

Data/ *from Page 6*

individual might not get a newsletter until six months after he signs up, or later.

Larry Nun would like Sons to remember two things: First, don't hold cards; send them in weekly. Second, don't ever pass up an opportunity to ask someone if they'd like to join the S.A.L.

If you have story ideas or pictures to contribute, send them to:

National Update newsletter
c/o Mike Pipher, Editor
612 S. State Road 446 #35-C
Bloomington, IN 47401

or send via e-mail
mpipher@indiana.edu

Deadline: **June 1, 2004**

There are times when 2 + 2 = 3

by Brian O'Hearne
National Adjutant

You've often heard it said, "Do the math." It's a simple matter to look on a chart and see that the S.A.L. has set a new All-Time High in membership every year for more than two decades, yes? Well, not necessarily.

What is not necessarily so simple is the fact that, at the same time we've been setting wonderful membership records, the S.A.L. has been simultaneously losing members in large numbers. Since 1993, the S.A.L. has averaged an 85 percent renewal rate. In other words we are losing 15 percent of our membership annually. In even stronger language, that translates into a LOSS of close to 40,000 members each year!

What if we could do a better job of renewing existing members? What if we had been able to retain at least half of those members who dropped out over the last ten years?

Do the math.

By keeping 20,000 members each year

for ten years, and by continuing to bring in new members as well as we have, the S.A.L. would be double its current size. If one stops to think about all the considerable good done by Sons, just imagine how much more we could be doing for veterans, their families, our communities and the youth of this nation if there were twice as many of us running around!

Do the math and do what's necessary to keep more members inside the Sons of The American Legion. The first thing to concentrate on is communications. Stay in touch with your members through mailings of bulletins and flyers. Telephone calls work well. Personal contact is a nearly surefire tactic. Get face to face with members by conducting squadron activities, especially family-oriented activities. Most Sons are adults and a great many of them are family men. In today's fast-paced world it's difficult for anybody to juggle family, work and a social life. The American Legion family offers opportunities to combine three of those.

U.S. Postage
PAID
Non-Profit Organization
Permit No. 431
Indianapolis, IN

The Sons of The American Legion

P.O. Box 1055

Indianapolis, IN 46206

**NATIONAL UPDATE**

Official Publication of The Sons of The American Legion

April 2004

**Honoring our past...**

More than 16 million American men and women wore a uniform during World War II. They fought to secure democracy, preserve freedom, liberate the oppressed and rid the world of the scourge of tyranny. Many made the ultimate sacrifice. Along with tens of millions more who waited and worked on the home front, they are known as the "greatest generation." In spite of the fact that their efforts changed the course of world history, no national monument has ever been erected to honor the veterans of World War II.

Until now.

On Saturday, May 29, an 11-year effort will culminate in the dedication of the National World War II Monument in Washington, D.C. In recognition of the dedication, and in conjunction with Memorial Day weekend, The American Legion has called on its posts, units and squadrons throughout the nation to undertake activities and celebrations acknowledging the men and women who served their country during World War II, especially remembering those who paid the ultimate price in the preservation of peace and in defense of peace-loving people everywhere.

Community celebrations will come in every shape and size including some or all of the following: a prayer breakfast, a walk-a-thon to raise money for the Children's Miracle Network, an award ceremony recognizing WWII veterans, historic and military displays, community booths and exhibits, games and entertainment, public television viewing of National World War II Memorial dedication ceremonies, etc.

Prayer Breakfast

As an organization dedicated to God and country, it's fitting that the day of honor for

The greatest honor which this nation can bestow upon the "unknown hero" would be to live for the things for which he died.

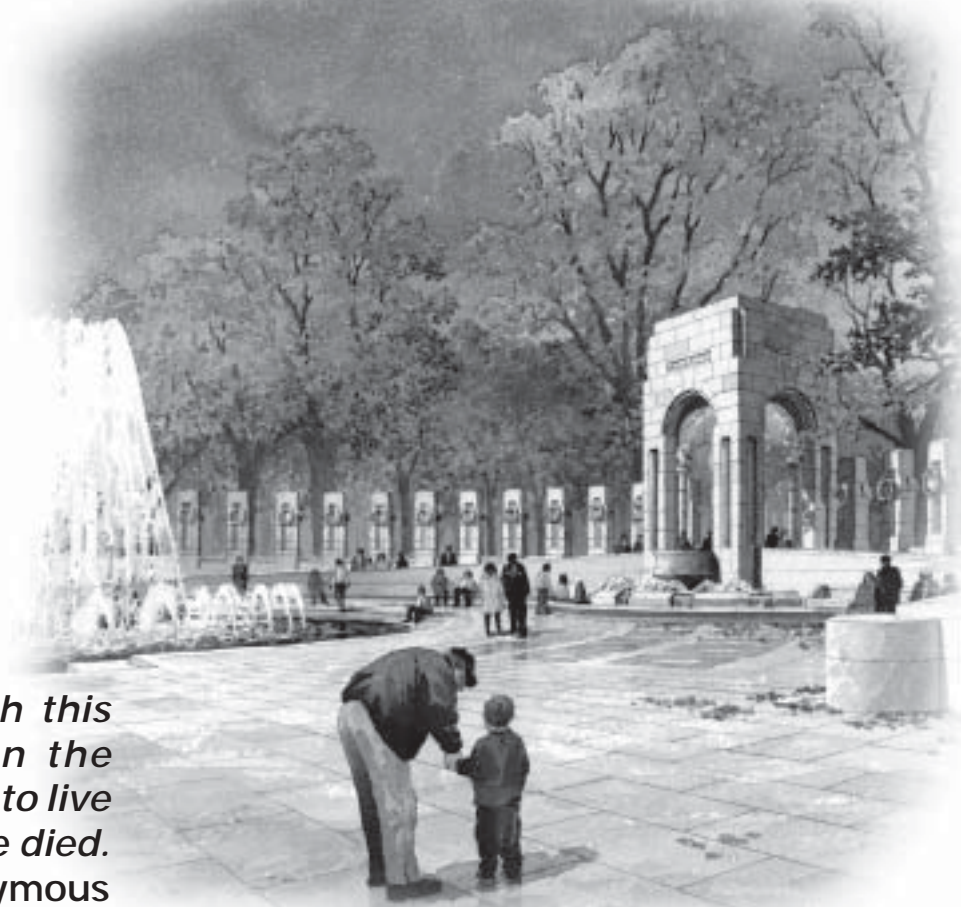
- Anonymous

should be 90 minutes and should begin early enough to avoid conflict with any walk-a-thon that same morning.

Walk-a-Thon

Perhaps nothing epitomizes the legacy of WWII veterans than children. They fought to guarantee life and liberty for their own children and the children of future generations. The very existence of the Sons of The American Legion is a testament to the legacy bequeathed by our forefathers' military service. A meaningful way to honor the memory of these veterans is to conduct a walk-a-thon to raise money for the Children's Miracle Network. The American Legion is a partner with the CMN in raising money and awareness for hospitals that treat 17 million children annually.

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...to ensure our future

Grow leaders - harvest members

by Neal Warnken
National Commander

Membership is going great, due to a lot of hard working blue cap members. We're ahead of last year's totals, but we still need to hit it extremely hard to keep the Sons growing. The best way to make sure someone renews his membership is through personal contact with him. Not so surprisingly, personal contact is also the best way to attract new members into our organization. Our goal this year is 300,000 members. However, I'd like to see us reach 330,000. That would be a 20 percent increase over last year's total. Membership is Everyone's Responsibility!

Another goal this year is to raise a half million dollars for all Children and Youth projects. All kinds of programs fit this category such as the Children's Miracle Network, Child Welfare Foundation, Eddie Eagle Gun Safety, Junior Shooting Sports, Boys and Girls State and Special Olympics. Legion National Commander John Brieden and Auxiliary National President Katherine Morris and I have all agreed to concentrate our efforts on this year's 50th Anniversary of the Child Welfare Foundation. I know The Sons of The American Legion will shine through in donations.

I hope you will visit our S.A.L. Web site - www.sal.legion.org - from time to time. I've asked those responsible to see that information about our national officers and our committee and commission reports be kept updated. You can expect to see fresh material on that Web site at least monthly.

A lot of fortunate Sons will be in Washington, D.C. during the Memorial Day Weekend in late May. Those able to travel to the nation's capitol and take part in events surrounding the dedication of the National World War II Memorial will take away memories enough to fill a lifetime. National Adjutant Brian O'Hearne and I will attend the dedication and we look forward to seeing many of you there. At the same time, every American Legion Post in the country has been invited to conduct activities back home related to the events taking place in Washington. You'll find a good deal of information and ideas in this newsletter that can spark ideas for dedication activities on the home front. I know Sons will do their usual outstanding job of rolling up their sleeves and pitching in on this historic occasion.

I have visited many Detachments already and would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for the hospitality you have extended to me. I look forward to seeing many more of you in the near future.

So let's get out there and Harvest our Membership and Grow our Future Leaders.

NLIC's train future leaders

The 2004-05 National Leadership and Information Conferences are now underway. These conferences are intended to provide an effective "train the trainer" venue to inform, educate, motivate, and share organizational objectives of our programs among current and future District/County leaders of The American Legion, Sons and Auxiliary. The conference format targets programs in Americanism, Auxiliary, Children & Youth, Legislative, Membership, Public Relations, Sons of the American Legion, and Veterans Affairs at all levels.

One conference is held in each region of the country annually. They usually run from Friday morning to Saturday evening and all follow the same format; specialized sessions on Friday afternoon and an opening session in the evening. Saturday's schedule is a wide variety of 20 minute sessions. All Detachment and interested squadron leaders are encouraged to attend the conferences in an effort to become more effective and informed about programs of The American Legion family.

In addition to the S.A.L. workshop, there are other workshops that Sons could benefit from attending. Detachments should also encourage S.A.L. advisors at all levels attend the N.L.I.C. in their region in order to gain more information and understanding of Sons' programs.

Detailed information regarding these conferences can be found on the S.A.L. Website at www.sal.legion.org.

www.sal.legion.org
Your Home on the Web

We are fighting [World War II] because we have the best way of life yet learned by mankind and we want to preserve it.

- Philip Wylie

Earning awards for membership

by Gary Swanlund
National Membership Chairman

I was in an American Legion Post home recently, wearing my Blue Brigade jacket and a Squadron Commander asked me what the Blue Brigade was. The Blue Brigade program is for all members who recruit 30 new members in a membership year. The key word in this program is "new." Renewals do not count towards the 30 member Blue Brigade total. The first year an individual reaches the Blue Brigade level he receives a very good looking, unique jacket. For each succeeding year that person continues to recruit 30 new members, he receives a hash mark to put on the sleeve of his jacket. In addition, anyone who recruits 30 new members each year for five consecutive years receives a \$150 gift certificate from National Emblem Sales. Forms for this program can be obtained from your Detachment leaders. Please ensure that the form is filled out properly and certified by your Squadron Adjutant and American Legion Department Adjutant. Also, don't forget that this form needs to make its way to National Headquarters by the May Target Date.

While it would be nice, the truth is that not everyone is going to earn membership in the Blue Brigade. However, another membership program we have is our Recruiter Pin Award. This program is available to any member of the American Legion family. Any Legion family member who recruits seven new S.A.L. members is eligible to receive a distinctive Recruiter Pin. Forms for this award are available on the SAL website with instructions on how and when to submit the paperwork. Regional Membership Committeemen will be responsible for forwarding pins to those who earn them.

But what about the rest of The American Legion family? Yes, Sons are eligible to earn special recognition for signing up brand new Legionnaires and Auxiliary members, too. On The Legion side there is "Brieden's Rangers." For every five brand new Legionnaires recruited, a Son can receive one of National Commander Brieden's pins. And for every three brand new senior Auxiliary members recruited, a Son can receive a President's Recruiter Award lapel pin. Be sure to fill out the necessary paperwork by the appropriate due dates.

Freedom is still expensive. It still costs money. It still costs blood. It still calls for courage and endurance, not only in soldiers, but in every man and woman who is free and who is determined to remain free.

- Harry S. Truman

Not so far to Nashville

American Legion family members will descend on Nashville, TN in late August to conduct three nearly simultaneous conventions. Sons will convene their 33rd annual National Convention on Friday, August 27th. All sessions of the three-day convention will be held in the Governor's Ballroom of the Opryland Convention Center and Hotel, part of a sprawling complex that will house many Detachments and Departments. "It's one of the biggest buildings I have ever seen in my life," says S.A.L. National Liaison John Kerestan.

August may seem like a distant blip on the radar, but there are housekeeping chores Sons need to deal with long before heading off to Music City. Some convention-related deadlines are in July or earlier. Membership award applications are due in May (see Page 7). Color guard applications are due before August. Scrapbooks and history books being considered for awards must be received at National Headquarters no later than July 28th.

In addition to convention business, delegates and their families will have plenty to do and see around town. Look for more entertainment opportunities throughout Nashville in the summer issue of *National*

Sons by the Numbers (as of March)

2004 Membership Goal 300,000
Current Status 215,000 (75%)
2004 Renewal Rate 65%
Leading Detachment Delaware (96%)
New Squadron Charters 56
2004 CWF Contributions \$115,000 (41%)
2003 VA Volunteer Hours 195,830
2003 VA Contributions \$1,945,233
2003 Flag Retirements 1,132

Update. Some convention information is available now on The Legion's Web site at www.legion.org. Additional information will be available following the Spring N.E.C. meetings in early May.

Squadron News

This is one instance where so many cooks will not spoil the soup. S.A.L. members from **Covington, LA Sq. 16** have teamed up with members of their Junior Auxiliary to raise money selling cookbooks. What makes this culinary effort different is that the groups have been soliciting recipes from national and state officers of The American Legion family and their spouses. We'll have to buy a copy to see if a certain S.A.L. National Commander offers up his famous "boiled water" recipe.

Colorado Alternate N.E.C. Ken Yanke was folding pocket flags on a flight into Indianapolis last fall. Turns out the Air Force Academy cross country team was onboard and their coach asked Ken what he was doing. Ken explained the Pocket Flag Project to him and then presented one to each of the cadets and coaches, courtesy of **Louisville, CO Sq. 111**. Ken continued folding and was also able to send 127 of the tiny flags to his nephew serving in Iraq with the 82nd Airborne.

Five-year old Beau Butner of **Tipp City, OH Sq. 586** is getting a first-class education in civics from his dad, Andy. The two marched with The Legion family in the local Mum Parade last fall and also spent Christmas Day passing out gifts to veterans in the Dayton VA Hospital. (Left)



Members of **Arlington, WA Sq. 76** joined with Legion and Auxiliary members to raise \$10,000 through auctions, raffles and donations. The money was used to purchase a small mountain of toys that were distributed to food banks in three nearby communities and wound up making the holidays a little brighter for over 600 children.

A highly unique program for at-risk children has gotten a much-needed boost from members of **LeRoy, NY Sq. 576**. Children in grades 7 thru 12 who have gotten in trouble find themselves before a court of their peers. This unusual Youth Court diverts cases that would otherwise tie up the local Family Court. It also familiarizes students with the workings of a real juvenile justice system because they become the judges, lawyers, clerks and bailiffs. Perhaps most importantly, it provides a confidential peer-review setting that tries to keep children from becoming repeat offenders.

Despite heavy snows, members of **Hudson Falls, NY Sq. 574** used December 7th as an opportunity to host a brunch buffet for veterans and other members of the community.

Last summer, all three of the highest awards given by the **Detachment of California** went to individuals from Riverside County. Rodney Perkins of **Riverside, CA Sq. 289** was honored as "Son of the Year" for his outstanding efforts toward needy, homeless and veterans' organizations. The "Under-21 Son of the Year" award, was presented to twin brothers Steven and Scott Cullings of **Newport Harbor, CA Sq. 291**, the sons of California N.E.C. P. Scott Cullings. Shortly after the brothers were appointed Detachment Assistant Sergeants at Arms last year, Steven was killed in a tragic tractor accident. In an emotionally charged meeting of the county's Board of Supervisors, special proclamations were presented to the S.A.L. and Legion honorees and Steven's proclamation was presented posthumously. (Right)



Sons from throughout **Rennselaer County, NY** decided to adopt the 413th Quartermaster Battalion in Iraq because it's made up mostly of local reservists. In just one month the S.A.L. had rounded up enough baby wipes, coffee, snack foods, money and other goodies to fill an 8 x 10 trailer and several pickup trucks. But what to do with all of that loot? Turns out a local radio station was also collecting items for the 413th and offered to pay to ship everything overseas. When some of the reservists returned home they let everyone know how grateful they were to supplant field rations with the care packages from home.

For 22 years, **Independence, KY Sq. 275** has spearheaded the Veterans' Grave Decorating Project in Kenton County, just across the river from Cincinnati. This year's efforts will be northern Kentucky's premier activity in conjunction with dedication ceremonies of the National WWII Monument in Washington, D.C. In recent years, an average of 100 volunteers from nine different service organizations contributed more than 400 hours decorating more than 6,000 graves. Dozens of individual and corporate donations provide money needed to purchase nearly 3,000 new flags and markers each year. The cemeteries also contribute by providing breakfast and refreshments for the volunteers.

It's a short bus ride from **Marrero, LA Sq. 222** into New Orleans and the D-Day Museum located there. Squadron members rented a bus and treated themselves and Legionnaires to a three hour excursion and self-guided tour through the museum. They were back at the Post in time for lunch.

The front of the Tennessee National Guard building in Dickson, TN has a new sign thanks to the efforts of Ed Wallace and Joe Cantrill of **Inglewood, TN Sq. 82**. Ed's son-in-law serves in Iraq with the 267th. (Right)

Up in Minnesota, more than 1,000 flags were honorably retired on Flag Day last year with the help of Sons from **Morris, MN Sq. 29**.

The 10th Annual Marion County Toy Run raised over \$8,000 this year and Sons from **Hillsboro, KS Sq. 366** were a big part of the organization behind this effort.

People in the rural Iowa community of Montrose Township wanted to bring honor and dignity back to the graves of their pioneer veterans. Conditions at the cemetery had fallen victim to neglect. Sons from **Keokuk, IA Sq. 41** stepped up to the task and helped form the firing party at this year's Pioneer Patriot's Day observance. Sons were also present at the dedication of a new headstone for a Medal of Honor recipient buried in nearby Wever, IA.

All 40 members of the Frederick County chapter of Special Olympics track team now have new uniforms thanks to the work and generosity of **Frederick, MD Sq. 11**. Special Olympians in Michigan have gotten a boost from **Stevensville, MI Sq. 568**. Last year's golf outing raised another \$2,000, part of which was

used to send ten Special Olympians to a Cubs game in Chicago. Squadron 568 also donated money to help send members of the local Lakeshore High School Band to play at the National World War II Monument dedication festivities in Washington, D.C.

Just a handful of guys in **Clawson, MI Sq. 167** raised over \$5,000 for a little boy stricken with terminal cancer and "adopted" his single-parent family of three other children.



Terre Haute, IN Sq. 104 hopes to repeat its successes of last year's Detachment Campout/Convention. The Squadron sponsored nearly a dozen youngsters last summer who won 20 trophies during two days of games and events and had trouble finding room for them all in the motor home.

The members of **Hollidaysburg, PA Sq. 516** have raised and donated over \$23,000 to

a variety of charities during the past year. In one instance, they provided money to send a local schoolgirl to the Dominican Republic where she worked with orphaned children.

There's nothing like the joy you can see in the eye of a child unwrapping Christmas presents. **Wilmington, NC Sq. 10** members put that sparkle into the eyes of 31 underprivileged kids this year by buying, wrapping and handing out over 100 gifts at their annual "Dare to Dream" Christmas party.

The Red, White and Blue Veteran Celebration's flag retirement ceremony looked a lot more solemn thanks to these **Evans, GA Sq. 192** Sons who helped form the color guard. (Below)

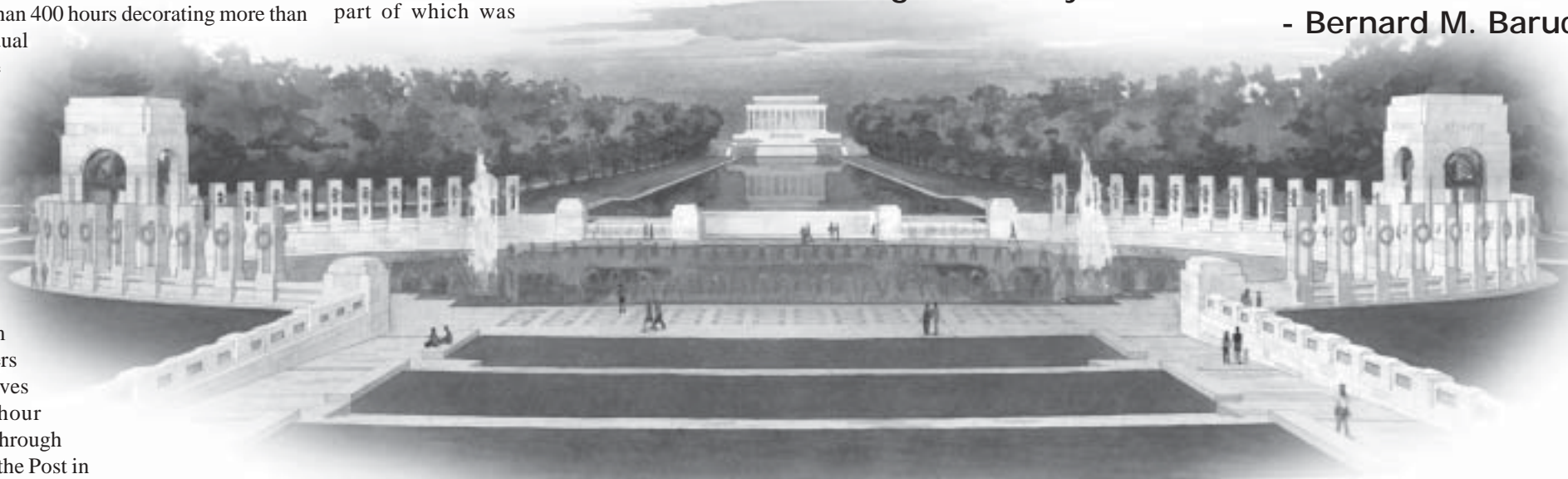


Sons out of **Whitehouse, OH Sq. 384** have sponsored a float regularly in the village's annual Cherry Festival parade. This year they wanted to do something different so the guys organized, practiced (twice) and unveiled

their newest entry: a synchronized riding lawn mower drill team. They described themselves as "A big hit; somewhat like the Shriners only much slower."

I for one will never concede that we cannot do as much in defense of our freedoms as any enemy may be doing to destroy them.

- Bernard M. Baruch



The unseen world of data ops

by Michael A. Pipher
National Update Editor

Larry Nun has a stubborn streak. He's been a member of The Legion for 30 years and could've joined the Sons then, but he decided to wait until somebody asked him. It took 15 years before an enterprising Nebraska S.A.L. member finally popped the question and Larry's been one of us (*Gretna, NE Squadron 216*) ever since. Few people know membership as well as Larry because his job as Business Technician in the Legion's Information Technology Division keeps him knee deep in it.

On a recent afternoon, Larry served as

tour guide through The Legion's expansive Indianapolis, IN data processing center, ten miles from National Headquarters. The nearly

new 63,000 square foot facility processes over four million Legion family membership cards twice each year. Many times that number of membership cards are warehoused there. The building is also home for National Emblem Sales operations and a massive computer system that keeps the entire Legion organization humming.

The first time cards are handled is in April when huge pre-printed rolls of cards pass

through large laser printers. Computers make sure members' names and Post/Unit/Squadron information are printed in

sequence. Up to 50,000 pages, or 200,000 cards, can be printed daily. The volume of cards is so great, the U.S. Postal Service sets up shop temporarily in The Legion warehouse and teams of postal



clerks process a mountain of mail on the spot. It takes nearly two months to print and ship all Legion family cards. But then this facility has to turn right around and begin processing those same cards as renewal and new memberships begin to flow back in each June. Cards come from Departments,

some better organized than others, and are optically scanned and stored electronically so they can be called up one at a time on computer screens in the National and Department HQ's. Approximately

100,000 cards cannot be successfully scanned by the system. The most common culprits: torn cards, stained cards and wayward marks that blur characters, especially those in the sensitive scan line

or check box areas. Unread cards must be hand-entered by Data Services personnel, the same folks who handle Data Transmittal Forms. They have a pet peeve they want adjutants to know about: When you sign up a new member, but soon find a need to make some change in

his data... wait a bit! The unfortunate truth is that some cards get held at the squadron and Detachment levels. Sometimes a data change form arrives before the new member's card and that causes significant confusion. The solution? Everybody should send in cards every week!

Data operations have improved since moving into the new building. Electronic handling of cards has been upgraded. Those who work here boast that any card that comes through the door will be on the

system in at least 72 hours. The building is constantly buzzing. In addition to membership cards, several million renewal notices go out annually (the S.A.L. sends out more than 350,000 of them each year). Our very own *National Update* newsletter passes through this building. More than 250,000 copies of the paper are addressed and mailed three times annually. Cards held at the

squadron and Detachment levels also can delay adding a person's name to the newsletter mailing list, which means an

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There is nothing so likely to produce peace as to be well prepared to meet an enemy.

- George Washington

Future/ from Page 1

community walk-a-thon provides opportunities to involve local citizens in an important Legion family event, promote healthy lifestyles and raise much-needed funds that will help CMN hospitals purchase new equipment, train staff, conduct life-saving research and provide care for children whose parents can't afford to pay.

Community Expo

Legion posts are being asked to host a community expo event on National Dedication Day to provide an enjoyable day-long festival with a World War II theme. Relatively few living WWII veterans will be able to attend dedication events in Washington, so it's important to provide a local recognition event that encompasses the entire community. School students could compete in essay, art or music contests honoring WWII vets. There's almost no end to the many groups that could be invited to take part in such an event; civic organizations, youth groups, local government, fire, police, businesses, religious organizations, scouts, nursing homes, etc. As in any festival, the expo should offer activities for all ages, food and a military theme. Booths, displays, memorabilia, drawings, door prizes and American Legion promotions could be

We have enjoyed so much freedom for so long that we are perhaps in danger of forgetting how much blood it cost to establish the Bill of Rights.

- Felix Frankfurter



included. The event should be timed to coincide with the 2 p.m. (EDT) nationally televised dedication ceremony from Washington, D.C. If possible, large screen TV's should be available to watch the telecast.

Many posts have divided responsibility of these events between

Legion family members. In some communities, the Auxiliary is responsible for prayer breakfast arrangements, Sons are organizing the walk-a-thon and members of the post are taking care of the overall expo events.

Regardless of the type of event being conducted in your community on Saturday, May 29th, it's essential that information about the event is shared with The Legion's National Headquarters. Write or call:

The American Legion
ATTN: Bill Pease
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46209-9910
(317) 630-1200

Walk-a-thon fund totals need to be reported on the 29th by calling (866) 539-2509.

World War II Registry

Anyone who helped win the war, either a veteran or an American on the home front, is eligible for the Registry of Remembrances, which will be accessible on site at the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. and on the Web. There is no charge to register. However, for a fee of \$10, an individual's photograph can also be registered. An official Registry of Remembrances Certificate can be obtained for a \$5 fee.

Planning guides and additional information are available from The American Legion National Headquarters and also via the Web at www.wwiimemorial.com or by phone at (800) 639-4WW2.

The history of Memorial Day

by Thomas W. Wigmore
National Chaplain

In 1868 General John Logan, National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, proclaimed, "The 30th of May is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who have died in the defense of their country during the late rebellion and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet churchyard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit."

That first year, nearly 5,000 people helped decorate the graves of more than 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried in Arlington (National) Cemetery.

By the late 1800s, many communities across the country had begun to celebrate Memorial Day. After World War I, it was also used to honor those who had died in all of America's wars. In 1971, Congress declared Memorial Day a national holiday to be celebrated on the last Monday in May.

Contact a Legion Post for the times and places of observances in your community this year, then attend those services with members of your family.

Memorial Day was originally called Decoration Day, a day of remembrance of those who had made the supreme sacrifice during the Civil War. In the years that followed the war, people in towns throughout America would hold local observances.