



NATIONAL UPDATE

Official Publication of The Sons of The American Legion

April 2000



Display a flag to recall those 'acting greatly'

by **Cliff Wiltshire**
Norwalk, CT Squadron 12

The letter, a mere three black and white paragraphs, is dated Jan. 18, 1923.

It's signed by Col. William J. Donovan, who describes a battle in which he was honored with the Medal of Honor. In the letter, as he dedicates the medal to his men, he refers to the 69th Regiment of New York.

"This medal was truly won by our entire command at the Kriemhilde-Stellung in front of Landres-St. Georges, Oct. 14-15, 1918 - a fight as bitter and as gallant in the annals of the 69th New York as Mayre's Heights at Fredericksburg, Dec. 13-14, 1862.

"A Regiment lives by its tradition. The noble tradition we have inherited impels me to ask that this medal remain in the Armory - there to serve as a recognition of the valor of our Regiment, as an incentive to those who enlist under its standard, but most of all as a memorial to our brave and unforgotten dead."



Illustration by Jim Kinder, Topon, PA Sq 217

My great-grandfather and namesake was among those killed during that battle. While I obviously never knew him, the pending celebration of Memorial Day often sends me to that quiet place where I ponder his ultimate sacrifice.

What was it like for a young man, with young children, to answer the call to fight for freedom? How heavy was the burden of protecting our nation's way of life?

Is it possible for me, and my children, to understand and remember a soldier's sacrifice? How can I help them realize the life we enjoy today is because of the commitment many men and women made to freedom over 200-plus years?

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Preserving memories

by **Michael Morris**
Greenwood, IN Squadron 252

Where are your father's or mother's medals, patches and ribbons?

I'll bet they're under the bed in a shoe box, or in the closet behind the flannel shirts.

Now is the time to get them out, while he or she is still around to talk about them. With a hot glue gun, a shadow box and some imagination,



you can create a display that will become a family treasure.

Here's how: ask the local Army-Navy store to put the medals in the right order; Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Commendation Medal, and so on. Then, clip the pins off the back of each attachment bar so they lay flat.

Look at the draping ribbons on the medals, and get a piece of fabric that will complement their colors. Use spray glue to attach the background fabric to the cardboard in the shadowbox, and lay everything out.

Use your computer to create a nameplate on stiff paper with a little information on it: name, branch and years of service. A picture taken during the time of service adds a lot.

Once you've arranged and rearranged things to your

Continued on Page 7

Sons are life savers

A Missouri Legionnaire is alive and well today thanks to some fast thinking and quick action by two members of the Sons and the wife of another.

The Detachment of Missouri mid-winter conference was being held at Jefferson City's Roscoe Enloe Post 5 on February 26th. That evening, Post member Harold Huffman was sitting in the bar when he began to choke on some food. He slumped onto the bar, unconscious and cyanotic.

Missouri Detachment Commander Greg Davis and his wife, Myra, were entertaining S.A.L. National Commander Rick Cook nearby. Myra spotted Huffman and alerted others to his emergency. Commander Cook and Indiana Alternate N.E.C. Damon Bradtmueller, who was also in town for

Continued on Page 7

Sons need to be accountable

by Rick Cook
National Commander

As I've traveled around the county and had opportunities to speak with Sons, I've tried to address the issues of service, accountability and leadership as often as possible. The first and last of these get a good deal of attention, so I'd like to take this opportunity to address the one in the middle; accountability.

Sons of The American Legion are accountable for their actions as members. As Squadron members, District members, Detachment officers, and National officers we all have responsibilities we have committed to by choosing to serve in our positions.

Squadron responsibilities are the most basic. All the programs we have at our disposal do no good unless we have someone working the programs at the Squadron level. We must strive to develop workable programs that benefit veterans and the community.

District officers must continue to be a conduit between the Detachment and the Squadrons. District officers must get Squadrons what they need to continue their work.

Detachment officers, because of the way the organization has developed, hold some of the most vital positions in our organization. In many cases, these officers are the only contact between National and the Squadron member. The information and programs they

promote are the lifeline of the organization. We must hold people accountable at the Detachment level. Those who take a position, either appointed or elected, must do their best to fulfill the duties that the office demands.

National officers must be the communicators. They're the first line of information from National to the Detachments. They need to insure all lines of communication are kept open so that information flows in both directions.

And while I have your attention: Please push to get reports filled out for activities. We need this information to pass on to The American Legion. All reports are important.



Commander Rick and Hawaii Detachment Commander Michael McCloskey attend U.S.S. Arizona Memorial Ceremony on December 7th at Pearl Harbor, HI.

Are you aware that our goal for Child Welfare is 200K in Y 2 K ? That is \$200,000 by the end of the collection year, which is coming up very soon. We are over half way to our goal but the deadline is May 31.

Stay focused on membership growth through new members and retention of existing members. It's going to take real work to reach the milestone of 250,000 members, but this goal can be achieved if we generate support at the Squadron level. One way to promote participation is through use of the *Stirring-up-Membership* recruiter program. Any Legion Family member who recruits 5 new members or more will receive a special recruiter's pin.

How you can assist veterans

by Raymond Giehl, Jr.
National VA & R Chairman

I'm often asked to provide ideas for activities Squadrons can undertake to assist veterans and their families. Here are a few thoughts.

One particular Squadron helped an elderly Legionnaire remodel his home by roofing it. They did some other major repairs and helped buy the materials. Many Squadrons visit local or nearby VA Hospitals and organize bingo games or picnics for the patients.

Lots of Squadrons make sure veterans' lawns are mowed during the summer and the snow is shoveled in the winter. Squadron members go shopping for veterans who cannot get out. Sons often just take the time to visit veterans in local nursing homes and cheer them up a little. Several states have Veterans' Homes and it's not unusual to see Sons visiting the homes, bringing gifts or fruit baskets for the holidays.

Does your Squadron make donations to Rehab projects through your Department? Is there a Fisher House in your state? If your Squadron is already doing some of these things for our veterans, we thank you and ask you to continue your good work. If we have given you some ideas then please act on them now.

If you're wondering where this information comes from, it was compiled from Squadron report forms sent in this past year. When we get closer to the end of the reporting year, please take the time to fill out a VA&R report form so others will know about the good work Sons are doing for veterans. If you need VA&R report forms, contact your Detachment Adjutant or the National Headquarters. Forms are also available online at www.sal.legion.org.

Remember, we owe America's veterans a debt we can only start to repay through the help we offer them. Hurry out into your community and see what you and other sons can do to help America's veterans today.

Mid-year membership registers

by **Brian O'Hearne**
National Adjutant

It's quite likely that, as you are reading this, a complete new Sons of The American Legion membership register has been printed for every Squadron in the country and mailed to every Detachment.

These membership registers are just like the ones that are produced at

the time the membership cards are printed. The registers contain all new members since the last printing of the membership cards (June 1999) and will have all new changes incorporated such as continuous years, changes of address, dates of birth and the last paid year. The data reflected on this new register is what is shown on our computer system at National headquarters as of mid-February.

Last year, three Detachments (Minnesota, Florida and Massachusetts) were selected for this project and the results received from that test were very favorable. Therefore, this year, all Detachments will receive these new updated membership registers for their Squadrons. The primary purpose of running a completely updated membership register for each Squadron is to assist each of them in their accountability of new members, assist with renewals of memberships, and to assist the Squadron with keeping the member data information current and up-to-date. Again, this new updated register will provide the date of birth

for each member when available. Squadrons are encouraged to forward all of their members' date of birth information to National Headquarters.

I have asked each Department Headquarters of The American Legion to forward these new membership registers to each of their Squadrons at the earliest possible date. Each Squadron should review their own membership register and submit any changes via member data form to National before the May 10th cut-off date (100% membership target date), which is the date that will be used for printing of the 2001 membership cards and registers.

National Headquarters began mailing the new registers to each Department in mid-March. They were printed in numerical order by Squadron and have a page break between each Squadron to make it easy to separate them.

We look forward to accomplishing this task each year during the late February time frame, but only once a year. Membership in The American Legion Family is important to us and everyone's assistance with this project is appreciated.

Child Welfare year end looms

by **David Ridenour**
Nat'l Child Welfare Foundation Chairman

It's Spring and we are closing in on the end of this donation year. Everyone has done a fantastic job.

Congratulations go out to the Detachments of New Mexico (\$2500 - 214%), Colorado (\$3810 - 209%) and Louisiana (\$1508 - 135%). These are the only Detachments meeting their per capita goals thus far.

Congratulations also go out to the Top Dollar Donation Leaders; Indiana is leading (\$16,972 - 58%), Ohio (\$7075 - 29%) and Minnesota (\$5805 - 86%).

Everyone is doing GRRRREAT! We still have a lot of work to do before the end of May, the deadline for all donations to be counted towards the 1999-2000 year.

We're always looking for a few

good men and have made big strides in getting R.A.T.s (Regional Action Team members) in every Detachment. R.A.T.s are still needed in the following states: AR, DE, IA, MS, MT, NV, NH, NM, ND, RI, SC, SD, WV, France, Philippines, Puerto Rico and Washington, DC, a lot more than I thought. If you know of anyone that would be interested in becoming a member of our team, please have them contact Kurt Yoder or David Ridenour at 1222-177th Place, Hammond, IN 46324 or (219) 844-8642.

Because any money received after May 31 will be counted toward next year's total, we're expecting a significant turn-in during the spring NEC. We're also looking forward to remaining The Legion Family's #1 contributor to Child Welfare.

Members and friends of **Parkville, MD Sq 183** served refreshments at the Maryland School for the Blind's annual Halloween party last fall. Over 300 students and their families enjoyed the holiday treats. **(Picture #1)**



#1

"Stirring up Membership" took on a new meaning out in Nebraska this year. **Venango, NE Sq 270** sponsored their annual Chili Cook-off in January. Both, Miss Nebraska and Mrs. Nebraska were brought in to help judge, hand out prizes and sign autographs. Boys State and Girls State delegates judged the youth division. A 25 year Special Edition football, autographed by someone named Tom Osborne, was also raffled off.

Harrisburg, PA Sq 733 held a "Summer Sports Cook Out" last August, filled with *"the kind of games and family activities that help our members greet and network with an aim to strengthen the community and support our neighbors,"* according to Squadron Adjutant Henry Houze III.

For many years, Legionnaires and VFW members have cared for the Bennington, PA cemetery. Sons of **Gallitzin, PA Sq 174** have now taken over those duties. The Squadron also celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1999 in a big way. Projects throughout the year included a trip to the Hollidaysburg Veterans Home, assistance to a Squadron member whose home was damaged by fire and a new Post pavilion **(Picture #2)** just in time for Memorial Day.



#2

Squadrons are being warned about an organization calling itself **USA.PX.Stores** which has been soliciting American Legion Posts, asking for e-mail addresses so they can update their records. The National Headquarters says it has no connection to this group and repeatedly warns Legion Family members against giving out members' e-mail or street address information. A



#3

Legion resolution adopted in 1998 prohibits the release of member information to any groups not officially affiliated with The Legion.

When Sons in **Hogansburg, NY Sq 1479** heard about a local couple's premature baby facing massive medical expenses, they organized a benefit dance and raffles to help the family cope with



#4

expenses not covered by insurance. In December, the Squadron invited little Matthew and his folks to the Post and presented them with a check for \$1,600.

LaGrange, IN Sq 215 Sons have donated money to the local Sheriff's department to help purchase a patrol car dog cage for the department's K-9 unit. Squadron Commander Mike Boots presents a check to County Sheriff Greg Dhaene. **(Picture #3)**

Many organization provide assistance to the Holly Center, a home for children, near **Maywood, NJ Sq 142**. But Squadron Commander Bill Grunewald has challenged his members to go the extra step of providing a cake and a gift for each of the Center's



#5

Don't call these guys turkeys. **Summit Hill,** holiday for many by purchasing 62 turkeys for the newspaper picture and story.

Not all Sons were able to attend the National Convention in Anaheim, CA last September. Some of those unable to enjoy the convention included members of **Homer, IL Sq 290**, who spent a busy Labor Day weekend raising funds for "Jerry's kids." A pork chop dinner, a raffle and all-day bingo at the Post home netted \$1,750 for the Muscular Dystrophy

It was quite a thrill for charter members of **Delaware** Past National Legion Commander Bruce Theisen, presented with a special gift by members who attended the historic event. It's also no coincidence to read through the Sq Charter and see so many similar family **(Picture #7)**

This is the third year running the **Detachment of Ohio's Fifth District** hosted a Bingo/Pizza party for occupants of the Ohio Veterans Home. Maybe there's something special about the quality of life in Ohio because the District also sponsors a Poker Run/Pizza Party each year.

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Members Friends



“Awwwwlllll uhhh-boarrd!”
Monticello, IN Sq 81 members rode along this year’s annual Christmas Parade route aboard ‘The General’ handing out U.S. flags and Legion comic books along the way. *(Picture #8)*

The **Detachment of Iowa** is doing a good job of promoting itself within The Legion Family. At their Mid-Winter Conference, Detachment leaders conducted a workshop entitled “Finding Help for your Events,” which explained the many ways Sons can help out at

on their birthday. It’s a time consuming and expensive idea, but well worth the effort.

aff, AZ Sq 3 hosted three families for Thanksgiving and when 100 area children showed up for the annual Christmas “Breakfast with Santa,” they were jolly, bearded Sons member Mike Myers. *(Picture #5)*

may be the national sport of Canada, but look what **Fairbanks, AK Sq 57** did recently: they handed a check for \$5,000 to support the Fairbanks Old Timers Hockey Team. No wonder it took a while to hold up the check. *(Picture #5)*

PA Sq 316 members brightened the thanksgiving at the local food bank. The gesture earned a nice local

virtually all Legion Family functions throughout the year. External relations aren’t too bad, either. The Detachment mans a booth each year at the Iowa State Fair.

Quakertown, PA Sq 242 has started a Video Share program. Members have compiled a small but growing video library. They take movies out to senior citizen care centers for the enjoyment of retired veterans and others. Currently, they service two such centers and are thinking about including more. *(Picture #9)*



rophy Association. *(Picture #6)*

no, CA Sq 124 to be initiated into the S.A.L. by himself a Californian. Each new member was part of the installation team. Close to 100 people attended the small ceremony. The Squadron members were all new names.

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How ideas get real

by **Brian Pittaway**
Wheaton, MD Sq 268 Historian

It started as a light conversation, just kicking around some ideas. From two Sons grew a larger idea; Walter Reed Army Medical Center’s Carroll House Holiday Feast.

Squadron members went to work with some very loyal businesses and individuals who had been waiting to be asked for help, support and supplies. Within days, answers started to filter in. “Food? What can we do?” “Cash? Here, hope this will help.” The response was such that we were able to do, both, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Who says people don’t care, or don’t want to be bothered? Not our Squadron! The Post donated space

in its kitchen and the rest was up to us. On Wednesday we prepared the feast. On Thursday, our volunteers set their personal Thanksgiving plans aside and gathered at the Post. We prepared turkey and stuffing, green bean casserole, mashed potatoes, sweet potato soufflé, corn, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie. Then it was off to the Carroll House.

We loaded up the vans and went to the Walter Reed Annex. There, among old summer retreat homes built in the early 1900’s for Washington’s elite, is a Veteran’s shelter. We felt our own good fortunes as we loaded up the kitchen with Thanksgiving (and later, Christmas) fare. I felt very blessed as I walked into my own warm, cheerful home a few hours later and I suspect this year’s good idea will become a Squadron 268 tradition.

Newest Squadrons

Pennsylvania

Sq 992 - Mount Morris
 Sq 637 - Hamburg
 Sq 178 - Philadelphia
 Sq 40 - Danville
 Sq 820 - Monroeville
 Sq 493 - Homer City
 Sq 761 - Glenolden
 Sq 361 - McKeesport
 Sq 852 - Harrisville

Illinois

Sq 1987 - Chicago
 Sq 672 - Middletown
 Sq 675 - Oswego
 Sq 496 - Mason City
 Sq 1189 - Waynesville
 Sq 169 - Eldorado
 Sq 507 - Bethany

Ohio

Sq 49 - Wilmington
 Sq 343 - Euclid
 Sq 184 - Piqua
 Sq 147 - Apple Creek
 Sq 732 - Youngstown
 Sq 514 - Willard

Minnesota

Sq 328 - Saint Joseph
 Sq 187 - Glenwood
 Sq 395 - Onamia
 Sq 80 - Wheaton
 Sq 400 - Canton

Indiana

Sq 482 - Pennville
 Sq 84 - Marengo
 Sq 134 - Westport
 Sq 69 - Orleans

Kansas

Sq 13 - Yates Center
 Sq 170 - Chanute
 Sq 192 - Canton

New Jersey

Sq 45 - Perth Amboy
 Sq 18 - Weehaken
 Sq 401 - Monmouth Jct

New York

Sq 190 - Delhi
 Sq 1492 - Brookfield
 Sq 1720 - Bliss

Texas

Sq 300 - San Antonio
 Sq 418 - Troup
 Sq 131 - Longview

Florida

Sq 1 - Titusville
 Sq 65 - Delray Beach

Michigan

Sq 363 - Kingsford
 Sq 326 - Sterling Heights

Nebraska

Sq 219 - Oxford
 Sq 29 - Bridgeport

North Carolina

Sq 55 - Winston Salem
 Sq 71 - Clayton

Alabama

Sq 135 - Phenix City

Arizona

Sq 91 - Chandler

California

Sq 124 - Delano

Connecticut

Sq 43 - Winsted

Georgia

Sq 82 - Ellijay

Idaho

Sq 19 - Fairfield

Massachusetts

Sq 373 - Baldwinville

Montana

Sq 130 - Vaughn

Oregon

Sq 30 - Gresham

South Dakota

Sq 88 - White

West Virginia

Sq 67 - Sistersville

Need help locating service medals?

Medals awarded while in active service are issued by the appropriate service if requested by veterans, or if deceased, their next of kin.

Requests for medals from the Navy, Marine corps and Coast guard should be sent to the U.S. Navy Liaison Office, National Personnel Records Center, Rm. 3475, 9700 Page Ave., St. Louis MO 63132-5100. Requests for medals from the Army should be sent to the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Center, ATTN: ARPC-VSE,

9700 Page Ave., St. Louis MO 63132-5100. Requests for medals from the Air Force should be sent to National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records), 9700 Page Ave.,

St. Louis MO 63132-5100.

The veteran's full name should be printed or typed so it can be read clearly. The request must contain the

signature of the veteran or the next of kin if the veteran is deceased. Include the veteran's branch of service, service number or Social Security number and exact or approximate dates of service. If available, include a copy of the discharge or separation document, WDAGO Form 53-55 or DD-214. If possible send

the request on Standard Form 180, "Request Pertaining To Military Records." These forms can be obtained at your RAO or local VA Office.

Saving mementos

Continued from Page 1

liking, start gluing. On a piece of paper, print the name of each object and a note about how it was earned. Laminate the list and spray glue it onto the back of the frame.

Decide to do it now; soon you'll have an heirloom that generations will own with pride.

In memoriam



It is with sadness and deep regret that we acknowledge the recent passing of two dedicated members of the Sons.

Former National Vice Commander Patrick Ahern of Colorado joined the Squadron Everlasting on February 8th following a lengthy battle with cancer.

James Reda, Alternate National Executive Committeeman from Michigan, joined the Squadron Everlasting on January 8th, the result of a heart condition.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of these dear friends.



Life saving Sons

Continued from Page 1

the S.A.L. conference, attempted to help Huffman. When Heimlich maneuver attempts failed, they laid the stricken man on the floor and began administering CPR in an effort to revive him.

Bratmueller administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation while Cook administered heart massage. Davis searched for signs of a pulse and coached the other two. The trio restarted the man's heart, then kept up efforts to help him breathing until paramedics arrived and removed a large piece of steak from the man's throat.

Huffman was hospitalized overnight but has since fully recovered. When he showed up a week later for the Post meeting wearing a suit and a broad smile, he was overheard saying, "I'm dressed to go now."

Deadline

If you have articles/photos for the next issue of the *National Update*, they must reach us by:

June 1, 2000

Memorial Day flags

Continued from Page 1

As you raise your flag on Memorial Day, or take your child by the hand at a graveside ceremony to explain why we pause to honor those who have fallen, remember these words from U.S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. on May 30, 1884:

“...it is now the moment when by common consent we pause to become conscious of our national life and to rejoice in it, to recall what our country has done for each of us, and to ask ourselves what we can do for the country in return.

“So to the indifferent inquirer who asks why Memorial Day is still kept up we may answer, it celebrates and solemnly reaffirms from year to year a national act of

enthusiasm and faith.

“It embodies in the most impressive form our belief that to act with enthusiasm and faith is the condition of acting greatly.”

(Editor's Note: Cliff Wiltshire is a 14-year member of the S.A.L. through his step father, a past Commander of Norwalk, CT Post 12 and a Vietnam veteran. Cliff lives in Columbus, OH where he is a columnist and commentary editor for Suburban News Publications, a group of 21 weekly newspapers.)

Visit your Home Page
on the Web
www.sal.legion.org



It's a catalog that comes around only once in a thousand years! This year's National Emblem Sales catalog (above) has a new look and is filled with a tremendous amount of new merchandise geared toward the Sons. If you purchase something from National Emblem Sales this year, you will automatically be mailed a new catalog next year.

The Sons of The American Legion

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