VETERANS MEMORIAL BRIDGE SIGNS DEDICATED

New Sign Renames Broadway Bridge as The Veterans Memorial Bridge

A dedication ceremony was held October 21st at the North Little Rock side of the Veterans Memorial Bridge, formally the Broadway bridge. Dignitaries were on hand including Lieutenant Governor Tim Griffin and Congressman French Hill to unveil the final chapter of the project, naming the bridge.

Construction on the new bridge completed in February of 2017 with a soft opening on March 1st without much fanfare. On April 6th, 2017, the new Veterans Memorial Bridge was dedicated in honor of all veterans.

Lt Governor Griffin asked why would we expend the resources to construct such a exquisite bridge as this when for utilitarian purposes, a simple design would have sufficed? In answering his own question, he stated that “this is what a free society does – to commit to future generations that this is what matters to our community.”

Master of ceremonies was Legionnaire Keith Dover. The events was well attended by representatives from Little Rock and North Little Rock along with several veteran groups from around Arkansas. The event concluded with the unveiling of signs that are placed at both entrances to the bridge.

“Christmas is not a time or a season but a state of mind. To cherish peace and good will, to be plentiful in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.”
Calvin Coolidge
Message from the Commander

Doyle Batey, Commander
Department of Arkansas

December 2020 is here already. By the time you receive your copy of this Legionnaire, Christmas will have come and gone as well as New Year’s 2021. I hope you and your family had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May we all be reminded of the reason for the season, the birth of Christ our Lord. May this same Christ protect you and comfort you during these troubling times. The year 2020 will be recorded as one of the darkest times in world history. The effects of the virus will be felt for many months or even years to come. Please take care of each other and take proper precautions to protect yourself and your loved ones. Membership in all of our posts is suffering as a result of the Covid-19 virus. I want to encourage each of you to help us by pulling out your renewal notice and sending in your dues. Your financial support whether by donations or simply by paying your annual dues is desperately needed to help us continue our veterans and community programs. Your renewal makes a difference and we deeply appreciate your loyalty. Legionnaires have been making a difference for over 100 years.

The January 2021 Mid-Winter Conference which was to be held at the Wyndham Hotel in North Little Rock has been officially canceled. There will be a meeting of the Department Executive Committee in January to take its place. Because of the covid-19 restrictions, only the 26 voting members of the executive committee will be allowed to attend the meeting in person. All past department commanders will be asked to call into the meeting via teleconference. Not every voting member will be in attendance.

Those who are sick, quarantined or uncomfortable about attending in person will also be permitted to call into the meeting. It is important to take care of ourselves and stay safe. I, again, encourage you to follow all local, state and national government guidelines to protect yourself and your loved ones from this pandemic. All that we are being told about the virus may or may not be based on science or fact but we must take all possible steps to protect ourselves. Many in our Arkansas American Legion family have been diagnosed with the covid. I myself was admitted to the COVID ward at Baptist hospital but have recovered. All of us who have experienced it firsthand will tell you to take this seriously. It is deadly and we want you to stay around for many more years.

Our new membership chairman has been very busy. He is attempting to contact all the district commanders and post commanders to offer his assistance. He cannot go to all the posts but he can share his knowledge and skills with you. If he hasn’t been in touch with you, please call him so he can help. Every post can use his support. I guarantee that you will not be disappointed. Membership member Chris Affolter can be reached at (909) 251-2464. His email is: chris.silverpawranch@gmail.com Chris also has an article in this edition of the Legionnaire.

In closing, I want to wish you all a blessed Holiday Season and pray that you all stay in God’s mercy, love and protection cover your family. God bless the U.S.A.

NEC Note

Greetings my fellow Legionnaires. Hopefully this finds you staying healthy and looking forward to the Christmas season and a better new year than 2020. This past year has been a difficult, trying time for all mankind around the world and so many are getting weary of the necessary, unplanned changes that have taken place in our lives. Those of us who have been in the military, have an advantage over those who have not served, as we have the toughness and stamina to withstand adversity and hardships and recognize the value of following directives even when we don’t like them. We will get through this with God’s help one day at a time and by helping bolster up those that need it. The Buddy Checks are an especially good way to do this, so please continue to check on your fellow veterans and their families.

I need to share some of the latest information from our National HQ which will especially delight all you NASCAR fans. As a marketing strategy, The American Legion has entered into an agreement with NASCAR and the Jimmie Johnson/Chip Ganassi racing team. This is absolutely nothing like the race car that was sponsored years ago. The American Legion will sponsor Honda car number 48 in the NTT Indy Car Series for a total of seventeen (17) races including the world famous Indy 500. With thirty (30) million Indy race car fans, this sponsorship is projected to benefit The American Legion in the following ways: 1) Visibility of The American Legion logo on the car and information provided at all races 2) partnerships with well-known corporations such as: McDonalds, GM, Honda, Sherwin Williams and others 3) fundraising from corporations and individuals 4) National Media exposure which is much less costly than previous advertising campaigns (we’ve already been on Fox News with a lengthy interview with Jimmie Johnson) 5) membership incentives for Departments and Posts 6) sales of racing items from Emblem Sales. More information will be forthcoming as The American Legion embarks on this marketing strategy to let the public know who we are, what we do, and invite other veterans to join us!

In closing, I want to wish you all a blessed Holiday Season and pray that you all stay in God’s protective arms now and in the New Year.

As always you can contact me via email maryrdrmn@gmail.com or call (501)922-6287 or (501)454-7357(cell)
Kevin Caldwell - Candidate for Department Commander

I am Kevin Caldwell, I would like to be your next Department of Arkansas Commander.

Roughly ten years ago I stood before the Department Convention attendees and stated, “I am the youngest legionnaire in this room, but I know I’m not the youngest legionnaire in this Department. If we don’t start doing something to get the younger legionnaires to participate we will cease to exist.” Here we are a decade down the road, and there have been a few positive changes, however more can be done to engage the younger legionnaires and Veterans.

During the past ten years I have been, Post 14 Adjutant (6 years); Poinsett County Commander; District 5 Sgt-at-Arms; District 5 Commander (2 years); and the Northeast Area Vice Commander. I have attended and participated in every Mid-Winter Conference and Department Convention for the past ten years, and I have served on the Convention Committee, for the past four years.

For the past eleven years, I have coordinated the Boys State and Girls State programs for Harrisburg High School and assisted with those programs for the Marked Tree and Trumann High School as well. Additionally, for the past 6 years I have directed the Harrisburg area and Poinsett County Veterans Day parade and events, with the assistance of the local mayor. Along with baseball coaches from two schools we have fielded an American Legion Baseball team and provided uniforms for the players.

I believe in the Four Pillars of the American Legion, and I believe that the posts and its members should be proactive in local communities.

During my time at the different commander positions, I have learned about the other posts, and the ways they conduct business and local events. This has helped me grow and expand my knowledge of the Legion, along with the experience of ‘that that works here, may not work there’. I feel that if we don’t start working to “bridge the gap” between the senior Department Leaders and our younger legionnaires, our cause and knowledge may be lost.

I ask for your vote and support. Let us work together for the security of the next 100 years of the American Legion.

THANK YOU
KEVIN CALDWELL FOR STATE COMMANDER

Jerry Bieker – Candidate for Northwest Area Vice Commander

I am announcing my candidacy for NW Area Vice 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 second year as 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. I hold a Master’s Degree in Christian Education and Doctorate’s in Biblical Studies and Divinity. I taught 4th and 5th grade math and one semester at Texas University. I am a member of the Leslie Assembly of God.

Married to my wife Leslie Carol for 24 years, 4 Children, 7 Grand-children and 2 great-grandchildren.

William Sheets—Candidate for Southeast Area Vice Commander

Fellow Legionnaires, I am running for SE Area Vice Commander for Department of Arkansas once again. I served in this Position back during the Centennial Year and was excited about the ability to visit many posts and Districts and help in any way that I could. My Bio has changed somewhat from the last time I wrote one, in that, I have completed more training for The American Legion with the latest being the inaugural class for Department Arkansas American Legion College. I am excited to once again work with the 4 Districts of the South East Area and still continue with the training program that was started back in 2019. I would ask for your support and vote for me in this position.

Ricky Hendricks - Candidate for Southwest Vice Commander

American Legion Post 54 of DeQueen and the 12th District are proud to announce their support for Ricky W. Hendricks for Southwest Area Vice Commander of the American Legion Department of Arkansas for the year 2020-2021. Ricky currently serves as Commander of Post 54 in DeQueen, AR. Ricky also served as Quartermaster for Post 4521 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in DeQueen. He has also served as Chaplain for Post 4521.

He is dedicated to helping other veterans in the community thru availability to VA and ministry work in the local church. Ricky served with Arkansas Army National Guard where served with the ranking of Staff Sargent.

He was deployed to Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom II. Where he received 2 Purple Hearts for injuries in the line of duty. He was a team leader and a squad leader. A member of Charlie Company 1/153rd.

Earned the combat infantry badge and combat patch. His service was from 1986-1991 and again from 2000-2006.

Ricky is married to Trisha (Wadlow) Hendricks for 13 years. Ricky would appreciate your consideration for him for the office of Southwest Area Vice Commander of the American Legion Department of Arkansas.
NEWS STORIES FROM AROUND THE DEPARTMENT

Department Service Officer Report

Greetings, Legionnaires. It is an honor to serve as the Department Service Officer for the Department of Arkansas. I know this has been a trying year for most of us, and I cannot wait until we can get back to some assemblance of normalcy. Until then, I would like to update you on some of the happenings in the Veteran Community that may be of assistance to you.

First, to those that are impacted by Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Medical and Prescription Co-Payments, the suspension of the collection action for Co-Payments enacted in April 2020 will end on December 31, 2020. What this means is that the printing and mailing of monthly patient statements will commence on January 21, 2021. If applicable, please review your billing statement for instructions on when and how to pay. Debt relieve programs are available at: https://www.va.gov/health-care/pay-copy-bill/financial-hardship/

Secondly, the Department of Veterans Affairs has created five new forms to be used in lieu of the current VA Form 21-4138, Statement in Support to Claim:

- VAF 20-10206 - FOIA/Privacy Act Request
- VAF 20-10207 - Priority Processing Request
- VAF 20-10208 - Document Evidence Submission
- VAF 20-10212 - Ch 31 Request for Assistance

I know some may be asking the question, “Why new forms?” Simply put, this is in effort to go to a more standardized claim form system. The VA Form 21-4128, Statement in Support of Claim is a multi-purpose form and it can be confusing to determine exactly what is being requested by the claimant. These standardized claim forms will eliminate a lot of the confusion in hopes of improving the timeliness as it relates to meeting the needs of the claimant.

Finally, I would like to schedule a Service Officer Training and Claims Clinic during the first part of the year. Please contact me at 501-374-9002 so I can get some input on dates and times from our Post Service Officers that are interested in training. Thank you in advance for your patience and understanding.

Antoine “Tony” Gordon, Department Service Officer

Membership Chairman Report

Legionnaires, Friends, and Patriots, We are now in 52nd place out of 55. This is not a good thing. I would like to propose a new and old strategy that can work for our renewals. The Buddy Check!! If we hold Post revitalizations this can work even with COVID-19 precautions in mind. Here is how we do it: 1. Post adjutant goes online, asks the district, or calls me to get a list of the members that have not renewed. 2. The post adjutant and the first vice commander organize officers and members to make calls for the to the unrenewed members. 3. Pick a date to do it or completion date. 4. You can meet in a central location or have this Buddy Check Committee call from their home. 5. Post adjutant and First Vice splits up the list and gets it to the members of the Buddy Check Committee. 6. Make the calls. 7. Follow up with a short letter and a self-addressed envelope to those that said they will renew. 8. Continue to call the others that you have not been able to contact. I hope that this helps. For more information on buddy checks The American Legion website has it. https://www.legion.org/publications/247460/buddy-check-event-toolkit One Last thing, there is an easy way for you to transfer members into your Post and that is Post 1000ad. This is only a holding post until either a Post finds this member or the member finds a post. If you need assistance getting this information, contact your district or me. Know lets get out there and get some members!! P.S. I am in the process of calling all District Commanders so please contact me so I can help you. For God and Country.

Chris Affolter Membership 909-251-2464 chris.armembership@gmail.com

Shawn Suitters—Candidate for Northeast Area Vice Commander

Shawn Suitters entered the US Army in November of 1989 at Ft Knox Kentucky. During his first enlistment time he served in Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield. He decided to reenlist in 1994 as a 13F10 Fire Support Specialist and served in various units until June of 2003.

Shawn first joined the American Legion in 2011 at Charles Town West Virginia, where he was tasked to start an American Legion Rider program. Shawn was the first elected Riders Director and served this position for two years.

After moving to Arkansas, Shawn and his wife Billie joined Post 336 in Williford. They enthusiastically became involved and Shawn has served as the Post Adjutant for the past 3 years. Shawn has also served as the 4th District DEC for the past three years.

Shawn served as the Detachment Adjutant for only 5 months when the current Detachment commander had to step down for health reasons. Shawn was appointed by the Detachment Executive Committee and confirmed by the Department Commander and DEC. Shawn served as the Detachment Commander for 19 months.

He stepped down from Detachment commander for the 20-21 year and was appointed as the Detachment NEC.

Department Children and Youth Report

Coudret/Garner Scholarship Youth Education Applications

The Children and Youth committee at our last meeting voted that all applicants must be a resident of Arkansas and graduate from an Arkansas high school. No email applications will be accepted and must have hard copy of application received at Department Headquarters by the due date of March 1, 2021.

War on Drugs Poster Competition

The Department Convention Committee and the Department Executive Committee have not yet decided whether or not to cancel The Department Convention for June 2021 therefore, the War on Drugs competition is undecided at this time. Once a decision has been made about this year’s Department Convention I will get the word out about the War on Drugs Competition. Each Post can still hold their Post competition if they so decide and forward the winners to Department once a decision has been made about the June 2021 Convention.

Marvin Jumper – Chairman
FROM THE DESK OF PRESIDENT NANCY

The old adage “What a difference a day makes” certainly holds true. We anticipate and plan our lives revolving around certain normal occurrences, graduation, college, marriage, children and making it to retirement. In today’s society, these events don’t always follow the “norm.” I didn’t get my college degree until my children were grown.

When I retired, I planned to not plan my days. I would great each day with amazing possibilities. I would stay up late and sleep late. I had a bucket list of things I wanted to do which included traveling the world, reading all those novels I purchased that sounded so interesting but only sat on the shelf collecting dust, of spending more time with family and friends and a few other items. The one thing I did plan was not to get so involved with the technology age.

So much for not planning. For the last nine months and who knows for how much longer, technology seems to be controlling a big part of my life.

With the guidelines and restrictions in place, I am more involved in technology than I ever wanted to be. While I did visit several foreign countries, some for the first time, others several times, my travels to distant lands are now confined to my recliner each afternoon touring Europe with Rick Steves on PBS. My visits with family and friends are mostly by phone, email, etc. I have learned how to have meetings by Zoom. I have also started ordering on-line.

The American Legion Web site, blog, Facebook page, etc. are wonderful sources of information on our organization. It keeps us informed and updated on what is happening, it provides training and so much more.

I hope that those of you who are old school like I am, will learn to use the technology that is today’s world. It’s not going away and it is up to us to learn how to use it to our advantage.

I wish you all a very happy holiday season.

Please stay safe and healthy. Hopefully it will not be long before we can get together again face to face. I miss seeing you.

Nancy
American Legion Auxiliary News

**Mid Winter Conference and Visit from National President Nicole Clapp**

Unfortunately, with the COVID-19 numbers steadily rising, the Mid Winter Conference and scheduled visit from National President Nicole Clapp had to be canceled. It is the hope of everyone that health situation will improve sooner than later and we can get back to being able to get together and resume our normal daily activities.

* * *

**Membership**

According to the last report from National, a little more than half of our Arkansas Auxiliary membership dues have been paid for 2021. If your dues are not paid by January 31, 2021, you will lose all benefits of the American Legion Auxiliary, including your years of service. When you think of gift giving this season, why not “gift” yourself another year in this wonderful organization.

Units, please do not hold memberships. Even if you only have one or two, send them on to the office.

* * *

**Cookbooks**

If you haven’t yet purchased a cookbook, there is still time to come by the office and get one or more. They make great Christmas gifts. Reports from several who have the cookbook and have tried some of the recipes only confirm what we all knew, that we have some of the best cooks around.

Don’t be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and try something new. One of the recipes, Mourner’s Pie, has such an intriguing name that we had to try it. While none of us at the office are fans of one of the ingredients, we did try it and were delightfully surprised. It didn’t taste at all what we thought it would.

**Auxiliary Website**

The update on the National Auxiliary Website has been completed. Please check it out. It is a wonderful resource for a quick answer to any questions you might have about the Auxiliary as well some wonderful online training.

**Good Deed Awards**

Keep those nominations coming. The youth of today are awesome. They are continuing to surprise us with their efforts in volunteering and in some instances, changing the world. Recently, a young lady in the Little Rock area questioned why the “green army men action figures” couldn’t look like her. A toy company stepped up to the plate and “green army women action figures” are now available. They are not yet in the stores, but can be purchased on line.

**Challenges**

Have you met the challenges put forth by the Finance Committee to help the Department of Arkansas American Legion Auxiliary?

Send the Department ten cents for each cookbook you have and twenty five cents for each pair of shoes you own.

**Quilt Raffle**

The Department applied for and received permission to extend the sale of raffle tickets for the beautiful quilt made by Ruth Legan. Tickets can be purchased from the Department office.

**Calling all Candidates for Department Offices**

Please let the Department office know if you want to run for an office. To date, only one person has notified the office that they plan to run for an office. The elected offices are President, Northeast Division Vice President, Northwest Division Vice President, Southeast Division Vice President, Southwest Division Vice President, Sergeant-At-Arms, Historian and Chaplain.

**Scholarship Applications**

Scholarship applications are due to Units by March 1, 2021. National Application Scholarships can be submitted through online fillable applications. Applications and instructions will be mailed to Units in early January 2021. Remember, essays prepared for the 2020 scholarship applications cannot be recycled.
Williford Bike Show

On November 7th, Post 336 Williford/Hardy, held its 4th Annual Bike Show. This is a fundraiser for the Post to allow them to build Christmas Baskets for their area. They usually donate 5 of the baskets High School and 5 to the Middle School, and the rest, the Post then determines Veteran Families to help during the Holiday Season. This year there were 5 categories for the show. Antique, Trike, Metric, Cruiser and Custom.

The Winners are as follows:
- Antique: BJ “Billie” Suiters
- Trike: Rick “Q-Ball” Timmons
- Metric: Jimmy “Black” Siter
- Cruiser: Jimmy “Papa Smurf” Yates
- Custom: Dewan “Yo-Yo” Duncan

Then finally, the BEST IN SHOW bike which was voted on by all the participants was awarded to Tim Bell.

Department of Arkansas, American Legion, supports the efforts of the Posts in working with the Veterans and the Communities in which they reside.

Chapter 91 American Legion Riders Get “Patched”

Nov 22, 2020

Several members of Beebe Chapter 91 American Legion Riders showed up Friday night to receive their ALR backpatch. Department ALR Director Billie Suiters was on-hand to present the members with their backpatch recognizing them as the first Chapter to charter since she took over as Director.
QUICK NEWS

**2021 Mid-Winter Conference Canceled**

The Department Convention Committee met on November 18, 2021 and made the recommendation to the DEC that due to the recent conditions bought upon us by COVID-19 that the Mid-Winter Conference scheduled for 9 & 10 January 2021 be cancelled and that instead we schedule an in person/virtual DEC meeting at a date to be determined sometime during the month of January. I called each member of the DEC and it was unanimous that the Mid-Winter for January 2021 be cancelled. Accordingly, the Mid-Winter scheduled for 9 & 20 January 2021 is officially cancelled. Once I have spoken to the Commander I will advise the DEC when we will hold that in person/virtual 1-day meeting. What that means is if you decide because of COVID-19 you are uncomfortable coming to the Headquarters for the meeting you can call in on the conference call and be connected remotely. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the Department Adjutant.

---

**Post Everlasting**

Past Department Commander (1989-90) James E. Brimer passed away on Saturday September 26th 2020 at his home in Olive Branch, Mississippi.