

MAY 2021

VFW

M A G A Z I N E

'MY BROTHERS'

VFW MEMBER SCULPTS
FALLEN TROOPS

VFW CHIEF TACKLES
TOXIC EXPOSURE IN
ADDRESS TO LAWMAKERS

WWI MEMORIAL
STATUES TAKING SHAPE

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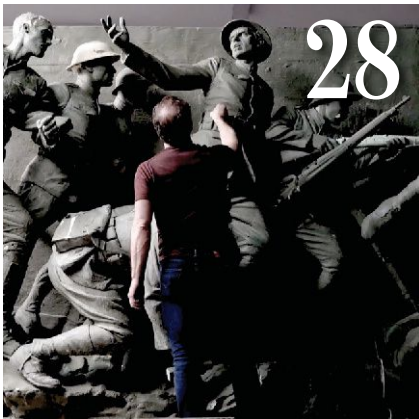
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8



16



28



44



COVER IMAGE:
Vietnam War veteran Cliff Leonard displays the bust of a Navy corpsman killed in action in August 2020 at his studio in Jacksonville, Fla. Leonard, a life member of VFW Post 7909 in Jacksonville, is a 74-year-old Marine who provides his creations free to the families of the fallen.
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8 VFW CHIEF SAYS THESE PRIORITIES WILL ‘SAVE LIVES’

In a nod to coronavirus restrictions, VFW’s annual address to House and Senate lawmakers was virtual this year. VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II highlighted toxic exposure, VA’s 48-hour claims review process, employment and education as items of greatest importance. **By Dave Spiva**

16 ‘MY LITTLE BROTHERS’

Cliff Leonard took up sculpting as a hobby when he was recovering from a heart transplant. The Marine veteran of the Vietnam War was recently recognized by VFW’s Commander-in-Chief for memorializing Marines and Navy corpsmen killed in action. **By Ismael Rodriguez Jr.**

28 ‘A SOLDIER’S JOURNEY’

From approval of the design in 2016 to the expected dedication in 2024, the process to build a national World War I memorial in Washington, D.C., has taken on a worldwide odyssey. Here’s a behind-the-scenes look at how it has progressed. **By Mark Swarengen**

44 VOLUNTEERS FILL BUDDY POPPY SHORTFALL

When COVID-19 shut down Buddy Poppy manufacturing sites, VFW members and volunteers scrambled to make up the difference. They produced more than 9 million Poppies through March 1 this year, nearly two-years’ worth of VFW’s “flower of remembrance.” **By Janie Dyhouse**





Remembrance is a Core Ideal for the VFW



COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
Hal Roesch II

Memorial Day is a bittersweet time. As veterans, we feel immense pride when we remember the nation's troops who paid the ultimate sacrifice in their devotion to duty. We also feel the tremendous anguish and grief over their family's loss.

Losing our fellow brothers- and sisters-in-arms is something that stays with us all, long after we take off our uniforms. I experienced this most recently in Florida.

In the Sunshine State, Cliff Leonard, a VFW member and Marine who served in the Vietnam War, profoundly feels that sense of loss. For more than 13 years, he has sculpted busts of Marines and Navy corpsmen from his home state who have been killed in action. Leonard presents his artwork to the families of the deceased troops free of charge.

In this issue, you'll read about why he started this project and why I recognized him in February with the *VFW Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of Merit*.

Also in this issue, you'll see:

- An update on how VFW Posts around the country and their members observe Memorial Day with both simple events and formal dedication services for local monuments they have erected.
- A listing of and a final salute to all U.S. service members who died overseas in 2020.
- How Post members and volunteers worked together last year to make up a shortfall of Buddy Poppies, VFW's official flower of remembrance.
- How VFW is helping to create the nation's World War I memorial in Washington, D.C.

VFW, with \$500,000 pledged, also is the biggest supporter of the proposed national Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial. We will continue to work to get it built.

One of the VFW's most cherished events is to participate in Memorial Day activities, such as laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. Unfortunately, that will not happen this year because of COVID-19 restrictions. But we will be there in spirit and will continue these visits when restrictions are lifted.

We remember our fallen heroes because it is one of VFW's founding ideals. Recalling the noble service and subsequent sacrifices of those who have given their lives in defense of the nation is one of the main reasons the VFW exists.

It's true that "No One Does More for Veterans" than the VFW. Remembering those who paid the ultimate sacrifice is part of that mission. On behalf of the entire VFW, I humbly thank all those heroes for their service.



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STAFF

PUBLISHER AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Tim Dyhouse

SENIOR EDITOR **ART DIRECTOR**

Janie Dyhouse

Lauren Goldman

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Dave Spiva

STAFF WRITER

Ismael Rodriguez Jr.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Tina Clark

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE

GLM Communications, Inc.

Sabrina Camacho, Vice President of Operations

500 1st Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030

(212) 929-1300 FAX 212-929-9574

Email: scamacho@glmcommunications.com

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Address all communications for publication to:

The Editor, VFW Magazine

406 W. 34th St., Suite 523, Kansas City, MO 64111

(816) 756-3390; www.vfw.org; magazine@vfw.org

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VFW OBJECTIVES

To ensure national security
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To assist the widows and orphans
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Lalena Magnetta Helping Others

I very much enjoyed your article on this very impressive lady. She is an amazing woman and a great credit to the U.S. Navy, VFW, and all female veterans, as well as to all of her admirers, which includes me. Please let her know how much I am amazed by all that she accomplished in spite of the horrendous odds against her. I am sure that she is an inspiration to all females who serve our great country.

CHUCK FARIA

LAGUNA WOODS, CALIF.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WORLD WAR ONE CENTENNIAL COMMISSION

Hello Girls in WWI

Very nicely done article by Kelly Bell. As a former member of "The Old Guard," I also appreciated the article on the centenary of the Tomb of the Unknowns.

JACK MONAHAN

ESSEX, CT.

I thoroughly enjoyed the recent issue of VFW, especially the WWI article about the Hello Girls. It is another great

story and reminder of the valuable service provided by women in the military.

TOM MOE

LANCASTER, OHIO

VFW Salutes Female Vets

My family has served in the U.S. Army back to the Civil War era, and I was a member of the famous 1st Air Cav. That said, my late sister, Kay, served in the WACs during the first days of WWII as a medical technician. When she returned stateside in 1946, she was informed by the local VFW that she could be an associate member, but not a full member like her husband who had been a B-17 crew member during the Big One. Times have changed, and that is a good thing.

JIM BOWEN

ELIZABETHTOWN, PA.

I enjoyed the Salute to Women Vets as I am the proud spouse of a 26 Bronze Star combat woman veteran who did tours that included a 14-month tour in Kabul, Afghanistan. Your salute should have included women who served in combat zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

COLLIN SCHRIVER

CELEBRATION, FLA.

The March issue was almost a complete dud. I am sick and tired of publications that dedicate an issue to one particular group. It took me just a few minutes to go completely through the March issue, reading only the article about the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in its entirety. Stop dedicating issues to one gender or one ethnic group. If you continue this style of publication, then I expect to see very soon an issue dedicated to men in the military.

CHARLES BUSBEY

DRIPPING SPRINGS, TEXAS

Telling the 'Sheroes' Stories

I have received such love for the article from VFW members and beyond. Well done. Thank you!

KERRI JETER

TENINO, WASH.

Remembering Nurse Sharon Lane

We recently opened the doors of the state-of-the-art VFW Post 12190 named after 1st Lt. Sharon A. Lane in Evans, Ga. There is no drinking or smoking, and everything is wheelchair accessible. It's so beautiful, and we are so proud with more than 200 members so far.

KENNY MANNI

EVANS, GA.

Honoring God and His Creation

I want to thank you for a great article about a great warrior and his continued service to his country and community. I wrote Gary Chamberlain a letter of thanks and asked him for any suggestions of how he and his organization could help me reach our legislators and law enforcement and how to better connect.

EDWARD JORDAN

ELIZABETH, TENN.

I applaud him and his efforts, particularly the mission to teach the next generation to keep our world a more beautiful place. My husband and I pick up two miles of our neighborhood road on a monthly basis here in Minnesota. We hope our children and neighborhood children will learn through our role modeling the importance of keeping our roads and countryside a healthier, prettier place.

JEANNIE PETERSON

ST. PETER, MINN.

"Mail Call" features letters from our readers in nine issues per year. If you have questions, comments or concerns about any subject or article from our most recent issue, letters can be emailed to magazine@vfw.org, with the subject line "Mail Call," or mailed to: VFW magazine, Mail Call, 406 W. 34th Street, Suite 523, Kansas City, MO 64111. Letters must be no more than 200 words, and VFW magazine reserves the right to edit letters for clarity, length and accuracy.

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Colleges Cutting Vet-Support Programs

Veterans and active-duty troops attending college are seeing a decrease in assistance at their schools, according to a report issued in February. Those views were supported by the report's finding that about 30 percent of colleges and universities had reduced funding for veteran-support programs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Operation College Promise, a Trenton, N.J.-based research group that helps veterans transitioning from the military to higher education, and the Texas A&M University System conducted the study. The groups surveyed 230 "military-connected" students in six states and 75 colleges and universities in 17 states between Sept. 15, 2020, and Nov. 13, 2020.

Here are some of the findings:

- Nearly 40 percent of students said they have seen a reduction



in communication with school staff since last March.

- About 80 percent of schools surveyed had a dedicated office for military support in the 2019-20 school year, which fell to about 72 percent in 2020-21.
- The number of schools with career counseling services for veterans dropped from 66 in 2019-20 to 58 in 2020-21.

Read the full report at www.inside-highered.com/quicktakes/2021/02/17/report-outlines-pandemic-challenges-student-veterans.

Depleted Uranium Not a Cause of Gulf War Illness

Researchers have concluded that depleted uranium used in armor-piercing shells during the Gulf War is not a cause of the mysterious ailments that have plagued many of that war's veterans over the last 30 years.

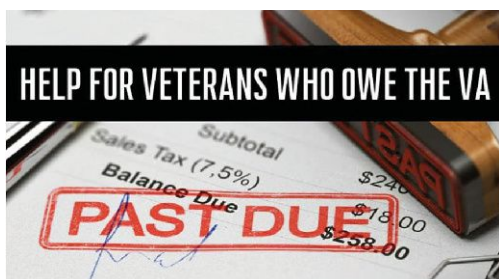
The study — *Resolving whether inhalation of depleted uranium contributed to Gulf War Illness using high-sensitivity mass spectrometry* — was seeking to find if inhaled fumes and dust from the rounds contributed to the symptoms reported by up to 25 percent of the 700,000 troops deployed to the war zone. It was published Feb. 18 in *Scientific Reports*.

Study authors Robert W. Haley, a professor of internal medicine at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, and Randall R. Parrish, a professor of isotope geology at the University of Portsmouth in England, scanned 154 Gulf War veterans. Of those, 106 had illness symptoms and 48 did not.

"Having found no depleted uranium in any of those with the illness, alongside knowing how long the substance remains in the body and can be traced in the urine, proves depleted uranium is not linked to Gulf War illness," they concluded.

Rather, Haley and Parrish believe that low-level exposure to sarin gas, anti-nerve agent medication and pesticides are more likely the cause.

Read the full report at www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-82535-3.



VA Halts Debt Collections

VA announced Feb. 18 that it will extend its suspension of debt collection on benefits overpayments and medical co-pays through September

2021. The original suspension ran from April 2020 through the end of last year. It was re-enacted in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Earlier in February, VA also suspended evictions and foreclosures on property backed by VA-guaranteed loans through the end of June 2021.

According to VA, veterans could be eligible for extended repayment plans, debt waivers and hardship suspensions.



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VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II virtually testifies during a House and Senate VA committee hearing on March 18 at the VFW Washington Office in Washington, D.C. During his speech, Roesch said one of VFW's top priorities is toxic exposure reform. From left to right, VFW National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci, Roesch, VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence and VFW National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray.

VFW Says a Top Priority is Toxic Exposure Reform

VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II virtually addressed House and Senate members in March. Roesch called on lawmakers to come up with a solution for toxic exposure.

BY DAVE SPIVA

VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II addressed a joint hearing of the House and Senate VA committees in March.

This year's VFW Commander-in-Chief's speech to Congress looked different than in years past. Roesch virtually addressed the committees due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Roesch said Congress and VA should take lessons learned from adapting to the worldwide health menace and use them to "strengthen" veterans' care and benefits.

"When this pandemic is over, improvisations such as telehealth should be expanded, not condensed," Roesch said. "Lessons learned from distancing and cleanliness should become part of

normal activities instead of reduced."

Roesch thanked House and Senate members for their work to improve veterans' care and benefits, including passing:

- The *National Defense Authorization Act of 2021*
- The *Commander John Scott Hannon Mental Health Care Improvement Act*
- The *COMPACT Act*
- The *Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act*

"All of these significant pieces of legislation will provide care and benefits for millions of veterans, allow for expanded care for veterans long over-

looked and, hopefully, save the lives of veterans who need help now more than ever," Roesch said.

TOXIC EXPOSURE

Among many VFW proposals and recommendations to Congress, Roesch urged lawmakers to address the toxic exposure to veterans and troops.

Roesch said that toxic exposure is a cross-generational issue that affects many veterans who served.

"Toxic exposure for U.S. troops has been synonymous with service for almost a hundred years," Roesch said. "A comprehensive system for taking care of troops exposed to hazards is long past due."

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Roesch called on Congress to work on a solution for taking care of veterans and troops who were exposed to environmental hazards, such as burn pits in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars and Agent Orange in the Vietnam War. He added that VA should grant a presumption of cause if the scientific evidence suggests that a certain disease is associated with toxic exposure or an environmental hazard.

Roesch said VFW recommends:

- Establishing independent commission to identify toxic and environmental exposures related to military service;
- Directing the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine to evaluate the scientific evidence regarding certain diseases and exposures related to toxic substances; and
- Requiring VA to grant a presumption of service-connected disability for conditions associated with toxic exposures and environmental hazards.

DISABILITY CLAIMS PROCESS

Roesch also said he is “concerned” about VA’s current disability claims process. He said VA needs to reinstate the “48-hour review” period that allows veterans service officers to evaluate claims decisions.

VA in April 2020 eliminated the 48-hour disability rating review period for service officers, which is vital to ensuring the accuracy of VA decisions. The review allows veterans service officers to give the claim an independent quality control check before it goes through VA’s review process.

“The VFW believes the application of a VA claim and the correct processing of a claim is the gateway for all care and benefits for every single veteran,” Roesch said. “Over the last two years, the VFW has grown frustrated with the Veterans Benefits Administration and its abrupt, often arbitrary changes to

the VA benefits claims process.”

Roesch said that while Congress has listened to the VFW to hold VA accountable for their policy changes, this should include reinstating the 48-hour review period.

“Countless veterans have benefited from the 48-hour review policy,” Roesch said. “The VFW’s rating review team routinely found errors during the 48-hour review period, correcting most of them within less than a business day, as opposed to now waiting months if not years for VA’s formal review process to resolve these minor discrepancies.”

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

In front of the House and Senate VA committees, Roesch proposed a restructuring of the Department of VA. He said that creating an Economic Opportunity office within VA would refocus resources and provide a central contact for Congress and veterans service organizations, such as VFW.

Roesch asked Congress to introduce legislation that would establish an Economic Opportunity Administration within VA.

Roesch also called on Congress to implement new job training programs, as well as extend funding for existing programs to help veterans find a job. He added that the programs should not only be in place for recently discharged veterans but all veterans.

EDUCATION BENEFITS

Roesch said VFW wants to ensure National Guard and Reserve members are credited for all activations in support of federal service, such as COVID-19 testing and vaccination missions.

“Within the past few years, Guardsmen and Reservists from several states have been activated to assist during events of national urgency,” Roesch said. “Currently, some members of the National Guard and Reserve are deployed to Washington, D.C., in the aftermath of the attack on the Capitol on Jan. 6.”

Roesch urged Congress to introduce legislation that would make National Guard and Reserve education benefits equal to those of active-duty counterparts, and that service members receive credit toward their education benefits for all federal activations.

VA HEALTH CARE FOR ‘UNDERSERVED GROUPS’

During his speech, Roesch said women veterans, racial and ethnic minority veterans, and LGBTQ veterans “deserve” the same care and respect as all other veterans.

“The VFW believes a first step to begin this process is to expand our knowledge,” Roesch said. “Before we can begin to address inequalities among veterans, we need to be fully informed about the depth of our veteran population.”

Roesch called on Congress to ensure that VA documents the correct race, ethnic and sexual orientation of all veterans in VA’s electronic health record system.

“While we believe there have been great strides made on behalf of those minority veterans we serve, we have also seen indications that we still have a way to go,” Roesch said. “The VFW prides itself on treating and viewing all veterans equally, but we have seen there are some who still do not receive the equitable treatment they have earned and deserve.”

Roesch closed the testimony by saying veterans need a “safe and accepting” place to receive health care and that there is “no room for discrimination or abuse” at VA health care centers.

“The VFW was disappointed to see this was not consistently the case in past years and vows to work with everyone involved to make sure veterans are never mistreated in any VA facility,” Roesch said. “In terms of care and respect, we can do better. We owe it to all our veterans to do better.”

To view Roesch’s full speech, visit www.vfw.org.

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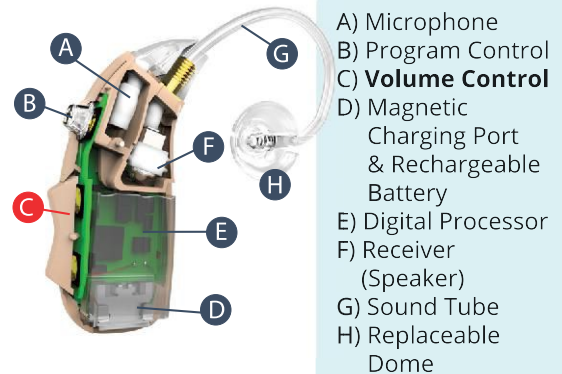


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Senators Reintroduce VFW-backed *Major Richard Star Act*

Three senators in February reintroduced a bill that would provide full retirement benefits to combat-injured veterans with less than 20 years of service.

Senate VA Committee Chairman Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and ranking member Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), as well as Sen. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), reintroduced the VFW-backed *Major Richard Star Act* (S. 344).

If signed into law, the act would provide relief to *Chapter 61* military retirees, those who were medically discharged due to injuries sustained on duty.

Last year, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the bill's implementation could cost \$2.5 billion over 10 years, or about \$250 million each year.

The bill is named in honor of Army Maj. Richard Star, who passed away on Feb. 13 at the age of 51. Star had to retire early due to terminal lung cancer caused by his service. He served in the Army as a combat engineer in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"The *Major Richard Star Act* would fix the unfair offset that prevents thousands of veterans living with the wounds of war from accessing both their disability benefits and retired pay," Tester said. "And it honors the service and sacrifice of Maj. Richard Star, whose legacy lives on in our continued fight to ensure our men and women in uniform get the assistance they deserve."

In a statement about the bill, VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II thanked Tester for the reintroduction of the *Star Act*.

"As we mourn the recent passing of our fellow VFW member and legislation namesake, we are committed to honoring Major Star's legacy by working to get rid of this egregious compensation rule," Roesch said.

Roesch added the *Star Act* would eliminate the "unjust offset," which deducts a retiree's pension by the amount he or she receives in VA disability compensation, for more than 41,000 *Chapter 61* retirees.



U.S. ARMY PHOTO

Army Maj. Richard Star

"They are just as deserving of retirement pay, even though their injuries prevented them from fulfilling their 20-year obligation," Roesch said. "We urge Congress to pass this act and honor this nation's promise to care for all its veterans."

Congress Passes COVID-19 Vaccine Bill

A bill that aims to expand VA's ability to provide COVID-19 vaccines to veterans, as well as their spouses and caregivers, was unanimously passed by the House and Senate in March.

If signed into law, the *Strengthening and Amplifying Vaccination Efforts to Locally Immunize all Veterans and Every Spouse (SAVE LIVES) Act* (H.R. 1276) would authorize VA to provide COVID-19 vaccines to all veterans, including veterans not enrolled in the VA health care system, and caregivers enrolled in VA care programs. It also would provide veterans' spouses and

spouses of veterans who have died from a service-connected disability to receive a vaccine.

The bill was originally introduced by House VA Committee Chairman Mark Takano (D-Calif.) and ranking member Mike Bost (R-Ill.) as the *Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans' and Caregivers' COVID-19 Immunizations Now Expanded Act of 2021 (VA VACCINE Act)*. When it was sent to the Senate, the bill was renamed the *SAVE LIVES Act* and expanded to include vaccine eligibility for spouses at VA.

As of the end of March, VA has administered about 3 million vaccines to VA-enrolled veterans and staff.

"VA has proven itself as one the most effective vaccinators in the nation," Takano said, "but it's clear VA needs additional authority to continue leading this effort to get as many shots into arms as possible."

As of press time, President Joe Biden had not signed the *SAVE LIVES Act* into law. Biden was expected to approve the bill by the end of March, according to a *Military Times* article.

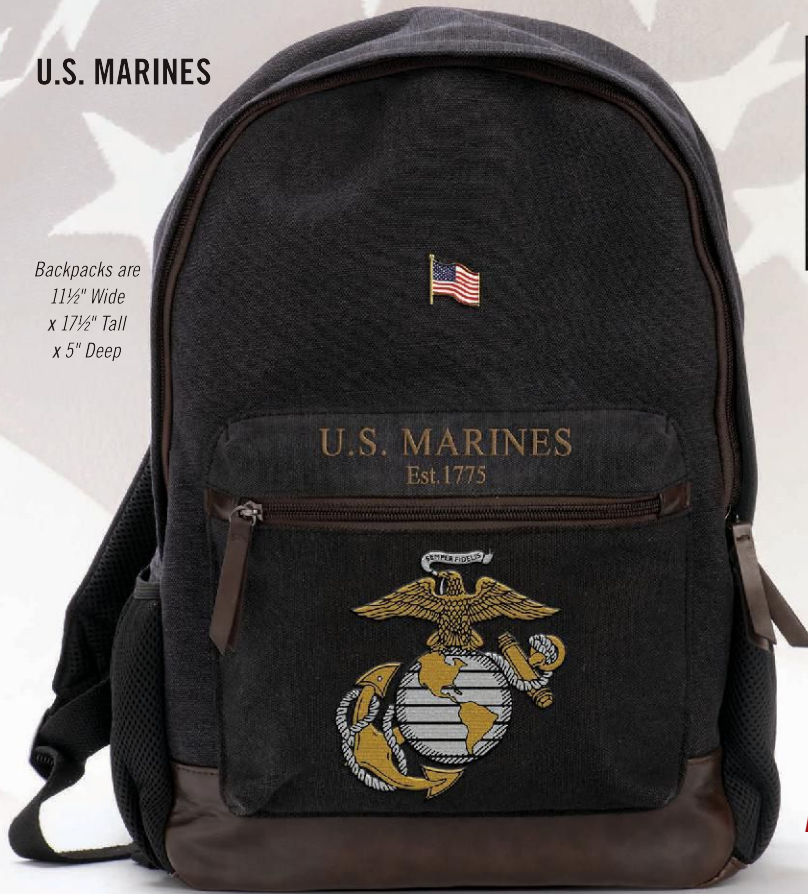


FOR MORE INFORMATION about specific legislation or VA benefits, contact VFW's Washington Office at vfw@vfw.org. A member of VFW's National Veterans Service staff will respond as soon as possible.

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23 Veterans in House Form Caucus

A group of almost two dozen representatives in the House comprise a congressional caucus they say is dedicated to creating a “more productive government.”



Rep. Van Taylor (R-Texas) and Rep. Jarden Golden (D-Maine) co-chair the For Country Caucus, a bipartisan group of 23 veterans that includes 14 Republicans and nine Democrats. In a press release announcing the members, the group said their focus is to create a Congress that is “less polarized, more efficient and trusted.”

In a joint statement, Marine Corps veterans Taylor and Golden said serving in the military gave them the skills to work as a team with “Americans of different backgrounds and beliefs.” Both congressmen are VFW members — Taylor is a member of VFW Post 4380 in Plano, Texas, and Golden is a member of VFW Post 1603 in Auburn, Maine. (See a list of all VFW members in Congress on page 40.)

“We’re honored to lead this bipartisan group of veterans as we continue to build on the foundation that’s been laid over the past two years,” Taylor and Golden said in a joint statement. “The mission of this caucus — to set aside political differences in the pursuit of policies that will benefit the country — has never been more important, and together we can set that example in Congress.”

In the previous 116th Congress, which adjourned on Jan. 3, 2021, the group stated it worked to pass several veterans’ bills in the House, including the VFW-backed widow’s tax repeal that was a part of the *National Defense Authorization Act of 2020*.

‘American Rescue Plan’ Gives \$17 Billion to VA

President Joe Biden on March 11 signed into law a COVID-19 relief package that gives \$17 billion to VA.

The \$1.9 trillion stimulus package, called the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021*, will give additional funding to the VA to distribute vaccines to patients.

The VA-related provisions of the law include:

- \$14.5 billion for VA for COVID-19 vaccine distribution, mental health care, enhanced telehealth capabilities, and support for homeless veterans or veterans who are in danger of becoming homeless.
- \$1 billion toward VA health care co-payment relief, which waives co-payments at VA during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also will reimburse veterans who have already submitted payments.
- \$750 million for construction projects at state-run veterans’ homes across the country. The funds will provide one-time payments for upgrades.
- \$386 million to provide at least 12 months of retraining assistance to some unemployed veterans.

Chairman of the House VA Committee Mark Takano (D-Calif.) said the law is “critical” to helping veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic.



President Joe Biden, with Vice President Kamala Harris standing in the background, signs the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021* on March 11 in the White House Oval Office in Washington, D.C. The new law, a \$1.9 trillion stimulus package, gives VA \$17 billion in COVID-19 relief funds.

“Too many veterans are struggling to find work as unemployment numbers rise,” Takano said. “[The *American Rescue Plan of 2021*] will fund retraining programs to get veterans back to work.”

Takano also said veterans have been delaying “much needed” health care due to the COVID-19 pandemic, adding that the law “ensures VA has the funds to treat this influx in patients.”

The *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021* also includes:

- Payments of up to \$1,400 to most U.S. adult citizens.
- A \$300 per week increase of federal unemployment benefits through Sept. 6.
- Expansion of the child tax credit by increasing the amount to \$3,600 for children younger than 6 years old and \$3,000 for children 6 through 17 years old.
- \$50 billion to increase COVID-19 testing and vaccine distribution for the general population.
- \$25 billion for rental assistance.

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A close-up, profile view of an elderly man with white hair and glasses, wearing a blue t-shirt. He is looking upwards and to the right, focused on his work. In the background, a dark-colored uniform with a yellow and red insignia is visible, suggesting a military setting. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of his skin and the details of his work.

‘MY LITTLE BROTHERS, MY PLA

Vietnam War veteran and VFW Post 7909 member Cliff Leonard works on a bust of a fallen Navy corpsman on Aug. 6, 2020, in his home studio in Jacksonville, Fla. A Marine himself, Leonard has spent more than a decade sculpting life-sized busts of fellow Florida Marines and Navy corpsmen killed in action for surviving family members at no cost.

© WILL DICKEY – USA TODAY NETWORK



TOON,

A Marine veteran of the Vietnam War uses his talents as a sculptor to honor Florida Marines and corpsmen killed in action.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

More than two decades after taking up sculpting, an automated email from VFW arrived on Cliff Leonard's computer screen on a late January day.

Penned by Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II to promote VFW's #StillServing campaign, the email asked veterans such as Leonard, a new life member of VFW Post 7909 in Jacksonville, Fla., how they were still serving their communities.

For the 74-year-old Vietnam War veteran, the email offered an opportunity to share his journey as a sculptor, a hobby that burgeoned into a passion for reviving the memory of fellow Marines and Navy corpsmen killed in action.

"I can look back now at some of those young guys, kids, that were my age and killed in Vietnam, and they have just disappeared. Other than their families, nobody really knows about them," said Leonard, who served from 1966 to 1968 with the Marines 2nd Squad, 3rd Platoon, Delta Co., 3rd Recon Bn. "I thought that this way, for lack of a better term, they would be able to live on."

Working from his garage in a suburb of Jacksonville, Leonard has spent the past 13 years molding clay structures into more than 50 life-sized busts of fellow Florida Marines and corpsmen killed in Vietnam, Iraq and

Afghanistan. Self-funded, he presents each bust to the surviving family members at no cost.

“I call them my little brothers, my platoon,” Leonard added. “When I first started sculpting these young men, it was very emotionally difficult for me, but it’s presenting it to the families that still remains the most difficult.”

‘KIND OF DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH’

Leonard’s journey into sculpting was filled with twists and turns after he left the service in 1968.

After earning a bachelor’s and later a master’s degree in psychology from Florida State University in 1974, Leonard tried an array of career positions, which included police officer, private investigator, school psychologist and real estate investor.

As he approached his late 40s, however, Leonard was diagnosed with cardiomyopathy, a disease that can lead the heart muscle to swell and cut blood circulation.

Threatened by the condition, Leonard opted for a heart transplant, which he successfully received on July 23, 1995, at the age of 48.

“Sometimes you think that somebody had to pass on for me to be here,” Leonard said. “That’s sometimes kind of difficult to deal with.”

A few years into his recovery process, Leonard noticed a newspaper article about a local woman in the Jacksonville area who had sculpted a full-sized carousel horse.

“It was fascinating what she had done,” Leonard said. “I was at a place in my life where I wanted to slow down my routine, so I thought this would be a neat thing to try. I called the lady and started taking classes with her.”

Leonard’s progress began with “whimsical woodland creatures” at first, but it soon led to his wanting to honor a fellow Marine from his 3rd Recon Company who had died in Vietnam.

“There would be no tears if I had stuck to making rocking horses and

the like,” Leonard said. “But this is something I felt compelled to do.”

‘I HAD ALREADY MADE MY COMMITMENT’

Despite working on several other personal projects to honor friends and fellow Marines from Vietnam, Leonard had not yet begun sharing his work with the grieving families of those lost at war.

That all changed when he joined the Semper Fidelis Society chapter in Jacksonville, a fraternity of Marines and Navy corpsmen devoted to building camaraderie and helping one another.

During one of the chapter meetings in 2005, the group spoke about honoring one of the young men killed in Iraq at a memorial they had established for Marines and corpsmen at Evergreen Cemetery on the north side of Jacksonville.

“I mentioned to them that I was a sculptor, and that I would like to sculpt a bust to be put out there,” Leonard recalled. “For whatever reason, it never really worked out, but in the process, we had made contact with this Marine’s grandparents and gotten some photographs.”

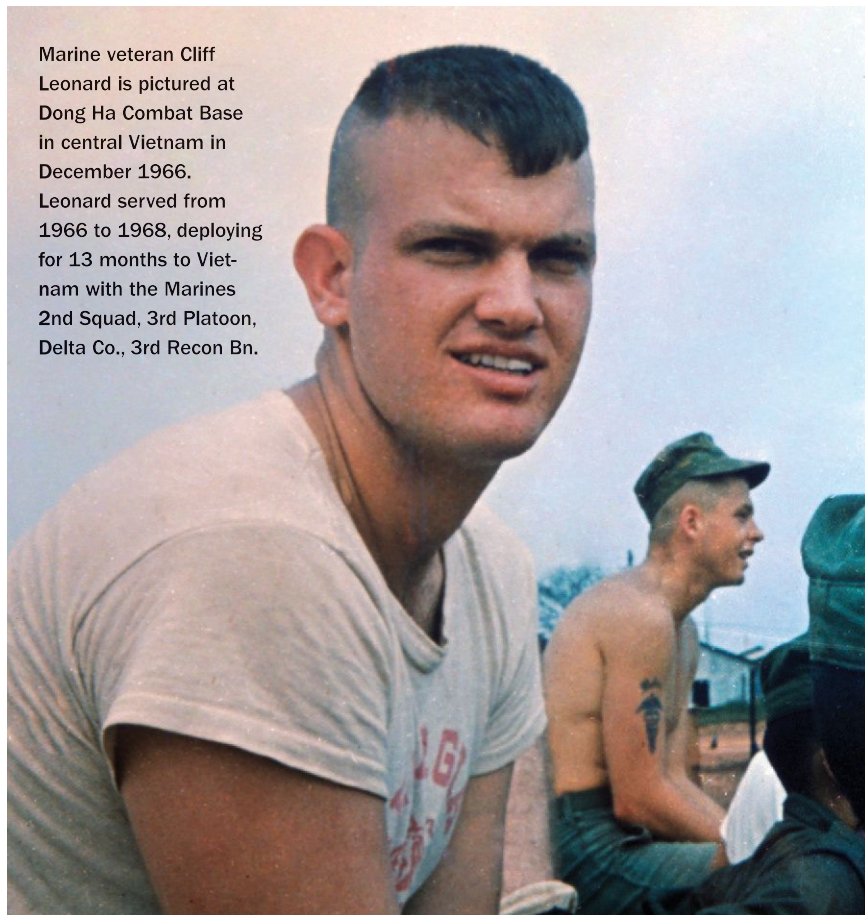
Feeling compelled to honor the memory of 20-year-old Marine Pfc. Nathan Clemons of Jacksonville, Leonard continued working on the project. He spent more than two months refining the bust, which he presented to the grandparents free of charge.

“I had already made my commitment to making the bust, and I decided to go ahead and make it, even though it wouldn’t be put out at the memorial,” Leonard said. “I presented it to his grandparents, and it had such an effect on me.”

Witnessing the vast range of emotion and gratitude his act of kindness brought to the surviving families sparked something in Leonard.

He proceeded to use skills acquired as a private investigator to find information on all the local Jacksonville Marines and corpsmen killed in action, reaching out to their surviving families for photos and permission to create a bust.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CLIFF LEONARD



Marine veteran Cliff Leonard is pictured at Dong Ha Combat Base in central Vietnam in December 1966. Leonard served from 1966 to 1968, deploying for 13 months to Vietnam with the Marines 2nd Squad, 3rd Platoon, Delta Co., 3rd Recon Bn.

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“I began with the immediate Jacksonville area and eventually worked my way into doing all the Marines and corpsmen from Florida,” Leonard said. “Some families declined, or never followed through, and I understand that. It’s upsetting no matter how much time has passed.”

Those families that do come forward and agree to work with Leonard are asked to provide a photo of their Marine or corpsmen, preferably an official photo snapped after their boot camp graduation.

“I like those because they’re young, in their dress blues, and looking like a Marine,” Leonard said. “That’s what I try to capture.”

Leonard spends about two months on each bust, working between 60 and 70 hours on the features that distinguish each young Marine and corpsman — a stern, steely-eyed demeanor that exudes confidence.

“I really try to capture the essence of a Marine, their determination and aptitude of knowing right from wrong,” Leonard said. “It’s a look that says, ‘I’m going to save the world,’ because that’s what we all thought, every one of us who came out of boot camp.”

Once the details are polished to the likeness of the Marine or corpsman, the water-based clay bust then needs to be hardened. Leonard accomplishes this by using a kiln before dousing them in acrylic paint and shoe polish to give it a look of bronze.

“It’s a lot of work,” Leonard said. “I only know if a piece is truly finished when I look at it and I can see the eyes and feel that he’s looking back at me. And just as important, I need my wife to look at the piece with a separate pair of eyes.”

‘IT’S AN HONOR’

Leonard’s life-sized busts honoring Marines and Navy corpsmen have been donated to local schools, memorials and dozens of surviving families since he began sculpting them 13 years ago.

It was in this sheer act of kindness and devotion to honoring fellow Marines and corpsmen that his story moved VFW



From left, VFW Department of Florida Adjutant Gene Perrino Sr., Cliff Leonard, VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II and Department of Florida Commander Glen Tilley are pictured during a ceremony on Feb. 13 at VFW Post 7909 in Jacksonville, Fla. During the ceremony, Roesch presented Leonard with the VFW Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of Merit, along with a life membership card to the VFW.

Commander-in-Chief Roesch to tears over the phone in late January.

“Quite honestly, it just touched my heart,” Roesch said. “That this man is taking his time and energy as he puts it, ‘to honor his little brothers.’ We talked for about an hour that day, and I just grew passionate about the guy.”

Roesch, noticing Leonard had not yet been a VFW member, encouraged the Vietnam veteran to join the ranks of more than 1.5 million.

“I told him that he’s exactly the type of person that will be indicative of what we’re looking for at VFW,” Roesch added.

“I told him I would personally make him a life member, and it took him about all of two seconds to think about it — he said he’d be honored.”

Following their conversation, Roesch was prompted to personally surprise Leonard with the VFW Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of Merit, along with his new membership card on Feb. 13 at VFW Post 7909 in Jacksonville.

“I was pleasantly surprised,” Leonard recalled. “It meant a lot, com-

ing from an organization of fellow brothers and sisters that respect what I do as much as I respect what the organization does.”

The award marked the second honor for Leonard in less than a year, as he was inducted into the Florida Veterans’ Hall of Fame in October 2020.

Leonard has previously won the General Chesty Puller Award from the 3rd Recon Battalion Association for honoring two Medal of Honor recipients and two other Recon Marines killed in action, as well as other awards for his work.

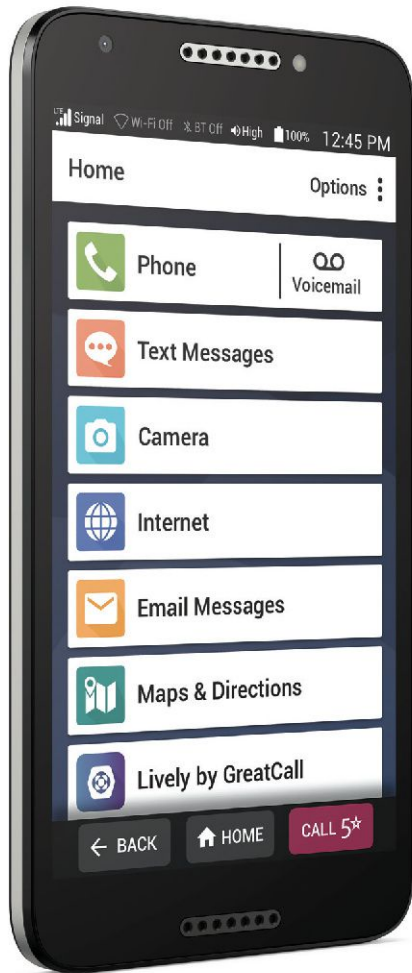
Although the new VFW life member of Post 7909 expects to continue honoring Florida Marines and Navy corpsmen killed in action through his sculptures, he added that he only wishes he could do more.

“I’m in the process of finishing the rest of the Marines and corpsmen in Florida, then we’ll see what happens,” Leonard said. “It’s a shame that there are so many of them killed in action, and it’s a damn shame I don’t have the time to do them all.”

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50 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH, 30 U.S. TROOPS WERE KILLED IN AN ATTACK ON A FIRE SUPPORT BASE NEAR THE VIETNAMESE DMZ.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY KEMP

At Firebase Charlie 2 around April 1971, Don Wilson, Darwin Olesen, Jerry Kemp, Robert Cadena and Mike Bodyl gather around an APC hit by a mine.

DEADLY CLIMAX OF GROUND WAR ON FIREBASE CHARLIE 2

BY RICHARD K. KOLB

“It was our deadliest day in more than three years in Vietnam,” said Society of the 5th Division (the Red Diamond Division of WWII fame) national historian Keith Short. “And it occurred on the 1st Brigade’s last major mission — *Operation Montana Mustang* [April-July 1971] — in-country.”

In the summer of 1971, U.S. forces turned over responsibility for the DMZ to the Army of the Republic of South Vietnam (ARVN). But before the change was complete, GIs there were struck by a tragedy that turned out to be one of the highest single-incident death tolls of the war.

“A single 122mm rocket made a direct hit on the sandbagged roof and in one screaming flash, [30] GIs were dead,” is how the late author-historian Keith Nolan described it.

At a firebase known as Charlie 2, grunts of A Co., 1st Bn., 61st Inf. Regt., 1st Bde., 5th Inf. Div. (Mech), had come in for the night in May 1971. In this case, the bush would have been much safer.

The firebase, located four miles south of the DMZ among the rolling hills of Quang Tri province and three miles northeast of Cam Lo village, had been under frequent rocket attacks. Troops had almost grown accustomed to the incoming rounds, especially because the

enemy’s aim was often inaccurate.

“You could set your watch by the attacks,” recalled supply Sgt. Bernard Gates of C Btry., 5th Bn., 4th Arty. “Every night at about 1700 hours [5 p.m.] the NVA would drop their rockets on us.”

For three consecutive nights, the NVA had rained 122mm rockets on the base. At 102 pounds and 6-and-a-half feet long, the projectiles have a range of 6.5 miles. They were equipped with time-delayed fuses.

Six hours before the destructive round hit, just north of the base, two rocket sites and their NVA crews were reported. Gunships attacked them and grunts on the ground clashed with the

regulars. During the encounter, two U.S. recon helicopters were shot down with three wounded.

Unfortunately, this did not deter another barrage on Charlie 2. Over a period of 15 to 20 minutes, 11 rockets landed within the perimeter.

On that May 21, evening rain clouds rolled in, concealing the NVA rocket launch site to the north. In the middle of evening chow, GIs had left the mess hall to take cover in a nearby club bunker, 16 by 32 feet.

Even though the bunker was covered by four layers of sandbags and three feet of dirt, the seventh rocket penetrated its protective barrier at 5:44 p.m. When the rocket struck, 65 to 70 GIs were inside.

'SCREAMING AND SCRAMBLING'

"There was a flash and a ringing noise and it knocked me down," said Spec. 4 William Benthimer, an APC driver. "People were pinned by beams and dirt. Guys were screaming and scrambling to get out. It happened so fast — then other guys came over to pull people out."

Gates helped in the rescue: "I volunteered to dig bodies out of the dilapidated bunker. I crawled into a hole to get those guys out. It was pretty messy. There were a lot of bodies in there. I didn't actually know how many until 25 years later.

"Chopper pilots flew in during the middle of the night to take out the bodies. They did one hell of a job. They all deserved medals for bravery."

Nearby units pitched in in other ways: "When Firebase Charlie 2 came under rocket attack, my platoon was setting up an NDP [night defensive position]," said Sgt. David Gahagan of 1st Plt., A Trp., 4th Sqdn., 12th Cav. "One of our track commanders spotted an explosion in and around the base. We radioed the Troop command post that rocket flashes were spotted about two kilometers away.

"We took our compass and shot an azimuth to the flashes and called in counter-battery fire from Alpha 4. The following morning we returned



PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY KEMP

From left, Bill Dodge, Ryan Riska, John Lacey, Jerry Garlinghouse, Andy Ramos and Terry Garrett at Quang Tri City airport, circa July 1970. Most were members of A Co., 1st Bn., 61st Inf. A Company lost 11 KIA in the rocket attack on Charlie 2 on May 21, 1971.

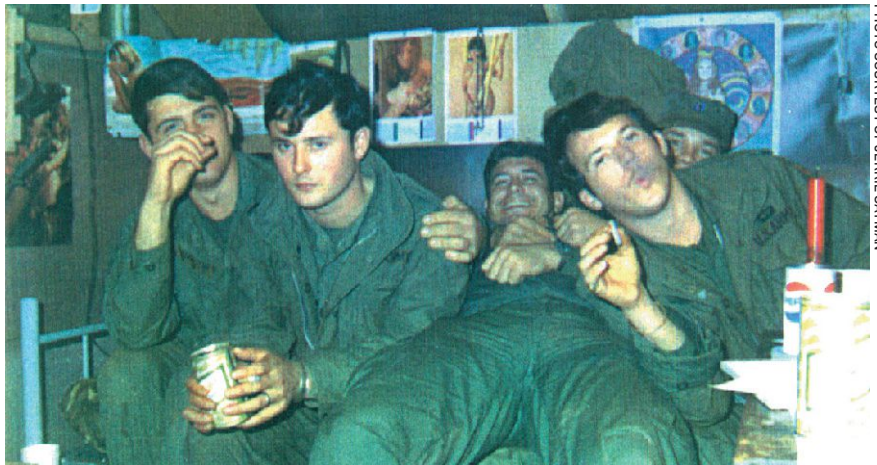


PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRIE OATMAN

Among those killed in the attack was Sgt. Leo Oatman, third from left. Other GIs in the photo were not identified.

to Charlie 2 to resupply and refuel. We saw the bags containing the bodies of the soldiers killed in the bunker. An engineer unit was called in to assist in excavating the ruined bunker."

Some of the men felt it was an awful coincidence that local workers failed to come to work on May 21. "At the time of the attack, I was sitting outside our bunker and saw the rocket being shot out of the rocket tube toward the bunker," remembered Spec. 4 Charles Gray, a rifleman in B Company. "It was a small club near the mess hall. Because the NVA dropped rockets there at chow time, everyone went to the club bunker for cover.

"The rocket hit directly on top of the

club bunker. What I could not figure out is why the Vietnamese who usually worked in the club did not show up for work that day."

RESCUING AND RETRIEVING

By pure chance, a few of the GIs had just left the club before the rocket struck. Bill Dodge, then an infantryman with A Company, recalls: "I was in the mess hall when the rounds started. It had become pretty much a daily routine. The first sergeant came in and told everyone to go to the club for a drink until it stopped. I went to the club, then headed out and then shortly after ran back.

"I dug down into the rubble from

Cannon cockers protect their ears as they fire a self-propelled 175mm howitzer at suspected Communist positions on May 31, 1971, just 10 days after the attack.



THE TOLL

U.S. KIA:
30

U.S. WIA:
33

the other side and we pulled several really badly wounded guys out and loaded them on Hueys. I remember yelling at the medics in the chopper because they were treating the injured so roughly.

“Guess there were so many that they were just trying to do the best that they could. They were throwing guys in like cordwood to haul them out. I remember digging until about 2:30 a.m. and sitting in the mud at the helipad. As usual, the mud was so deep and sticky that you couldn’t even walk. There were so many dead. This was my worst night in Vietnam.”

Spec. 4 Carl J. La Palme, an armor crewman in C Company, had a similar experience. “The first sergeant had ordered the men there because the club was above ground. I had just left it when the rocket landed there.

“I yelled out to my friend, ‘Damn, that rocket hit the club.’ Then I ran to the bunker. On the way, another GI ran right into me. His face was covered

with blood. I took him back to my bunker and put him in my bunk, then ran back to the bunker and called a medic.

“By this time everyone was at the bunker. What we saw was shocking. The rocket had hit right in the middle of the club bunker, driving through the roof before exploding. It literally cut the tie rod beams that held up the roof.

“We started digging the men out of the bunker, using anything we had — shovels, our hands, anything. Confusion reigned: People were running around everywhere. It was about 6 p.m. now, and we started pulling the men out.

“I went to the place where the door used to be. A man was lying face-down in what I call the splits—his back was broken. I pulled him up by his collar and out of the doorway, then laid him on the ground out of the way. He was dead.

“Back in the bunker, I helped to get out the men who were still alive. When I got there, you could hear men praying and crying and screaming for someone to get them out of the fallen debris.

“We worked into the night rescuing the living and retrieving the dead. About midnight, we had the dead stacked on the helicopter pad waiting to be moved to Quang Tri City, brigade headquarters.

“Next day, CBS and NBC news arrived and took pictures of all the helmets and M-16s we had lined up. This was by far the most tragic time I spent in Vietnam.”

TALLYING THE TOLL

Ten sub-units of the 1st Brigade sustained casualties in the bunker. The 61st Infantry was hit hardest, losing 14 men — 47 percent of the 30 Americans KIA. A Company alone counted 11 killed; Headquarters Company, one; D Company, two; and brigade HHC, four.

The 7th Engineer Battalion’s A Company also saw seven members perish in the rubble. A Co., the 77th Armor had one KIA, as did HQ Btry., 5th Bn., 4th Arty. Two batteries from the 26th and 65th Artillery, 108th Arty

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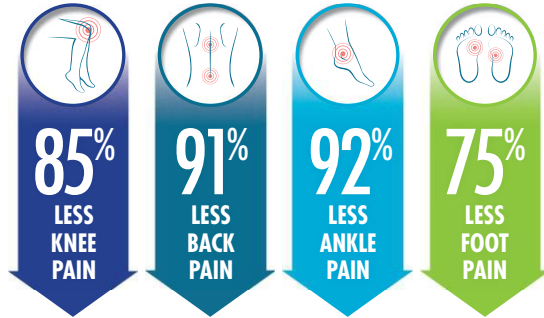


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Firebase Charlie 2 was situated halfway between the Cam Lo River and the DMZ, just northwest of Dong Ha.

Group, probably there for fire direction control, each had a KIA, too. One grunt from the 11th Infantry died also.

Exactly 50 percent of those killed were infantrymen. Fatalities were split evenly between draftees and volunteers. Agewise, they ranged from 19 to

45 with 80 percent in their 20s.

Only the sapper attack on FSB Mary Ann the previous March equalled this toll in a single ground incident during the war's last three years. Just one other single hostile action in the 1970s exceeded either toll. That was the helicopter shoot-down at LZ Judy on Aug. 28, 1970, which claimed 31 GIs' lives.

Besides the KIA, 33 soldiers were wounded in the attack.

John Estrada of A Co., 1st Bn., 61st Inf., was with the 5th Mech to the very end. Because he was on R&R on that fateful day, he narrowly missed the deadly strike. "Good friends of mine died on May 21," he says. "For many years, I buried those memories. During the unit's last few months in-country, the loss hung like a pall over our heads. But we maintained. Finally, within only the last few years did I come to terms with it and begin reconnecting with my fellow vets at reunions."

Less than two months after the rock-

et attack, on July 10, the last 500 members of the 5th's 1st Brigade departed Charlie 2. Two separate contingents of 50 American artillerymen and technicians each remained behind at Charlie 2 and Alpha 4 to monitor radar sensors and man a battery of 8-inch guns.

America's last days on the DMZ ended much as they had begun. From now on, the war in this no-man's land would be waged by ARVN. The 1st Brigade, 5th Division, left Vietnam on Aug. 27, 1971.

Though U.S. infantry units remained on the ground for another year, never again would they sustain casualties even approaching those at Charlie 2. ✪

EMAIL magazine@vfw.org

Richard K. Kolb is the former publisher and editor-in-chief of VFW magazine. An Army veteran of the Vietnam War, Kolb is a life member of VFW Post 5717 in Kearney, Mo.

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIETNAM WAR

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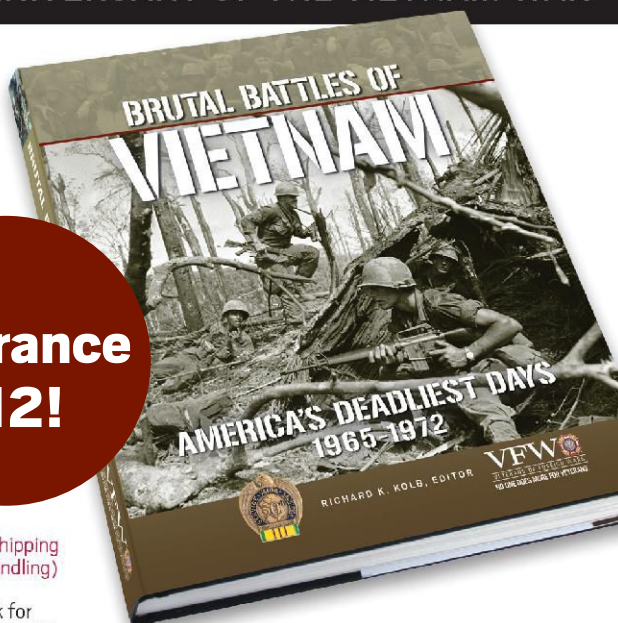
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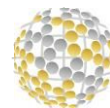
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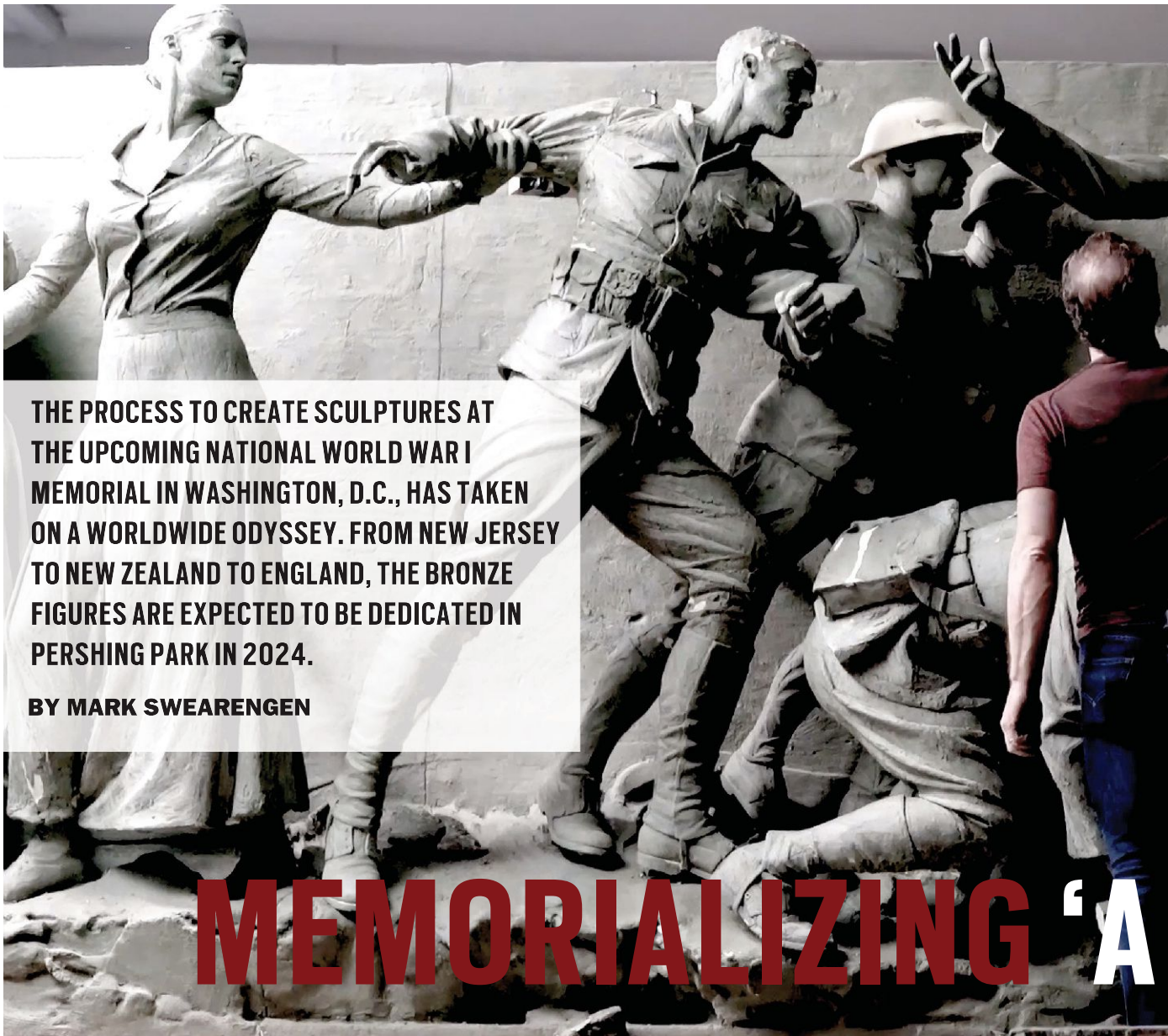


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THE PROCESS TO CREATE SCULPTURES AT THE UPCOMING NATIONAL WORLD WAR I MEMORIAL IN WASHINGTON, D.C., HAS TAKEN ON A WORLDWIDE ODYSSEY. FROM NEW JERSEY TO NEW ZEALAND TO ENGLAND, THE BRONZE FIGURES ARE EXPECTED TO BE DEDICATED IN PERSHING PARK IN 2024.

BY MARK SWEARENGEN

MEMORIALIZING 'A'

The last American veteran of World War I passed away in 2011 at the age of 110. Born in 1901 in Bethany, Mo., Frank Buckles enlisted in the Army at age 16 in 1917 and served in the war as an ambulance and motorcycle driver.

Although we cannot explore his memory or that of his fellow veterans, we can gain — through the study of history, preserved battlefields and monuments — an understanding of what life and the war were like more than 100 years ago.

America remained neutral early in WWI until German submarines began sinking U.S. targets in 1915. The U.S. was further enraged when it was discovered that Germany had attempted to establish an alliance with Mexico against the U.S.

Congress declared war against Germany in April 1917. The military had to initiate an intense training effort to field an effective fighting force, and soon the American Expeditionary

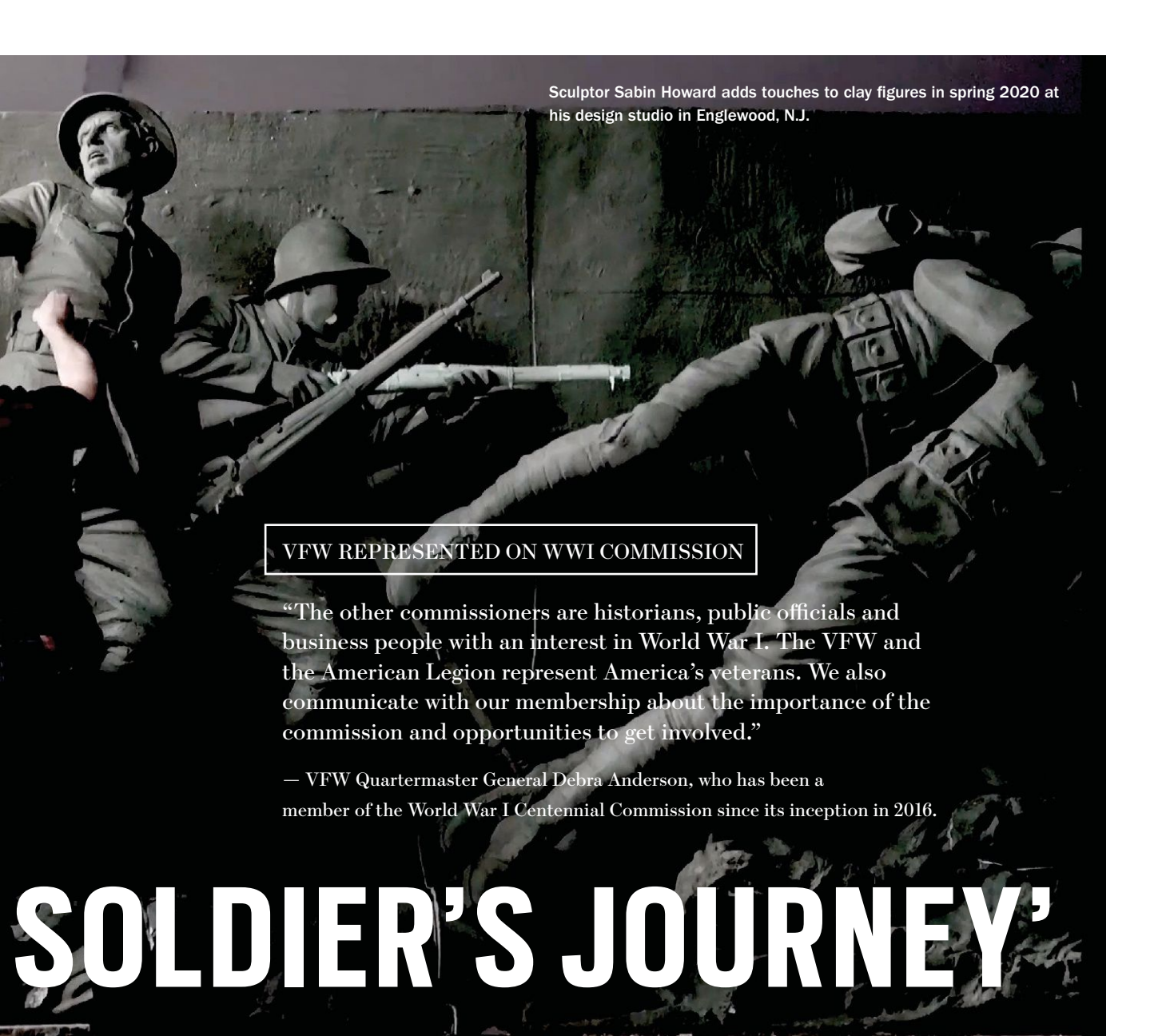
Forces deployed to Europe under the command of Army Gen. John J. Pershing. By May of 1918, more than 1 million U.S. troops had been deployed to Europe.

In America, there was a mood of desperation, as well as a spirit of commitment. Men and women of all backgrounds responded. They took it as their responsibility, their duty to country. They had to leave families. Daughters and sons saw fathers leave for the war.

REMEMBERING THE SACRIFICES

There was little time to shift the economy to a wartime effort. Women by the thousands took up work on the homefront that had been done by men. Others served overseas in battle areas as doctors and nurses, ambulance drivers and translators.

At the time, it was called “The Great War.” U.S. casual-



Sculptor Sabin Howard adds touches to clay figures in spring 2020 at his design studio in Englewood, N.J.

VFW REPRESENTED ON WWI COMMISSION

“The other commissioners are historians, public officials and business people with an interest in World War I. The VFW and the American Legion represent America’s veterans. We also communicate with our membership about the importance of the commission and opportunities to get involved.”

— VFW Quartermaster General Debra Anderson, who has been a member of the World War I Centennial Commission since its inception in 2016.

SOLDIER’S JOURNEY’

ties during the 19 months of American involvement totaled 53,402 killed in action; 63,114 dead from diseases and accidents; and 204,002 wounded.

U.S. citizens soon established memorials around the country. In 1921, the burial of an unidentified soldier in the plaza of the Memorial Amphitheater in Arlington National Cemetery led to establishment of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Other memorials included the National World War I Museum and Memorial of the United States in Kansas City, Mo. It was dedicated as the Liberty Memorial on Nov. 11, 1926, by President Calvin Coolidge. A District of Columbia War Memorial, dedicated in 1931 on the National Mall, commemorates the citizens of Washington, D.C., who served during WWI.

The years following saw the United States involved in World War II and subsequent wars. Reflections on WWI slow-

ly faded, and the United States did not have a national WWI memorial in the nation’s capital.

The memorial in Kansas City was eventually designated in 2004 by Congress as America’s official WWI Museum and Memorial.

With the war being nearly 100 years in the past, law was passed in 2014 which designated Pershing Park in Washington, D.C., as a WWI memorial. The law also established the WWI Centennial Commission to build a national WWI memorial in Pershing Park.

65-FOOT-LONG DESIGN SELECTED

The commission held an international competition in 2016 to select a design concept for the memorial and received 350 submissions. According to VFW Quartermaster General Debra Anderson, who has been a member of the commis-



Models Paul-Emile Cendron and Zach Libresco portray a WWI battle scene in January 2019 in Stroud, England, surrounded by a photogrammetry rig of 156 cameras. The photogrammetry process allowed artist Sabin Howard to study the intricate detail of each subject in the memorial and create his own vision of every human figure.

sion since its inception in 2016, a concept submitted by architect Joe Weishaar won the contest. She said American sculptor Sabin Howard joined the team shortly after that and has been an “integral” part of the commission’s work since then.

“The commission has stayed in regular contact with Sabin Howard during the process,” said Anderson, an Army veteran of the Gulf War. “He attends many of our events, and we have gotten a virtual tour of his studio. The commissioners feel like we know him and Joe Weishaar, the architect, well.”

Howard, Weishaar and the WWI Centennial Commission collaborated to devise a full relief. After more than a dozen iterations, Howard and Weishaar produced a design that the commission liked. It presented Howard’s vision of “a transformational story of a horrific era in history that changed the world forever.” The essence of the initial plan was a 65-foot-long wall featuring bronze life-size figures of soldiers in battle.

After design approval, Howard recruited actors to his studio in Englewood, N.J., to portray soldiers, nurses and family members. He configured the scene for the memorial, posing every model precisely to present a moving-in-time story. Between February and October 2016, Howard shot 12,000 photos of the actors at his Englewood studio and another studio in the Bronx, N.Y.

DESIGN EMPHASIZES THE HUMAN ELEMENT

Anderson says the WWI Centennial Commission wanted a sculpture that fit well in an urban park that already includes a statue of Army Gen. Pershing. She said the commission members told Howard that the memorial needed to convey the significance and sacrifice of the war.

“We wanted it to honor veterans of WWI and also tell a universal story of service to our country,” she said.

Anderson added that the design went through many iterations. It was Howard, she said, who came up with the “Soldier’s

Journey” idea.

“His sculpture wall tells the story of a man going off to war, fighting, suffering and returning home a changed person,” Anderson said. “It will be a place of reflection, inspiration and honor.”

She noted that the memorial also must fit within the park in an appropriate way and be a focal point.

“The park has several entrances, and the location of the sculpture will draw people into the center,” she said. “It needs to be historically accurate in uniforms and equipment. We also wanted diversity with the inclusion of minorities and women showing their participation in the war.”

As Anderson noted, Howard named the scene “A Soldier’s Journey” to portray the entire arc of a Doughboy’s experience.

“It’s about what happens on the battlefield, the camaraderie and brotherhood of arms that happens in war,” Howard explained.

Prominent in the center will be a depiction inspired by Marine Gunnery Sgt. Dan Daly, who in WWI’s Battle of Belleau Wood yelled fearlessly to his men, “Come on you sons-a-bitches! Do ya wanna live forever?”

An ensuing scene shows a nurse caring for a soldier wounded in a gas attack, the stare of a soldier suffering from shock and helmets on the ground from fallen soldiers.

DEDICATION SCHEDULED FOR 2024

Once satisfied with his initial drawing, Howard traveled in May 2017 to the Weta Workshop in New Zealand. He worked there through January 2018 posing live models to create a three-dimensional print and a 1:6 scale model of plastic resin. From there, Howard took the model to Washington, D.C., for review by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

In the fall of 2018, after some revision, Howard had the model shipped to the Pangolin Editions Foundry in Stroud, England. An innovative photogrammetry rig of 156 cameras developed by photographer Steve Russell was used to create textured 3-D foam armature figures. The photogrammetry process allowed Howard to study the intricate detail of each subject in the memorial and create his own vision of every human figure.

Between August 2019 and January 2020, the foundry in England created life-size images of each figure and shipped them back to Howard’s studio in New Jersey, where each

figure was layered with clay.

The first 11 completed clay figures were shipped back to the English foundry in September 2020 for casting of final bronze figures using a special “lost wax” process (see sidebar). As of February 2021, Howard still had 27 figures to sculpt.

According to Howard, the completed memorial featuring 38 figures in a 58-foot-long, 10-foot-high relief should be finished in 2023 and installed in Pershing Park for dedication on Memorial Day 2024.

He emphasized the commitment and dedication of his team of sculptors, Charlie Mostow and Raymond Frech, who provided initial sculptural work on the clay figures.

“Their work has been invaluable,” Howard said. “And we can’t make sculpture that is visceral without live models. To create the drama and emotions of WWI, I am grateful to the following hard-working models: Madeleine Howard, Christina Tonn, Paul-Emile Cendron, Mark Puchinsky, Christian Ashdale, Zach Libresco, Javi Robles, Chadd Blaylock and Anton Floyd.”

Eventually, when people visit the memorial in Pershing Park, they will see and feel “A Soldier’s Journey” of men of all backgrounds, the daughters and sons, the mothers and nurses, who in their country’s desperate time, were there when they were needed, and did what had to be done. 🌟

[EMAIL magazine@vfw.org](mailto:EMAIL_magazine@vfw.org)

Mark Swarengen is a member of VFW’s Department of Missouri. A Vietnam War veteran, he resides in Chesterfield, Va.



PHOTO BY ANDREW HOLTZ

CREATING A BRONZE STATUE

The “lost wax” process involves forming a rubber mold around each clay figure. The figure is then removed and wax is poured into the rubber mold. The wax hardens to an image identical to the original clay figure. A ceramic shell is then formed around the wax figure.

At this point, molten bronze is poured into the ceramic shell, the wax melts and flows out through flues in the shell. The bronze cools to a solid figure matching the original clay image.

ABOVE: Sculptor Sabin Howard uses live model Christina Tonn as a reference while refining the face of the “standing mom” statue in fall 2019 at his Englewood, N.J. studio.

PHOTO BY ANDREW HOLTZ



Model Tim Rogan, artist Sabin Howard and Howard’s assistant, Charlie Rostow, work on the “kneeling father” sculpture in 2019 at Howard’s studio in Englewood, N.J. Howard said, “We can’t make sculpture that is visceral without live models,” noting that models’ participation was “invaluable.”

Local Memorials Honor Veterans

Three VFW Posts honor veterans from their communities with memorial services and permanent structures. They believe they are fulfilling one of VFW's most important reasons for existing.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VFW POST 402



A bronze doughboy, pictured here in June 2020, has stood outside VFW Post 402 in Coraopolis, Pa., for more than four decades. Following an upgrade by the Post last year, the statue now serves as the anchor to a newly built veterans memorial. The Post expects to officially have its unveiling ceremony during Memorial Day weekend this year.

Since its inception more than 120 years ago, one of VFW's longstanding pursuits remains preserving the memory of veterans who fought for America, often-times paying the ultimate price.

In the years since, VFW's efforts to commemorate veterans of previous wars has led to war memorials sprouting across the country, from small towns to large metropolitan cities.

Commemorated through an array of devices that include monoliths, cemeteries, streets and memorial parks bearing their names, honoring veterans has always been a VFW pastime.

Here are a few examples of memorials created in 2020 through the help of local VFW Posts, whose memorials honor those who fought to protect and preserve the existence of our nation's values.

'A MONUMENT WORTHY OF ALL VETERANS'

After more than four decades greeting people outside VFW Post 402 in Coraopolis, Pa., a bronze doughboy statue received reinforcements in 2020.

Unanimously voted upon by Post 402 members last year, the longstanding statue will now serve as the anchor to a new Veterans War Memorial honoring local veterans from all six services who fought in all American conflicts.

"The condition of the original monument was always lacking due to time and weather damage over the years," Post 402 Commander Mike Blair said. "It was also felt throughout our membership that the monument did not properly represent all conflicts throughout the years."

The plea to enhance and add reinforcements to the doughboy statue began years before its approval, a plea that often came from the late Lou Gilberti, a Post 402 life member and Army veteran who served in Korea.

"He would ask me every time we spoke, for five years, to take up the monument on the corner," Post 402 Quartermaster John Radcliff said. "Upon his death, he requested dona-

tions go directly to the monument. At that moment, the Post members made it their mission to get this done.”

Lacking funds at the time, Post 402 members sought contributions from local businesses and private community donors through a fundraising campaign that included selling engraved pavers.

“These engraved pavers included dedications to those who have served, local businesses and organizations, as well as members of the community who support the mission of the VFW,” said Steve Miller, board president and Post member.

The fundraising campaign yielded more than \$30,000, which surpassed any campaign previously held in the Post’s 100-year history, according to Miller.

“Taking on a project as large as this memorial was not taken lightly,” Radcliff said. “It took thousands of hours, work from our youngest to our oldest members and a lot of help from our community businesses to see this project completed.”

Although completed for more than a year now, Pennsylvania COVID-19 restrictions forced a postponement of its unveiling ceremony, which is tentatively scheduled for Memorial Day this year.

For Post 402 members in Coraopolis, however, the beautification of its doughboy statue and completion of its

new Veterans War Memorial is worth waiting to formally celebrate.

“I believe we have a monument worthy of all veterans and the ability to maintain it well into the future,” Radcliff said. “I hope we have made all veterans, past and present, proud.”

‘THEY WERE BOTH QUIET, UNASSUMING GUYS’

It all happened in a vacuum for VFW Post 8278 Adjutant Gary Althoff.

When a new subdivision proposal passed in the village of Bangor, Wis., in late 2018, it gave Althoff and the rest of the village board members power to name the town’s new streets.

Realizing he had a unique opportunity to memorialize those who paid the ultimate sacrifice, Althoff recalled a March 2018 *VFW* magazine article about a street-naming project to honor local veterans.

As a Vietnam War veteran, the story prompted the tenured village president to propose honoring natives Thomas Leslie Anderson and John Eugene Leis, two Purple Heart recipients who died fighting in the same war.

“It just stuck in my mind,” said Althoff, who deployed to Vietnam in 1969 with the Air Force Postal Courier Service. “So I wrote a letter and proposed that instead of the streets being named after a tree or

a dead president, we should name them after two local boys who gave their lives for this country.”

The proposal passed unanimously among the village board, which decided on Anderson Street and Leis Street, respectively.

Althoff, however, took it a step further. “Because there are a lot of Leises and a lot of Andersons in the community, people weren’t going to know who we honored,” Althoff said. “So it was important to place the first and last names of the soldiers on the signs.”

The proposal, again, passed with a unanimous vote, heralding the names Tom Anderson Street and John Leis Street, respectively.

Althoff’s vision for the pair of streets in the new Shelley Miller addition of Bangor, about 130 miles northwest of Madison, Wis., culminated in an unveiling ceremony on Sept. 13, 2020.

Gathered in the village’s new subdivision, the memory of its two native sons was celebrated by more than 150 people, which included Post 8278 members and surviving family members of both Anderson and Leis.

“It was such a special ceremony,” Althoff said. “I know their families were honored to receive such recognition, but it was also a sad remind-

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE COASTER



From left, VFW Post 1333 members Frank Hall, Claude Jones, Wilbur Martin and Post Commander Robert Jameson prepare to place U.S. flags on veteran gravesites at Monmouth Memorial Park in Tinton Falls, N.J., on May 25, 2020. They enlisted a local Boy Scout troop to help.



er of the day they received the news. For others in attendance, it was about honoring a lost brother in arms, a lost classmate, friend or acquaintance.”

For Althoff, it was all three. A Bangor native himself, Althoff graduated from Bangor High School two years before Anderson and Leis, knowing both well.

“They were both very quiet, unassuming guys,” Althoff recalled. “I remember John, for example, was known affectionately in the military as ‘the little farmer.’ They used to get quite a charge listening to his stories about growing up on the farm.”

The ceremony included speeches from a few immediate family members of both men, as well as a special surprise by project developer and benefactor Dick Barbour.

Barbour, who paid for the signs, joined Althoff at the conclusion of the ceremony to present the surviving family members of Anderson and Leis with their own commemorative signs.

“I’ve been on the board for more than 24 years, 15 as president, and this is perhaps one of my proudest moments,” Althoff said. “Years from now, kids in school may need to write a paper, and they might look at those street signs and learn a little bit about our history.”

‘OUR COMMITMENT TO THEM’

For as long as Robert Jameson can remember, members of VFW Post 1333 in Asbury Park, N.J., have annually convened at Monmouth Memorial Park for Memorial Day.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions issued by state officials last year, Jameson and six members of Post 1333 joined 20 Boy Scouts from Troop 76 in nearby Oakhurst, N.J., in keeping with their tradition to honor the fallen.

“We wanted to make sure it didn’t skip a year,” said Jameson, a Vietnam War veteran and current Post 1333 commander. “It’s an honor to do this for our fallen veterans. That’s what we’re about at the VFW. That’s what we try to do.”

Leading groups of Boy Scouts, each Post 1333 member trekked across different sections of Monmouth Memorial Park in Tinton Falls, N.J., about 6 miles west of Asbury Park.

Setting off into the cemetery at

Village of Bangor President and VFW Post 8278 Adjutant Gary Althoff, middle, presents commemorative street signs to Leo Leis, left, and Elmer Anderson, right, brothers of John Leis and Thomas Anderson, respectively, on Sept. 13, 2020, in Bangor, Wis. Althoff worked for two years with other village leaders to secure the renaming of both streets in honor of veterans.

9 a.m. on that Monday, Post members and their Boy Scout counterparts placed more than 500 U.S. flags at veteran gravesites to honor their memory.

“There were different sections of the cemetery, so we wanted to make sure each marker had an American flag,” Jameson said.

“We were determined to stay at the cemetery until each veteran gravesite had its flag. That’s our commitment to them.”

Jameson added that the Post continues to honor and celebrate the memory of veterans through their community work, and it should not be reserved for once a year.

“We try to always bear in mind that our commitment to honoring their memory is a daily task,” Jameson said. “That’s why we try to stay involved in always serving our community where we can. We do this for them.”

EMAIL irodriguez@vfw.org

COMMUNITY REMEMBERS TWO VIETNAM VETERANS

THOMAS LESLIE ANDERSON

Thomas Leslie Anderson was born on April 10, 1949. He graduated from Bangor High School in 1968 and began his tour in Vietnam on July 6, 1969, with Headquarters Co., 65th Engineer Bn., 25th Inf. Div.

Anderson was killed in action on Dec. 21, 1969, in the Hau Nghia Province of South Vietnam. He received a posthumous Purple Heart and is listed on the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial in Washington, D.C.

JOHN EUGENE LEIS

John Eugene Leis was born on Veterans Day, 1950. A 1968 graduate of Bangor (Wisc.) High School, Leis deployed to Vietnam on July 27, 1970, as an armor crewman. He served with the 1st Bn., 77th Armor, 5th Inf. Div.

Leis was killed in action on June 20, 1971, near the Quang Tri Province in South Vietnam, just a few weeks before being scheduled to return stateside. He received a posthumous Purple Heart and also is honored at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

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★ A FINAL SALUTE ★

VFW magazine presents this memorial listing in tribute to the 40 U.S. troops who died **overseas** in 2020. It includes troops killed in combat and non-hostile incidents.

AFGHANISTAN

Deaths by Hostile Cause ARMY

- **Sgt. 1st Class Javier J. Gutierrez**, 3rd Bn., 7th Special Forces Grp., San Antonio
- **Staff Sgt. Ian P. McLaughlin**, 307th Bde. Eng. Bn., 3rd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div., Newport News, Va.
- **Sgt. 1st Class Antonio R. Rodriguez**, 3rd Bn., 7th Special Forces Grp., Las Cruces, N.M.
- **Pfc. Miguel A. Villalon**, 307th Bde. Eng. Bn., 3rd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div., Joliet, Ill.

Deaths by Non-Hostile Cause ARMY

- **1st Lt. Joseph Trent Allbaugh**, 2nd Bn., 44th Air Defense Arty Regt., 108th ADA Bde., Folsom, Calif.
- **1st Lt. Trevarius Ravon Bowman**, B Co., 198th Signal Bn., 261st Signal Bde., Spartanburg, S.C.
- **Spc. Vincent Sebastian Ibarria**, 2nd Bn., 22nd Inf., 1st BCT, San Antonio
- **Spc. Branden Tyme Kimball**, 3rd Bn., 10th Aviation, 10th Combat Aviation Bde., Central Point, Ore.

AIR FORCE

- **Capt. Ryan S. Phaneuf**, 37th Bomb Sqdn., 28th Bomb Wing, Hudson, N.H.
- **Lt. Col. Paul K. Voss**, Air Combat Command, Yigo, Guam

ANTARCTICA

Death by Non-Hostile Cause AIR FORCE

- **Staff Sgt. George Girtler**, 109th Airlift Wing, Schenectady, N.Y.

BAHRAIN

Death by Non-Hostile Cause MARINE CORPS

- **Sgt. Trevor Goldyn**, 5th Marine Expeditionary Bde., Frankfort, Ill.

DJIBOUTI

Death by Non-Hostile Cause ARMY

- **Pfc. Walter Lewark**, 1st Bn., 200th Inf., 93rd Troop Command, Mountainair, N.M.

EGYPT

Deaths by Non-Hostile Cause (Helicopter Crash) ARMY

- **Chief Warrant Officer 3 Dallas Gerald Garza**, Task Force Sinai, Fayetteville, N.C.
- **Chief Warrant Officer 2 Marwan Sameh Ghabour**, Task Force Sinai, Marlborough, Mass.
- **Staff Sgt. Kyle Robert McKee**, Task Force Sinai, Painesville, Ohio

- **Sgt. Jeremy Cain Sherman**, Task Force Sinai, Watseka, Ill.
- **Capt. Seth Vernon Vandekamp**, Task Force Sinai, Katy, Texas

GERMANY

Deaths by Non-Hostile Causes ARMY

- **Staff Sgt. Setariki Korovakaturaga**, 44th Expeditionary Signal Bn., 2nd Theater Signal Bde., Labasta, Fiji (COVID-19)

AIR FORCE

- **Airman 1st Class Xavier Leaphart**, 52nd Aircraft Maintenance Sqdn., Lithonia, Ga.
- **Airman 1st Class Aziess Whitehurst**, 52nd Aircraft Maintenance Sqdn., Sierra Vista, Ariz.

GUAM

Deaths by Non-Hostile Cause NAVY

- **Aviation Ordnanceman Chief Petty Officer Charles Robert Thacker Jr.**, *USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71)*, Fort Smith, Ark. (COVID-19)

AIR FORCE

- **Airman 1st Class Christopher "Harrison" Fay**, 36th Logistics Readiness Sqdn., 36th Wing, Plano, Texas

IRAQ

Deaths by Hostile Cause ARMY

- **Spc. Juan Mendez Covarrubias**, 1st Bn., 227th Aviation, 1st Air Cav Bde., 1st Cav Div., Hanford, Calif.
- **Staff Sgt. Marshal D. Roberts**, 219th Eng. Installation Sqdn., 138th Fighter Wing., Owasso, Okla.

MARINE CORPS

- **Capt. Moises A. Navas**, 2nd Marine Raider Bn., Germantown, Md.
- **Gunnery Sgt. Diego D. Pongo**, 2nd Marine Raider Bn., Simi Valley, Calif.

Deaths by Non-Hostile Cause ARMY

- **Sgt. Christopher Wesley Curry**, 3rd Bn., 21st Inf., 1st Stryker BCT, 25th Inf. Div., Terre Haute, Ind.
- **Sgt. 1st Class John David Randolph Hilty**, 1st Bn., 227th Aviation, 1st Air Cav Bde., 1st Cav Div., Bowie, Md.

ITALY

Death by Non-Hostile Cause AIR FORCE

- **Tech. Sgt. Michael Wayne Morris**, 31st Aircraft Maintenance Sqdn., 56th Helicopter Maintenance Unit, Cass Lake, Minn. (COVID-19)

JAPAN

AIR FORCE

Deaths by Non-Hostile Cause

- **Sr. Airman Jeremieh Soroten**, 18th Munitions Sqdn., 18th Wing, Wahiawa, Hawaii

MARINE CORPS

- **Sgt. Tyler Mason Rankin**, Marine Aerial Refueler Trans. Sqdn. 152, Marine Aircraft Group 12, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, Gladstone, Mo.

KENYA

Death by Hostile Cause ARMY

- **Spc. Henry Mayfield Jr.**, 1st Bn., 58th Aviation, 164th Theater Airfield Ops Grp., Hazel Crest, Ill.

KOSOVO

Death by Non-Hostile Cause ARMY

- **Pfc. Alexander Blake Klass**, 2nd Bn., 162nd Inf., 41st BCT, Willamena, Ore.

KUWAIT

Deaths by Non-Hostile Cause AIR FORCE

- **Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Ouellette**, 42nd Aerial Port Sqdn., 439th Airlift Wing, Merrimack, N.H.
- **Sr. Airman Jason Khai Phan**, 66th Security Forces Sqdn., 386th Air Expeditionary Wing, Anaheim, Calif.

SYRIA

Deaths by Non-Hostile Cause ARMY

- **Spc. Antonio Moore**, 346th Eng. Co., 363rd Eng. Bn., 411th Eng. Bde., Wilmington, N.C.
- **Sgt. Bryan Cooper Mount**, 1st Sqdn., 73rd Cav, 2nd BCT, St. George, Utah

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Deaths by Non-Hostile Cause AIR FORCE

- **Capt. Kelliann Leli**, 380th Air Expeditionary Wing, Parlin, N.J.

MARINE CORPS

- **Cpl. Eloiza Zavala**, Combat Logistics Bn. 13, 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Sacramento, Calif.

BCT = Brigade Combat Team

Editor's note: If there are other troops missing from this memorial listing, send their name, unit information, hometown and cause of death to magazine@vfw.org.

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VA GIVES MORE OPTIONS TO HONOR DEPARTED VETERANS

VA's National Cemetery Administration is working to expand its Veterans Legacy Memorial. A VA employee encourages VFW members to get involved.



BY DAVE SPIVA

While millions of Americans are observing the upcoming Memorial Day later this month, VA national cemeteries will be places where families gather to honor their departed veterans' service and sacrifices to the United States.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some VA cemeteries may be restricted per local ordinances. If an option to visit a site in person is not available, the National Cemetery Administration's Veterans Legacy Memorial might be the best way to remember a veteran. The National Cemetery Administration last year expanded its Veterans Legacy Memorial website to help family and friends share memories of veterans.

The Veterans Legacy Memorial is dedicated to preserving the memory of about 3.7 million veterans buried or interred at VA cemeteries, according to VA. On the website (www.vlm.cem.va.gov), visitors can leave a tribute to any veteran found by searching their name, military service, war period or cemetery. Tributes also can be shared on social media pages.

While the tribute function of the website isn't new this year, James LaPaglia, the digital services officer for the National Cemetery Administration, said more options are available. Friends and family of veterans now can post photos and documents such as newspaper clippings pertaining to a veteran's military ser-

vice. The website also has a new layout and design.

"We are really excited about these new features to the Veterans Legacy Memorial website," said LaPaglia, a retired Air Force public affairs officer. "This Memorial Day, family and friends of veterans interred at VA national cemeteries will be able to submit photos, biographical summaries and obituaries to the page. It's a way for people to tell more about a veteran's service to the country."

LaPaglia also encourages VFW members to be a part of telling the story of those on the Veterans Legacy Memorial's website.

"There are so many different ways veterans' service organizations,

'NEVER FORGET GARDEN' HONORS VETERANS AND FAMILIES

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SOCIETY OF THE HONOR GUARD



This year marks the centennial of the congressional approval and dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

In preparation for the milestone, the Society of the Honor Guard, a non-profit based in Pennsylvania, started an initiative to help raise awareness to remember U.S. veterans and their families.

The organization wants people to plant and maintain a "Never Forget Garden" to represent "America's unwavering commitment" to recognizing and remembering the sacrifice of all veterans.

The president of the Society of the Honor Guard, Gavin McIlvenna, encourages others to install a garden to honor veterans.

"It is the society's intention that this living memorial serve as a kind of a proxy not only for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, but for your loved one's final resting place that you may not be able to visit this year," said McIlvenna, a VFW life member. "In doing so, you will keep their memory alive and support the national commemoration for the 100th anniversary of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on Nov. 11, 2021."

For more information about the Never Forget Garden and the Society of the Honor Guard, visit www.tombguard.org.

ABOVE: Shown at left is a Never Forget Garden marker designed by the Society of the Honor Guard and Carruth Studio. The president of the Society of the Honor Guard, Gavin McIlvenna, encourages others to install a garden to honor veterans during Memorial Day and year-round.

Marietta National Cemetery, a VA national cemetery in Marietta, Ga., is shown on Memorial Day 2019. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some VA cemeteries might have restricted access. The National Cemetery Administration's Veterans Legacy Memorial gives people access to pay tribute to deceased veterans from a smartphone or computer.

including VFW, can help tell the larger story of these veterans," LaPaglia said. "People can go to our website and find veterans who they know to tell others about their story. Organizations can make it a project to submit information to their fellow veteran's webpage."

LaPaglia said contributing to the Veterans Legacy Memorial will help keep the memorial of past veterans alive for future generations.

"A veteran dies two deaths — a physical one and one when people stop saying their name," LaPaglia said. "It is key to our mission that we keep telling others about these veterans' stories. We don't want people to forget them and their sacrifice." ✪

EMAIL dspiva@vfw.org

ELIGIBILITY FOR BURIAL AT VA CEMETERIES

VA offers burial and other benefits to eligible veterans, troops, spouses and other dependents. According to the VA, those eligible are:

- Veterans who did not receive a dishonorable discharge
- Military members who died while on active duty, active-duty training or inactive duty for training
- Spouses or minor children of veterans (VA notes that in some cases, unmarried adult dependents of veterans are eligible.)

Additional information on VA burial benefits is available at local VA national cemetery offices by visiting www.va.gov/burials-memorials or calling VA at 1-800-827-1000.

If burial arrangements at an open VA national cemetery are needed, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 1-800-535-1117.

VA also provides veterans headstones or other markers to honor their military service if they are not buried at a VA national cemetery.

VA's National Cemetery Administration oversees 153 national cemeteries and provides funding to 118 other cemeteries across the country. About 93 percent of veterans living in the U.S. have access to a free burial option within 75 miles of where they live, according to the National Cemetery Administration.

THE NEWLY ELECTED 117TH CONGRESS IS COMPRISED OF 91 VETERANS, 18 FEWER THAN THE LAST CONGRESS. AMONG THIS TERM'S CONGRESSIONAL FRESHMEN, 16 ARE MILITARY VETERANS.

VFW WELCOMES NEWLY ELECTED VETERANS TO CONGRESS

BY DAVE SPIVA



DOD PHOTO

Rep. Troy Nehls (R-Texas)



HOUSE CREATIVE COMMITTEE PHOTO

Rep. Tony Gonzales (R-Texas)



DOD PHOTO

Rep. Ronny Jackson (R-Texas)



NASA PHOTO

Sen. Mark Kelly (D-Arizona)

The number of veterans serving in the current Congress is the fewest since the end of World War II. Only 91 veterans were sworn in on Jan. 3, with just 16 being newly elected.

The 117th Congress comprises 74 veterans in the House and 17 in the Senate. The number of veterans in Congress currently is down 18 from the 116th Congress (2019-20). A total of 24 men and women of the 117th Congress are VFW members. (See sidebar, p. 42.)

The peak decade for veterans in Congress remains the 1970s. The high point was the 93rd Congress (1973-74), in which 390 lawmakers, or about 73 percent of the total, were veterans. Most of those veterans had served in WWII and the Korean War. Today, veterans account for only about 17 percent of Congress, the lowest proportion since at least the end of WWII, when such records were first compiled.

Here are the 16 newly elected men and women of Congress who served in the military:

REPRESENTATIVES

Rep. Barry Moore

Alabama's 2nd District | Republican

Moore served six years in the Alabama National Guard and Army Reserve from 1989 to 1995.

Rep. Darrell Issa

California's 50th District | Republican

Issa served in the Army as a bomb disposal technician, tank platoon commander and computer research and development specialist. He left the Army at the rank of captain. Issa left Congress in 2015 but was re-elected to the 117th Congress.

Rep. Scott Franklin

Florida's 15th District | Republican

Franklin served in the Navy for 26 years, with 14 of those years on active duty and 12 in the Navy Reserve. The Naval Academy graduate served in the Gulf War, Bosnia and Kosovo as a naval aviator.

Rep. Andrew Clyde

Georgia's 9th District | Republican

An Iraq War veteran, Clyde served in the Navy and Navy Reserve for 28 years. He retired from the military in 2013 as a commander, according to *Bethel*, the publication of his alma mater, Bethel University in Mishawaka, Ind.

Rep. Kai Kahele

Hawaii's 2nd District | Democrat

Kahele served in the Air Force and Hawaii Air National Guard as a pilot for 18 years. He served in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars and left the service at the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks

Iowa's 2nd District | Republican

Dr. Miller-Meeks served 24 years from 1976 to 2000 in the Army and Army Reserve. She enlisted at 18 years old and ultimately became an ophthalmologist in the Army Reserve.

Rep. Jake Auchincloss

Massachusetts' 4th District | Democrat

Marine Corps Reserve Maj. Auchincloss is a veteran of the Afghanistan War and operations in Panama. He has served as an infantry and reconnaissance officer during his military career.

Rep. Peter Meijer

Michigan's 3rd District | Republican

Army veteran Meijer served as a non-commissioned officer with an intelligence unit in the Iraq War. Meijer served in the Army from 2008 to 2016 and is a former Student Veterans of America board of directors chairman.

Rep. Pat Fallon

Texas' 4th District | Republican

A former Air Force officer, Fallon was stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas. He served from 1990 to 1994 and left the military as a captain.

Rep. August Pfluger

Texas' 11th District | Republican

Iraq War veteran Pfluger served 20 years in the Air Force and Air Force Reserve

as a pilot. He is a former member of former President Donald Trump's National Security Council staff.

Rep. Ronny Jackson*

Texas' 13th District | Republican

An Iraq War veteran, Dr. Jackson served in the Navy for 24 years. Jackson most notably served as former President Trump's physician when he was head of the White House Medical Unit. He also served with the unit under the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations.

Rep. Troy Nehls *

Texas' 22nd District | Republican

Retired Maj. Nehls served with the Army Reserve in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, as well as Bosnia. He earned two Bronze Stars and is a former sheriff of Fort Bend County, Texas.

Rep. Tony Gonzales*

Texas' 23rd District | Republican

Retired Navy Master Chief Cryptologic Technician Gonzales deployed in support of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars during his military career.

Rep. Scott Fitzgerald

Wisconsin's 5th District | Republican

A retired Army Reserve lieutenant colonel, Fitzgerald served from 1981 to 2009. He is a former member of the Wisconsin State Senate.

SENATORS

Sen. Mark Kelly*

Arizona | Democrat

Kelly is a former Navy captain who served in the Gulf War as a naval aviator. Kelly also is a former astronaut with NASA.

Sen. Roger Marshall

Kansas | Republican

A former member of the House, Dr. Marshall is an Army Reserve veteran. He served the military for seven years from 1984 to 1991 and is a practicing gynecologist.

*VFW Member (See sidebar.)



EMAIL dspiva@vfw.org

VFW MEMBERS IN CONGRESS A total of 24 VFW members are members of the 117th Congress. Four are in the Senate and 20 serve in the House of Representatives. Here is a list of those VFW members.

VFW MEMBERS IN THE HOUSE

Rep. Don Bacon (R)

Nebraska | District 2 | Air Force | Iraq War
VFW Post 7535 | Momence, Ill.

Rep. Jim Baird (R)

Indiana | District 4 | Army | Vietnam War
VFW Post 1550 | Greencastle, Ind.

Rep. Jim Banks (R)

Indiana | District 3 | Navy | Iraq War
VFW Post 5582 | Columbia City, Ind.

Rep. Jason Crow (D)

Colorado | District 6 | Army | Afghanistan and
Iraq wars | VFW Post 1 | Denver

Rep. Jared Golden (D)

Maine | District 2 | Marine Corps |
Afghanistan and Iraq wars | VFW Post 1603 |
Auburn, Maine

Rep. Tony Gonzales (R)

Texas | District 23 | Navy | Afghanistan and
Iraq wars | VFW Department of Texas

Rep. Mark Green (R)

Tennessee | District 7
Army | Afghanistan and Iraq wars
VFW Post 11160 | Clarksville, Tenn.

Rep. Ronny Jackson (R)

Texas | District 13 | Navy | Iraq War
VFW Post 1475 | Amarillo, Texas

Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R)

Illinois | District 16 | Air Force | Iraq War
VFW Post 6049 | Morris, Ill.

Rep. Brian Mast (R)

Florida | District 18 | Army | Afghanistan War
VFW Post 9610 | Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

Rep. Troy Nehls (R)

Texas | District 22 | Army | Afghanistan and
Iraq wars | VFW Post 3903 | Rosenberg, Texas

Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D)

California | District 20 | Navy | Afghanistan War
VFW Department of California

Rep. Steven Palazzo (R)

Mississippi | District 4 | Marine Corps |
Gulf and Iraq wars | VFW Department of
Mississippi

Rep. Van Taylor (R)

Texas | District 3 | Marine Corps | Iraq War
VFW Post 4380 | Plano, Texas

Rep. Scott Perry (R)

Pennsylvania | District 10 | Army | Iraq War
VFW Post 6771 | Dillsburg, Pa.

Rep. Greg Steube (R)

Florida | District 17 | Army | Iraq War
VFW Post 12055 | Bradenton, Fla.

Rep. Mike Thompson (D)

California | District 5 | Vietnam War
VFW Post 768 | Windsor, Calif.

Rep. Mike Waltz (R)

Florida | District 6 | Army | Afghanistan War
VFW Department of Florida

Rep. Brad Wenstrup (R)

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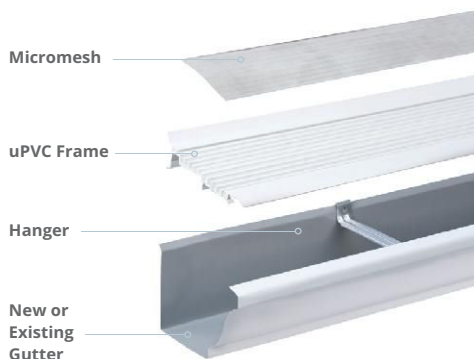
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When COVID-19 shut down Buddy Poppy assembly centers, members mobilized across the country to build nearly two years' worth of the red flowers of remembrance.

VFW Post Volunteers Assemble 9 Million

Buddy Poppies

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

ABOVE: A youth volunteer from VFW Post 5066 in Collierville, Tenn., shows off a VFW Buddy Poppy she assembled last fall. As of March 1, the Post had made 200,000 Poppies to help make up for the shortfall created by the shutdown of Buddy Poppy assembly centers due to COVID-19.

Since last fall, VFW Post 2423 in Indian Trail, N.C., has been having “Buddy Poppy” parties. The purpose behind these festivities — where social distancing is practiced — is to assemble Buddy Poppies, VFW’s official flower that recalls the sacrifices of the nation’s service members.

The North Carolina Post is just one of about 180 VFW Posts nationwide that responded to build the red flowers of remembrance after five Buddy Poppy assembly centers shut down due to COVID-19.

According to Tim Woods, VFW Department of North Carolina junior vice commander and member of Post 2423, Facebook has been a good way to spread the word about the Buddy Poppy events.

People from the community needing volunteer hours have stepped up. Woods said National Honor Society members, Boy and Girl Scouts and ROTC students are just some of the youth present to assemble Buddy Poppies at different times.

“Sometimes we cook and sometimes we order out,” Woods said. “We laugh and have a good time.”

For those folks unable or not wanting to come assemble at the Post, members

A Boy Scout unit displays a basket of Buddy Poppies at VFW Post 2423 in Indian Trail, N.C., last summer. Scouts were just one of many groups to help assemble 300,000 VFW Buddy Poppies at the Post.

VFW Programs Director Lynn Rolf (left) met up with VFW Department of Iowa Sr. Vice Commander Mike Braman in January in Knoxville, Iowa, to pick up a batch of VFW Buddy Poppies assembled by VFW and Auxiliary members in Iowa over the holidays.



created “take-home” 85-ounce buckets with enough materials for volunteers to produce 500 Poppies.

As of March 1, VFW Post 2423 had produced nearly 300,000 Buddy Poppies.

According to VFW Programs Director Lynn Rolf, through the efforts of VFW Posts, he was able to collect 9 million Poppies, which comes close to two years’ worth of Buddy Poppies.

“When I put the word out that we needed help, a lot of people stepped up to do just that,” Rolf said. “Many found that it helped bring the community together.”

Rolf said to get started, he took photos and provided a narrative description for assembling each of a Poppy’s three parts: flower, stem and label. He said some folks in the field made videos showing how to assemble.

In the middle of this, Rolf said he was able to drive to Minnesota, where he visited the Minnesota Veterans Home in Silver Lake and also the Veterans Home in Hastings. Residents at those homes are assembling Poppies as well.

“That was pure dumb luck and joy when I got to go there and get them involved,” Rolf said. “We are very excited to have them on board with us.”

‘AMAZING AND HUMBLING’

Brian Walker, Department of Tennessee junior vice commander and member of VFW Post 5066 in Collierville, partnered with the Post Auxiliary to gather volunteers for Poppy assembly. He created a video so those assembling would know how.

Walker said the Post coordinated to drop off assembly kits at volunteers’ homes or be at the Post for pick-ups.

“We have had about 150 kids working with us on this project,” Walker said. “We have assembled 200,000 Poppies so far. We are still working on these. We have hit some dry spots because of COVID, but we are going to keep going.”

In New Kingstown, R.I., VFW Post 916 undertook the assembly of some 300,000 Buddy Poppies. Tiger Patrick, VFW Department of Rhode Island commander and Post 916 commander, said he reached out to the community through social media channels.

With only 120 members, and most of those older than 70 and “snowbirds” who didn’t come back in the summer



PHOTO COURTESY OF LYNN ROLF

due to COVID, Patrick said he was pleased with the community turnout.

“I was terrified when the boxes came because it was a lot,” Patrick said and laughed. “We had an entire class of students who did this as part of a remote learning project. Citizens who needed community service hours to fulfill their debt to society helped out, too.”

To instruct volunteers in the Poppy construction, Patrick made a training video and put it on Facebook. As a result, the Post had 28 huge boxes full of Poppies ready to ship.

“I called it ‘Hot Mess Central,’” Patrick said. “I had dreams about Poppies. But it was amazing and humbling at the same time.”

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‘I WAS DETERMINED’

THE CEO OF EASTERSEALS CREDITS HER SERVICE IN THE AIR FORCE AND HER PARENTS FOR HER CAREER SUCCESS. HER ORGANIZATION WORKS WITH THE VFW TO HELP VETERANS AS THEY TRANSITION FROM MILITARY SERVICE TO CIVILIAN LIFE.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

Angela Williams is the first Black woman to hold the position of CEO for Easterseals, one of America's leading nonprofit health care organizations. An Air Force veteran and VFW member, Williams served in Korea in the early 1990s.



PHOTO COURTESY OF EASTERSEALS

For as far back as she can remember, military service has been an integral part of Angela Williams' life. That service, along with her strong upbringing, has led Williams to her position as CEO of Easterseals, one of America's leading nonprofit health care organizations.

When she was 4 years old, Williams' family moved from Anderson, S.C., to southern California, where her father, Chaplain J.C. Williams, became the Navy's fifth Black chaplain.

The family moved every three years, including service at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., where her father was the first Black chaplain in the Academy's history.

"I loved the military," Williams said. "My parents loved the military. It was in us. It was a part of our culture. So it was no surprise that when I transitioned into high school, my parents talked to me about entering a service academy."

Williams liked the idea of serving and began applying to academies. But she also didn't want to miss out on traditional college life.

"Growing up as a preacher's kid, we had strict household rules," Williams said and laughed. "I wanted to go experience college without the added rigors a service academy may have included."

Williams went to the University of Virginia on an Air Force ROTC scholarship and earned a degree in American government. Wanting to study law, Williams received an educational deferment so that she could go to law school at the University of Texas School of Law in Austin.

That deferment came with the caveat that Williams had one chance to pass the bar exam. If she didn't pass it, she would enter the Air Force as a regular line officer, and her specialty would have been decided for her.

"I was determined," Williams said. "I always knew I was going to be a lawyer. I didn't stay for my law



Angela Williams (far right) with her family in 1989. Williams, now the CEO of Easterseals, served in the Air Force Judge Advocate General Corps. Williams' father, J.C. Williams (second from right), was the Navy's fifth Black chaplain and the first Black chaplain at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. Angela Williams, who also is an ordained minister, credits her family and her military service for her desire to serve.

school graduation, but packed up and moved back to Virginia. I studied and studied and passed my bar exam in the state of Virginia on the first try.”

Williams' first assignment with the Air Force's Judge Advocate General's Corps was Nov. 21, 1988, when she was stationed at McConnell Air Force Base near Wichita, Kan.

During *Operation Desert Storm*, Williams was in Osan, Korea, while her dad was on active duty in the Mediterranean Sea and her brother was a Marine in Kuwait.

“I was in Korea for one year,” said Williams, a VFW member with the Department of Illinois. “I loved it. But just overall, my experience on active duty was an incredible experience. I loved trial work and prosecuting cases in the military.”

While Williams had no intention of leaving the military, when a personal mentor told her that the U.S. attorney in middle Florida was looking to hire an assistant U.S. attorney, she made the change.

Williams' prominent law career includes time with an international law firm, as well as serving on the late Sen. Edward Kennedy's Senate Judiciary Committee.

While working for Sen. Kennedy, Williams had a calling that came as a surprise. She traveled to Israel in 1996 with her church, where she was called into ministry. Upon her return, she called her parents to tell them of the news.

“I called and said, ‘I think God is calling me into ministry,’” she recalled. “They said, ‘Okay.’ I asked, ‘Aren't you surprised?’ They said, ‘Ever since you were a kid, we knew it was going to happen, but you had to discover it for yourself.’”

She attended seminary on the weekends while working full-time for Sen. Kennedy. Today, she is a volunteer pastor at the Chicago Apostolic Center.

Williams said she credits the military and her family for the paths she has taken in her life to lead her to Easterseals in 2018, when she became the first Black woman to hold the position of CEO at the organization.

“I credit my parents for being so bold to have the vision to serve our country and uproot our family at the height of the civil rights movement,” Williams said. “They took a risk at a time when things were turbulent. They instilled discipline and an ethic of service and serving with excellence.”



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VFW AND EASTERSEALS WORKING TOGETHER

When VFW's Director of Programs Lynn Rolf met David Muir about five years ago, they made a connection beneficial for veterans.

Muir, senior vice president for Easterseals DC MD VA Veterans Staffing Network, was at a Student Veterans of America conference when Rolf introduced himself.

“I realized pretty quickly that we have programs that might benefit veterans he has contact with and, likewise, Easterseals employment programs can benefit vets on our end,” Rolf said. “The relationship is a win-win.”

For instance, Rolf said VFW's *Unmet Needs* and *Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship* are just two of the programs with which he has assisted Muir's referrals.

Easterseals' employment services range from career coaching to a job board with listings from around the country.

“In my interactions with veterans, I often hear about the job market or get questions about career searching,” Rolf said. “I refer those folks to David at Easterseals.”

Easterseals CEO Angela Williams said the veteran community is a priority for Easterseals, which includes employment and job training.

“We work with veterans and military families to help break down barriers,” Williams said. “We serve the entire family with a range of wraparound services.”

To learn more about VFW's vast array of programs, visit www.vfw.org.

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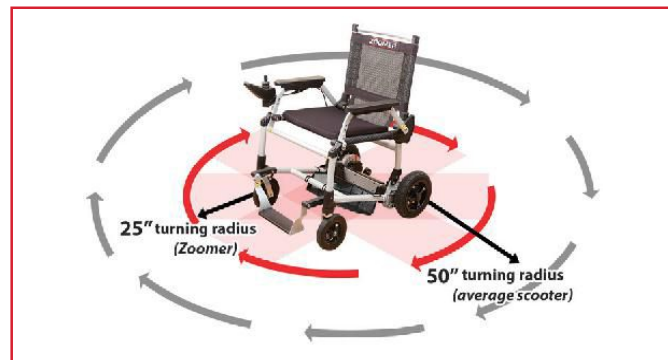
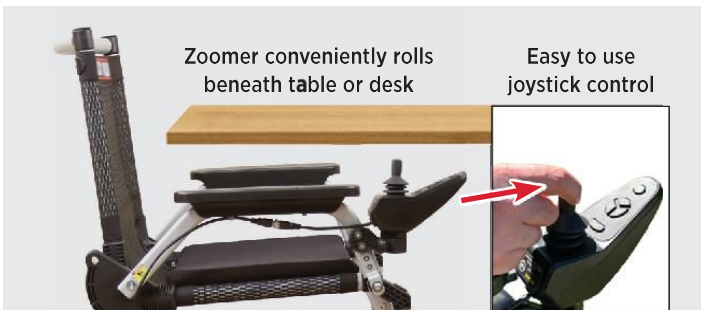
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Retain Members by Including Their Families

When VFW welcomes families and encourages Auxiliary membership, membership retention is greater.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

VFW membership retention has long been promoted at all levels of the organization. According to Rick McKenna, deputy director of VFW's Membership Department, if VFW members encourage their family members to join the VFW Auxiliary, they are more likely to stay involved at the Post.

"When you look at it, there are nine different ways from Sunday for someone to become an Auxiliary member," said McKenna, whose wife, Lori, is the Auxiliary chaplain at Post 7397 in Lenexa, Kan. "We all need to be working toward the mindset of inclusivity."

Promoting the Auxiliary goes beyond retention, McKenna said. When recruiting a veteran, also recruit that veteran's family.

"Get the family on board as well," McKenna said. "It's easier to be engaged when the family is involved. More hands make less work for everyone. In the end, it's all about supporting the Post."

Corey Hunt, associate director of VFW's Membership Department and member of VFW Post 7397, said his Post's Auxiliary is the "backbone" when it comes to operating in the city and the community.

"Together, it's all about supporting each other and supporting veterans," he said.

'ONE TEAM, ONE FAMILY'

VFW Auxiliary National Secretary Treasurer Ann Panteleakos said when she was a child, the VFW was "a family affair." She noted there were picnics, baseball games and holiday parties of all sorts.

When the Post served corn on the cob at dinners, for example, the kids shucked the corn, and whoever shucked the most got 50 cents, she recalled with laughter.

"The VFW and Auxiliary have

worked together forever," Panteleakos said. "However, there seems to be a new resurgence of one team, one family. I am glad we are getting back to where everyone is welcome."

Panteleakos said that in her travels around the country, she has seen that some Posts and Auxiliaries have child care available for meetings and events. And for children and grandchildren needing volunteer hours to graduate, this is an avenue for getting teens involved with the child care.

Maribeth Fischbach, treasurer for VFW Post 7397 Auxiliary, said she has found that if a Post is welcoming to the family, it's beneficial for all.

When Fischbach and her husband, Bruce, moved to Kansas, Bruce was looking for a hall to rent, and he visited the Lenexa VFW Post.

"He came home and told me we needed to go down to the Post," she said. "We did, and they welcomed me as much as they welcomed him. When he saw how I was treated, the next thing you know, he was going up through the chairs and was state commander."

Fischbach said at Post 7397, everyone works hard to try to get spouses involved because they are all dealing with the same issues, regardless of what war the veteran-spouse served in.

"We have something really special at our Post," she said. "It's a good partnership. We can do so much for spouses and family members."

Fischbach's Auxiliary created a corner at the Post specifically for children. It is supplied with crayons and coloring books and sidewalk chalk.



From left, Ralph Schneider, Rick McKenna, Maribeth Fischbach and Kim Keane with VFW Post 7397 and VFW Auxiliary 7397 distribute VFW Buddy Poppies outside a grocery store in Lenexa, Kan., in November 2019.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VFW POST 7397

She recalled one of the Post's steak nights when a young couple with twin babies came in. The members took turns holding and caring for the babies so that the couple could have a nice dinner.

Another time, the Post commander's son returned from an overseas deployment and came in with his wife. In a joint event with the local American Legion Auxiliary, the couple was given a date night and was recognized at the Post.

A couple of hours later, Fischbach said the wife was crying tears of gratitude because it was the first time anyone had thanked her for everything she did for her family while her husband was away.

"That simple act of kindness and appreciation means so much to military spouses," Fischbach said. "Welcoming families only makes us stronger."

VFW Membership Coordinator Matt Nute concurred, saying that the Auxiliary is a key component, particularly when it comes to attracting younger veterans to the organization.

"It's pretty simple," he said. "If you get families involved, we are more likely to retain members." ★

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This weird herb comes from a 12-foot tall tree that grows in Greece and other countries in Europe. In the old days, people noticed that when their horses who had leg and feet problems ate this herb – it was almost like magic how quickly their problems got much better. They called it the “horse herb”. Then somehow with Europe’s ongoing wars, this herbal secret got lost in time.

“It works for people who’ve tried many other treatments before with little or no success. Other doctors and I are shocked at how effective it is. It has created a lot of excitement” says Dr. Ryan Shelton, M.D.

Its active ingredient has been put into pill form and improved. It is being offered in the United States under the brand name Neuroflo.

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Already popular in Europe, this natural herb is taking America by storm since it was announced last week.

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Katerina King from Murrieta, California says, “I had hands and feet tingling and snapping and burning feeling. It made my life very uncomfortable. I had a hard time walking, my legs felt like they each weighed 50 pounds. Once I got in my car and my feet felt so heavy I couldn’t even drive the car. With Neuroflo I have no more tingling, cold or burning painful legs and feet. It went away.”

WHAT DOCTORS ARE SAYING

“Now I finally have a natural solution I can recommend to my patients who suffer from leg and feet problems and pain. I’m delighted because previous treatments were not effective, but Neuroflo has worked for every one of my patients with no side effects” says Dr. Eric Wood, N.D.

Dr. Ryan Shelton, M.D. says “This is new and different. It works for people who’ve tried many other things before. It is natural with no side effects. Don’t give up hope for your leg and feet



RE-DISCOVERED LEG AND FEET PROBLEM SOLUTION: In Greece in the 1600s, this herb was originally called “horse herb” because it was fed to horses with ailing legs. It has now been re-discovered and is giving soothing comfort to Americans who have leg and feet pain, burning, tingling and numbness.

pain, burning, tingling and numbing. This pill is working for countless people after other treatments have failed them. I highly recommend it.”

“Neuroflo is a terrific choice for people with leg and feet issues. The clinical trials in support of this herb show it is very effective for safe and fast relief,” said Dr. Wood, a Harvard trained doctor who has appeared on award winning TV shows.

Now you can get a good night’s sleep – peaceful, restful sleep – with no pain, tingling, zinging, itching or zapping. Improve your balance and coordination. No side effects – safe to take with other medications. Enjoy your favorite activities and hobbies again. Be more active, have more fun, enjoy life more. Don’t risk irreversible damage to your feet and hands. Don’t get worse and wind up in the hospital or a nursing home.

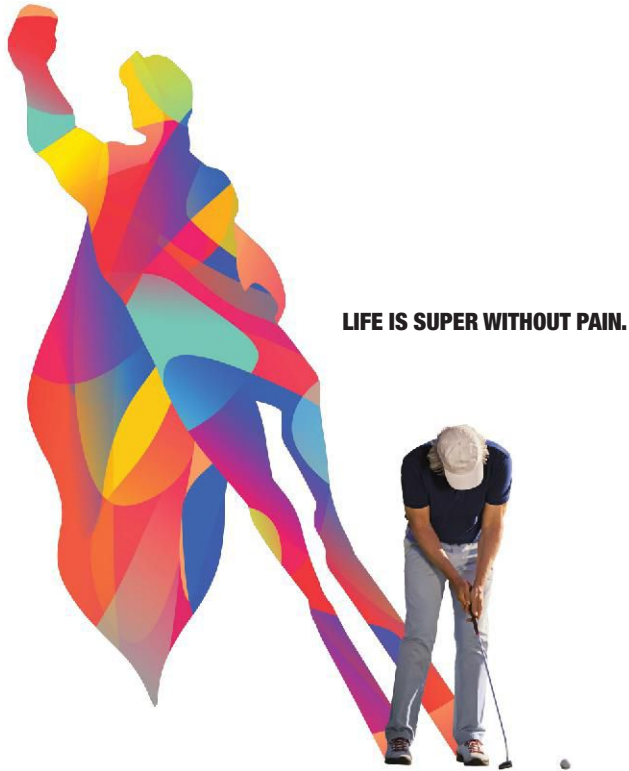
Neuroflo is GUARANTEED to work for you – or you will get full refund with a 90-day unconditional money-back guarantee. It is NOT sold in stores or online. No prescription or doctor visit is required.

50% OFF FOR THE NEXT 10 DAYS

This is the official release of Neuroflo for readers. Therefore, everyone who calls within the next 10 days will receive 50% OFF their first order. A toll-free hotline number has been set up for local readers to call for this 50% OFF savings. The number will be open starting at 7:00 am today and only for the next 10 days.

All you have to do is CALL TOLL-FREE **1-888-824-9216** and provide the operator with the special 50% OFF discount approval code: **NEF158**.

Important: Due to Neuroflo’s popularity and recent media exposure on ABC, CBS and FOX NEWS, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not get through immediately, please be patient and call back. Those who miss the 10 day deadline for 50% OFF will have to pay more for Neuroflo.



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Reducing the Financial Impact of Hospital Stays

No matter what type of insurance you have, hospital bills can quickly add up to thousands of dollars.

In fact, the average cost of a three-day hospital stay is about \$30,000.

Even the expenses for a brief hospital stay can add unwanted financial stress to an already stressful situation.

VARYING COSTS OF HOSPITAL STAYS

Like health care in general, there are several complicated factors that determine the costs of hospital visits and procedures.

The location of the hospital is a big cost factor. A study using information from Kaiser State Health Facts found that in the United States, the average inpatient hospital stay averaged \$2,488 per day at nonprofit hospitals and \$1,889 at for-profit hospitals.

However, these costs vary widely between states. For example, if you reside in California, you can expect your daily stay at a nonprofit hospital to average \$3,833, while a stay at a nonprofit hospital in Mississippi averages only \$1,304 per day.

Add-on fees also have a big impact on your hospital stay. You may receive an estimate for a hip replacement of \$40,000. However, that estimate typically does not include fees for:

- Operating room per-hour costs
- Anesthesia
- Surgeon's fee
- Hospitalization costs (before surgery)
- Visits with the surgeon

HOSPITAL PRICE TRANSPARENCY RULE

Until recently, it felt nearly impossible for consumers to know the potential cost of hospital procedures until bills started arriving in the mail.

However, the Hospital Price Transparency Rule, instituted on Jan. 1, requires hospitals to post prices

online, allowing consumers to have an idea of what common procedures could cost.

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, "hospitals must post standard charges for at least 300 shoppable services that can be planned in advance, along with a description and any other services the hospital customarily provides with it."

These required services include 70 specified services and 230 hospital-selected services, including:

- Patient consultations
- Psychotherapy
- Blood tests
- MRIs
- CT scans
- X-rays
- Ultrasounds
- Joint replacements
- Sleep studies
- Physical therapy

With costs of common procedures posted, consumers can compare rates and select the best option for their care and budgets. This transparency can be useful for such routine visits as annual physicals, colonoscopies and lab testing.

However, in an emergency, there is no time to shop around for the best prices.

BACKUP PLANS

To prepare for the costs associated with a hospital stay, it can be beneficial to have safeguards in place beyond your standard health insurance.

Many turn to hospital indemnity plans, a type of supplemental insurance designed to help pay for hospital expenses that are not covered by other policies.

Depending on the policy, hospital indemnity insurance often provides payments that can be used for any purpose, from medical copays to food, rent and utilities.

For more information, call the VFW Member Benefits Department at 1-800-821-2606.



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Biblical Bush Shuts Down Joint Discomfort in 5 Days

Amazing plant “prescription” gives new life to old joints without clobbering you. So safe you can take it every day without worry.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 54 million Americans are suffering from joint discomfort.

This epidemic rise in aching joints has led to a search for alternative treatments—as many sufferers want relief without the harmful side effects of conventional “solutions.”

Leading the way from nature’s pharmacy is the new “King of Oils” that pioneering Florida MD and anti-aging specialist Dr. Al Sears calls “the most significant breakthrough I’ve ever found for easing joint discomfort.”

Biblical scholars treasured this “holy oil.” Ancient healers valued it more than gold for its medicinal properties. Marco Polo prized it as he blazed the Silk Road. And Ayurvedic practitioners, to this day, rely on it for healing and detoxification.

Yet what really caught Dr. Sears’ attention is how modern medical findings now prove this “King of Oils” can powerfully...

Deactivate 400 Agony-Causing Genes

If you want genuine, long-lasting relief for joint discomfort, you must address inflammation. Too much inflammation will wreak havoc on joints, break down cartilage and causing unending discomfort. This is why so many natural joint relief solutions try to stop one of the main inflammatory genes called COX-2.

But the truth is, there are hundreds of agony-causing genes like COX-2, 5-LOX, iNOS, TNK, Interleukin 1,6,8 and many more—and stopping just one of them won’t give you all the relief you need.

Doctors and scientists now confirm the “King of Oils”—Indian Frankincense—deactivates not one but 400 agony-causing genes. It does so by shutting down the inflammation command center called Nuclear Factor Kappa Beta.

NK-Kappa B is like a switch that can turn 400 inflammatory genes “on” or “off.” A study in Journal of Food Lipids reports that Indian Frankincense powerfully deactivates NF-Kappa B. This journal adds that Indian Frankincense is “so powerful it shuts down the pathway triggering aching joints.”

Relief That’s 10 Times Faster... and in Just 5 Days

Many joint sufferers prefer natural solutions but say they work too slowly. Take the best-seller glucosamine. Good as it is, the National Institutes of Health reports that glucosamine takes as long as eight weeks to work.



Yet in a study published in the International Journal of Medical Sciences, 60 patients with stiff knees took 100 mg of Indian Frankincense or a placebo daily for 30 days. Remarkably, Indian Frankincense “significantly improved joint function and relieved discomfort as early as five days.” That’s relief that 10 times faster than glucosamine.

78% Better Relief Than the Most Popular Joint Solution

In another study, people suffering from discomfort took a formula containing Indian Frankincense and another natural substance or a popular man-made joint solution every day for 12 weeks.

The results? Stunning! At the end of the study, 64% of those taking the Indian Frankincense formula saw their joint discomfort go from moderate or severe to mild or no discomfort. Only 28% of those taking the placebo to the relief they wanted. So Indian Frankincense delivered relief at a 78% better clip than the popular man-made formula.

In addition, in a randomized, double blind, placebo controlled study, patients suffering from knee discomfort took Indian Frankincense or a placebo daily for eight weeks. Then the groups switched and got the opposite intervention. Every one of the patients taking Indian Frankincense got relief. That’s a 100% success rate—numbers unseen in by typical solutions.

In addition, BMJ (formerly the British Medical Journal) reports that Indian Frankincense is safe for joint relief — so safe and natural you can take it every day.

Because of clinically proven results like this, Dr. Sears has made Indian Frankincense the centerpiece of a new natural joint relief formula called Mobilify.

Great Results for Knees, Hips, Shoulders and Joints

Joni D. says, “Mobilify really helps with soreness, stiffness and mild temporary pain. The day after taking it, I was completely back to normal—so fast.” Shirley M. adds, “Two week after taking Mobilify, I had no knee discomfort and could go up and down the staircase.” Larry M. says, “After a week and a half of taking Mobilify, the discomfort, stiffness and minor aches went away... it’s almost like being reborn.” And avid golfer Dennis H. says, “I can attest to Mobilify easing discomfort to enable me to pursue my golfing days. Definitely one pill that works for me out of the many I have tried.”

How to Get Mobilify

Right now, the only way to get this powerful, unique formula that clobbers creaky joints in five days without clobbering you is with Dr. Sears’ breakthrough Mobilify formula. It is not available in stores.

To secure bottle of this breakthrough natural joint discomfort reliever, buyers should call with Sears Health Hotline at 1-866-683-5416 within the next 48 hours. “The Hotline allows us to ship the product directly to customers.”

Dr. Sears believes in this product so much, he offers a 100% money-back guarantee on ever order. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days, and I’ll send you your money back,” he says.

The Hotline will be open for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number will be shut down to allow them to restock. Call 1-866-683-5416 to secure your limited supply of Mobilify. You don’t need a prescription, and those who call in the first 24 hours qualify for a significant discount. Use promo code VW0521MOB when you call.

Last State Restricted Silver Walking Liberty Bank Rolls go to U.S. residents

Residents of states listed in bold below get first dibs on last remaining Bank Rolls loaded with U.S. Gov't issued Silver Walking Liberties some dating back to the early 1900's worth up to 100 times their face value for just the \$39 minimum set for state residents - all other state residents must pay \$118 per coin if any remain after 7-day deadline

► **STATE DISTRIBUTION:** A strict limit of 4 State Restricted Bank Rolls per state resident has been imposed

NATIONWIDE - "It's a miracle these State Restricted Bank Rolls even exist. That's why Hotline Operators are bracing for the flood of calls," said Laura Lynne, U.S. Coin and Currency Treasurer for the National Mint and Treasury.

For the next 7 days the last remaining State Restricted Bank Rolls loaded with rarely seen U.S. Gov't issued Silver Walking Liberties are actually being handed over to U.S. residents who find their states listed in bold in this month's publication and call the National Toll-Free Hotlines listed in this month's publication.

"I recently spoke with a retired Treasurer of the United States of America who said 'In all my years as Treasurer I've only ever seen a handful of these rarely seen Silver Walking Liberties issued by the U.S. Gov't back in the early 1900's. But to actually find them sealed away in State Restricted Bank Rolls still in pristine condition is like finding buried treasure. So anyone lucky enough to get their hands on these Bank Rolls had better hold on to them,'" Lynne said.

"That's because the dates and mint marks of the U.S. Gov't issued Silver Walking Liberty Half Dollars sealed away inside the State Restricted Bank Rolls have never been searched. But, we do know that some of these coins date clear back to the early 1900's and are worth up to 100 times their face value, so there is no telling what U.S. residents will find until they sort through all the coins," Lynne went on to say.

And here's the best part. If you are a resident of one of the states listed in bold in this month's publication you cover only the \$39 per coin state minimum set by the National Mint and Treasury, that's fifteen rarely seen U.S. Gov't issued Silver Walking Liberties worth up to 100 times their face value for just \$585 which is a real steal because non state residents must pay \$118 per coin which totals \$1,770 if any coins remain after the 7-day deadline.

The only thing U.S. residents need to do is call the National Toll-Free Hotlines printed in this month's publication before the 7-day order

deadline ends.

"Rarely seen U.S. Gov't issued silver coins like these are highly sought after, but we've never seen anything like this before. According to The Official Red Book, a Guide Book of United States Coins many Silver Walking Liberty Half Dollars are now worth \$115 - \$825 each in collector value," Lynne said.

"So just imagine how much these last remaining, unsearched State Restricted Bank Rolls could be worth someday. Remember, these are not ordinary coins - these rarely seen coins date clear back to the early 1900's. In fact, these coins have been forever retired by the U.S. Gov't, and you can't get them rolled this way anywhere because these are the only State Restricted Bank Rolls known to exist," said Lynne.

"We're guessing thousands of U.S. residents will be taking the maximum limit of 4 Bank Rolls because they make such amazing gifts for any occasion for children, parents, grandparents, friends and loved ones," Lynne continued.

"We know the phones will be ringing off the hook. That's why hundreds of Hotline Operators are standing by to answer the phones beginning at 8:30am this morning. We're going to do our best, but with just 7 days to answer all the calls it won't be easy. So make sure to tell everyone to keep calling if all lines are busy. We'll do our best to answer them all," Lynne said.

"That's why the National Mint and Treasury set up the National Toll-Free Hotlines in order to make sure U.S. residents get the State Restricted Bank Rolls before they're all gone," she said.

The only thing readers of this month's publication need to do is make sure they are a resident of one of the states listed in bold in this month's publication and call the National Toll-Free Hotlines at 1-800-979-5763 Ext. RWL1156 before the 7-day deadline ends midnight tomorrow. ■

IF YOU FIND YOUR STATE IN BOLD BELOW CALL: 1-800-979-5763 RWL1156

AK	CO	HI	KS	ME	MT	NJ	OK	SD	VT
AL	CT	IA	KY	MI	NC	OR	OR	TN	WA
AR	DE	ID	LA	MN	ND	NV	PA	TX	WI
AZ	FL	IL	MA	MO	NE	NY	RI	UT	WV
CA	GA	IN	MD	MS	NH	OH	SC	VA	WY



JACKPOT:

Imagine finding the 1919-D Liberty Walking Liberty shown above worth thousands of dollars in collector value in one of these unsearched Bank Rolls. There are never any guarantees, but U.S. residents who get their hands on these State Restricted Bank Rolls will be the really lucky ones because even more common coins are still worth up to \$115 - \$825 in collector value.

VALUABLE:

It's like a treasure hunt - there's no telling what you'll find. That's because the dates and mint marks of the fifteen U.S. Gov't issued coins sealed away inside these State Restricted Rolls have never been searched. All we know is some of the coins are worth up to 100 times their face value.

IMPORTANT: The dates and mint marks of the U.S. Gov't issued Silver Walking Liberties sealed away inside the State Restricted Bank Rolls have never been searched. Coin values always fluctuate and they are never any guarantees, but any of the scarce coins shown below, regardless of their value that residents may find inside the sealed Bank Rolls are theirs to keep.



1916-P Mint: Philadelphia Mintage: 608,000 Collector Value: \$55 \$250	1919-P Mint: Philadelphia Mintage: 962,000 Collector Value: \$32 \$15	1921-S Mint: San Francisco Mintage: 548,000 Collector Value: \$80 \$800	1938-D Mint: Denver Mintage: 491,600 Collector Value: \$60 \$160
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