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Collecting Illinois

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VFW Auxiliary

Sissac, Tade take state Voice of Democracy, Patriot’s Pen top honors at state awards ceremony

The State of Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars announced its Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen State Champions at the 75th annual Voice of Democracy banquet held Feb. 12 in Springfield.

Natalie Sissac, of Batavia, Illinois, a junior who is home-schooled, was named the Voice of Democracy State Champion and recipient of the John H. Emery Youth, Pageantry and Patriotism Award of \$2,500.

Sissac, who had been selected as the District 4 Champion, was sponsored by Niles Post 3579 and its Auxiliary in Niles, Illinois.

Parker Tade, an eighth grade student at Trinity Lutheran in Tinley Park, Illinois, was honored as the State Patriot’s Pen Champion during the banquet.

He was sponsored by Bremen Post 2791 and its Auxiliary in Tinley Park, Illinois. Tade was the District 16 Patriot’s Pen Champion.

Both students were provided the opportunity to read their winning essays at the banquet.

In addition to Sissac and Tade, awards were presented to each of the remaining 16 District Voice of Democracy Champions as well as second and third place State Patriot’s Pen students.



State Commander Bobby Welch, left, and State Auxiliary President Rhonda Borkgren, right, present the John H. Emery Youth, Pageantry and Patriotism Award to Natalie Sissac, who was selected as the Illinois Voice of Democracy Champion on Feb. 12.

Patriot’s Pen Awards

- Gaye Hines Memorial 2nd Place Award, \$500 - Ady Ferguson, District 12.

- Raymond L. Moreland Memorial 3rd Place Award, \$250 - Ellie Wrage, District 10.

Voice of Democracy Awards

- 2nd Place: George R. Cramer & Ray R. Soden Scholarship Award - \$1,500.00 - Lily

Jones, District 6

- 3rd Place: Terry L. McKinney Memorial Award - \$1,250.00 - Elizabeth Boyd, District 13

- 4th Place: Dale & Catherine Clifton Award - \$1,000.00 - Ethan Devany, District 19

- 5th Place: Johnson Phelps Post 5220 Auxiliary Award - \$750.00 - Grace Pattara,

District 16

- 6th Place: Edward Jarnell & Joseph Ross Award - \$600.00 - Joshua Coe, District 5

- 7th Place: Dick Cosner Memorial Award - \$500.00 - Sarah Whitehouse, District 11

- 8th Place: Vern & Lorraine Umphery, Post 6863 & Auxiliary Award - \$450.00 - Collin Kenyon, District 3

- 9th Place: Robert C. Holysz Post 2200 Award - \$400.00 - Kathryn Killian-Johnson, District 8

- 10th Place: Grant-Parkholme Post 9115 Award - \$375.00 - Reese Hankins, District 9

- 11th Place: West End Post 2004 Memorial Award - \$350.00 - Dannika Fulling, District 17

- 12th Place: Chester Spears Memorial Award - \$325.00 - Maggie Stacey, District 15

The following District Champions each received a \$300 award:

Sophie Clement, District 7; Carly Favre, District 12; Cyrah Dunlap, District 10; Hayden Hoffman, District 14;

Jackson Moran, District 18



State Auxiliary President Rhonda Borkgren, left, and State Commander Bobby Welch, right, present the John H. Emery Youth, Pageantry and Patriotism Award to Parker Tade, who was selected as the Illinois Patriot’s Pen Champion on Feb. 12.

SEE ADDITIONAL PHOTOS ON PAGES 5 AND 8

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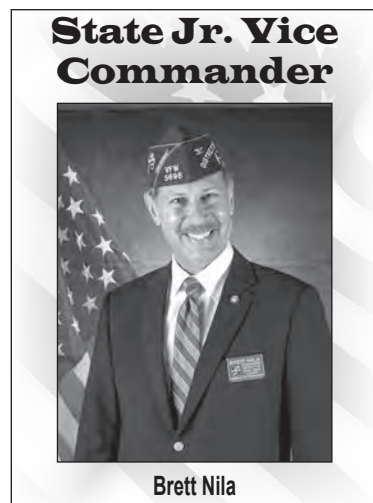
Bobby Welch

Greetings Comrades! We just finished up our February Council meeting and Voice of Democracy Banquet, it was so nice to be able to do things in person again...

First and foremost, congratulations to our Patriots Pen and Voice of Democracy winners and I wish them well in their quest to be the top ranked participants in this very rewarding VFW Program. I will forever be amazed with the extreme level of intelligence and maturity that these young Americans display... it gives me something to aspire too, when I grow up...

Next, I want to wish "fair winds and following seas" to Past State Commander Dave Stout, his unselfish dedication to step up and keep the department moving forward as the Adjutant Quartermaster these past couple of years was greatly appreciated. Unfortunately, at the advice of his doctor, he had to resign that position at the Council of Administration meeting. Dave, you will be missed my friend and from the bottom of my heart, thank you for your service.

Last, let us all welcome Joe Bartley as the newly appointed and elected Adjutant Quartermaster. Joe came highly recommended, and his civilian and military resumes fully supported those recommendations. After working with Joe for these past two weeks, there is no doubt in my mind that the council made the correct decision and that he will serve this Department honorably for years to come. Welcome aboard Joe!



Brett Nila

In 2023, the Department of Illinois will be hosting the Big Ten Conference. The last time we hosted was 2013. At the February Council of Administration meeting, our Site Selection Committee's recommendation of the Westin Hotel in Itasca for the 2023 Big Ten Conference, was approved.

I want to thank those who served on that Committee with me: John Davin, Barb Wilson and Chuck Ingle. We began

work in late September. In the following weeks, relying on emails and Zoom meetings, we developed a "Request for Proposal." Weeks later, as hotels responded by our December 1st deadline, we were able to review their proposals and determine which hotels to visit. We ultimately visited 3 hotels and, after reviewing those findings, we agreed on the Westin as our recommendation to the Council.

In addition to my fellow committee members, I want to express my appreciation to South Dakota's 2021 Big Ten Planning Chairman and to Wisconsin's 2022 Big Ten Planning Chairman, for the data they provided which helped our committee to benchmark our findings. With the site of the conference now determined, the Department of Illinois can move forward on to our next stages of planning to host the 2023 Conference. For that, I'll need to form new committees and will be looking for members interested in serving on those committees.



Bobby Edwards

2021-2022 Where has the Year Gone!

As we approach these final months of the 2021-2022 year, let us remember our vision and mission to our great fraternal organization the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It is time we get back into our communities and show them that we continue to be relevant. It is time that we reach out to our members to get them back involved or even to simply catch up with them and make sure they are doing well. We need to make sure that we are always "relevant" with our Post members because our members are the lifeblood of this organization and always need to be a priority. Can tell you first-hand that when our leadership made calls to our members, they were grateful for the call and to hear from their fellow veterans.

Looking forward into the 2022-2023 year coming up, I would like for the Post and Districts to think and start planning.

During this year's upcoming elections at the Post, District Levels we must review five questions when planning for our future and for our elected leaderships engagement. (1) Where are we? (2) How are we doing? (3) What can we do to make things better? (4) Are members involved within the post, district activities and community? (5) How do we execute post and district activities for the betterment of our great fraternal organization. We must return to family-oriented activities to attract younger eligible veterans and change the mindset of the post is just a bar. Post and District Commanders leadership principals are evaluated, by their actions and engagement, by our members, as the person who is leading the Post or District. Post and District Committees must also provide the excitement for other members to want to become apart and contribute their thoughts and ideas. Remember! Not One Person Can Do It Alone.

I would like to encourage "ALL" elected Post and District Trustees review their duties and responsibilities. The trustees are the checks and balances to a well-organized and prosperous organization. Here is one example: At least monthly, review the Monthly Report of Receipts and Expenditures of the Post Quartermaster. Failure to follow can lead to a Post becoming insolvent and outside agencies applying liens against the Post. In these changing times,

the Veterans of Foreign Wars, America's largest organization of combat Veterans knows all too well the experience of fighting a sometimes-invisible enemy. This unique understanding, and the situational readiness and dedication, has given this country the will to adapt and overcome all adversities through military service is perpetuating the VFW and its members' commitment to service through the COVID-19 pandemic that has sweep and is continuing to sweep the country with a New Variant. The VFW remains an organization of veterans #StillServing.

Commander Welch's Moto "Mission First-Veterans Always" has enabled us, as we, have traveled the state to review where we are at the Department Level. We have witnessed great accomplishments. The members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars from our Post and Districts are helping their communities in many ways. Please report your charitable activities and community activities through your local post, district newsletters and local and social media.

Posts 2602, 10302 team up to donate handicap vehicle with lift chair

Veterans of Foreign Wars of Illinois Lawrence J. Cross Post 2602, Peoria Heights, District 9, Northenders Post 10302, Springfield, District 10, and Veterans Helping Veterans Inc., donated a handicap accessible vehicle with a lift chair assembly to Joy Thompson of Springfield Dec. 31.

Post Service Officers Don Yarbrough of Post 2602, and Frank Tyree of Post 10302, coordinated this charitable event.

Yarbrough found and repaired the vehicle to make sure the vehicle was operational and Tyree coordinated the delivery date and time.

Thompson has cerebral palsy and is permanently in a scooter chair. Illinois VFW State Senior Vice Commander Bobby Edwards was on hand to present the title transfer to Thompson.



State Senior Vice Commander Bobby Edwards, right, presents the title transfer to Joy Thompson.



The handicap accessible vehicle is equipped with a lift chair assembly.

Don't forget to report it on your X-sheets.

We have adapted to innovative ways in conducting our Post, District and Department meetings. We have 41,000 plus members represented in the 17 Districts and 265 Posts in the Department of Illinois. We need to strive to increase our membership back to 50,000 plus so we have the power and leverage to provide even greater support to the veterans. Know our members, posts, and districts are out there on the front lines every day serving our veterans, their families, and our communities. We need to do a better job of capturing that data and getting credit for our service hours by filling out and submitting the X-Sheet. The Veterans of Foreign Wars should take pride in its commitment to Veterans and today's military. Our programs ensure "no one" is forgotten. We as VFW members care passionately about serving their fellow citizens. Just as we pledged serving out time in uniform, we again vow to sustain a lifelong commitment to the Nation and our Communities.

New State Adjutant-Quartermaster installed at Mid-Winter Conference

Citing health reasons, State Adjutant-Quartermaster Dave Stout announced his resignation from both positions on Feb. 12 at the Illinois VFW Mid-Winter Conference.

State Commander Bobby Welch appointed Joe Bartley, of Riverton, Illinois, a life member of Northenders Post 10302 in Springfield, Illinois, as State Adjutant. Bartley was nominated as State Quartermaster, and elected unanimously by the Council of Administration.

Bartley, a 27-year-veteran of the U.S. Army, Army Reserve and the Illinois Army National Guard, earned his eligibility to the Veterans of Foreign Wars during a deployment in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom during 2005-2006.

Bartley retired from the U.S. Army Reserves as a lieutenant colonel. During his twenty-seven year career, he served as a Support Operations Officer for Army Material Command and oversaw the up-armor program for the Southwest Asia theater. He served as Company Commander of 258th Quartermaster Supply Company, Battalion Commander of 651st Troop Command, and detachment officer in charge, Multi-Functional Support Command deployed in



National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento, right, administers the oath of office to new State Adjutant-Quartermaster Joe Bartley of Riverton, Illinois.

support of OIF/OEF.

In 2006, Joe joined Northenders VFW Post 10302 as a Life Member. He has served as a Post Trustee from 2014 to 2021 and blood drive chairman from 2015 to present. He has served as the District 10 Quartermaster since 2017, District 10 blood drive chairman since 2015 and the Community Activities chairman in 2021-2022.

Bartley was appointed as National Aide-De-Camp in

2016-2017. He was appointed as Assistant Inspector at the Department

Bartley has a Masters of Business Administration from Trident University and a Masters of Education Administration from Western Illinois University. In addition, he completed Quartermaster Officer Basic and Advanced courses, Transportation Advanced Course, Ordnance Advanced Course, and Command and General Staff College. He re-

ceived certification as Certified Defense Financial Management.

Bartley is a Life Member of VFW National Home. He organized, and was the Charter Commander for AMVETS Post 94. He is a Life Member of AMVETS Post 94, served 2 terms as Commander, and is currently the 2nd Vice Commander. He is a Life Member of National Guard Association of Illinois, Life Member of National Guard Association of the United States, member of American Legion Post 32, and member of Military Officer Association of America.

He served two terms as Commander of Ansar Shrine Legion of Honor and is current Acting Commander of Great Lakes Shrine Association Legion of Honor, covering units in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and one unit in Canada.

He is active in the community, currently serving his

fifth term as a Village Trustee in Riverton, where he served as the Acting Mayor for six months and is the current Mayor Pro-Tern.

He has served on the Riverton Fire Department for 19 years and was promoted to the Fire Chief in August 2017 and continues to serve today. He was co-owner of an insurance agency from 2006 until he was elected State Adjutant-Quartermaster.

Joe is the current President of Greater Riverton Kiwanis and is serving his second year as the Lieutenant Governor for Division 28. He is Past Master for Riverton Masonic Lodge 786 and is a member of the Elks, Chamber of Commerce, Alumni Associations, and masonic organizations.

Joe and his wife, Cindy reside in Riverton. He has two adult daughters and five grandchildren.

Illinois committee busy with legislative priorities for veterans

We have been active as a department on the legislative priorities for Illinois that concerns veterans.

The below legislation will be included on the state VFW website (www.vfwil.org) as well as sent out via email to members. We urge our membership to be involved.

It is imperative that our members keep their profiles updated on the national website, especially email addresses.

We have had one major bill pass House Bill 359 was passed and sent to the governor for signature it created the position of inspector general for the Illinois department of Veterans Affairs in response to the Covid outbreak.

HB35 - Veterans Bill of Rights. Increase veterans small business loans. Support programs to prevent veterans suicide. Increase veterans access to health care and new strategies to prevent veterans homelessness.

HB163 - Provides that at the time of enrollment, US Military personnel based in temporary

housing located outside a school district but will live in a school district in 6 months, must be enrolled in district without charge for tuition.

HB390 - Appropriates \$250,000 for the training of service dogs.

HB2378 The bill amends the Disabled Veterans Homestead Act to allow a surviving spouse who receives DIC to apply for the exemption, if the veteran died before applying for the exemption.

HB2775 - Homelessness. Bill will prevent interference by landlords in the assistance provided by county VAC's.

WE OPPOSE HB3590, this bill would defund the Cook County VAC. It is currently in the house rules committee. It was passed by the House Veterans Affairs Committee. Several VAC Superintendents testified against the bill in a Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing.

SB569 - Provides that high school students can take the Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Test in their school.



Michael Peck, right, Illinois VFW assistant legislative chairman with Rep. Joyce Mason, the author of Illinois House bill 35, Veterans Bill of Rights. Mason was presented an autographed copy of Medal of Honor recipient Allen Lynch's book Zero to Hero.

Illinois VFW News Deadline

The deadline for the upcoming issues of the Illinois VFW News

May/June 2022 - May 1, 2022
September 2022 - Aug. 1, 2022
December 2022 - Nov. 1, 2022
March 2023 - Feb. 1, 2023

Email items to: Barb Wilson, Editor at
bwilson@vfwil.org

If you have questions, contact
Barb Wilson at (618) 559-3331

Items not received by deadline may be held for the next issue

Naperville's Don O'Reilly: A 100-year-old Active Veteran

By Barbara Blomquist and Jim Oftedal

What does a 100-year-old veteran do?

Well, if he's Don O'Reilly he doesn't sit at home watching sports or the news. Instead, he's out attending his 285th service as a Military Honor Guard.

One of the original members of the Judd Kendall honor guard, Don who turned 100 last November, joined Naperville's Judd Kendall Post at the "young" age of 90 and has been a regular ever since. Don's role in the honor guard started as a Rifleman in 2015.

He carried and fired the (10#) M-1 rifle at every Military Honors service. One particular Saturday, Don drove 2 hours from an out-of-town trip in order to attend a graveside service for a veteran. After he lost strength in his wrist and arm making it difficult to hold the M-1 rifle, Don became the flag bearer holding the deceased veteran's service flag at the graveside. "The 10# rifle seems to get heavier with

every minute it's held."

I first met Don in a GI Yoga class. Several years ago I was going to write about some of the vets in the class and wanted to interview him. He said to talk to the other guys who saw service because "I always had a clean bunk and three-square meals."

I remember hearing that about my father-in-law, a sergeant in bomb disposal in WWII who lost his leg when he stepped on a German foot mine in 1945. He never wanted to swap war stories with other vets because he said he didn't see action. Thus is the service mentality of a humble patriot.

Don is a World War II veteran of the U.S. Army Air Corps - 8th Division.

Before there was a separate Air Force he served with Air Force Military Police and was stationed in England during the war. Since the services have separated, Don recognizes his service as Air Force. Don is a member of both the VFW and American Legion.

Last month at a military funeral he told Jim Oftedal, Judd Kendall's Honor Guard Commander, more details about his service. Going overseas to England in 1943 required 20-22 days because they had to rig-zag all the way up the USA coast; no lights-complete darkness. Two years later he returned from England on the Queen Mary. In contrast to going overseas, the Queen Mary was all lit up! Normally that ship carried 4,000 people, on the return, it carried 18,000 service members cramped on board. Meals were twice a day and you were assigned a hammock and slept in "shifts". In the submarine Navy, it was called "hot bunking". The ship stores sold Hershey candy bars - big ones, two for 25 cents. What a memory.

Don's obvious love of country and service was shared by several of his eight offspring. Two sons served in Vietnam and a grandson was in Afghanistan. One of his grandsons is a WWII reenactor who "has more



Don Reilly, a 100-year-old Air Force veteran, still active in his community. Photo courtesy of Jim Houg.

uniforms than I do." It was this grandson that went with him to Norwich and London, England, for a reunion of his old Air Force unit a few years ago. In October he went with a granddaughter to a reunion in Charleston, he sadly remarked that "there were fewer of us there." And yes, he has gone on an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. Don went to Marquette University in Milwaukee on the GI Bill and with

financial assistance from Western Electric. He's retired from a career as a mechanical engineer.

On his 100th birthday, hundreds of community members formed a convoy outside his home along with the Naperville Police Department, Aurora Police Department, and Mission BBQ (where he frequently eats). I wish I had more space to talk about this remarkable vet and my classmate.

Isham honored as Illinois VFW Veteran of Quarter

This is the inaugural year for the Department of Illinois's Veteran of the Month, Quarter and Year program. The VFW Department of Illinois' webpage states, "In an effort to create and maintain a culture of recognition, motivate high performance and reinforce desired behaviors. A new award has been instituted by the Commander and the

leadership team to recognize outstanding Comrades who perpetuate the purposes set forth in our Congressional Charter."

The honor of receiving the first Veteran of the Quarter went to Comrade Michael Isham, John Hugo Kaiser Post 1461 in Belvidere, District 6. Michael is an Iraqi War Veteran and serves as the Chaplain for the Post. Isham was the Veteran of the Month for November and the Veteran of the Quarter for September, October and November.

The Citation on the Veteran of the Quarter certificate read, "This is to certify that the Commander of the Department of Illinois has awarded the Veteran of the Quarter Award to Michael P Isham. Having surpassed his peer for the period 1 September 2021 to 30 November 2021 and through his dedication to the purposes set forth in the Congressional Charter. Comrade Isham has been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal with Silver Star. His selfless and commendable performance reflects great credit upon himself and is keeping with the highest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Signed Robert J. Welch, Commander, Department of Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars."

Michael has recognized by his Post for helping the community and supporting the National Charter by the following actions that he performed in November.

Michael conducted four outreach events at RESA Middle School in Rockford, Illinois to help students understand what Veterans Day means and the role of a Veteran in the community. He spoke to a total of 62 students on what it is to be in the military and answered their questions. Michael did such a great job that



District 6 Commander Ruben Hernandez, right, presents Michael Isham with the Veteran of the Quarter certificate.

we were asked to a mentor at the school to help these vulnerable kids. He is setting the example of what young Veterans can do by serving the community and promoting a positive image of the VFW.

As a member of the Honor Guard, Michael participated in four events. Three giving last honors to our fallen comrades and our Veteran's Day ceremony which was open to the community and streamed on FACEBOOK Live. The streaming on FACEBOOK Live allowed those whose health has been compromised and not wanting to be in the public and those that are homebound to watch the ceremony. Michael is honoring the military service of those who

came before us and who are no longer with us.

Michael started an informal peer-to-peer session at the VFW. This informal meeting in which members of the VFW and the community can come together and discuss current issues that impact Veterans and any issues on an individual level. The holidays can be hard for some Veterans and Michael wanted to get ahead of any issues and let everyone know they have people that they can count on. It allowed one Veteran whose Mother was admitted into the ICU over two hours away a way to work through some of the mixed emotions safe environment. Michael is always putting the interest of his fellow VFW

members first.

Michael worked to help fund raise for a Veterans 5K on Saturday November 13th. He also participated in by rucking the course in his old uniform and talking to fellow Veterans to get the word out on what the VFW does for the community and for fellow Veterans. Michael is promoting patriotism through his example.

Isham was presented the awards in a small ceremony the on the same night that District 6 was holding the Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen award ceremony. It is fitting on a night that we were celebrating the future generation of the United States that we also celebrate the future of the VFW.

Illinois VFW, Auxiliary honor Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen students at 75th annual state banquet



Patriot's Pen Gaye Hines Memorial 2nd Place Award, \$500 - Ady Fergusson, District 12.



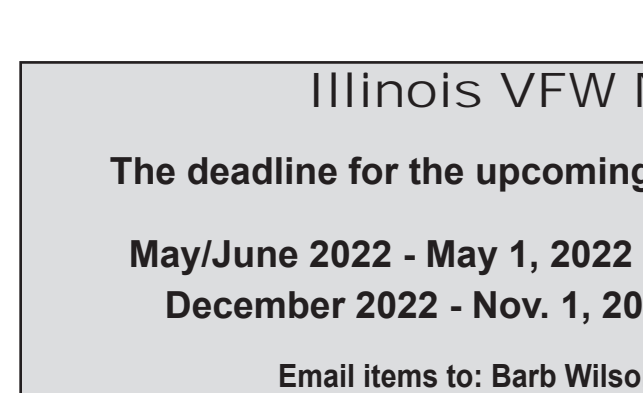
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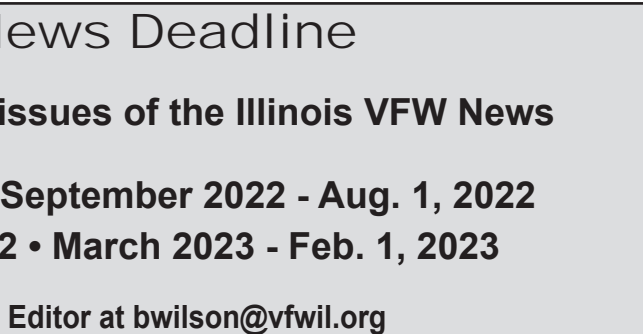
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Collecting Illinois: State Commander combines passion for veterans with learning about Illinois’ VFW history

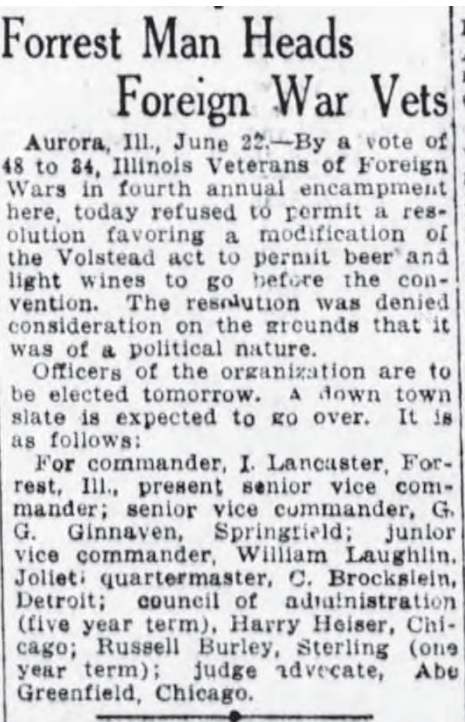
By Robert Welch
Being passionate about Veterans pretty much comes with the territory when you join the Veterans of Foreign Wars. After a couple of years, you may accept an elected office and hopefully you become passionate about the organization and where it will go in the future. But did you ever wonder where we came from to begin with?? I did...

Maya Angelou said: “You can’t really know where you are going until you know where you have been.” I find this to be a profound statement that helps guide me in my quest to understand the “why” and “where” of the VFW. This quest has led to one of my passions (or as some may call it my obsession)... collecting VFW memorabilia from days gone by. My collecting focuses on Membership Badges, Convention/Encampment Badges, and Ephemera (items of collectible memorabilia, typically written or printed ones). Basically, anything that I can glean information from.

So, what is a badge? If you look up the definition of badge it states: A distinctive emblem worn as a mark of office, membership, achievement, licensed employment, etc. Though, looking at one, most people would call it a medal. That is a misnomer that has become widely accepted due to the military practice of calling their awards... medals. The following Encampment/Convention badges are currently in my collection. These badges, in conjunction with historic newspaper articles, have



The earliest badge that I have is from 1923, this was our 4th encampment, it was held in Aurora in June of 1923 and I. L. Lancaster was elected as the 4th Department Commander. This badge does not include any thing that says it was a VFW badge, the attached newspaper clipping helps identify it as such.



helped piece together a timeline for where Department of Illinois Encampments/Conventions were held.

The first encampment was held in Chicago on December 11, 1920. On that day the Department of Illinois was chartered, Ernest V. Dickson was elected as the De-



This badge is from the 8th encampment in 1927. Held in Chicago, it was at this encampment that Abraham Greenfield was elected for a consecutive term as Commander.



This example is a ribbon hanging from a frame where a typed label with the Comrades name and post number would be inserted. This ribbon says “Member” at the top, there would have been other ribbons that said Delegate, Alternate and Guest as was the common practice. In 1931 at the 12th encampment, Reverend Francis J Thomas was elected as the 11th Commander.



This example from the 25th encampment in 1944 was made out of plastic, as metals were being used for the ongoing war effort.

partment Commander, John Cenic as the SVC, and Clarence Wellman as the JVC. It is doubtful that a badge was produced for this encampment. The 2nd encampment was in Rockford in June of 1921, only seven months after the first.

See **Collecting Illinois** on Page 7



28th Encampment, Chicago 1947



29th Encampment, Peoria 1948



32nd Encampment, Springfield 1951



34th Encampment, East St. Louis 1953



35th Encampment, Rockford 1954



38th Encampment, Chicago 1957. VFW badge on the left and Auxiliary on the right



52nd and 53rd Encampment badges as ribbons that belonged to Past Department Adjutant Quartermaster Helmuth Frank. Chicago 1971 and Peoria 1972

Collecting Illinois

Continued From Page 6

The badges pictured here are just a small portion of the collection that I have put together over the past couple of years, while most of these have been purchased from Ebay, I do want to thank Comrade Paul Bezazian for his gracious donation of the Helmuth Frank badges. These badges are truly a part of the history of the Department of Illinois VFW and they deserve to be saved and preserved.

They also help us correct our history, for instance since 1996 we have been two years off on our conventions. The Department was celebrating their 75th Anniversary in December of 1996, and in June

of 1997 we held our 75th Convention? The badges that I have collected, in conjunction with old newspaper clippings and the Proceedings of past conventions show that we held our 75th Convention in 1994, 76th in 1995 and then back to 75th in 1996 during our 75th Anniversary. With that being said, we will set the record straight and this coming Convention will be the 103rd. So, the next time you are looking through the drawers of that dusty desk in the corner or old boxes in your post and you come across something like this, save it, you never know what story it might tell.



This last example of an encampment badge is from our 63rd Convention held in Chicago in 1982. It was at this convention that Past Commander in Chief George Cramer was elected as the Department Commander.



This membership badge belonged to Past Department Commander William M P Smith, who was elected the 20th Commander at the 21st Encampment in 1940 in Waukegan. A World War I Veteran of the 38th Infantry Division, Commander Smith was a member of Edwardsville VFW Post No. 1299 and served as a member of the Illinois Veterans Commission, appointed by Governor William Stratton.

Illinois Council approves VFW member History Project with PCI

The Illinois VFW Council of Administration approved a project to capture the oral and written history of members of the Illinois VFW at the August Council of Administration Meeting.

In the next few weeks, members of the Illinois VFW will receive postcards and emails requesting the members contact PCI to verify member contact information, and if the member so desires, to participate in sharing their military service information for a story book.

It is important to note to our members, this is a legitimate mailing and not a scam. Employees with PCI will verify the member's contact information and if the member wishes to be interviewed about their military service, they can. If not, tell PCI you don't want to receive further correspondence.



Bloomington Post 7539 recently unveiled a new monument honoring all Veterans. The monument stands near the Bloomington Village hall as a lasting memorial to those Veterans we have lost, have served, and are still serving our country in the Armed Forces of the United States. This project has been in the works for about three years and due to the generous donations of time, and material from the Village of Bloomington, and donations from the residents, businesses, and members of our post we raised in excess of \$ 35,000 to bring this project to fruition. VFW Post 7539 is grateful for the participation and generosity of everyone involved in seeing this project completed.



78th ANNIVERSARY of D-DAY

13-day WWII tour departs June 2, 2022 from Minneapolis or Chicago.

FRANCE: Paris tour, all sights on Normandy, festivities on June 6, SHAF headquarters in Reims.

BELGIUM: Battle of the Bulge sites.

GERMANY: Remagen Bridge, Rhine cruise, Nurnberg rally grounds & courtroom, Dachau and Hitler's Eagles Nest. Great hotels, many meals, professional guides, & Vi Ranney, escort

Deadline for airline seats is March 18 - CALL TODAY!

To sign up, call Vi Ranney: 605-665-3596 or email: viranney@vyn.midco.net

Our other upcoming tours:
Exclusive Norway - July 23, 2022
England, Scotland, Wales, & Ireland - Aug. 20, 2022
Two-part Europe - September 22, 2022
(Part one: Oktoberfest, Passion Play, Switzerland, France, Monaco. Part two: Spain and Portugal.)

Tours sponsored by GRHS. Everyone Welcome!!



12th Place: Chester Spears Memorial Award - \$325.00 - Maggie Stacey, District 15



\$300 award: Cyrah Dunlap, District 10



National Auxiliary President Jean Hamill congratulates the students on their achievements during the banquet.



LaFore Lock Post 755 posts the colors during the banquet's opening ceremony.



\$300 award: Sophie Clement, District 7



\$300 award: Jackson Moran, District 18



Left, National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento addresses the students, parents and teachers at the state banquet. Sarmiento congratulated the students on reaching the state level, and thanked the parents and teachers for their commitment to the students.

Below, State Commander Bobby Welch salutes the flag while leading the banquet attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.



\$300 award: Carly Favre, District 12



\$300 award: Hayden Hoffman, District 14



All in the Family - Not something one normally sees, but Mike and Mary Ellen Jones have every reason to be proud of their children, with each representing District 6 in either the Patriot's Pen or Voice of Democracy program. Faith was District 6's Voice of Democracy champion in 2019, sister Lily represented District 6 as their Voice of Democracy champion in 2022, and brother, Hunter Jones represented District 6 as their 2022 Patriot's Pen Champion.



Grace Pattara was recognized as the District 16 Voice of Democracy champion during the district's awards banquet held in early January. Pattara is a home-educated senior in high school. She is the daughter of JoAnn and Vincent Pattara and is the 4th of 6 wonderful siblings. She has competed in a nationally-ranked Speech and Debate Forensics League for seven years, qualifying and competing at the National Tournament of Champions each year. In her spare time she works at Nothing Bundt Cakes as a Guest Service Representative and Shift Lead. She is honored to be representing the 16th district and is grateful for this opportunity.



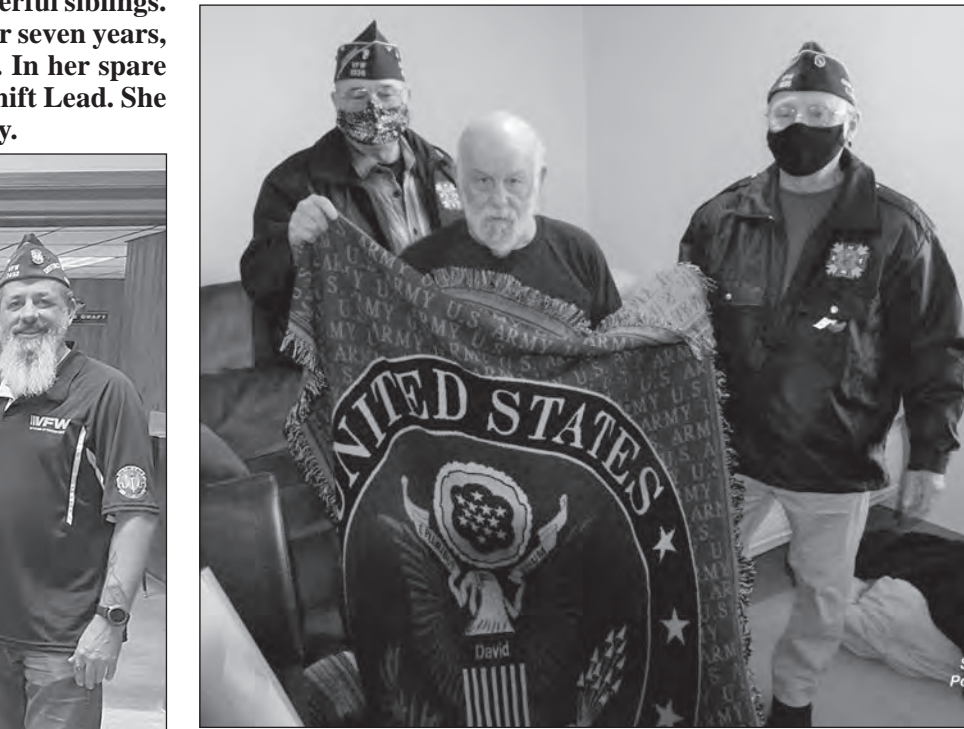
On 17 November 2021, 19th District Commander Rob Bailey (right) presented VFW members with their Quilts of Valor. From left, Robert Lee, U.S. Navy, retired; Rick Schwerdtner, U.S. Marine Corps; Bryan Gulley, U.S. Air Force; and Don Bullock, U.S. Army.



Benjamin O. Davis VFW Post 311, Richton Park, held a Blood Drive on July 17, 2021 to support Versiti Blood Center of IL. Thanks to coordination by Post 311 Member Kyna Simpson, her son Terrance Brown, Chicago Bears Team Member and the support of several members from New Faith Baptist Church of Matteson, IL, it was a very successful blood drive. As stated by Versiti "18 individuals registered to collect 15 blood products, exceeding the 14-donation goal! When separated into 3 components (platelets, plasma, and red cells), up to 45 patients were assisted." Staley Da Bear assisted the Post with acquiring possible donors.



Air Force vet William D. "Bill" Hanley a Life Member of Coal City's St. Juvin Post was recognized for his service with one of the Post's Blankets for Vets tapestry throws. Since 2013 St. Juvin has presented over 500 of these symbols of the veteran's commitment to protect and defend the freedoms that we enjoy. The throws represent over \$25,000 raised through Buddy Poppy events sponsored by Berkot's Super Foods, Minit Marts in Coal City and Diamond, Casey's General Store, Dollar General and Whitmore Ace Hardware, the Post also conducts raffles and receives generous support from private individuals such as our special benefactor Tom Fulton. Each throw is personalized with the veteran's name, branch of service and a custom label that reads "The members of St. Juvin Post 1336 Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States present this throw to you as a symbol of your service to a grateful nation"



Following a tradition dating to 2013 Post members visited assisted living and skilled care facilities in Dwight, Wilmington and Morris to present veteran residents with a personalized service logo tapestry throw honoring their service to a grateful nation. While the Post honors vets with the throws all year, The Christmas season marks the largest distribution which this year was 24. Post members were able to visit some of the vets in assisted living facilities; however, they were unable to visit those vets in skilled care environments due to restrictions on visitation. Army vet David Wood of Dwight is presented with his symbol of commitment to a grateful nation by (from left) Post Commander James "Hoppy" Phillips and Jr. Vice-Commander Jim Richards.

VFW Auxiliary

Auxiliary President



Rhonda Borkgren

We are quickly moving to the end of our year! I am so proud of the amazing job the Auxiliary is doing. I attended the Mid-winter Conference in Melbourne Florida. It was wonderful to

hear the National Membership Ambassador announce Illinois as First in the Nation in retaining members. We have so much to be proud of with that. To me it is so much more important to keep the members we have than to have to replace them. Great job Membership!

It was great seeing Commander in Chief Fritz and his wife Megan. I always love hearing Fritz talk about the importance of the VFW and the Auxiliary working together. We are the families of the VFW. We need to remember that. We do so much good working the programs of the VFW. Our Legislative program reminds us to sign up for the VFW Action Corps and working the VFW Priority Goals. I am proud of the

calls, letters, and phone calls our members make to help get bills passed to help the VFW. We are so much stronger together.

National President Jean Hamil spent the weekend with us here in Springfield. We entertained her by taking her to the Lincoln Presidential Library Museum in the morning. We had a meet and greet at Highlanders Post 10302. I thank everyone who stopped by and visited with National President Jean. We had great attendance and it even increased attendance for the fish fry at the post. I love giving a Post business. Followed by our Night on the Town. Where we celebrate our District Presidents by honoring them with a special dinner. I gave them personal membership awards for being

97% or above this year! On Saturday we had our Council meeting. We had a great meeting and were visited by a Dinosaur, Shark, and a koala bear! I have a great bunch of chairpersons this year who are helping to meet my goal of making meetings fun! I believe you can have fun playing games. It will help you to remember the things we want you to know. I have seen from being in the front of the room for all these years, people quit paying attention when we are just lecturing them. My rule is no boredom! Our weekend closed with the newly formatted Voice of Democracy and Patriot Pen Banquet. I loved the new set up. I have not heard any negative comments. It was so nice to sit at a table and enjoy visiting

with those at our table. Thank you, Commander, for the fresh ideas. I want to thank all the Posts and Auxiliaries who work together to make our great Voice of Democracy and Patriot Pen's programs work! Without all of you working together, none of this would happen.

As we go into the next few months, please start thinking about stepping up and throwing your name in the hat to be an officer. We always need new officers at the Auxiliary, District, and Department levels. It is fun and rewarding work. I remember when asked to take an office in district. I said what do I have to do. When asked to run for Department, they were clicks. They told me to run and change that. You too can, make a difference.



State Rep. Dan Swanson, Illinois District 74, presents National Auxiliary President Jean Hamil with an Illinois flag during a reception honoring Hamil's official visit to Illinois..



National Auxiliary President Jean Hamil walks down the Aisle of Flags during a reception held in her honor at the Northenders VFW Post 10302 in Springfield.



National Auxiliary President Jean Hamil, joined by District Auxiliary Presidents and other Auxiliary members, visited the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum during her official visit to Illinois.

VFW Auxiliary

Celebrating America's Freedom Event



National VFW Auxiliary President Jean Hamil is joined by Veterans of Foreign Wars Commander-in-Chief Fritz Mihelcic during the Celebrating America's Freedom Event (C.A.F.E.) held at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida.



Nancy Reike and Mercie Woolfolk serve as color bearers during the C.A.F.E. at the Kennedy Space Center.



Illinois VFW Auxiliary members at the C.A.F.E. in Cape Canaveral, Florida.



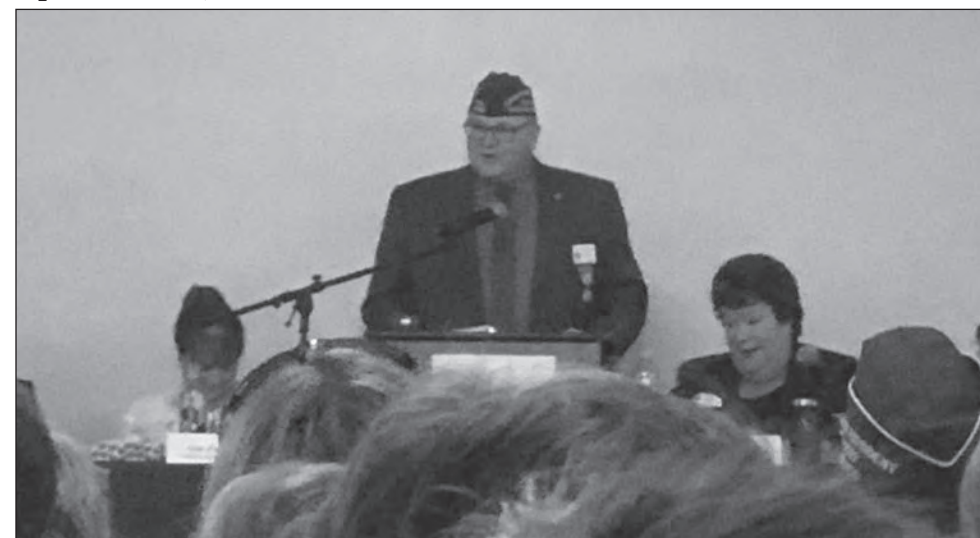
National VFW Auxiliary President Jean Hamil and VFW Commander-in-Chief Fritz Mihelcic enter the Celebrating America's Freedom Event at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida.



Past State Commander Russ Reike and wife Nancy at the Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral, Florida.



VFW Commander-in-Chief Fritz Mihelcic visits with Illinois Auxiliary President Rhonda Borkgren, Past Auxiliary President Mercie Woolfolk and Color bearer Nancy Reike before the C.A.F.E. begins.



Commander-in-Chief Fritz Mihelcic speaks to the VFW Auxiliary during their Mid-Winter conference in Florida.

Illinois VFW eulogizes President Abraham Lincoln



The Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen students inside Lincoln’s Tomb listen to history about President Abraham Lincoln prior to the eulogy.



National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmien-to and National Auxiliary President Jean Hamil place a wreath at President Abraham Lincoln’s Tomb.



National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento and National Auxiliary President Jean Hamil with State Commander Bobby Welch and State Auxiliary President Rhonda Borkgren at President Abraham Lincoln’s bust.



National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento and National Auxiliary President Jean Hamil with State Commander Bobby Welch and State Auxiliary President Rhonda Borkgren at President Abraham Lincoln’s Tomb.



The Patriot’s Pen and Voice of Democracy students with the VFW and Auxiliary officers prior to the eulogy to President Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln, the first president to be assassinated, is buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois.