

In their own words

Continued from Page 7

there. I talk a lot to high school students and it's surprising that World War II is not taught to them. They teach us ancient history, how about American history? **Harold Bray - Benicia, CA**

a part of that history. This was war and you have to understand that you're sitting out there and there is some enemy trying to kill you every single minute, every single hour of the day and you never know for sure when it's gonna come. Wait until you're in that position, then you might be able to make some comment on the bomb with some kind of intelligence. **Glen Morgan - Bryan College Station, TX**

The younger generation now says we shouldn't have dropped the atomic bomb on Japan. But before you can come to this kind of conclusion, you have to stop and think that there were a lot of U.S. prisoners in Japan. I happen to know one of them and he told me his Japanese guards had already been given orders to shoot all of the prisoners if we invaded Japan. How can anybody say we shouldn't have dropped this bomb when I honestly believe it saved a lot of American lives? Our old ship was

Deadline

If you have story ideas or photos for the next issue of *National Update* they must reach us by **February 1, 2002**

I think they should realize the sacrifice that was made for them to have the freedom that they have today in this country. I just don't think that young people realize the freedom that they have cost a lot of bodies out there. I think that when they come outta high school now, it should almost be mandatory that they spend a couple of years in the military. They call us heros. No. The heroes are still out there in my book. We were the lucky ones. Those are the guys who gave their lives. **J. P. O'Donnell - Indianapolis, IN**

The Sons of The American Legion

P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

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



NATIONAL UPDATE

Official Publication of The sons of The American Legion
December 2001



S.A.L. 'troops' mobilize following NYC/DC attacks

No sooner than rescuers had begun digging through rubble in New York and Washington, D.C., members of the Sons of The American Legion were rallying around the flag and beginning relief efforts all across the country.

In the days following the terrorist attacks, **Poland, OH Sq. 15** collected \$2,000 in cash, \$10,000 worth of supplies and a fistful of letters addressed to New York City's firemen, handwritten by local elementary school children. Squadron Commander Jeff Vrabel, Sr. and two other Sons loaded everything into a truck and delivered it personally to **Lt. B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial American Legion Post 1291** (see Page 6) which is about 16 blocks from the now-infamous 'ground zero.'

Anaheim, CA Sq. 72 served up a benefit breakfast which raised more than \$1,500.

Jamestown, NY Sq. 777 undertook a 'United We Stand' fundraiser at the end of September which was open to the public. The program included free food, music, speakers, raffles, shirt sales and lots of fun.

Not sure what to do with money your Squadron had raised? National Adjutant Brian O'Hearne has some suggestions (see Page 3).

The Flag Flies at Half-Staff

by **Roland D. Matteson**
Past National Commander

Over the rubble remains of the World Trade Center,
The flag flies at half-staff.

Over the Pentagon where our soldiers and sailors lay,
The flag flies at half-staff.

All through the towns and villages of our Great Nation,
The flag flies at half-staff

And I believe over the gates of heaven,
The flag flies at half-staff

And in my heart and mind,
The flag flies at half-staff

FOR EVER MORE

Sons perish in WTC

Two members of the S.A.L. were among the thousands of victims who perished in the attack on the WTC.

One of those killed was 45 year old Raymond York, Jr., a 20-year veteran of the New York City Fire Department and a charter member of Broad Channel, NY Sq. 1404. Ray had been injured on the job a year ago and had been assigned to light duty. On the morning of the attack he was getting ready to participate in a public relations event at Rockefeller Center when heard about the first plane hitting the WTC. Witnesses say Ray flagged down an ambulance and raced to the scene of the attack. His body was one of the first to be pulled from the rubble of the collapsed WTC the following morning. Ray leaves behind a wife and four children.

Another Son who lost his life in the WTC attack was 42 year old Edward Beyea, a Life Member of Bath, NY Sq. 173. Ed was a computer programmer who worked for Blue Cross/Blue Shield in one of the WTC towers. He was paralyzed from the neck down and confined to a wheelchair. Witnesses reported a friend of Ed's made it out of the building, but went back inside to help him get out. They were last seen trying to maneuver down a stairway. Ed is survived by his mother.



In this issue

Commander's message

Page 2

Adjutant's message

Page 3

Legislative news

Page 3

Squadron activities

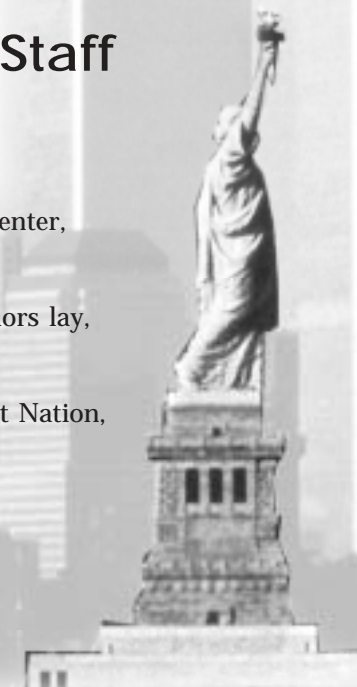
Page 4

Membership update

Page 6

U.S.S. Indianapolis

Page 7



Focus on the future

by Clifford Smith
National Commander

Hello to all my fellow members. I am looking forward to a great year as we *focus on the future*. I want to thank you for electing me your National Commander. I am *your* National Commander not *the* National Commander. I am a proud Son who just wears a different colored cap this year. Working together as a true American Legion Family this year, we will reach all our goals for the veterans and children of our great nation.



Communication is our first key to success. This year the commission and committee chairmen have set up a communications network among themselves. We have regional representatives on each committee, which will aid in getting much needed information to all Detachments.

It is amazing to see and hear all the wonderful projects and programs that your Squadrons perform each year. This year there will be a strong emphasis on reporting these accomplishments. Last year only 8% of all Squadrons reported to the National organization. This information is vital to our growth. Our reports are compiled along with The Legion's own reports and used by National Commander Santos in his annual report to Congress.

Pics in cyberspace

by Kevin Harrington
National Historian

One of the responsibilities of any Historian, is to make a scrapbook of the Commander's (or Squadron's) activities. Typically, few people ever see these books unless the Historian makes sure they're kept in a public place. Yet, with new technology at our fingertips, we now have the chance to place our scrapbooks on the Internet. I have done that with the National Commander's Scrapbook. You are welcome to view it at: www.timesunion.com/communities/sal (Editor's Note: eventually, this will be moved and made a part of the National Historian's page on our S.A.L. National Web site). You will find photos from our National Convention, photos of various national activities, photos from visitations made by National Commander Cliff and other information.

I want to invite everyone to submit photos that are taken at events visited by Commander Cliff. You can mail them to me at 1467 Bame Rd., Castleton, NY 12033 or send them to me at my e-mail address: KevinHarrington-

Our membership theme is *Running with the Big Dog*, which should be a lot of fun throughout the year. Our Vice Commanders have challenged each other and no one wants to be in the *Dog House* (at the bottom). We also have a new program called the Blue Brigade. This is for anyone who recruits 30 new members. A personalized jacket will be given at the National Convention to anyone who reaches this plateau. The person who recruits the most members in each region will also receive a Sons of The American Legion watch.

Our goals are high but attainable. We hope to have 260,000 members and continue our \$1 per member goal for the Child Welfare Foundation. I believe we can also raise \$50,000 for the National Emergency Fund and \$100,000 for the Children's Miracle Network. I realize these are hefty goals but with our commitment to God and Country I am sure they can be met.

I also have a Commander's Project this year. We will be working with The Salvation Army Veterans Centers throughout the country. The Salvation Army has been providing service to our veterans throughout all the wars America has endured. They have 31 Veteran Centers across the country. I hope many of you will join me in supporting this worthy project. More detailed information has been sent to each Detachment Commander.

In closing I want to wish all of you a successful and prosperous year. We have a terrific administrative staff this year that is here to serve you. Keep your *focus on the future* and be accountable for all of your actions. We are all proud possessors of a priceless heritage. Let us continue to adopt in letter and spirit all the great principles for which The American Legion stands.

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

NationalHistorianSAL@Juno.com. Please include the names and titles of all persons in the photos. I'll try to have them up on the site quickly. Digital photos can be e-mailed and film photos can be scanned in JPEG and e-mailed also. Please mail a print copy of any photo and any dinner programs or newspaper articles about Cliff's visits so I can use them for his scrapbook. All submitters' names will be noted. I hope you enjoy seeing yourselves on-line!

Once the Historian's page is running on the Sons' National Web site, I want to include things such as the history of our organization. I want to have at least one important historical activity from each region. I'm looking for an annual event that demonstrates the values of the Sons; things we want other members and the public to know about. It could be something headed by the Sons, or a Legion or public activity that Sons participated in.

U.S.S. Indianapolis: Adopt a survivor

It still ranks as the worst naval disaster in the history of the United States.

The U.S.S. Indianapolis had been picked to deliver the atomic bomb components to Tinian Island in July, 1945. On July 30, after successfully completing her top secret mission, she was hit by two Japanese torpedoes and sank in less than 15 minutes. Of the 1197 men aboard, about 900 made it into the water. They had no food or drinking water and many were badly burned and injured. Their screams filled the air as sharks began taking them one by one. After five nights and four days in the water they were found, by accident. By the time rescue planes and ships arrived, only 317 men remained alive.

The U.S.S. Indianapolis National Memorial stands near downtown Indianapolis, IN. Every two years, members of the U.S.S. Indianapolis Survivors Organization hold a national reunion in Indianapolis in memory of the great ship and the men who served aboard her.

Sons serve up thanks

Past National Commander David Stephens is one of those guys who watches and listens for opportunities, then gets groups of people to act.

Back in August, he heard the U.S.S. Indianapolis Survivors were planning to be in town. He made a few calls, found out who was organizing events for the Survivors, rounded up a dozen S.A.L. Detachment officers and worked out plans for a special dinner, at which time Hoosier Sons would present the Survivors with a plaque thanking them for their service and their sacrifices.

Dave also made a couple of calls to local television stations and the newspaper. He followed up with a printed press release confirming the date, time and place of the dinner. Two stations sent news teams to cover the dinner. One of them devoted more than two minutes of air time to the story (above).



Today, 118 survivors are still living, but that number is rapidly dwindling. They range in age from 74 to 94. About 70 of them were able to attend this year's reunion in Indianapolis in August. Many of the survivors can no longer afford the cost of traveling to Indiana for the biennial reunion.

A special fund has been created to assist survivors and their families make the journey. Numerous businesses and individuals have already contributed to this fund.

Without the sacrifices of these men, millions would not be alive today. Members of Indiana's Detachment of the Sons of The American Legion are assisting with fundraising efforts for the survivor's fund. Anyone else interested in helping should make checks payable to: USS Indianapolis Survivors Organization and send them to:

Adopt a Survivor Program
c/o John Gromosiak, Chairman
412 N. Alabama St. #305
Indianapolis, IN 46204

In their own words

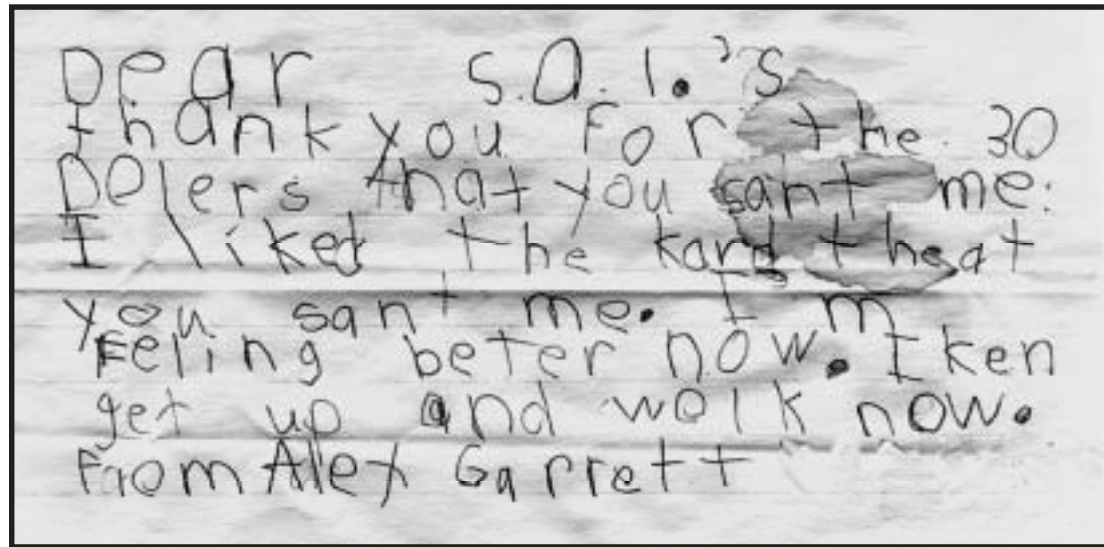
(Editor's note: The following comments were offered by survivors when asked, "What would you hope future generations remember about the story of the U.S.S. Indianapolis?")

I went to see Captain McVeigh in 1951 in New Orleans, LA. As we were driving back to Canal Street, he stopped his car and said, "Son, what do you see?" I looked and saw the signal light was red, the Metro bus was there and people were walking across. He said, "Son, what the hell do you see?" I said I didn't see anything and he said, "Look across the street at those three winos and hippies. Son, people like that are not gonna save this country. People like you and I are going to have to die for this country." Lindsey Wilcox - Baytown, TX

I think that despite the problems we think we had with the Navy, we live in the greatest country in the world and we all should be very, very proud of the United States. Paul Murphy - Broomfield, CO

I just hope they remember what it was all about, what it was fought for, what we were doing out

Continued on Page 8



These are the kind of messages which make everything worthwhile. The note (above) is a Thank You note sent to **Alton, NH Sq. 72** from a five year old boy who had gotten hurt and couldn't walk for a week. Squadron members heard about his plight and sent him \$30 to purchase a book and other things to pass the time.

More than four years in the making! Charles 'Ace' Grissom is an S.A.L. member from **Sage, AR Sq. ???**. He is also a master wood carver, proven by this giant Golden Eagle which required four years to complete (right). It's believed to be the world's largest freestanding eagle carved from a single piece of wood. The bird stands 6'5" tall and weighs 180 pounds. It was carved from a 100 year old, 5,000 pound black walnut tree. The table beneath it is made of solid oak and is also hand carved. After four years of constant work on this project, 'Ace' isn't sure what to do with the sculpture but says, "I want to see the eagle go to a place where it can be appreciated and enjoyed as much as I have enjoyed carving it. Oh, and no more big projects for me. I'm getting too old for this kind of work!" He has been offered nearly \$40,000 for the carving and has submitted papers to the Guinness book of World Records.

The Detachment of Indiana has been helping out quite a bit with the Knightstown Home, a residential facility for troubled children. Last year the Detachment contributed \$10,000 to set up a weight room and exercise facility at the school. This year, **Monticello, IN Sq. 81** donated a truckload of bicycles to the school (right/above). This summer, members of the Detachment's **Second District** sponsored a day at Indiana Beach Amusement Park for the students (right/below). Sons inside **Terre Haute, IN Sq. 104** held a father/son car show in October out in the parking lot and are planning their upcoming annual Super Bowl party.



Arizona. Also, the guys in **Camp Verde, AZ Sq. 93** get up extra early one day each month in order to cook breakfast. They use the profits to fund various Squadron activities.



Berkeley Springs, WV Sq. 60 and Martinsburg, WV Sq. 14 presented a set of flags to the town of Hedgesville. They also enlisted the help of the local fire department to paint the pole and put up the new flags.

A Fourth of July flag retirement ceremony was held this summer by **Waco, TX Sq. 121**. Color guard members stand in formation (right).

Many Detachments are beginning to conduct their own Leadership Training Conferences. One such group is the **Detachment of**



Arizona. Also, the guys in **Camp Verde, AZ Sq. 93** get up extra early one day each month in order to cook breakfast. They use the profits to fund various Squadron activities.

Kansas Detachment Commander Wes Wills has gotten an overwhelming response to his project this year: Flag Education in 4th grade classrooms. He's received orders thus far for more than 20,000 one inch stick-on flags and flag etiquette packets. Wes has also promised an award to every Detachment member who signs up at least one new member this year.

Every so often we get a new member right out of the chute, so to speak. Such was the case when Devin James Sanchez Lord (right) entered the world in August of last year. Devin's dad, James, quickly signed him up into **Southington, CT Sq. 72**. For a short while he was probably the youngest member of the S.A.L. in the world.

York, PA Sq 799 has a way of making the holidays a bit merrier for others. At Thanksgiving they give food baskets to families in the area. They help with Christmas gifts for the veterans at Lebanon VA hospital. They put flags on veterans' graves and provide an honor guard on Memorial Day. This year they

also donated \$200 to CWF and another \$300 to the community's Special Olympics program.

Remember when Kevin Winkelmann was our National Commander? That's Kevin between two **National Junior Shooting Sports** champions (right). Commander Kevin made the trip to Colorado

this year to watch the finals. Sons provide all scholarship money which is won by these shooting sports champs.



Members of **Linden, NJ Sq. 102** (below) organized a rummage sale and canister drive for the local Cerebral Palsy League this year. With help from the Auxiliary and the Post, a total of \$1,300 was raised.

Celeron, NY Sq. 777 now gives a pair of \$500 college scholarships. One is designated for a member of the Sons and one is reserved for the daughter of an Auxiliary member. Meanwhile, **New York Detachment Commander David Downey** is drumming up support for two projects



this year. The first involves collecting money for CWF. But his special project is an effort to get help for the Saratoga National Cemetery Honor Guard. The 373-acre facility opened in 1999 and uses 100 volunteers in six rotating units to provide dignified ceremonies earned by our departed veterans. The Guard is in need of financial aid for uniforms, equipment and associated costs.

We want to repeat our heartfelt congratulations to **Past National Commander Bill Matoska**, who traveled to San Antonio, TX in August and wound up getting married. While taking a boat ride along San Antonio's famed Riverwalk, Bill and his girlfriend,



this year. The first involves collecting money for CWF. But his special project is an effort to get help for the Saratoga National Cemetery Honor Guard. The 373-acre facility opened in 1999 and uses 100 volunteers in six rotating units to provide dignified ceremonies earned by our departed veterans. The Guard is in need of financial aid for uniforms, equipment and associated costs.

Shelly Buckler listened to the tour guide tell stories about local lore. One such story predicts good luck for couples who are married near the 'place of restful waters.' Bill turned to Shelly and proposed.

She accepted. It took a while to round up a minister, but the couple was married in front of nearly 100 tourists-turned-witnesses. Matoska is a member of **Parkville, MD Sq. 183**. The new Mrs. Matoska is a member of **Essex, MD Auxiliary Unit 148**. A photo of the happy couple appeared in the *National Update Special Convention Edition*, which can be viewed along with other *National Update* issues on our National Home Page on the Web.

It was hotter than a what...? You're looking at (below) the winning bowl of chili in this year's second annual I.B.C.A. BBQ and C.A.S.I. Chili Cook-off which was hosted by **Mineral Wells, TX Sq. 75**. More than 50 cooks took

part and more than 200 people watched and ate. The Squadron raised over \$2,800 which will support local charities as well as the Squadron's activities. Do you suppose anyone noticed that Squadron 75 Commander Randy Ezell (he's the one in the middle) just happened to be a member of the winning team?



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 to: mpipher@indiana.edu

We let the dogs out

This year's National Membership theme is 'Running with the Big Dog.' The biggest 'Dawg' of all is National Commander Cliff. National Membership Chairman Kent Blanchard is the 'Dawg Warden' While Detachment Commanders and membership chairmen will serve as 'Dawg Catchers.'

"It's time to focus on our future, the future of the Sons and the future of our youth," says Blanchard with a wink of an eye. "It's time to recruit recruiters. It's time to make huge leaps in membership. It's time!"



Above- National Membership Chairman Kent Blanchard presents 'Outstanding Recruiter Pin' to Richard "Doc" Pfeiffer of Indiana.

Below - The light blue pin is trimmed in gold (actual size).

Bottom - National Commander Cliff is the year's Top Dog.

Some of the most outstanding recruitment efforts of the year have been taking place overseas. At press time, the **Detachment of France** was leading the world, already attaining 120% of their goal. Other leaders currently include the **Detachments of Hawaii - 83%**, **Mississippi - 58%**, **Georgia - 55%**, **Alabama - 54%**, **Tennessee - 42%**, **Utah - 42%**, **Florida - 41%**, **Texas - 40%**, **Kansas - 40%**, and **Delaware - 40%**.

The organization as a whole now stands at just over 60,000 which is 25% of the national goal for 2002.

Blue Brigade coming

One of the most elite units within The American Legion is the famed Gold Brigade, made up of Legionnaires who have each recruited at least 50 new members in a single year. Members of the Gold Brigade are easily recognized by the gold satin Legion jackets they wear with pride.

It's possible a similar group could be organized soon within the Sons of The American Legion. Preliminary plans call for the group to be known as the Blue Brigade. Sons who recruit at least 30 members within a year would be eligible to receive a distinctive light blue jacket.



These photos were taken in New York City on September 22. Left - Poland, OH Sq. 15 Commander Jeff Vrabel, Sr. Shakes hands with NYC Legion Post members after a truckload of supplies was delivered. Jeff points out that it's never easy driving in Manhattan, but after the attacks, travel was a nightmare.



Right - an eerie nighttime exposure of what is known as Ground Zero, site of the former World Trade Center towers.

Relating to the public

by Gary Winters, Chairman
National Public Relations Commission

It's hard to think of the Public Relations Commission as a separate body because so much of our work involves assisting almost every other administrative unit of the S.A.L. We help others achieve the goals they set which are associated with public and media relations.

At the national level, we have been working for quite some time on a new Member's Handbook. The work of writing and compiling has ended and the new book is currently awaiting approval by The American Legion's S.A.L. Sub-Committee.

We are presently working on a design for a memorial plaque which the Sons has been asked to place at the National Cemetery in Hawaii to commemorate the sacrifices of veterans.

Pins are popular within the Sons and the P.R. Commission has designed a new pin which will soon be available, but only to a select few. We will begin awarding a pin and certificate to the "P.R. Person of the Year" in each Detachment. It will be up to each Detachment to decide who gets the award each year, but it should go to the person who has done the most to promote the S.A.L. through outstanding public relations work.

Keep your eye on the Sons' official Web site for updates on these and other matters: www.sal.legion.org. Feel free to contact me if you have any suggestions about the Web site: g-winters@ti.com.

What can I do now?

by Brian O'Hearne
National Adjutant

One of the most natural responses to any crisis is a desire to help. Sons have poured themselves into relief efforts to an unmeasurable extent in these past two months. In fact, there has been such an overwhelming desire to help that I thought I would mention some of the agencies and activities which we know will produce results.

Please understand that this list is not exhaustive, nor am I endorsing any particular agency or relief effort. These are merely things which have crossed my desk and I thought it would be helpful to share them with you.

Scholarships

The American Legion has established the 'September 11 Memorial Scholarship' for children of America's Armed Forces who died while on active duty on or after September 11, 2001. Contributions may be sent to The American Legion National HQ.

Also, the 'Ed Beyea Scholarship' honors one S.A.L. member killed in the WTC attacks and has been set up at his former high school. Contributions can be made payable to 'Haverling Central School District' and sent to 25 Ellas Ave. Bath, NY 14810.

National Emergency Fund

Any current member of The American Legion Family (Legion, Auxiliary and Sons) is eligible to receive direct financial assistance from this special fund. Every single dollar contributed to the NEF is used for assistance. All administrative costs of the fund are provided by The American Legion, which means every single dollar contributed is available for direct assistance.

Time to put the bite on Congress

by George Evans, Chairman
National Legislative Commission

This is an urgent plea to all Sons to get involved in our 'Grassroots Lobbying' campaign. The very existence of the Sons of The American Legion is at stake.

HR 1754 is a bill to amend Section 501 (c) (19) of the Internal Revenue Act of 1986. The current interpretation by the IRS is that members of the S.A.L. and the Auxiliary are considered 'associate or social members.' Unless changed by Congress, the IRS intends to tax American Legion Posts on all charitable monies raised by the Sons and the Auxiliary. Legion Posts are likely to disband their Sons programs rather than pay such huge taxes. You should contact your representative and insist he or she become a co-sponsor of this important legislation.

Contributions may be sent to The American Legion National HQ.

Family Support Network

This involves time and energy, not money. American Legion Family members touched by the terrorist attacks, as well as family members of U.S. military personnel called to duty in the wake of those attacks, are likely to need protection and care from the rest of us. These families need help with such things as child care, transportation, home repairs, lawn and sidewalk maintenance, etc. An intense nationwide effort is underway to secure volunteers to help out. Legion Families who need assistance may call 1-800-504-4098 around-the-clock. Calls are processed and referred to Legion Posts in those communities where the needing family resides. Here's your chance to be a hometown volunteer.

Blood Donations

American Legion National Commander Ric Santos has called upon all Sons and Legion Family members to visit their nearest blood collection center as soon as possible.

Post Homes

Local authorities all across the country are being made aware that American Legion Posts are available for use in times of emergencies. Sons can help by working with Post officers to provide personnel if an emergency arises.

Misc Funds

An enormous number of funds have been established in cities and towns all across the nation. You should check with those who have established the funds to see just where the money will be donated. Some funds retain a portion of all proceeds to cover administrative costs. It is up to you to decide where your money will do the most good.

Just as important, **Senate Joint Resolution 7** (The Flag Amendment) won overwhelming passage in the House of Representatives last summer, but is still awaiting action in the U.S. Senate.

(Editor's Note: At press time, S.J.R. 7 was 'being held at the desk' in the Senate. This means that, without committee hearings, it could be called to the floor for a vote at any time Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) and Seante Minority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) agree to do so. The American Legion and the 142 organizations which make up the Citizens Flag Alliance have launched a national petition drive urging to Senate to take appropriate action on S.J.R. 7 because passage is now very likely.)

As America sends its young men and women to war, it is very important that we protect our flag. I urge you to thank those Senators who have signed on as co-sponsors to The Flag Amendment.

If you would like additional information or have a question about legislative matters involving The American Legion Family, contact me at GBESAL@aol.com.