

Commander Cook

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National Vice Commander, National Executive Committeeman, and various National Committee and Commission chairmanships.

Cook places membership recruitment and retention at the top of his agenda. "Membership gives us the base on which we can develop all of our programs," says Cook. "If we want to reach \$200,000 in Child Welfare, or be visual in the World War II Memorial Fund drive, or provide a leadership role in youth programs and keep kids off of the streets, we need to expand our membership." One new project Cook will try to incubate this year involves sponsorship and support of youth soccer across the country. "We're exploring opportunities with the U.S. Youth Soccer Association. We hope it will be possible to put together a program similar to, and as successful as, Legion Baseball."

Service is another area the new

Membership record

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percentages over goal were Oklahoma (615 members, 165%), South Dakota (177 members, 164%), Philippines (169, 159%), Puerto Rico (41 members, 146%), District of Columbia (77 members, 135%), Nevada (124 members, 132%) and Georgia (3,075, 128%).

Membership Renewal Awards, for the Detachment in each region with the highest rate of renewing members, were given to the Detachments of: Maryland (East), Nebraska (Midwest), Iowa (Central), North Carolina (South) and Idaho (West).

National Commander will focus on. "We owe our membership to the service of our fathers. It's our duty to do all we can to support veterans."

"You're either in or you're out," says the always congenial Cook. "You can be a card-carrying member and do nothing or you can be a participant and get results."

CWF donations

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by the Detachments of Texas (\$17,200), Michigan (\$14,800) and Indiana (\$11,000).

The Detachment of Colorado had the nation's highest per capita rate of over \$5.

Another success story has been the growth of "RATs" throughout the Sons. The S.A.L. began with just eight Regional Action Team members. There are now 35 "RATs."

The rallying cry for the S.A.L.'s CWF drive this year is "\$200K in Y2K." Sons are being asked to raise at least \$200,000 to coincide with the year 2000.

S.A.L. delegates hear from Legion visitors

A wide variety of special guests streamed through the Sons' National Convention all weekend. One such visitor was a future National Commander of The American Legion.

Alan Lance of Idaho stressed the need to rethink policies for our active military personnel. "We have a shortfall of active duty personal partially due to the fact that they can earn more money in the working sector than the military ranks," said Lance. He also believes campaign financing for national office holders must be watched closely to stop outside influence by foreign countries.

American Legion Internal Affairs Commission Chairman Herm Harrington and Commission member Larry Besson also visited. They thanked Sons for outstanding work. Both suggested the S.A.L. can, and should continue to overshadow Legion

performance with goals such as Child Welfare Foundation, NEF, and membership.

Special recognition was given to the Sons for their assistance with the World War II Memorial Fund. David Downey from the Detachment of New York raised over \$5,800.00 in pledges from a walk-a-thon. Delegates lined up to provide Harrington with an additional \$7,000 in donations.

Robert Spanogle, The American Legion National Adjutant since 1981, thanked the delegation for their good work and growth of the S.A.L. "Over \$1 million for Child Welfare shows how you care for

America's children," said Spanogle, who served as S.A.L. National Legion Liaison back in the 1970's. "Support of the NEF and WWII programs also shows your commitment to The American Legion Family. The 21st century is upon us and Legionnaires are getting older but they're not ready to disappear."

Several divisions of The American Legion Headquarters will soon occupy a new \$4 million building in Indianapolis. The new facility will greatly increase communication between Legion Family members. New Internet service will be offered.

"Our bright future will overcome the challenges of Washington for our Flag amendment, said Spanogle. "Anything John Kerestan or the S.A.L. asks of me, I'll try to accomplish." With his tongue planted firmly in his cheek, he coyly reminded delegates that "The Adjutant is not an agitator but really a facilitator."



National Update

Official Newsletter of The Sons of The American Legion



September 5, 1999

California rush sends Sons out for the gold

National Commander Byron Robichaux rapped the gavel (picture below) in the Anaheim Marriott Hotel Marquis Ballroom Friday evening, bringing to order the 28th Annual National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion.

A total of 638 Sons from 45 Detachments made their way to southern California for this year's convention.

The Detachment with the largest number of registered delegates was Pennsylvania. The

Keystone State paid for 100 members. Other large delegations included the Detachments of Maryland (63), Ohio (49), New Jersey (34), Florida (33) and Indiana (30). "We had encouraged Detachments to pre-register and many of them did," says National Assistant Adjutant Harold Thompson.

The Detachment traveling the farthest to attend this year's Convention was the Philippines (picture right).



Getting down to work, Sooner

Oklahoma Native Rick Cook is the new National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion. In the wake of his unanimous election today near the end of the

Sons National Convention in Anaheim, Cook stood proud before a cheering room filled with his fellow Sons, his family and S.A.L. supporters.

The new Commander, his wife and their three children are all Legion Family members from Owasso, OK. Commander Rick is a charter member of Talala, OK Squadron 337 and was the first person ever elected Commander of the Detachment of Oklahoma. His service at the national level includes holding the offices of



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Records tumble during 1998-99

More Sons than ever before

With time still remaining in the year, Sons have already surpassed their membership goal for 1998-99. Just under 220,000 men and boys now belong to the S.A.L., 104% of the this year's goal. For the 18th consecutive year, it's also a new all-time high in membership.

At least 32 Detachments set new all-time high totals over the past year. The Detachment of Indiana, with more than 29,000 members, has hung onto its claim of being the world's largest Detachment. The Detachment of Ohio has more than 24,000 members, the Detachment of Pennsylvania has more than 22,000 and the Detachment of New York has nearly 17,000.

The world's largest Squadron continues to be Lincoln, NE Squadron 3, with 768 members.

Detachments with the highest

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Million dollar men

Ten years ago, Past National Legion Commander John "Jake" Comer became the first person to challenge Sons to raise \$1 million for the Child Welfare Foundation. What began as a challenge became reality this year as S.A.L. contributions to the CWF surpassed the million dollar mark.

Total S.A.L. contributions during the past year were nearly \$180,000. By far, the Detachment of Ohio's \$33,200 in contributions far outpaced the nation. More than \$7,000 of the Ohio contribution was raised by Mason, OH Squadron 194 through a day-long combination of golf, dinner and a dance (another \$2,000 was donated to other projects). Other major contributions to CWF were made

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Miller offers his thanks

Outgoing American Legion National Commander Butch Miller, who is also a member of the Sons, told convention delegates on Friday, "I know in many situations, people look at the S.A.L. and they're afraid of them taking over. Taking over *what*, I haven't really found out. The



truth of the matter is, the S.A.L. was never intended to take over anything. It was always intended to be a supportive program of the principal mission of The American Legion. You have taken over *that* responsibility and done an outstanding job of it."

"At the beginning of the year I made a promise. I told you that I would not fail you and I would not allow you to fail me and those that we serve. I am very happy to say that you did not fail those that you serve. As a matter of fact, in far too many situations, you are truly the savior of some of those Posts that still serve America."

Miller took time to single out and thank the Detachment of Pennsylvania for contributing the greatest amount of money toward the National Emergency Fund, \$2,000. He also thanked the Detachment of Wyoming for leading the nation in per capita giving to the N.E.F.



Above, American Legion Auxiliary National President Virginia Hobbs took time out from a very busy schedule to address Sons. Below, Auxiliary National Vice President Elizabeth Stuart also paid a call on Sons.



Sons relaxed Saturday evening with their California hosts. A beach party and luau were held on the water's edge at Newport Beach American Legion Post 291. Polynesian food was served and dancers entertained for several hours.



Lower left, Anaheim Mayor Pro-Tem Shirley McCracken presided National Commander Robichaux with a proclamation welcoming Sons to "the happiest place on earth." Below, pandemonium reigns on the Convention floor Saturday as Sons parade in Mardi Gras fashion to celebrate membership gains during the past year.



Many generations of service are represented in these pictures. Above, Past National Commander J.R. Stillwell stands with the very first S.A.L. National Commander, Michael Seaton. Right, S.A.L. charter member George Hooten addressed delegates on Friday.



Charter member still going strong

George Hooten has been a member of the S.A.L. ever since the organization was founded. He is a 68 year charter member of the Sons and has also served as Executive Director of the National American Legion Press Association (NALPA) for 19 years. Hooten once thought his membership in the Sons would be temporary.

At the age of 12, George joined Atlanta, GA Squadron 1. In 1984 he transferred to Austell, GA Squadron 216. George says, when he first joined the Squadron, it was a military-style organization using military classifications for ranks instead of officers as today. Prior to WWII, emphasis was on Drum and Bugle Corps. Hooten served in the Air Corp during World War II. He is still an active pilot. Although a dual member, he says, "I'm so damned proud of the S.A.L. that I only wear my SAL cap."



Above, the irrepressible "Jake" Comer stirs audiences on issues important to The Legion Family.

Below, a brand new fiberglass S.A.L. emblem was presented to National Vice Commanders, a gift from the Detachment of Kansas. Additional copies of the emblem are still available. Contact the Detachment of Kansas.

S.A.L. wins in NALPA contest

Two S.A.L. publications were judged to be among the best Legion Family newsletters in the country this past year.

The Detachment of Michigan Update, edited by Daniel Wall and Allen Liebau, won First Place in Category 2-B (Typeset - Other Publications) in this year's NALPA "Best Papers" contest.

The *National Update* newsletter, edited by Mike Pipher, was judged the best in Category 5-B (Computer Generated - Other Publications).

Awards will be passed out Monday evening at the annual NALPA Banquet, to be held in the Huntington Room #16 on the concourse in the Hilton Hotel.

Squadrons, Districts and Detachments are all encouraged to publish newsletters to keep members informed and to promote the organizations to their communities.



Comer lights a patriotic fire

American Legion Past National Commander John "Jake" Comer of Massachusetts lit up delegates to the Sons' National Convention Saturday when his remarks turned toward the fight for a constitutional amendment to protect the flag.

"Under Article Five, it gives us the right to amend," said Comer. "This is not something we just thought about yesterday. The women in the audience should understand and fight hard with us. A woman veteran of this nation could vote for the National Commander of The American Legion before she could vote for the president of the United States. How ludicrous! She could do that in 1920 because we amended the Constitution. Blacks did not have the right to vote until we amended the Constitution, and it was the right thing to do! And this is the right thing to do now."

"When we hear, we forget. When we see, we remember. It's only when we do that we understand!"

Check out our new home on the Internet!!
www.sal.legion.org

Deadline: articles for the fall issue of the National Update newsletter must be received by Oct 15th. Send them to:

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Sons pause to remember those gone before

An uncomfortable quiet hung over the Sons' National Convention for a brief period Friday night as National Chaplain Cliff Smith presided over a special S.A.L. Memorial Service. At appointed times during the service, delegates and guests paid silent homage to departed comrades.

The colorful, respectful service was punctuated by a handful of ceremonial displays including color guard formations, bagpipe music played by an S.A.L. member and the poem "In Flanders Fields" read by Past National Chaplains. At one point, National Vice Commanders placed names of departed Sons into a helmet, signifying those members' passage into the Squadron Everlasting. Scripture was read by Rev. Tom Glander of the Detachment of Wisconsin. Fr. Gary Gummersheimer of the Detachment of Illinois closed the service saying, "We pray that we will never forget the sacrifices of those who have departed and that we take up the task of carrying on for God and country."

