all safe.

NEC Note

Greetings fellow Legionnaires. I hope this finds you all well and coping healthfully with the current pandemic. This virus is certainly hanging around a long enough time and you’re probably getting a little tired of the restrictions. Although the restrictions are getting tiresome, to say the least, they are necessary if we’re going to beat this bug, so I hope you’re all following the CDC guidelines so you can all stay well.

The positive aspect I’ve found with this confinement, is that I’ve had the opportunity to get some projects done at home such as cleaning out closets, and for our post, such as updating our post constitution and by-laws, that I never seemed to have enough time to get done previously.

Our post is currently meeting via the internet on zoom but will have its first in-person meeting in November, using CDC guidelines and with the online meeting as an option. I am very interested in hearing how and what your posts are doing and also how you are doing, personally, coping with this pandemic.

National HQ continues to conduct business with their staff working from home and conducting meetings virtually. The annual fall meetings of the NEC, which are always held in October, will be held October 14-15 and will be held over the internet. I understand we have 50 resolutions to vote on so I should have some news for you in our next newsletter.

On a personal note, I’m recovering well from my third surgery, a total hip replacement. This will be, hopefully, my last surgery for a long, long time. I should be in great shape to hit the road again when all the pandemic restrictions have been removed. I’m sure looking forward to it!

In the meantime, until we meet again, please continue to take care of yourselves and don’t hesitate to contact me any time.

Mary Erdman, NEC
(501)922-6287 (501)454-7357(cell)
maryerdman@gmail.com
DEPARTMENT-LEVEL CORRESPONDENCE

Membership Chairman Letter

I know that every membership chairman has given you the same old gobbley goop about membership being the bloodlife of the organization and that all of the percentages matter. I'm not going to go into that because I feel that it has been said year after year after year and it does help to remind us of these facts, but we need to look towards the future and actually do something about those facts. So, I want us to think of membership in a new light and start to think outside the box. If our posts base their membership plan on five simple words it'll work out in a very positive manner.

1. AWARENESS is about us knowing who we are, what we do, and how we do things. Awareness is also about advertising in the local newspapers, social media, websites, and getting the information out to those prospective recruits for our great organization.

2. RECRUITING is a standard amongst all nonprofit organizations. We need to think outside the box to recruit new perspective members. Yes, we know that the standard recruiting booth does bring in members, and we can give information about our great organization. There are also other ways to achieve these goals. I'm hoping to give more information on how to recruit new members in the future.

3. ENGAGEMENT of our members must be paramount. Many of the new members that are recruited into the American Legion want a sense of belonging. By creating an engagement program that can include award ceremonies, initiations, fishing trips, shooting adventures, and many other things. This will give them a sense of belonging, and comradeship. Even in this time of covid, there's always something that we could do to engage our members.

4. RENEWALS are a key essential to our organization. We really need to get on the phone, knock on doors, and go see those that are in places where we can't reach all the time. Possibly even doing a post revitalization by doing renewals, and also working the post 1000 list from National.

5. REINSTATEMENT is when we try to recruit back those members who did not renew. We really need to find out why they didn't come back to us, and ask them if we engaged them? If we don't know there is a problem, we can't fix it.

By setting up a basic post membership plan on these five words (awareness, recruiting, engagement, renewal, and reinstatement) could give our posts a little more success in managing the members. I will be sending out more resources based on these five words to assist us in creating and holding on to our membership. Remember my membership team and I are here to help. I'm only a phone call away to be able to assist you. We have a concise plan with goals in mind that are achievable with the objectives that will hopefully help our membership throughout the department of Arkansas.

For God and country,
Chris Affolter Membership Chair,
Department of Arkansas, (909) 251-2464

Jerry B. Bieker Candidate for NW Area Vice Commander

I am announcing my candidacies for NW Area Commander. I have been a member of the American Legion for 4 years. I have held the following officer positions:

Post 131 Leslie, AR: Second Vice Commander, First Vice Commander and Commander. Achieved over 100% membership.

Second District: Second Vice Commander, Adjutant, Financial Officer and Commander. Achieved over 100% membership.

I served 20 years in the US Navy. I spent 6 years in the Submarine force working on Nuclear Missiles. I then changed my rating (job code) to intelligence, I provided support for Desert Storm and then finished my career doing Law Enforcement and Physical Security. My last tour was at Tinker AFB in Oklahoma City.

Member of the DAV, Chapter 6, Harrison, AR. Currently hold the position of Chaplin.

Member of the Searcy County Veterans Memorial Association and a member of the Board.

Dr. Jerry B. Bieker Jr.
Commander the Great Second District
Jbieker59@gmail.com

Family Caregiver act goes into effect Oct. 1

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) offers enhanced clinical support for caregivers of eligible Veterans who are seriously injured. VA is making changes to improve and expand the PCAFC. These changes are described in VA’s Final Rule – Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Improvements and Amendments Under the VA MISSION Act of 2018. Under the new “Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) Improvements and Amendments” regulation, RIN 2900-AQ48, PCAFC is expanding. The regulation goes into effect on October 1, 2020. The expansion will occur in two phases, after the VA Secretary certifies to Congress that VA’s new caregiver information technology system is fully implemented.

- The first phase will include eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service on or before May 7, 1975. Veterans of WWII, Korea and Vietnam Veterans will be able to apply after the official launch date, to be announced in late August.

- The final phase will occur two years following the first date of expansion and will expand PCAFC eligibility to include eligible Veterans from all eras regardless of when the serious injury was incurred or aggravated.

For information visit VA caregiver support or call 855-260-3274
Pony Express riding 2,300 miles for Legacy Scholarship

By Jeric Wilhelmsen, American Legion

The 2020 American Legion Legacy Run was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but that does not mean the nation’s highways won’t see a caravan of patriotic American Legion Riders crossing the country by motorcycle and three-wheeler, raising scholarship funds. The Pony Express Ride, involving American Legion departments from California to Indiana, takes off Wednesday, Oct. 7, for a 2,300-mile journey that will wrap up in Indianapolis on Oct. 13.

The ride, like the annual Legacy Run, will benefit the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, which provides college money for the children of U.S. military personnel who lost their lives or became over 50% disabled while on active duty since Sept. 11, 2001.

Traditionally, Legacy Run checks collected on the ride are presented onstage at the national convention of The American Legion, which this year was forced to cancel due to the pandemic. American Legion Riders across the country have adapted and overcome to find other ways to conduct the ride. Virtual Legacy Runs and in-state rides have sprung up throughout the nation, raising money to assist the students.

The Pony Express Ride begins at Hollywood Post 43 where the California contingent will depart before the sun rises on Oct. 7. As the ride moves east, American Legion Riders from various departments will join in.

The first stop will be at Post 86 in Overgaard, Ariz., where riders from the Department of Arizona will join the group. The morning of Oct. 8, the new group will start one of the longest legs of the journey and make their way to Roswell, N.M.

On Oct. 9, the riders continue their journey to Lubbock, Texas, where participants from the Department of Texas will join in. On Oct. 10, it will be a short hop to Oklahoma City to meet riders from the Department of Oklahoma.

The ride is scheduled to reach St. Roberts, Mo., on Oct. 11 where they will prepare for the final leg of the journey. On Oct. 12, the group will have a half-day ride to Plainfield, Ind., just outside of Indianapolis, home of The American Legion National Headquarters.

Presentation of checks to National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford will occur the morning of Oct. 13, 2020, in front of national headquarters building.

“We ride to show our determination to meet the mission and to honor our pledge to the children and their parents,” American Legion Riders Advisory Committee Vice Chairman Steve Ridenour explained of the event.

There is still time to donate to the Legacy Scholarship Fund and have it count toward this year’s Legacy Run.

Because of current restrictions and precautions, the Pony Express Ride will not be collecting checks along the route like the Legacy Run normally does. Donations may be made online by visiting legion.org and clicking on the button to donate to the virtual Legacy Run. Or go directly to https://www.legion.org/riders/legacyrun/donation to make a gift.
New Arkansas Post #1 Commander
Barbara Johnson, PhD

Dr. Barbara Johnson, PhD was recently unanimously elected to serve as our Post 1 Commander. She has strong credentials as a Veteran and is both a dual member of the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary. She is also a dual member of the American Legion Auxiliary for the past four years. Currently, she is the membership chair and the Treasurer for the American Legion Auxiliary. She has strong credentials as a Veteran and is both a dual member of the American Legion Auxiliary and the American Legion.

She served as the Finance Officer for the M.M. Eberts American Legion for the past six years, as well as the membership chair and the Treasurer for the American Legion Auxiliary for the past four years. Currently, she is still serving as President of the MM Eberts Post 1 American Legion Auxiliary. She has made history for Post 1/Unit 1 by being the first Post Commander to have served as a Past Arkansas Department American Legion Auxiliary President, and to serve as the Post Commander and Unit President simultaneously. She is also the first woman of color, Veteran, and PhD to have held these positions simultaneously.

Since being in the organization, she has attended numerous conferences and taken classes in order to learn about the components, tenets, organization, and general functioning of the American Legion. Utilizing her diverse abilities, she is looking forward to attending as many Post functions as possible. She is also committed to bringing as many community events as possible into the Post, and making the surrounding neighborhood, members, and friends aware that MM Eberts Post 1 is a vibrant Post, focused on maintaining its proud 100 Year tradition, and continuing the mission of the American Legion. The Legionnaires of Post 1 are honored and proud to have her as our 2020-2021 Commander.

VA encouraging Veteran to get Flu shot
Free Veteran Drive-Through Flu Clinic in Little Rock and North Little Rock

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas. Flu season has arrived in Arkansas amid the COVID-19 pandemic, but Veterans can take steps to fight the flu by taking advantage of Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System’s free flu shot clinics, including convenient drive-through options.

Beginning Monday, September 14, flu clinics will be set up at the John L. Mc Clellan Memorial Veterans Hospital in Little Rock, and at the Eugene J. Towbin VA Medical Center in North Little Rock.

A walk-in clinic will operate in the Mc Clellan atrium, near the Dermatology clinic and ENT clinic waiting area, and a drive-through clinic will be open in the parking lot of the hospital Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

A walk-in clinic will be open in room 1C-100 of the Towbin facility Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and a drive-through clinic will be open in lane 1 of the COVID-19 screening area of the north parking lot of the facility Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Veterans will also be able to get their flu shot at the primary care and geriatric care clinics, and at all eight of CAVHS’ Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

The Flu vaccine is a Veteran’s best protection against the flu, which usually begins in the fall and may continue through late spring. Those at a higher risk of illness and flu-based complications include: Veterans age 65 and older; Veterans with health problems such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung disease and other chronic illnesses or conditions; pregnant Veterans; caregivers of Veterans with health problems.

Flu viruses can change over time, so every year the vaccine is updated to protect against the viruses most likely to spread that year. More information can be found at https://www.publichealth.va.gov/flu/

DEPARTMENT SWEEPSTAKE WINNERS
$1,000 – Walter Fassbender – Beebe
$750 – Curnie Bryant, Jr – Little Rock
$500 – Frank Miller, Jr – Springtown, TX
$400 – William Holzknecht – Mayflower
$100 – Clarence Gray – Subiaco
$100 – Andy Hickman – Mt Vernon
$100 – Weldon Lewis – Jacksonville
$100 – Charles Bothwell – Greensboro, SC
$100 – Paul Anderson – Ft Smith
$100 – Daniel Enger – Bella Vista
FROM THE DESK OF PRESIDENT NANCY

First of all, I hope that this finds all of you safe and well. There have been a number of unpleasant events since we have been able to be together. In addition to COVID-19, we have had racial demonstrations, some were peaceful and some not so peaceful. The Auxiliary office sustained window damage during the initial demonstration and although we have insurance, we did have to pay the deductible. The windows have been replaced and we are altering and installing new curtains. In addition, for various reasons we had some members resign from the Department Executive Board (DEC). We would like to welcome Jeremy Dillon, Julie Landrum, Beverly Mulkey and Mary Erdman to the DEC for 2020-2021.

I wish I could include a list of events and dates of events planned to serve and assist our veterans and their families, but at this time we are not able to definitely plan normal activities. We are still hopeful that we will be able to have a Fall Conference and Gift Shop. We have rescheduled our National President, Nicole Clapp, to be in Little Rock, January 6-10, 2021, during the time scheduled for Mid-Winter, but her visit could be canceled at any time.

In the meantime, our Auxiliary members have not been idle in their service to others. The sound of sewing machines have been heard in several areas of the state as Auxiliary members have been busy sewing hundreds of face masks that have been donated to various facilities while other members have been busy sewing bags for the Christmas Shop. Others have been busy checking on family, friends and neighbors, providing meals, and donating food to various churches and food banks. There are so many more good deeds being done, I hope that members and units are keeping up with the activities and hours to report on our year end reports.

A Department Executive Committee meeting will be scheduled in September. The room available to us has a maximum capacity of 25, allowing for the social distancing requirements. DEC members will be admitted first. If there is room, guests will be admitted until the capacity of 25 has been reached. We will continue to follow City of Little Rock regulations and the Governors directive of wearing masks and social distancing. We are looking forward to reopening the Department office on a full time basis in the near future. If you are coming to the office, please be prepared to follow these guidelines.

Nancy
American Legion Auxiliary News

MEMBERSHIP - Patricia L. Murray, Chairman

It’s been a strange 2020 so far but we’re making it. What about dues? 2020 dues can be paid throughout the year 2020, it’s never too late. We are collecting 2021 dues now, don’t wait to send them in to your Unit so that they can be sent to the department Headquarters. Don’t hold dues! It is very important to realize that by paying your 2021 dues and not your 2020 dues, you have a break in continuous membership years. Look at your membership card closely and see what year is listed as your join date (Member since)! Did you forget to pay your dues one year? You can get that year back by paying back dues to your Unit, Department and National. Female veterans still have their first year dues waived. It’s not just important to recruit female veterans, it’s important to retain them as members. National tells us although female veterans join our wonderful organization, they don’t stay as members very long. Recruit and retain! Be creative in reaching your members. If you are unable to hold face to face meetings, don’t lose contact with members; calling, sending a card or emailing your members go a long way in retaining their membership. Check with your Legion Post, if a new member has joined in the past year or so, find out if they have families in their family that qualify as members. We must work together as Legion Family on membership. Please contact me at patricia.murray@att.net if you have any questions or need any help.

Poppy Committee- Nora Earnest

As the National President is scheduled to be in Little Rock during the time scheduled for our Mid-Winter Conference, the Poppy Committee would love for her to see the Poppy Posters that will be created at different grade levels in the school system. We are going to have a POPPY POSTER CONTEST starting September 15 through December 15, 2020. Poppy Poster Contests are held in local schools for students in grades 2 through 12. Guidelines will be sent to Units in the next Unit mailing. Please contact and work with the schools in your area so that many children can be involved. If you have questions or need help please contact me at noralearnest@hotmail.com.

Chaplains Corner- Chaplain Debra Woody

To all of my Auxiliary Family – I know that we are all trying to adjust to our new way of life, even though it has been 6 months since our way of life has been turned upside down. We don’t understand why all of this is happening, but just remember God is still on His throne and we are His children. We must continue to pray and uplift each other and by staying strong for our Veterans and their families. I know we are saddened by the loss of some of our friends. But please keep praying for those that are sick and hurting. Remember to trust and obey the Lord and He will see us through this difficult time. May you find comfort and peace in the name of Jesus.

COOKBOOK – Betty Minor

The American Legion Auxiliary Cookbook is in the office and available for purchase. The hardback cookbooks are $15.00 each and must be paid for at the time of pickup. We are not mailing the cookbooks. However, if you are going to be in Little Rock and want to purchase a cookbook, please call the office at 501-374-5836 to make arrangements to come by. Also, we may be able to make arrangements to get prepaid copies to your area via a “road trip relay.”

Finance Committee – Ada Heath

Your Finance Committee has been working diligently to prepare a budget for 2021. An “Estimated Income/Expense” document will be sent to the DEC and a “face-to-face” discussion will be held at the next DEC meeting. This past year hasn’t been ideal for our Auxiliary thanks to COVID-19. Money that we depended on through our convention didn’t happen...so we need YOUR help! Those items on the FINANCE STATEMENT asking your Unit to provide...still needed! Remember the Finance Committee challenge on your cookbooks? (10 cents per cookbook)...still needed. Purchasing our newly published Auxiliary Cookbook...an order form is now available. The “bakeless bake sale” (President Nancy’s project)...recipe and money still needed.....and, if you didn’t count your shoes and send in 25 cents per pair...still needed. Expenses still happen even though we haven’t been able to meet together. Support your Department....!

Girls State – Charley McAfee, Chair and Charlotte Wilson, Director

The American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) Arkansas Girls State will be held May 30 through June 4, 2021 at Harding University, Searcy, Arkansas. The ALA and the Girls State Staff will continually monitor the COVID pandemic and make plans accordingly for the 2021 session. Regular updates and instructions will be available in late fall on our website Arkansasgirlsstate.com. Currently, we are working closely with the Finance Committee to prepare a working budget for the 2021 session. This will be discussed at the upcoming Department Executive Committee Meeting to be held in September.

We were deeply saddened that the 2020 ALA Girls State Session could not be held. The staff had worked hard to have a great program ready for 2020 and only canceled when we realized the responsibility of keeping 900 girls virus free. We are continuing ahead in the hope that the virus will be under control by the Spring of 2021.

Education Committee, ALA—Barbara Johnson

This year, it would be nice to have enough units doing activities in education to combine and develop a Department Education Program. We already know that many units are doing activities that involve schools and students. Please, send me a text at (501) 786-8039 or just a note at geobarbara83@gmail.com with your unit information and a sentence or two about what was done in the education program.

School has just begun but it is not too early to begin working the Education Program of the American Legion Auxiliary. Scholarship applications and more information is available for downloads on the national website, www.ALAforVeterans.org/scholarships. A. Children of Warriors National Presidents’ Scholarship B. The Non-Traditional Student Scholarship C. Spirit of Youth Scholarship D. Junior Auxiliary Loyalty Scholarship

Get this information to the counselors at your local high schools. All scholarship applications have a deadline of March 1, 2021. Mid-year reports are due in Education this year. Please submit a narrative report by December 15, 2020.

If there is anything that you need from me, please do not hesitate to ask. Education is the key to our very existence, and we must continue to strive to ensure that no child is left behind in any way. It is vital that we support the children of veterans and servicemembers to the best of our abilities.
QUICK NEWS

♦ 15,000 face masks have been donated to the Department of Arkansas through National Headquarter from the country of Taiwan. Contact the Department Adjutant to arrange picking some up.

♦ The Arkansas Legionnaire is seeking an applicant for the position of Editor. Please contact Department Headquarters for more information.

Tribute to James Rubright

I am really saddened to report that our friend, Jim Rubright passed away on September 13th. Jim was such a kind man and always had a kind word for everyone he spoke to. He will be greatly missed. He was such a calm voice in the sea of chaos which often surrounds us. Rest in peace my friend. Thank you for your service and all you have done for the American Legion.

My heart and my prayers go out to his family, please keep them in your prayers..

Doyle Batey,
Department Commander