Greetings: Hope everyone had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year’s considering having to cope with the pandemic. Now that the holiday season is behind us, we can look forward to spring and some relief from Covid19 and get back to doing things we have been unable to do.

We hope things are moving forward and we will be holding our Dept. Oratorical Contest on March 15th at Towson Post 22 with at least three Districts participating.

Baseball is gearing up for the upcoming season and we will PLAY BALL. Also, our Dept. Boys State Program, as well as our Dept. Auxiliary Girls State are planning on conducting the programs virtual this year.

Our Posts are working on their programs for the upcoming year and making sure all necessary precautions have been made to protect you if you desire to attend your local Post or participate in any of their programs. This has been a very frustrating year for our Posts because of the Pandemic, especially with many of our members needing to stay home for their safety and we all understand. As things gradually ease up and with many getting their Covid vaccine, hopefully you will feel more comfortable to visit your Posts while still following the safety regulations, masking and distancing for safety.

On behalf of our Posts, I wanted to let you know that you have been missed and hope that all has been well with you and your family. You are the most valuable asset of our Posts and the entire American Legion Family. Sometimes, we don’t realize how well we had it until it’s lost and for the past eleven months, we have endured something I never dreamed of happening. Hopefully, we are now headed toward recovery.

As a reminder to our Post Leadership, you realize our members have been away from their Posts and it is important that you reach out to your membership and let them know what your Posts are doing regarding upcoming programs and events. We must communicate with our membership for they are the backbone of our Organization.

Some disappointing news was that our National Commander’s Visit to Maryland scheduled in March has been canceled for the second year. If any Posts have a gift for Commander Oxford, please let us know and we can arrange for delivery to Department Headquarters.

For our July Convention in Ocean City, Maryland, we are in the planning stage. More information will follow. For planning purposes, our Convention will be held during the second full week of July. If making your reservations, be sure you book your rooms with a hotel that will allow you to cancel if need be. Hopefully, everything will be finalized by May.

We just held our February D.E.C. at Post 60 in Laurel and our next scheduled D.E.C. will be May 16, 2021 at Dorchester Post 91 in Cambridge, MD.

Please stay safe as we look forward to a brighter spring. God bless our troops and God Bless America.

Philip R. Dorsey
Department Commander

Reflections of an Adjutant
By Russell W. Myers, Jr.
Black History Month – Honoring our Historically Black Posts and Department Leaders

Last year I was approached to consider presenting some historical context and information in remembrance of Black History Month in 2020. This year the Department continues to pay honor and tribute to these deserving Veterans, and hopes that the information shared illustrates and educates our members about the deep history and record of service of the Posts and Veterans in Maryland, the Black communities, and at the Department level within The American Legion. This year the article will briefly touch on the Department history of including minority Veteran leaders in its leadership, followed by highlighting the career and rise to Department Commander of Leroy Thornton of Baltimore, and finally ending with a call to carry forth the pleas for the Veterans from the many wars that have not been justly recognized for their deeds largely due to their race or gender.

In last year’s commemoration we discussed two of the early Posts formed by Veterans in Baltimore City. This year we took a slightly different approach and asked Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton Post 55 of Bel Air to send us a brief history of their Post for publication in this edition of the Free State Warrior. One can locate that history on pages 13-14. The recounting of the history of Post 55 stands on its own as a testament to their service, and the legacy of the men and women who have elevated the Post throughout the years.

Continued on page 6
Greetings One and All! As you read this, Spring is “right around the corner!” If you have been observing Lent, I trust you have been blessed. With our membership, we made 80% for January as you probably know. Then, we roared ahead by 1% to 82.034%! The February milestone was 85%, and, as a Department, we missed it by 1.574%! As of this writing, North Eastern Shore (90.667%), Western Maryland (88.702%), and Mountain Districts (87.181%) remain the top 3. Caroline remains the top county at about 97%. As a Department, we currently sit at 84.259%. Everyone has been sending in Membership, and for that we thank you. But it just hasn’t been enough. No county made the 95% Incentive Goal for 31 January.

As predicted, the 85% and 90% milestones for February and March “could be” quite a challenge for some. Encourage – NO: admonish – posts to get membership in right away. Don’t sit on it. Help posts that are not doing electronic submissions to do so. Ron Holcombe is establishing procedures to let him know when you submit your Consolidated Post Reports so he can track them. Many counties have not submitted Post Inspection Reports (Or, are they lost in the mail?). If a given post is not meeting because of the current pandemic situation, **everything besides** the meeting requirements can be accomplished by the County Commander meeting with the Post Commander/Adjutant. Not having a regular post meeting should not be a reason for not submitting the report. Keep doing Buddy Checks. As a Department, we will need over 2600 submittals to make goal for March 10 (90%).

National American Legion Commander Bill Oxford has reached out to Departments about the challenges we are facing not only as an organization, but as a Nation. He recently stated that he is proud of the many ways our posts stepped up to assist their communities through food and blood drives, meal preparation and countless other creative ways our fellow Legionnaires excelled in times of need. He established three goals: Recruit 100,000 new members; attain a 90% renewal rate; and achieve 100% with regard to the Consolidated Post Reports.

Many throughout the American Legion – not just in Maryland – have experienced local COVID pandemic closure actions and have been unable to provide face-to-face services for potential members. With these varying degrees of pandemic related restrictions and the personal precautionary measures of all Americans, it is going to be tough to meet the 100,000 new member goal. **Our emphasis now becomes member RETENTION. It is our top priority!**

Commander Oxford further reported that we have over 615,000 (that’s right, 6 figures) members from 2019 and 2020 who have not renewed for 2021!! Just look at the red ink on our weekly report. Who are those members? Where are those members? We are currently over 2400 behind this time last year. He has established a goal of 90% retention, calling it **Operation Come Back.** The campaign just goes to March 15, but we won’t stop then! The key is, of course, communication. When non-renewing members are asked why they did not renew, the overwhelming answer is: nobody from the post ever spoke to them. They only heard when it was time to pay dues. This is why Buddy Checks are so important. Are we continuing to do them? Or, was it one and done? Now that we cannot invite them to a function (there aren’t any), we have to reach out in other ways. Commander Oxford said recently, “We need to make working renewals our main priority. If recruiting is about having an organization worth belonging to, retention is about leadership. It is time to roll up our sleeves and put a personal touch on renewals by calling or visiting our members who have not yet renewed. This is our way of building a Foundation for the Future for The American Legion.”

**National has established the following requirements:**

**POSTS:**

Utilize MyLegion and review rosters for those not renewed.

Contact members and ask them to renew. Be sensitive to their concerns and answer them. (Some may have to be made aware that the Legion is more than a bar stool.)

Emphasize the work the Legion does everywhere and what dues go to support. Do you know what the Legion is doing before Congress to help veterans and active duty personnel and their families? Veterans in need? And, our communities in general? See www.legion.org for more ideas and factual information.

Use Email if they won’t answer the phone. Or, be bold and make a personal visit if you are so inclined. Involve Chaplains and Service Officers when appropriate.

As members renew, it is important to process them right away. Perhaps, hand deliver their Membership Card. Say, “Thank You!”

Engage 2020 DMS Members who have not renewed and invite them to transfer and renew at a local post.

**Counties and Districts:**

Contact your respective posts on a weekly basis – Communicate. Start with the ones you know need help the most.

Help those posts struggling with retention. Tell them to Ask for help. Don’t be embarrassed to ask for help. You, too!

Upcoming Incentives For March and Beyond

**MARCH 103rd ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL AWARD**

All Posts that achieve 100% by March 15, 2021, the 103rd Anniversary of the American Legion, will be entered into a special drawing to win $500. The drawing will be held at the May 2021 DEC Meeting.

**DEPARTMENT RECruiter BONUS**

Members that recruit 15 new members by the March 15 American Legion 102nd Anniversary will be entered into a drawing for $250. The drawing will be held at the May 2021 DEC Meeting.

Will Trotter
Department 1st Vice Commander

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**As the 2021 year has started as 2020 year ended we still are unable to meet together as a Department we all continue to support our Veterans and their families and our communities the best way we can.**

Since the last warrior there hasn’t been a lot going on except Post and County meetings which most of them have been done in zoom. This is a great concept that will be very beneficial to those members who can’t make it in person to a meeting. They can still feel like they are a part of the organization. National is already using this concept with the online training that they are hosting.

The training information is sent to the Department Adjutants and they get the information to those who want to join those sessions. Our Department Adjutant Myers is great keeping everyone informed. Thank you Adjutant Myers. Hopefully soon we can all get back to normal.

This is an update to the National American Legion College memo that was sent on December 30, 2020. The class of 2020 college dates are confirmed for November 13-19, 2021. All departments who submitted applications still have one seat in the class based on the top-ranked applicant you submitted. Housing arrangements will be developed on the local COVID-19 restrictions in November and December. Call-in letters will be sent no later than April 1 with the class dates, travel, and lodging information.

As stated in the previous memo, when the 2020 class concludes, a 2021 college class will convene December 12-17, 2021. The 2021 student application will be posted and available on February 5, 2021, at legion.org/college. Applicants who were not selected for the 2020 class and would like to attend the 2021 class will be required to complete a 2021 application. Class of 2021 student applications are due July 31, 2021.

National Commander Oxford sends his greetings. Ask that we all continue to stay steadfast in our mission of membership and serving our community and our Service men and women and their families.

Remember who we are and what we do and we can accomplish anything together. Stay safe and may God bless you and the American Legion and our great Nation.

Yours in Legion Service,

Patricia McCoy

The American Legion

Department of Maryland
Greetings: In the past year and a half we have experienced significant disruption in our lives caused by what is a global emergency of the COVID-19 Pandemic that lead to everyone working from home to be safe. As for me I have been very careful and I have not been visiting any of the Posts physically, because of the social distancing restrictions. I have been attending virtual and conference call meetings and making Buddy Check Calls. Now that most of us are working from home, I hope that the Post Administrators are continuing with their Post operations of maintaining the business of visiting the post at least 3 days out on the week to pick up the US mail checking for membership renewals, making Buddy Check Calls, and reading the Emails from Russell Myers: Department Adjutant and the Region Committee Leaders, that’s assisting the Districts with the process of organizing the Districts into Regions and assisting with their administrative duties and responsibilities.

Thank God that the Medical Scientists has developed a vaccine to help our immune system fight the COVID-19 VIRUS.

Now all we need is for Governor Hogan to lift the State restrictions to the point that we can have meetings and events and enjoy dining out at a capacity that would be close to our normal way of life.

One of my annual duties as Department 2nd Vice Commander is to make sure that the Post complete and submit their Consolidated Post Report Annually. The Consolidated Post Report was established in 1975 in order to assist departments in the documentation of the various activities a specific post has done during the twelve-month reporting period, June 1, through May 31. The Consolidated Post Report is one of the most beneficial documents the post will complete. The post information is used when the National Commander and others testify on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC on behalf of all veterans. Each post has a story to tell and when we speak collectively our strength is magnified.

One of the Post Commander, Post Adjutant duties is to make sure that the Post has completed and submitted their Consolidated Post Report & Narrative Forms annually. Now is the time to start filling out the Consolidated Post Report, The Post Adjutant can go to Department website (mdlegation.org) search resources and then click on Department Forms & Publications please take time out to read the cover page and you will find it to be helpful about why the Post should complete and submit their Consolidated Post Report in a timely matter.

Consolidated Post Report: You have three options to choose from to submitting the Consolidated Post Report & Narrative Forms to the Department Headquarters for accountability, once received the forms will be date stamped.

You can mail the Consolidated Post Report & Narrative Forms to the Department Headquarters on or prior to June 1, 2021 by way of the US Postal Service.

Remember the mail is moving slow and it may not be delivered on time for accountability in order for Department Headquarters to forward a copy to the National Headquarters and also to our Department Committee Chairpersons to judge for the awards that will be presented at our Annual Department Convention. I would encourage the Post Adjutants to go on the Department website (mdlegation.org) click resources and click on Department Forms and Publications, search for printable Consolidated Post Report and print out a blank copy of the Consolidated Post Report as a working copy until you receive your end of the year Post Report Package from the Department Headquarters, you will find the Consolidated Post Report & Narrative Forms to the Department Headquarters.

I strongly recommend that the Post Adjutants to go the National American Legion website (mylegation.org) and sign-in to complete and submit the Consolidated Post Report to National and afterwards the Department of MD will automatically receive an accountability copy.

Narrative Forms: it’s the responsibility of the Post Adjutant to mail their Post Narrative Forms to the Department Headquarters no later than June 1, 2021 for accountability, our goal is to obtain 100% in completing and submitting the Consolidated Post Reports and Narrative Forms for the purpose of judging for Convention Awards that will be presented to the winning Posts at our Annual American Legion Department Convention.

I’m confident that our Department can maintain our 100% record nationally in completing and submitting our Consolidated Post Reports. Last year we work as a team to get it done. I know that it’s going to take a lot of effort and dedication to obtain the 100% goal for a second year. “So let’s get it done” If you need my assistance contact me 2nd Vice Commander Ronald Holcombe (443-854-0990)

I would like to see more members take advantage of the Department Membership Incentive Awards Program that the Department Officers and others has worked so hard putting together to award our members for their dedication and hard work in recruiting new members and maintaining the post membership retention and obtaining the department membership percentage target dates and goals, if you need a copy ask your Post Adjutant for a copy of the Membership Incentive Awards Program or you can go on the Department website (mdlegation.org) to print a copy, You’ll find that we are awarding Cash Awards, Cash Raffles, American Legion Commanders Uniform Caps, Jackets, Commander’s Membership Challenge Coin and an opportunity to receive the National Commanders membership recruiter’s lapel pin.

Don’t forget to celebrate the American Legion 102nd Birthday, March 15, 2021, Mark your calendar.

Remember if everyone would recruit one new member it would extend the life of our organization known all over the world as the American Legion.

Stay Safe…

Ronald L. Holcombe
Department 2nd Vice Commander

First, I want to thank you all for your calls, cards & prayers on the recent passing of my father, they meant a lot to me. The weather hasn’t been very cooperative to be out on the roads, I have attended a few in person post meetings, I have attended many virtual meetings & made ‘Buddy Checks’. Just remember, some may be shut in & your call may be the only call they got that day, let them know we care & they are important to us.

If you have any requests to raise funds outside your district, please have the District Commander email the requests to me. As well, I continue to update the Department Calendar so if you have any events to be added, please email them to me at: ruthhiggins01@comast.net. There are several Post Inspection Reports still overdue, they are:

SED: Dorchester Co. Posts: 87; 91; 243
NED: Caroline Co. Posts: 193
Cecil Co. Posts: 15; 135; 194
Kent Co. Posts: 36; 143; 228; 246
WMD: Carroll Co. Posts: 31; 120; 191; 200; 223
SMD: Anne Arundel Co. Posts: 7; 34; 40; 141; 175; 226; 276; 277

Stay Safe…

Ruth A. Higgins
Department 3rd Vice Commander

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Department Officers

Department Commander: Philip R. Dorsey
1st Vice Commander: William L. Trotter
2nd Vice Commander: Ronald L. Holcombe
3rd Vice Commander: Ruth A. Higgins
Judge Advocate: Frank A. Porter
Treasurer: Gary W. Gifford
Historian: Richard L. Dougan
Chaplain: Curtis L. Jones
Sergeant At Arms: Steven M. Blank
Adjutant: Russell W. Myers, Jr.
Assistant Adjutant: Steve M. Tatroat
Service Officer: Adrian G. Gambea
National Exec. Comm.: Patricia A. McCoy
Alt. N.E.C.: David J. Johnson
Proofreaders: Linda M. Bishop

Ruth A. Higgins
Department 3rd Vice Commander

St. Mary’s Co. Posts: 54; 221; 255; 298
NCD: Baltimore Co. Posts: 122; 148
If you have sent them, I thank you. If not, please send them immediately to: ebony@mdlegation.org. These reports need to be completed. If the posts aren’t meeting in person, please make every effort to meet with the Post Commander &/or Post Adjutant to fill out the report & note on the first two lines about how you met.

I am humbled by the hospitalization shown me when I visit & I enjoy talking with you over the phone. So many posts are stepping outside their box & trying new ideas to continue moving The American Legion forward during these trying times. As always, I encourage you to “Preserve” our memories, “Protect” our benefits & “Promote” The American Legion.

Yours in Service,
Ruth A. Higgins
CALL FOR THE 102ND ANNUAL CONVENTION THE

The One-Hundred-Third Annual Convention of The American Legion, Department of Maryland, Inc., is hereby called, and in conformity with the action of the One-Hundredth-Second Annual Convention and the Department Executive Committee, will be held in Ocean City, Maryland, Wednesday, July 14 through Friday, July 16, 2021.

PURPOSE
The Convention is called for the purpose of electing officers for the ensuing year, hearing and considering resolutions, and for the transaction of such other business as may be deemed necessary to come before the Convention.

REPRESENTATION
The Department Convention shall be comprised of representatives from each Post who shall be members in good standing of the Post by which they are elected, and all Past Department Commanders while in good standing in their respective Posts. Each Post having 15 members in good standing shall be entitled to two Delegates. Each Post having 26 members in good standing shall be entitled to three Delegates and an additional Delegate for each additional fifty members after the first twenty-six. Each Post shall be entitled to an Alternate for each Delegate. Membership strength of the Post, for determining Delegate strength, shall be computed as of paid-up membership in Department Headquarters at the close of business on June 11th. All District Commanders, all Department and all National Officers listed in ARTICLE VI, Section 1 of the Department Constitution in the year in which they serve (excluding the Department Adjutant if serving as an employee of the Department), and all Past Department Commanders, shall be Delegates-at-large to Department Convention, with right to vote thereat, to be exercised by them with their respective Posts. Every Post shall file the name and number of the Delegates and Alternates to the Department Convention at least twenty days prior to the convening of the Convention, (no later than June 23rd this year), and at the same time pay the registration fee of $15.00* for each and every Delegate, in the case of an Alternate taking the place of a Delegate such Alternate shall be required to pay the registration fee of $15.00* which shall be done when the substitution takes place or sooner; unless and until such registration fees of the Delegates have been paid, the Delegation is disqualified to act for any purpose, and no individual Delegate will be allowed to vote, provided, however, that the mere non-payment of registration shall not deprive a Delegate otherwise duly qualified, of the right to vote in any Region or District Caucus, on any matter (including election of officers) which thereafter is subject to ratification by the Department Convention. Post Commanders are urgently requested to have at least one member of their Delegation on the Convention floor at all times.

*Cost of Delegates will be $20.00 on or after June 24th.

VOTING
ARTICLE V, Section 3 (a) On all matters of business except the election of Department Officers, members of the Department Executive Committee and Delegates and Alternates to the National Convention, and except amendments to this Constitution or the By-Laws, voting shall be by voice, and the decision of the chair thereon shall be final unless a vote by roll call be demanded; and upon demand of any person having proper voice such other manner of voting shall be employed.

(b) The election of all Department Officers, and National Officers, shall be by roll call except where, in the case of individual offices, the necessity of a roll call is dispensed with by unanimous consent.

(c) The election of members of the Department Executive Committee and Delegates and Alternates to the National Convention shall be in accordance with such rule as adopted by the Caucus in and for the Region from which such members, delegates and alternates are elected, but in no case shall any such rule preclude the nomination of any member from the floor of such Caucus by any person having proper voice thereat. Voting at Caucuses shall conform to the provisions of Subsection (d) hereof.

(d) In all voting, the vote of each Post shall be equal to the total number of delegates to which such Post may be entitled. Each delegate shall be entitled to one vote. The vote of any delegate who may be absent shall be cast by the delegate’s alternate and the vote of any delegate absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the present delegates from the member’s post. An alternate whose delegate is present may nevertheless move into the place of an absent alternate whose delegate also is absent, and there by acquire the right to vote provided h/she is the senior alternate present at the time. Alternates shall have all the privileges of delegates, but may only vote as herein set forth; provided the alternate’s registration fee is paid. At the conclusion of all roll call voting, for each individual election required to be conducted by the Department Convention, the Department Officer conducting such elections shall ask if any Post desires to amend or change its vote; or ask does any Post, which has not cast its vote during the roll call vote, now wish to cast its vote. No Post shall be allowed to pass more than one time. After the Department Officer conducting the election has made the aforesaid announcement and taken due note of all change in voting and has recorded the vote of any Post which originally passed, then the conducting officer shall announce that the voting is closed and direct that the tally be taken, and the results announced.

(e) All Past Department Commanders, while in good standing in their respective Posts, shall be delegates for life to all Department Conventions with voice and vote, to be exercised by them with their respective Posts and to all Region or District Caucuses at which any election provided for in this Constitution shall be held, and at which their respective Posts may be entitled to vote. The failure of such Post to properly register its delegation shall not deprive such Past Department Commander of their right to vote, provided the Past Department Commander is properly registered as a delegate.

(f) All Department Officers as set forth in Article VI of this Constitution and National Officers of this Department shall be Delegates-at-large to Department Conventions, with the right to vote thereat, in the year in which they serve, to be exercised by them with their respective Posts; provided, however, that nothing contained herein shall give to any of such persons the right to more than one vote.

ELECTION
The following Officers are to be elected. A majority of the authorized vote of the Convention shall elect: (Per ARTICLE V, Department Convention Section 4)

(a) The Department Convention shall elect a Department Commander, a Department Senior Vice-Commander, a Department Judge Advocate, and a Department Treasurer, a National Executive Committee member and an Alternate National Executive Committee member for the respective terms for each office as specified in Section 4b hereof. The Department Convention shall elect such other offices as may be authorized by the Department Convention for such terms appointed by the Department Convention.

Section 4 (b) The Officers positions listed in Section 4 (a), elected by the Department Convention shall be nominated and elected for office in the following sequence and for the term of office, as listed:
1. Alternate National Executive Committee member – 2 Years (on odd number years).
2. National Executive Committee member – 2 Years (on odd number years).
3. Department Treasurer – 1 Year.
4. Department Judge Advocate - 1 Year.
5. Department Senior Vice-Commander – 1 Year.
6. Department Commander – 1 Year

REGION CAUCUSES
(ARTICLE V, Sections 6-7-8-9)
A caucus shall be held by each Region during, or not more than twenty days prior to, the convening of each Department Convention, at which caucus the election of the Region Commander, (serves concurrently as Department Vice-Commander for said Region), Region Vice-Commander, District Commanders, District Vice-Commanders such Department Executive Committee members, and Delegates and Alternates to the National Convention of The American Legion to which such Region may be entitled by this Constitution shall be held. It shall be the responsibility of the Region Commander in and for each Region to see that at least fifteen days prior notice of any Region Caucus convened for the above purposes shall be given by mail to the Commander of each Post in the Region, and no such Caucus shall be deemed legally convened in the absence of such notice; provided, however, that any Region may caucus at any Department Convention upon three hours notice by announcement from the Rostrum, and all the purposes of this section may thereafter be fulfilled just as though prior written notice had been given. The action of such Region Caucus as to the election of any of the officials named in this section shall not be final until ratified by the Department Convention.

Section 7. A quorum shall exist at a Department Convention or at a Region Caucus when one third of the Posts in the Department or Region, as the case may be, are represented by duly elected Delegates or Alternates.

Section 8. Delegates to National Convention. Each Region in Caucus not more than twenty days prior to the convening of the Department Convention shall elect one delegate and one alternate delegate to the National Convention, this delegate and alternate delegate is to represent the first thousand members of their respective Region; there shall also be elected a delegate and alternate delegate for each succeeding thousand members.

The five Department Delegates shall consist of the Department Commander, the Department Commander for the immediate prior year, the
Department Adjutant, the Alternate National Executive Committee and the Department Senior Vice-Commander who hold office at the convening of the next succeeding National Convention. The alternates for these delegates shall be appointed by the Department Commander.

Any additional delegates and alternate delegates are to be elected by the Region with the highest percentage of their previous year’s membership as of the day that determines the Department Convention membership strength for the Region.

Section 9. Region Election of DEC Members. Each Region in Caucus not more than twenty days prior to the convening of the Department Convention shall elect one representative to the Department Executive Committee for each unit of 500 members or major fraction thereof in the said Region.

The membership strength of said Region for this purpose shall be computed as paid up membership in the Department Headquarters at the close of business on the 35th day prior to the convening of the Department Convention or as of July 1st, in each year, which ever date shall first occur.

In the event any Region shall have less than its first and only unit of 500 members, it shall nevertheless be entitled to elect one representative to the Department Executive Committee.

The distribution of the Regions’ representatives to the DEC shall be divided in an equitable manner between the Districts of the Region utilizing the membership strength of each District.

The Region shall submit the names of all elected as above for ratification to the Department Convention such ratification constituting election. At such Caucus each Post shall be entitled to the same number of votes as for the Department Convention. No Region Caucus for the purpose of such election shall be convened sooner than June 23rd, 2021.

MEETINGS
The opening Joint Session will begin at 8:00 AM, Wednesday, July 14th. All business sessions of The American Legion, Department of Maryland, will be held in the Convention Hall (Location to be determined) and will start promptly at 8:00 AM on Wednesday, July 14th, Thursday, July 15th and Friday, July 16th, unless changed by the Convention or Department Executive Committee. A quorum shall exist at the Department Convention when one-third of the Posts in the Department are represented by a duly elected Delegate or Alternate.

CREDENTIALS CERTIFICATES
For Credentials Certificates for Delegates and Alternates. A check made out to The American Legion, Department of Maryland, at $15.00* per Delegate, and MUST accompany the Credentials Certificate. All Constitutional Delegates (ART. VI) and Past Department Commanders must also pay the $15.00* Delegate Fee or they can not vote. It is extremely important that the certificates be forwarded to Department Headquarters as soon as possible after June 8, 2021 (35th Day before the Department Convention). District Commanders should personally check each Post under their supervision to see that the above is complied with. All Post Adjutants are charged with the responsibility of returning the Credentials Certificates to us at the earliest possible moment. **$30.00 on or after June 24th.

AMENDMENTS
Amendments to the Department Constitution and By Laws must be submitted in typewritten form to Department Headquarters by June 4th, 2021 in time for the Department Adjutant to forward copies to each Post in the Department at least 30 days prior to the convening of the Convention. These amendments require a two-thirds majority of votes of the representation at the Convention. However, the Constitution may be amended without notice by unanimous vote at any Department Convention. (ARTICLE XIII, Section 1).

RESOLUTIONS
Resolutions shall be submitted typewritten, in triplicate, to the Resolutions Committee at the Convention, or prior to June 4th to Department Headquarters. By order of the Department Executive Committee, each resolution MUST have supporting documents and authority attached to each copy. Resolutions submitted to Department Headquarters prior to June 4th will receive preferred attention. Those submitted after that date will be considered only if the Convention Resolution Committee considers them to be of paramount importance to the Legion.

SPECIAL NOTICE
The thirty-fourth Annual Department Convention, 1952, unanimously resolved no one should be allowed on the main portion of the Convention floor on election day except Officers, Delegates, Alternates and working press. (Ref: Resolution #13)

POST OFFICERS
ARTICLE VIII, Sec. 6 of the Department Constitution states, “All Post Officers for the ensuing year shall be elected at least twenty days prior to the opening of the Department Convention and they shall assume their duties as such within twenty days after the closing date of the Department Convention. YOU MAY HOLD YOUR INSTALLATION PARTY ANY TIME YOU WISH; YOUR POST OFFICERS MUST TAKE OFFICE DURING THE TIME ABOVE STATED. THE DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HAS REQUESTED THAT EACH POST FILE A COPY OF MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTS FOR EACH POST COMMANDER AND ADJUTANT WITH DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS. THE DOCUMENTS WILL NOT BE RETURNED BUT RETAINED IN DEPARTMENT FILES.

REPORTS
1. You are urged to promptly file your Certificate of Elections of Post Officers which MUST be signed by both the Post Commander and Adjutant. The Certificate on the bottom of this form means exactly what it says. You MUST EXAMINE the service record of each of your Post Officers to certify their eligibility.
2. Consolidated Post Report Form should be filed promptly.
3. All other Report Forms. If you have lost or misplaced any of these report forms, send an e-mail or call Department Headquarters and ask for a duplicate.

REGISTRATION
For Tuesday the Registration Desk will be open at the Convention Hall beginning at 7:30 AM, July 13th. DO NOT SHOW UP BEFORE THEN AND EXPECT US TO ACCOMMODATE YOU. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO OPEN EARLIER THAN 7:30AM ON TUESDAY. NO CREDENTIALS ARE REQUIRED FOR ATTENDANCE AT DEPARTMENT LEGION COLLEGE (IF IT OCCURS IN PERSON). EVERYONE WILL BE GRANTED ACCESS TO THESE COURSES WITHOUT CREDENTIALS.

On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday we will open at 7:30 AM. You are urged to pick up your Delegate’s Credentials and badges as soon as possible in order to facilitate the business of the Convention. A POST COMMANDER OR ADJUTANT MAY PICK UP THEIR POST DELEGATION REGISTRATION PACKET. ANY OTHER DELEGATE PICKING UP THE POST DELEGATION PACKET MUST PRESENT A WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION FROM THE POST COMMANDER OR ADJUTANT LISTING THEM AS THE AUTHORIZED DELEGATE TO SIGN FOR THE PACKET. ALL DELEGATES MUST BE PAID.

THERE WILL BE A MEETING OF THE 2021-2022 DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. THIS IS TO BE HELD IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CLOSE OF THE DEPARTMENT CONVENTION.

THERE WILL BE NO FEE FOR LEGION COLLEGE THIS YEAR. PLANNING IS UNDERWAY TO OFFER COURSES, THE EXACT FORMAT IS STILL UNDER DISCUSSION. (But note there will be no pins or Certificates given out this year.)
He retired from the National Guard as a First Sergeant, and then continued working for the MD and State through this difficult period of our history. Leroy recounted many stories of his service.

As Posts were forming in the new organization the Posts were segregated by race. Veterans who were African-American wished to carry out the mission of The American Legion in their local communities and for the benefit of other Veterans who served in WWI. By the early 1930s six Posts had been formed for Black Veterans within the Department of Maryland. It may be important to note that while The American Legion from its creation officially allowed no discrimination based off of race or gender, many Veterans faced the societal challenges prevalent at the times when associating in national or even State level organizations.

In the early 1930s the leaders of the Department of Maryland saw a gap in support of the Posts forming in the Black communities around the State. There was also a lack of communication and encouragement for increasing the numbers in this underrepresented population. The decision was made at this time to appoint a representative from these Posts to serve as a Department liaison to endeavor to increase the participation of the minority Veterans. From my research by the Late 1930s or early 1940s the Department had elevated this representative to a Department Vice Commander position that was elected by the Convention. At that time each District in the Department (seven in total by 1934) had a Commander that was a Department Vice Commander. According to Leroy Thornton, a longtime leader within the Department, the second African-American Veteran elected to be the Department Commander, this practice of electing a minority representative as one of the Department Vice Commanders continued at least until 1958 when the Department reorganized to have three Department Vice Commanders and seven District Commanders, with these District Commanders serving as Department Officers. This reorganization and practice of ensuring minority representation in the Department leadership has its foundation in the early 1930s, but has continued as a goal of the Department ever since those early days. While from its start the Department struggled with the societal issues of race segregation, the early leaders took steps to include all Veterans in the Department leadership to better coordinate with all communities in the State.

Recently I had the opportunity to interview Mr. Leroy Thornton from Northeast Post 285 in the Baltimore District. The story of his service and continued service in The American Legion highlight a man of character who rose above obstacles and achieved the honor of being elected Department Commander in July 2002.

Leroy is a Korean War Veteran who served in the 37th Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Division while in Korea. Over the course of a few years the U.S. Army was desegregated following President Truman’s signing of Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948. Thus the 37th Field Artillery Leroy joined, like the rest of the Active Army was an integrated force. Leroy completed his obligation with the Army and returned home, done with military service, or so he thought. Leroy’s older brother Wilson Thornton convinced Leroy to try just one year in the local National Guard unit at the Winchester Armony in Baltimore City. For the record Wilson was my first Brigade Command Sergeant Major when I enlisted in the Maryland National Guard; Wilson went on to retire from an extraordinary career in uniform with the MD Guard and still works at the Fifth Regiment Armory today, serving the MD Guard in his late-80’s. The MD Guard and the 231st Transportation Battalion at the time Leroy enlisted was still segregated. The Adjutant General for over 45 years, Maj. Gen. Milton Reckord (Department of Maryland Commander 1932-33) and Governor McKeldin resisted the desegregation of the MD National Guard. The MD Guard consisted of 3 units of black soldiers and 80 units of white. Some members of the 231st, along with civil rights advocates continued to put pressure on the Governor and Adjutant General to desegregate. The MD Guard would officially desegregate in 1955, but would continue to struggle with the racial issues for years to come. One example of this is illustrated by Leroy’s experience when activated for the riots in Cambridge, MD in the summer of 1963. After years of increasing tensions over the continued segregation of communities on the Eastern Shore, civil rights leaders from Baltimore and the local area began to ratchet up the demonstrations for the end to segregation in towns in this area of Maryland. By 1963 organized protests in Cambridge had raised the atmosphere to a boiling point, and riots broke out in the downtown area. According to Leroy there were two retail districts closely located in Cambridge, one for white customers, and the other for black patrons. The streets were in close proximity and with the rising hostility the MD National Guard was called upon to provide security in the community in an attempt to restore peace. Even by 1963 many units of the Guard still had a predominant racial makeup from the earlier practices of segregation. A mix of units and soldiers were sent to Cambridge for the civil disturbance, and Leroy recounted the scene after hours that highlights the challenges that still existed. Leroy explained, “After we got off duty, we were housed at a local school”. “The white soldiers were allowed to sleep inside the school, however the black soldiers were forced to sleep outside in the school yard or on their trucks” he further detailed. This story highlights the challenges African-Americans faced while trying to serve their communities and State through this difficult period of our history. Leroy recounted many stories of his service. He retired from the National Guard as a First Sergeant, and then continued working for the MD Guard for 39 years in total in uniform and as a civilian employee. As he retired from the State of Maryland Leroy turned more of his focus to his American Legion service.

In 1961 a group of Black Veterans in Baltimore formed Northeast Post 285. Leroy was asked to join in 1965 and was almost immediately made the Post Adjuntant. Leroy recounted that Baltimore District at the time contained around 40 Posts and was the most influential District in the Department. He told of the leaders of the Baltimore District encouraging him to get involved in the District. After decades of Post involvement, Leroy was elected as the Baltimore District Commander in 1994, and served two terms. He continued to serve in various leadership roles in the Department, including Commission Chairs, and moving through the Department Officers positions before being elected Department Commander in 2002. Leroy has two children, Lori and David, and two grandchildren Erin and Jared Johnson. The interview revealed a man committed to the service of his country and to The American Legion, and the Department of Maryland is proud to have Leroy among its current leaders. Leroy’s shared experience of overcoming obstacles of societal wrong stands as a testament to his strength of character and others who faced such adversity throughout our history. His example of leadership is echoed in countless other stories, and I would like to share a couple examples from recent times.

In 2019 the MD National Guard had a historic moment in the history of both women and African-American Veterans in that organization. For the first time in any State the leadership team for the National Guard was all female. The team was led by Major General Linda Singh as Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Singh was both the first woman and African-American to serve in this role for the MD National Guard. The MD National Guard’s Senior Enlisted Advisor was Sgt. Maj Perlissa Wilson. While both Assistant Adjutants General, Brig. Gen. April Vogel, and Brig. Gen Janeen Birckhead rounded out the all-female Command team. Three of the four Veterans are also of African-American heritage. All of these women are accomplished leaders within the organization and demonstrate the finest of our State and Nation.

All three of these Veterans are also members of The American Legion. Sgt. Maj. Wilson is a member of Towson Post 22, I served as an Active Guard Reserve soldier with Sgt. Maj. Wilson and she has been a respected leader in around the Guard family for years. I also served with Maj. Gen. Singh in Afghanistan. Her skills and capabilities were evident then, and it was no surprise when Governor Hogan selected her as the Adjutant General. Many will remember her strong leadership during the unrest in Baltimore in 2015. But many of you do not know that she is also a member of Post 166 in Ocean City, MD. She is retired from military service now and continues to be an influential leader, including tenure at Towson University as the University’s first “Leader in Residence”.

Post 166 in Ocean City also is the home Post for Brig. Gen. Janeen Birckhead. She currently serves as the Adjutant Assistant General-Army, the role is as Commander of the Maryland Army National Guard. Both Brig. Gen. Birckhead and Maj. Gen. Singh have been recognized by the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Maryland as the female serviceperson of the year in the Past. If one was watching the news lately they would have seen Brig. Gen. Birckhead as she led two monumental tasks. In early January Brig. Gen. Birckhead was given command of Task Force Capitol. The Task Force consisted of thousands of National Guard members from around the country sent to provide security at the Capitol complex. She continued in that role until after the inauguration, but was quickly called on by Governor Hogan to lead the efforts for COVID vaccine distribution, and specifically to focus on equitable distribution of the vaccine in Maryland. These historic roles demonstrate the leadership of Brig. Gen. Birckhead and the confidence in her leadership not only here in Maryland but also in a national operation to protect the Capitol. The Department of Maryland is also proud to have these accomplished leaders as members.

Recognizing the deeds and actions of our men and women in the military is a tradition that precedes our nation. Our nation since its founding had an array of awards that recognized actions, especially acts of valor in combat. In our last edition of the Free State Warrior there was an article about the George S. Robb Centre for the study of the Great War at Park University in Missouri. The Centre’s Valor Medals Review Project leads the investigation of World War I veterans (African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, Jewish American, and Native American) who, despite deserving deeds, may have been unjustly denied high-level valor awards due to bias, discrimination, or confusion by changing standards surrounding Medal of Honor awards. The rest of the article serves as a follow up to that article and to highlight some individual cases of valor deserving of recognition. The accounts will cover many war periods; some are State of Maryland stories, some are national stories. The accounts will cover many war periods; some are State of Maryland stories, some are national stories.

In the article last month one of the names mentioned was Sgt. William Butler from Salisbury, MD. Butler fought with Company L, 369th Infantry in France during WWI. Sgt. Butler encountered a German raiding party that had taken American prisoners. Sgt. Butler engaged the party, killing 10 Germans and wounded several others before overtaking the German Lieutenant and releasing the prisoners, including his Commanding Officer 1LT Gorman Jones. Lt George Robb, a white officer who was awarded the MOH while commanding an all-black Platoon, wrote a glowing report of Sgt.
Butler’s exploits and it was included in the recommendation for the MOH, which was denied at the time. For these acts of valor that day Sgt. Butler was awarded the French Croix de Guerre and the Distinguished Service Cross. No African-American was awarded the Medal of Honor (MOH) during WWI or its immediate aftermath. Two have been subsequently awarded the MOH in recent years. Reviews of valor awards for minority Veterans have been conducted for WWII and more recent conflicts and Congress has authorized these studies and delayed awards, but no such study for WWII has been conducted. That is where the Park University team is researching and working to redress this situation. Senator Chris Van Hollen is a leading advocate of the bipartisan effort to gain the recognition for these deserving individuals, and he has been advocating for Sgt. Butler to be awarded the MOH. The American Legion has supported the mission of the Robb Centre and the efforts on addressing the awards gap. Our national legislative division has been working hard to address many of these situations, and the vital efforts will continue.

The disparity in valor awards was not limited to WWI, and many examples exist from the conflicts since WWII.

Many from Maryland have heard of the exploits of the 29th Division during the D-Day landings and the heroism of the members of the local units that comprised the famed Blue and Gray Division. On the other hand far fewer have heard of the heroism of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, or the individual deeds of Cpl. Waverly Woodson Jr, a medic in the unit. Senator Van Hollen is also advocating for Cpl. Woodson’s Maryland family to ensure their husband and father is recognized for his deeds on D-Day. Cpl. Woodson, a combat medic in the only Black unit to storm the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944, was critically wounded in the leg and backside during the initial landing. In spite of his injuries, Cpl. Woodson pushed forward with heroism and a determination to provide medical care for all those suffering on the landing beaches. He worked tirelessly for thirty hours before collapsing from his wounds. He saved many men on the beaches and fought through the onslaught from the Germans to deliver needed attention to all the wounded in his sector. For his deeds he received the Bronze Star Medal, and now Senator Van Hollen, other Maryland Congressmen, supporters, and his family are fighting for him to be awarded the Medal of Honor for his deeds. There was consideration of a higher award at the time, but it has never come to fruition. Like many of his generation, after the war Waverly went to college earning a degree in medical technology and with his family made their home in Maryland. He went on to become the director of the morgue at Walter Reed Army Hospital in DC, and rarely ever talked about the war or the landings. He was a humble man who served his country, and if nothing else, he deserves for many more to know of his heroic deeds on the beaches of Normandy. It is the hope of many that the long overdue recognition and awareness will soon happen.

By the time this article hits everyone’s mailbox the calendar will be turning from February to March. While the month of February has for years been designated to focus on the history of African-Americans in our nation and March is also dedicated to elevating the history of women of our heritage, the hope of many is that through these practices we achieve the ideals that the history of these Americans can rightly be celebrated as they are; an integral part of the history of our nation.

With February now fading into history and March beginning, the deeds of the 6888th Central Postal Battalion, and especially the highlighting of two Maryland sisters, are a most apt bridge between the two commemorations. The 6888th or as they called themselves, the “Six Triple Eight”. The 6888th was formed by recruiting African-American women from all over the United States, and was part of the newly formed Women’s Army Corps (WAC). The original Auxiliary Corps could not be sent overseas, and so the change in the WAC status allowed for deployment into foreign theaters. The Army in Europe’s mail service was suffering a huge backlog with millions of pieces of mail stacked in warehouses in England and France. The women of the 6888th arrived in England in February 1945 and immediately began the task of setting up an operational mail service for the troops serving overseas. They worked three shifts a day, for just over three months. In that time they eliminated the backlog of over two years of mail, and helped restore morale at that critical end phase of the European Campaign. But their work was not over. In May 1945 the unit was shipped into France to handle another huge backlog in the Army postal system. This time with mail over three years old sitting in mail warehouses, they worked until October 1945 to clear the backlog. Their unit motto was “No mail, low morale”. The women of the 6888th helped restore that morale and worked selflessly to make sure the Army mail was running on time. The 6888th received little recognition for their work. There is a push to award the unit the Congressional Gold Medal for their deeds during WWII. This effort is supported by The American Legion, and many leaders in Congress. This year we are hopeful that the medal will finally be awarded to the women of the 6888th.

Two of the women of the 6888th came from Crisfield on Maryland’s south Eastern Shore. The Elzie sisters, Marian and Vivian, were born in Crisfield. Marian who had joined the WAC earlier convinced Vivian to join. After joining Vivian decided to attend Officers Candidate School and was promoted to Lieutenant. Both sisters were assigned to the 6888th and deployed with the unit to Europe. There are a number of other Maryland women in the unit, and a State roster is at the end of this article. Marian is not listed from MD, but from PA as she had moved to the Philadelphia area for better employment opportunities by the early 1940’s. When their duties overseas were finished women were demobilized, went back into the communities across the United States, and returned to civilian life. Marian Elzie Wilson attended college under the G.I. Bill and became a dietitian and nutritionist working in many New York hospitals.

This is where the story takes an interesting turn for the MD Legion Family. Vivian Elzie married overseas becoming Mrs. Taylor and studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, earned her degree, and returned to Salisbury teaching at both Salisbury High and James M. Bennett High school. One of her pupils was a young man named Melvin Smullen, who went on to be elected as Department of Maryland Commander in 2011. It certainly is a small world, and it is fitting that the women of the 6888th receive the recognition for their deeds during the war, and remembrance for who they were, in the military and in civilian life in our communities across the country.

Last year I reminded everyone that there are many more personal stories, and Post histories, one could highlight in these articles. The same is true as this year’s commemoration and remembrance comes to an end. There are so many stories to tell, and next year we will surely recount more of these deeds. My hope is to spark the efforts to save these memories for posterity and promote a celebration of a part of our history that is not as familiar as many other aspects. The elevation of these stories and history shows the proud traditions, and clearly answers the question of why the members would want to maintain their heritage.

The recounting of the actions and works of the heroes from this article can serve as a reminder that many served and were never appropriately recognized. Striving to educate and illuminate the deeds of a few is a calling for all to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars.

It is past time to make this a constant effort to promote all Veterans’ contributions, and share the history, good and bad, in order to highlight the proud history of the African-American Veterans and the accomplishments shared with the Department of Maryland. The way ahead is lit brightly by their deeds and the inclusion of all Veterans is solid foundation for the future!

List of 6888th members from MARYLAND: Barnes, Agnes E PVT; Elzie, Vivian N 2LT; Jackson, Mary Rebecca CPL; Jones, Laura Mae PVT; Matthews, Vashit Murphy PFC; Moore, Annie Beulah PVT; Nailor, Mary Catherine PVT; Noisette, Emily Olive PFC; Parker, Thelma Alice PVT; Philyaw, Ethel; Pollard, Hortense PFC; Pollitt, Lucy Geraldine PVT; Sydnor, Gloria A PVT; Tate, Catherine L PVT; Taylor, Gloria Phenyrene PVT; Whyte, Grace Margaret PVT; Wilkins, Annie B PVT; Wilson, Eleanor Ann PVT; Young, Vivian Winifred SGT.
MOUNTAIN DISTRICT
Serving Allegany and Garrett Counties

Greetings from a very wintry Mountain District!! At our district meeting Valentine’s Day our guests included Alex Whitney, Chairman of the redistricting committee for WMD, and Richard and Brenda Dougan from Post 239 in Washington County. We are progressing with the plans set forth for becoming District #7 of the WMD at end of July’s convention. Our district has decided to join the rest of the state in canceling our reception scheduled for April 17, thus losing our option for a final farewell to MTD. Our visits to the VAMC in Martinsburg, WV are still on hold, but we continue to support the Volunteer services with Canteen books for the patients. We remain #3 for the Department in this year’s membership, being led by Barton 189.

As a district, we are conducting a raffle of a Henry Golden Boy 22 ga LR Rifle, valued at $1000, permissioning request to sell tickets outside of our district to conclude with convention when the winning ticket will be drawn. Tickets will be $1 or 6 for $5. Contact any member of Garrett, Allegheny or Washington County for tickets before end of convention. Funds will be used to support the Veteran needs of the new District #7. Post 13 reports 3 honor guard presentations and 3 MOH. Post 24 reports working with a traveling baseball team providing funds and volunteers, and trying to get them set up with Legion Baseball.

They sponsor and support special needs sports and scouting. They did perform a Veterans Day ceremony as well as participating in WAA cemetery distributions. They have had a meat and cheese raffle, clothing drive for homeless veterans, fundraiser for $3000 for local teenager fighting cancer, cash drive for local youth, clothing drive for homeless veterans, fundraiser for $3000 for local teenager fighting cancer, cash drive, and have done handicap upgrades to their post. Post 71 continues to conduct monthly blood drives. Post 155 coordinated with Piedmont WV post for Veterans Day service and helped with a food bank. Post 189 assisted an Eagle Scout project with $50 and labor to help clean the local Shaw cemetery. Post 208 conducted a Veterans day dinner, assisted with WAA in 3 cemeteries, is conducting a raffle based on the lottery and monthly donation drives at the local Shop-n-Save grocery store for honor guard and veteran needs support. I have encouraged all members to stay safe and get the Covid vaccination as available. I have visited all MTD posts and am very proud to serve as the final MTD commander. We look forward to spring bringing warmer weather and better health to all of our members.

Charee Reckner
Mountain District Commander

SOUTHERN MARYLAND DISTRICT
Serving Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George’s, Montgomery and St. Mary’s Counties

I am excited for the GREAT Southern Maryland District (SMD) and for the changes we are all going through - with the reorganization of the Department of Maryland’s reorganization. As we all stressed over the past few years, these changes will streamline our Region of Maryland (future Southern Maryland Region) and will create two districts that were the former six counties of SMD. If you add up the officers required for our six counties that is roughly 60 officers – then add SMD Council to that, we need 69 Legionnaires for all these positions. With the reorganization of the future Southern Maryland Region and the two future districts – we only need 29 Legionnaires (reducing 40 positions). If you are a member of one of our posts – don’t worry, this will not directly affect most Legionnaires but it will directly affect your officers: 1) less positions to fill; 2) less distance to travel since the districts are smaller then the six counties; 3) more attention will be spent on posts that request help since the future Southern Maryland Region is much smaller than the current SMD (as some posts within SMD are being moved to other regions – like the Northern and Western Regions). Let’s look at a few numbers: currently SMD is 15,155 Legionnaires however other districts in Maryland range from 800 to 9,000 Legionnaires; consequently SMD is larger than four of our other districts combined (to include having 400% more posts then some of our counterpart districts). Currently SMD is larger than 21 other entire Departments/States across the United States. This reorganization will help us and I am excited how well the transition is going. From this point forward – our number 1 priority needs to be our membership and this smooth transition. At the conclusion of the Department of Maryland’s Convention this summer – SMD will cease to exist and will now be the Southern Maryland Region.

As I wrote in the last edition of “The Free State Warrior” – my keywords this American Legion Year are “adapt and overcome” and “think outside the box”.

I urge everyone to continue telling our younger Legionnaires to support your own post but also look outside it. Attend the district and region meetings; attend the Department’s Convention this summer; enroll in the free online American Legion training programs; listen to the Training Tuesdays (which is a class the last Tuesday of every month on the National American Legion website); tell your nephews and nieces about Boy’s State and Girl’s State, Oratorical Competitions – both which lead to thousands of dollars in scholarships. Tell the Veteran down the street (who has children and is having trouble paying their utility bills) we have programs that can help them – all they have to do is ask the local post (who can request assistance from the Department and National). We literally do so much – so please talk about what we do to our Legionnaires (and prospective members). Our National Headquarters’ publishes an online monthly report called the “American Legion Impact Report” – I encourage everyone to read that; will shock you what we do on a monthly basis.

I am honored to be the Commander of the GREAT SMD – and I am honored even more by serving next to everyone as a Legionnaire. My continued hope for this year: let’s not “go thru the motions” --- let’s make a difference. “Veterans Strengthening America”

Steven A. Brennan
Commander, Southern Maryland District

SOUTH EASTERN SHORE DISTRICT
Serving Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester Counties

Greetings and salutations from the South Eastern Shore District, I hope everyone had a safe and happy holiday season and a Happy Valentine’s Day. I also hope everyone is staying safe and healthy. Hopefully sometime soon we can all be able to gather as we used to. I would like to send prayers and condolences to all who have lost family and friends as well as those who have transferred to Post Everlasting. The SESD is still working and preparing the new redistricting that is about to begin as well working hard to gain some more momentum in our membership. I would like to thank all of the Post Commanders, County Commanders and the many others for their hard work dealing with membership, especially in these unprecedented and scary times. I would also like to congratulate Wicomico Post 64 for having 2 State Champions in the Junior Shooting Sports competition. GREAT JOB!!!!! As a district, we have also joined in the other districts and have canceled our District Reception out of precaution. Spring will be here soon and hopefully we will be pandemic free and return to some normalcy. Once again, I wish you all peace and blessings. Stay safe and stay healthy. Hope to see everyone soon.

Yours in Legion Service

Anthony Sullivan
South Eastern Shore District Commander

BALTIMORE DISTRICT
Serving Baltimore City

Greetings Comrades, I hope that you and your families have been well. Thank you for your continued support and contributions to The American Legion programs. Please do your best to retain and increase our membership numbers. During these difficult times, I encourage everyone to stay faithful and hang in there; and remember the saying: Today is a gift. That is why it is called the present. In time, things will get better. Until we meet again, please continue your buddy checks, stay strong and be safe.

Reginald Baker, Commander
Baltimore District Commander
NORTH EASTERN SHORE DISTRICT
Serving Caroline, Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne’s and Talbot Counties

A s we celebrate our birthday on March 15, we remember and wonder at our beginning, in Paris in 1919. Today, worldwide, we are almost two million members strong.

In the North Eastern Shore District, four percent of the state’s population, we aspire to nine percent of Department membership and twelve percent of SAL Detachment membership. So far, we are Number 1 toward both aspirations.

Meanwhile, in spite of the winter weather and in spite of the Covid pandemic, we are “carrying on.” We have had to close post homes, cancel meetings and activities; but at least buddy checks and bingo have survived.

Joan E. Sorflaten
North Eastern Shore District Commander

WESTERN MARYLAND DISTRICT
Serving Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties

T hings are kind of Snowy here in the Great Western Maryland District. Since the last writing, not a whole lot has taken place, we did hold out District Oratorical contest this past weekend. We had 3 very informed and competent students competing for some cold hard cash. In 3rd place was a Young Man from Carroll County, 2nd place winner was a Young Lady from Frederick County and in 1st place a Young Lady representing Washington County. Glad I didn’t have to pick a winner from these knowledgeable High School Students.

There are a couple of things coming up for Spring, the “Wounded Warriors” from Walter Reed have a Spring Fishing trip to Camp Airy in Thurmont, Post 168, along with members of the Jungle Cock Organization, are instrumental in providing them with food and drink for the day. Also this Spring there will be several parades for Memorial Day, the Western Maryland Commander will participate in the parade in Sharpsburg, Md.

Edward A. Gravatt
Western Maryland District Commander

NORTHERN CENTRAL DISTRICT
Serving Baltimore, Harford and Howard Counties

G reetings from The Great Northern Central District (NCD). Our district is in 5th place in the Department with respect to membership at 84.85% so all of our Posts will be working really hard to increase their membership rosters over the next 4 months. Our Membership committees will have to use all of the tools available to them from Department and their communication skills to encourage current members to renew and to get new members to sign up on a large scale. I have complete faith in those committees to get the work done and help our Posts, Counties and our district move up in ranking position within the Department before the end of the year. But there is so much more to our Veteran’s Service Organization (VSO) than membership.

During the last three months the Posts of the NCD have been busy with Wreaths Across America ceremonies, Buddy Checks, and Blood Drives. On Saturday, December 19th many of our Posts honored our veterans who have passed by taking part in Wreaths Across America ceremonies. Each December on National Wreaths Across America Day, the mission to Remember, Honor and Teach is carried out in wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as at more than 2,100 participating locations to show our veterans and their families that we will never forget.

Our Buddy Checks have also been very successful across the NCD. Reaching out to our members during this pandemic is so important that I cannot express it in words. I don’t have a count of how many of the NCD Posts have completed Buddy Checks, but I know it is a large majority. On February 10th I attended the Joseph L. Davis (Post 47) regularly scheduled membership meeting and as I walked into the hall many of the Post officers including Post Commander Mike Bush were conducting their Buddy Checks right then and there. It was a great thing to see.

Since the beginning of this legion year our NCD Posts have collected over 409 pints of blood, saving an estimated 1,227 lives. Total Pints of Power Red donated is 38, saving another estimated 228 lives, for a total of estimated lives saved to be 1,455. I want to thank Mark Phoebus, the NCD’s Blood Drive chairman, for doing a great job this year. I must also thank all of the organizers at the Post level for getting the drives scheduled and conducted by the Red Cross. But most importantly I want to thank all of the persons who have made it a point to show up at our Posts and give blood time and time again.

For the Good of The Legion I am very happy to report that Southwest Post 332 opened its doors for the first time on November 20th of 2020. For those who don’t remember, Southwest Post 332 is the product of a merger of Morrell Park Post 137 and August J. Raveio Post 195 (137 + 195 = 332). It has been quite awhile in the making but my congratulations goes out to Commander Ray Staniewski and his small band of helpers that have worked tirelessly to open this new Post and I invite all who can to visit it and share in the joy of this wonderful good news story. The Department’s Finance Commission is also to be congratulated for having patience with and trust in Commander Staniewski to get the job done. That concludes my report, take care and be safe.

For God and Country,

Jody R. McCourt, Northern Central District Commander

Department Sgt-at-Arms
By Steven Blank

M oving on to the second half of the legion year, 2021.
A lot hasn’t changed, in reference to our meetings at Department level, due to the pandemic for over a year. This has been a challenge for all the officers for the Districts, and Department level. At the Post level for programs, and Post meetings, the attendance is down, members are being careful. This doesn’t help in membership also. My hat goes off to all officers from Post level and up.

Hopefully by the time of the Department Convention, we will be back to normal. With the reorganization of the Department of Md. we have a lot of work ahead of us. Working out the details, with the Counties and the Districts, hopefully the members will attend the meetings, which is very important, so members understand the specifics. Please be safe, and have a nice spring, hope to see you soon. God bless our country.

Dept. Sergeant at Arms

Steven Blank
SPECIAL OLYMPICS FSW MAR-APR 2021

As you all know, this COVID Virus is affecting us all in some shape or form. Special Olympics of Maryland is no exception. They have virtually shut down all of their events until further notice. I was fortunate enough to be invited to the Detachment of Maryland SONS Winter Meeting on the weekend of 29-31 January. Friday night started with the Polar Bear Plunge (albeit in the Grand Hotel Pool). I swear the hotel’s maintenance crew forgot to turn on the pool heaters. With me were PFC Neshawn Jubilee of the Ocean City Police Department (my counterpart in Ocean City) and Jeff Abel, SOMD Vice President of Local Program Development. The American Legion Family Plungers did (2) plunges, one at 6PM and one at 8 PM. Saturday morning started out with a Training Session, co-hosted by Joe Gladden and Chuck Gannon. All questions were answered by Joe and Chuck and their forum was spot on. At 3 PM, the drawdown and buffet started. I had never been to one of these events before, and believe me it won’t be the last one. These guys know how to raise money for their charities, we ought to take a page out of their book. As of this writing The American Legion Family Team has garnered $6,857.00. There are still two more weeks to go and I’m sure this amount will increase. With the oncoming winter storm approaching the East Coast the D.E.C. scheduled for Sunday was cancelled. Hopefully in the not too distant future we’ll be back to some semblance of normal and the Special Olympic Events will once again be scheduled for our Special Athletes.

Yours in Legion Service,

Wild Bill Ganz
Chairman

S.A.L. Commander

Greetings Legion Family,

Spring is soon on its way; we just need to dodge the dreaded February snow. With the Covid vaccines now coming available, hopefully we can gain immunity from this disease and get back to some sort of normalcy. Membership is doing well but keep working those renewals. We all need these members to be successful as a Squadron and Detachment.

Our Mid-Winter Conference and DEC took place January 30th and 31st. Commanders and Adjutant Training was held on Saturday as well as 5 Star training. The 5 Star/10 Ideals training is open for all Legion family members at any age. On Saturday afternoon we held a very successful drawdown for SAL Children and Youth projects, congratulations to all the winners. Unfortunately, due to the severe weather forecast for Sunday, we cancelled the DEC meeting.

I am happy to report that the Charlotte Hall Awning and Patio Project is well under way. We hope to have this completed, barring any further weather delays, by Spring. Once complete, I plan to share photos on our website and Facebook page.

This year our project is the “Catch-A-Lift” Program. We have T-Shirts available for a $20 donation to the project, these shirts are grey and feature the slogan “Sons Stronger Together” with the SAL Emblem. Reminder, if you send a check directly to a local charities and would like to have this counted for the year end report, make sure to send a photocopy of your check to Adjutant Matoska, without a check copy we cannot give your Squadron the credit you deserve.

All project donation checks should be made out to: Detachment of Maryland and earmarked Commanders Project. Donations are encouraged to be presented at a DEC meeting, or can be mailed to: Detachment of Maryland, 3115 Orchard Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21234

Remember to send flyers of your upcoming events to Bear Weinzirl so he can post them on the Detachment website, get the word out and you may see some new faces at your events.

The next DEC meeting is April 18th at Delta Hotel Hunt Valley, Md. This meeting begins at 1 PM and will observe state COVID-19 guidelines. This is the hotel where we have been holding our convention. A block of rooms is available for April 17th, if so desired use “Sons of The American Legion” for the $79 rate. Convention is planned for June 18-20, also at The Delta Hotel in Hunt Valley. Cross your fingers that we will be able to hold this annual event.

I hope to see you at the DEC in April. Until then please stay healthy and work your programs.

“Sons Stronger Together”

Yours in Service,

Bob Manzo
Detachment Commander
Sons of The American Legion

Eight & Forty

LA BOUTIQUE DES HUIT CHAPEAUX ET QUARANTE FEMMES DEPARTEMENTAL DE MARYLAND SALON 39

B on Jour, Partners and all: These difficult times we are living in have greatly impacted the work we do for our special children, however, it has not stopped us. Innovation and imagination are evident in the ways we have coped. This has been evident of our Partners since our beginning in 1921, a hundred years ago. At that time, the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary organized us as a common ground for the hard-working members of the ALA to come together for Fun and Fellowship. After a few years, a service to children suffering from all respiratory diseases, including asthma and cystic fibrosis was added, as well as service to National Jewish Hospital located in Denver, CO. which was and is the most distinguished facility of its kind treating all respiratory diseases. The Eight & Forty, as we are called, have adopted a specific need each year for the hospital donating many thousands of dollars each year to fund the need. Over the years, millions have been donated to the All Partner Projects, The Recreation Fund, The Shower of Checks and The Pediatric Fund. Not to mention the many boxes of gifts sent each year for the gift closet, as every child receives a gift on entering National Jewish as well as a gift when discharged. Over the years many Salons have adopted affected children and assisted their families with medical expenses while remembering the child on special occasions like birthdays and holidays. Becoming their fan clubs so to speak. The need for our assistance does not diminish. The children and their families depend upon our being there for them. There is no greater honor than “helping a child to breathe”.

We have a fund raiser taking place to raise the monies needed to support these projects. As we are restricted from coming together, this one is being held by mail. If you would like to contribute to the cause, you can send a check made payable to Salon 39 to our treasurer, Marian James at 6026 Berkeley Ave., Baltimore, MD 21209-4104.

In all the years I have written for the Free State Warrior, I never heard from anyone regarding my columns until the last issue. I heard from two readers. I welcome all comments, both positive and negative. This lets me know you are reading the messages. Stay as safe as you can.

Ivy Christoffers, CNP, CDNP
L’Avocate Departemental
ichristoffers@verizon.net
240-421-9580

Baseball

With any luck we hope to start the 2021 season on June 14th or before. Please be sure to follow your County Covid 19 rules. Each team should have a forehead temperature gauge to check all players, coaches before every game. Take all of the player’s temperatures before each game to help protect all of your players, coaches, fans and parents. Team managers are responsible for the teams following all Covid 19 rules that are in place in your respective counties.

We are expecting a record number of teams this year with the increase of teams to our Jr. program. Be sure to hit the submit button when you register your team on line. This completes the registration process.

All teams playing American Legion baseball in Maryland must use the Diamond D-1 baseball for all games, playoffs, tournaments and all-star games.

Dates to remember are Jr. and sandlot teams state tournament, July 17 and 18. Sr. tournament July 26 through 30 at Funkstown. Regional II playoffs August 3 through 7 in Asheville North Carolina and the World Series, August 11 through 16 in Shelby, North Carolina.

All coaches and managers are required to pass a background check and a sexual abuse course before working with any kids.

Mike Ristin
Chairman
From the Chaplain’s Desk

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Colossians 3:12-14

Happy New Year family and fellow comrades. I pray everyone is doing well and staying safe. I wanted to let all our awesome Chaplains know that we will be having a Chaplains meet and greet and QA session on Saturday April 17th at 10am Virtually on Gotomeeting. This includes all Sal, Auxiliary, and Legion Riders Chaplains or anyone interested in possibly becoming a Chaplain. Please send me your email address, full name, contact number and your Post #. I will send the information to the Zoom link once I get all your contact information and email addresses. Please come prepared to discuss whatever you are led to share and any question you have about our purpose and mission (ministry)

Now I want to share a few of life’s lessons learned from reading an article about rowing that I hope will encourage and keep us focused on our mission to continue serving together our Veteran community, state and nation through our 4 pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

If you want to succeed, consider helping others and being there for them, and not just yourself. In swimming, if you don’t show up for a practice, or you are late, you hurt no one but yourself. On the other hand, if you are expected to be at practice and you don’t show up, the boat can’t go out and everyone’s day is compromised as a result.

Strive for harmonious relationships with others if you want life to go well. There is an old saying that team work makes the dream work. This proves to be an absolute in rowing it can mean the difference between winning and losing. When everyone in a boat is “swinging” together, following the leader and taking orders from the coxswain, the boat goes fast – regardless of how much individual power is in the boat. On the other hand, a boat of 8 powerful rowers who all do their own thing in terms of timing and effort will lose every time.

3. Save your criticism for yourself. Once a rowing coach expounded on what happens when everyone in the boat is pointing their finger at others for a bad race, or even a bad practice. Not only is it considered the height of rowing etiquette no-no’s to coach others on what to do in the boat; it creates disruption and bad feelings. This coach’s simple order to the rowers when they feel tempted to badmouth another rower: “Row your seat and not anyone else’s.” Says it all. What if everyone “rowed their seat” and kept finger-pointing out of the picture everywhere in life?

4. Focus on doing the little things right before trying to get the big things right. When you tackle a sport like rowing – or even swimming – especially at midlife, it’s not effective to try to race immediately or expect to be a good rower anytime soon. Rowing is about getting the fundamentals right – catching the water at the right angle, going slowly down the slide, leaning out of the boat at the right angle, and even sitting up properly, just for starters. Once you do this, then power matters (this is where your erg scores matter), but many things in life include this principle of taking time to be precise and practiced in the little things if you want the big things to develop, too.

5. Follow the leader. In sweep rowing, all rowers face the coxswain with their backs to where they are heading. This means that the coxswain is in their eyes and ears – stray tree limbs, buoys and even other boats are potential obstacles – and everything he or she says about timing, pace and precision can dictate winning or losing. The coxswain is also the person who does the talking during the race to tell you how the boat is doing compared to other teams, and when you have to dig deeper when you don’t think you have another ounce of strength left. You can’t call your own race in these types of situations, and with one leader, everyone else has to be a good follower. It also doesn’t hurt to thank the leader when the team does well – in the case of rowing; the coxswain is often tosed into the water with all of his or her clothes on. Gratitude in all forms goes a long way.

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Earl Warren Court once noted, “always turn to the sports pages first, which records people’s accomplishments. The front page has nothing but man’s failures.” I pray we focus this year more on our successes and not our failures, Amen!

In closing, thank you all for the great work you continue to provide to your fellow comrades and their families and friends. Remember please continue to do your buddy checks, renew your membership and support your Post Commanders and members. Also know I am readily available to not only legion members but to any veteran and his family who are in need of someone to talk to, who may need a prayer, or just needs to be connected to his/her American Legion family. I just want to make sure NO ONE EVER FEELS ALONE! The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team. Phil Jackson

Curtis Lee Jones (240)383-6920
Department of Maryland Chaplain

The Maryland Gold Star Star Legacy Run Remembers 20 Years Later!

It truly is amazing that 20 years ago this September 11th that our country changed forever. The terrorist attacks on our Nation put into motion so many things that they cannot all be listed or that is all this article would be is a list. One thing that did happen is that the American Legion has taken up the cause of putting the children of our fallen and disabled veterans through college. In 2001 the American Legion created the Legacy Scholarship Fund. In 2016, the American Legion Riders of Maryland decided to take up this cause in a more official capacity and we started the Maryland Gold Star Legacy Run.

Since the First Maryland Gold Star Legacy Run, The American Legion Family from Maryland has raised and donated $195,600.00 to the Legacy Scholarship Fund through this ride. We need your help again this year. We have set a goal of $55,000.00 which would put us over the one quarter million dollar ($250,000.00) mark.

On June 11-13, 2021 the 6th Annual Maryland Gold Star Legacy Run will leave from Towson and make stops in North Eastern Shore, Southern Maryland Western Maryland and the Mountain District. We will be spending the night in LaPlata on Friday June 11th and having dinner and refreshments at Post 82. On Saturday, we will stop in Frederick for lunch at Post 11 and have dinner in Cumberland at Post 13. Other stops are planned but we are still waiting for confirmation before we can publish them. It seems like just yesterday that about 25 riders left Towson Post 22 on the first Maryland Gold Star Legacy Run. That year we raised $13,500.00. Last year on the 5th Gold Star Legacy Run we raised $47,100.00 for the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

So, you are now asking…how can I help…how can I be a part of this noble cause? The answer is simple. Please get with your Post membership and vote to make a pledge to the Legacy Scholarship Fund. Last year donations ranged anywhere from $50.00 to over $7,000.00. You could also be a sponsor of the Run for $100.00 and get your name on the back of this year’s t-shirt. Finally, please let the Riders in your Post know we will be holding the Run on the weekend of June 11-13, 2021 and encourage them to participate. We will be mailing out to your Post a package with all the details of the 6th Annual MD Gold Star Legacy Run by the end of March 2021. Feel free to reach out to me with questions.

This year, we will be giving out a special award for the Legion Family that raises the most money. Last year Towson Post 22 won donating over$7,300.00, Harry White-Wilmer Post 82 came in 2nd raising over $7,000.00 and Francis Scott Key Post 11 raising over $4,000.00 for the Legacy Scholarship Fund. Who will win the award this year? Remember, to be eligible for this award, the money must be presented to us on the Gold Star Legacy Run or mailed into us by June 30, 2021. We will present this trophy at the Department

Legacy Scholarship Fund

Legacy Scholarship Fund

To Benefit:
American Legion

Maryland Gold Star Legacy Run

June 11-13, 2021

Maryland Gold Star Legacy Run

The proceeds of this ride will help provide college scholarships to the children of our Fallen Soldiers and the children of our disabled veterans since 9/11.

Starting Friday June 11, 2021 we will leave Towson American Legion Post 22 in the morning and travel about ten miles around Maryland to return on Sunday June 13, 2021 to Towson.

We need your help by riding with us, sponsoring us or making a donation. Last year, in the middle of a National Emergency, we raised and donated $27,200.00 to the Legacy Scholarship Foundation. This year we set a goal of $80,000.00. We need you help to reach it.

More details and exact route information can be obtained at WWW.MDGLR.org in late March 2021 or by emailing Joe Clendenin at jusgill@verizon.net or John Barner at johnbarner@verizon.net

Registration: $50.00 per Bike (includes patch and rocker)
A service includes recreational activities, hobby shops, clubs, and social activities. Wellness program and deluxe fitness center, daily meals in our modern dining facility, a private room, and extensive services! Experience the same camaraderie you enjoyed during your time in uniform, and join your fellow retirees in a dynamic community that offers exceptional care and extensive services!

The Home now also welcomes retired reservists and National Guard members from the enlisted and warrant officer ranks to apply for residency. Experience the same camaraderie you enjoyed during your time in uniform, and join your fellow retirees in a dynamic community that offers exceptional care and extensive services!

Armed Forces Retirement Home in Washington, DC Now Welcoming Retired Reserve and National Guard Members Apply for Residency in 2021!

Are you seeking to live in a vibrant and affordable independent-living retirement community with other military retirees? Are you retired from the service, with the majority of your duty time spent as an enlisted member or warrant officer? Then The Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) in Washington, D.C., may be just for you!

The Home now also welcomes retired reservists and National Guard members from the enlisted and warrant officer ranks to apply for residency.

In Washington, D.C., AFRH offers residents a scenic, wooded campus just minutes from downtown - home to museums, monuments, and a host of local entertainment, sports, and other cultural options.

Veterans who are not retired may also be eligible to live at AFRH if they have a service-connected disability of 50% or greater, or if they served in a war theater (such as in Vietnam, Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan) and now have an injury, disease, or disability. Married couples are welcome to apply for residency at AFRH:

If both individuals meet all military and other eligibility requirements in their own right, or
If the eligible veteran is retired and married their current spouse prior to military retirement.

For further information or to request an application visit https://www.afrh.gov/apply or contact the Office of Public Affairs at admissions@afrh.gov or 1-800-422-9988.

SGT Alfred B. Hilton Memorial American Legion Post 55

A Brief History

Today’s SGT Alfred B. Hilton Memorial (SABHM) American Legion (AL) Post 55, located in downtown Bel Air, Maryland, is historically an African American, American Legion Post that was formed after WWI. Despite the efforts of civil rights organizations and black soldiers, Jim Crowism, whether by law or custom, prevailed in much of the country. The policy of the American Legion was to allow each state to decide on the racial make-up of applicant posts.

After the Maryland American Legion ruled to segregate each Post, some of Harford County’s colored WWI veterans decided to start their own American Legion post. After the review of their application, the American Legion National Executive Committee (NEC) granted a Temporary Charter on September 23rd, 1931 to Bel Air Post 55, becoming the sixth colored American Legion Post in Maryland (Clayton, pg. 2-3).

On November 6th of 1931, the Bel Air Times devoted a front page article (inserted right) describing a November 3rd, 1931 celebration of this Charter establishing the Bel Air Post. The occasion was celebrated by the legionnaires with a parade, which was “filled with people from Bel Air and the surrounding country”. The parade, led by a marching band, went through downtown Bel Air, Maryland, and was followed by a gathering at Ames Methodist Episcopal Church. There, the people were addressed by a number of prominent speakers, including our inaugural Commander, Comrade Lewis Taylor.

Commander Taylor opened the ceremony where he remarked on the purpose for which the Post was founded. That it would provide aid for “ex-soldiers” and their dependents, to forward the cause of his race, and to inspire future generations with ideas of patriotism and service. In addition, he stated that the Bel Air Post membership had increased to 30 members, all of whom were in uniform. In attendance were also seven members from the Walter Green Post in Baltimore.

Throughout the years and towards the present day, Post 55 continues to be a beacon for assisting our veterans, including patients at Perry Point Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center in Perryville, Md. providing neighborhood support.

Continued on page 14
Maryland in 1842. Answering the call to enlist and Isaac Hilton, was born in the Hopewell Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton, the son of Harriett to some edits for historical correctness). (See preliminary artist rendering below - subject awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. was mortally wounded and was posthumously Virginia in September of 1864; the day he on the battlefield at New Market Heights, erected by the end of 2021. Hilton at Millard Tydings Memorial Park, beautiful memorial honoring Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton, an African American who is Harford In honoring the history of SGT Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Post 55 Department of Maryland was fully re-chartered as “Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Post 55 Department of Maryland” on 1 December 2017. In addition to the Post 55 name change, Commander Hank Allen and members of Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Post 55 are actively working two (2) efforts to commemorate Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton. The first effort includes the supporting a nonprofit organization, The Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Fund, Inc., dedicated to fundraising activities to erect a memorial at Millard Tydings Memorial Park, Havre de Grace, Maryland; it is expected to be erected by the end of 2021.

Our second effort is the painting of a mural on the north side of the Post 55 building. The mural will depict the gallantry of Sgt. Hilton on the battlefield at New Market Heights, Virginia in September of 1864; the day he was mortally wounded and was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. (See preliminary artist rendering below - subject to some edits for historical correctness).

Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton, the son of Harriett and Isaac Hilton, was born in the Hopewell area (now called Level) of Harford County, Maryland in 1842. Answering the call to enlist into the Union Army during the Civil War, Alfred Hilton enlisted in the 4th Regiment, United States Colored Troops, August 1863. He was selected and promoted to Sergeant, where he faithfully served in various military capacities, and bravely fought in defense of the Union in numerous battles against Confederate forces. In May 1864, Sgt. Hilton was appointed Color Sergeant and was tasked with carrying the national flag for his regiment (The Historical Society of Harford County, Inc., Fall 2000).3

On September 29, 1864, Sgt. Hilton advanced ahead of the Union troops in the assault against entrenched Confederate defenses at the Battle of New Market Heights in Virginia, which turned out to be a critical engagement during the war. Despite having to bear the weight of the unfurled American flag on the uphill assault and being so conspicuous a target, Sgt. Hilton managed to reach the enemy’s inner defenses. Here he encountered the 4th’s regimental color bearer about to collapse to the ground. With evident determination and energy Hilton grasped the falling banner and continued forward. Now burdened with both flags and confronted with unrelenting Confederate rifle fire, he dropped with a severe leg wound “while trying to cross the second line of abatis”.3

That Sgt. Hilton was able to reach the “very edge of the breastworks,” suffer a debilitating gunshot, and yet return to federal lines with what proved to be a mortal injury was due, no doubt, to a combination of personal courage, determination, and aid from his comrades.3 He died on October 21st from injuries he sustained and was later buried at Hampton National Cemetery in Hampton Virginia. The bravery and gallantry demonstrated by Sgt. Hilton and soldiers of the 4th United States Colored Troops (USCT) confirmed General Butler’s confidence in the courage of his African American troops and brought federal forces one major step closer to Richmond’s fall and the end of the Civil War.3


Author by Commander Henry (Hank) Allen
Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton Memorial
American Legion Post 55
115 North Bond St
Bel Air, Md. 21085

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans – Online Tribute
Gilchrist is a nonprofit organization that provides care, counseling and support for people with serious illnesses through the end of life. Nearly 12 percent of our hospice patients are veterans, and many of them served during the Vietnam era. Gilchrist’s Welcome Home Vietnam Veteran celebration honors the veterans we serve each day as well as all the veterans in our community.

For the past several years, Gilchrist has joined with our community to give a joyous welcome home to more than 1,500 Vietnam veterans and their families in Baltimore and the surrounding areas. This year will be different.

On Sunday, March 28th at 3:00pm (Eastern Time – USA), Gilchrist will be presenting our 3rd annual Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration. This year is going to be special as we are creating a moving video message for Vietnam Veterans. For the first time we will be able to reach Vietnam veterans and their families not only in our state but across the United States and around the globe.

The video is powerful, meaningful, and heart felt. We have a very moving interview with Joe Galloway, one of America’s premier war correspondents. Mr. Galloway became the only American civilian to receive the Bronze Star with “V” because of his heroism during the Battle of la Drang in November of 1965. We also have fascinating story of an airman and an orphaned Vietnamese baby during the Vietnam War. In addition, we have salutes from representatives of all of the branches of the military and a message from Maryland Governor Hogan. For more information and to register for this free event, you can go to:

Welcome Home Celebration for Vietnam Veterans | Gilchrist (gilchristcares.org)
Gilchrist Welcome Home Promo wDisclaimer on Vimeo

Gilchrist’s 3rd Annual Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration
March 28, 2021
Virtual Event at 3:00 p.m. EST, USA
For up-to-date details and to register, visit: gilchristcares.org/welcome-home-celebration
Clinton Post 259 commemorates Senator Mike Miller as a Son of the American Legion (S.A.L.)

Senator President Emeritus Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr., best known for his longevity as Maryland’s president state senator serving decades in Annapolis; became the longest in United States history. Miller also represented the 27th District (Calvert, Charles, and Prince Georges counties) for 45 years before his death.

The senator served as president state senator from 1987 to 2020, a total of 33 years. Just as his many years in Maryland politics, his dedication as a Son of the American Legion (S.A.L.) was also long, due to his father being an original member of The American Legion Post 259.

“Mike Miller was an honorary life member of our squadron,” said David Hutchinson, Squadron 259 Commander. “For nearly 50 years, Mike was very instrumental in our ability to raise funds and donate to charities and so many American Legion programs. By association, his name represented excellence and integrity for our Squadron and The Clinton American Legion as a whole.”

Miller’s father, Thomas V. Miller Sr., served four terms as Post Commander. He created the tradition of meals served at membership meetings which still holds true today.

Maryland Matters, a news site that covers Maryland government and politics, wrote in an article by Bruce DePuyt about Miller that “He was remembered by his successor as “a country boy from Clinton who became a kingmaker in Annapolis.”

“Being a Clinton resident, I would often run into Mike in the community,” said Hutchinson. “He was always asking how we were doing and if there was anything he could do, saying “I’m right down the street”. It was such an honor to have him as a guest speaker at many of our Installations over the years. As we all know, Mike was a remarkably busy man but always made time to attend and speak at our ceremonies.”

Miller’s many colleagues gave homage to the man who was diagnosed with metastasized prostate cancer and had to resign in December 2020. He died three weeks after resigning. American Legion Clinton Post 259 presented on their marquee the senator with the words “In loving memory of Maryland Senator Thomas V. “Mike” Miller, Jr. (December 3, 1942 – January 15, 2021)

“A Life Member of the Sons of The American Legion Clinton Squadron 259”

Miller leaves behind his wife of 55 years Patti, five children, and 15 grandchildren.

“Our squadron members walk into the post knowing that we wouldn’t be where we are without Thomas V. Miller Sr. and Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr.,” said Hutchinson. December 3, 1942 – January 15, 2021

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

We are surviving and slowly getting back part-way to normal. However, a lot of us are still waiting for the vaccine despite the Phase we are in. Personally, I am looking forward to Convention this year and meeting a few friends and colleagues who will be braving COVID-19. We are truly a Legion Family team!

“Birds of A Feather Flocking Together for God & Country” in Unity, Love, Faith, and Charity continue to do what they can for the Veterans, the Military and their Spouses, Our Youth and our Communities. A bit different, but the end results are good. Our Department is very appreciative of our members’ support and dedicated service to the programs and achieving their goals.

Other than administrative responsibilities, most of the year has been virtual or not happening. I was proud to represent our Department at the Sons of the American Legion Mid-Winter Convention bringing greetings and having fun. They really know how to put together a drawdown with a variety of money-making opportunities supporting their programs, as well as a training session on Saturday. An organization of teamwork and helping one another. I hope you did well Commander Bob with your project that weekend and thanks for helping out with mine!

My President’s Project for 2020-2021 is: “Easter Seals DC, MD & VA.” For nearly 100 years, Easter Seals have been the indispensable resource for children, adults, families and veterans living – and thriving – with disabilities and special needs in DC, Maryland and Virginia. Their programs consists of: Child Development Centers, Early Learning Services, Day Services, Easter Seals Disability Staff and Public Awareness.

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Mayor's Project Campaign:

For God & Country,

Linda L. Green
The American Legion Auxiliary Department of Maryland President

202-230-2431 – Cell
E-Mail: cjsllg@aol.com

Are Your Friends and Family . . .

A Member of Our Family?

When asking an eligible person to join The American Legion, Auxiliary, SAL or Riders, remember to extend the offer to include their eligible friends and family members.
Greetings Legionnaires, I hope you and your loved ones are staying safe and healthy. The COVID-19 pandemic has restricted us once again from bringing Veterans into our office. We finished appointments for January 2021 and shifted our focus to virtual hearings. The restrictions of the pandemic have given the opportunity to Veterans, that originally requested a personal appearance before the Board of Veterans Appeals, the option to do a virtual hearing instead with the Veterans Law Judge. The same applies to informal conferences, pre-determination hearings and decision review officer hearings with the local Regional Office and others across the country.

From the first week in February to mid-March 2021, we have over 30 hearings scheduled. Most of these hearings are with Veterans Law Judges that usually would be taken care of by our BVA unit in Washington D.C. Some of our Veterans have been waiting a very long time for their hearings so I’m glad we’ve been able to use this platform. So far, the Judges we have interacted with have been very supportive of our Veterans. They are taking the time to listen to us as we fight for our Veterans. If the Regional Office does not open by mid-March, Doug and I plan on doing appointments 1-2 days a week from Carroll Post #31 and Talbot Post 70. We are still planning on conducting a virtual Post Service Officer training session soon.

Updates for the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

Three new conditions were recently added to the list of presumptive conditions for which the Department of Veterans Affairs grants service connection to Vietnam War veterans affected by exposure to the chemical herbicide Agent Orange. This means that tens of thousands of veterans will now be eligible for VA disability benefits if their Agent Orange exposure resulted in bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, or Parkinson’s Disease-like symptoms.

The addition of these conditions is unusual in that it came from Congress, not VA. Typically, presumptive conditions are determined by VA, based on significant supporting evidence from scientific studies. However, in this case, the conditions are being added as part of a measure included in the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA. The National Defense Authorization Act is a policy and spending bill for the Defense Department that passes through Congress every year.

Nehmer v. U.S.

Department of Veterans Affairs was a class action lawsuit brought against VA by the National Veterans Legal Services Program in 1986. As a result of the case, VA must take certain actions when it recognizes a new condition as scientifically linked to Agent Orange exposure. Specifically, VA must: (1) identify all claims for the recognized condition that were previously filed and/or denied; and (2) pay retroactive disability and death benefits to the veterans or their survivors back to the date of the veteran’s initial claim.

The Nehmer class consists mainly of veterans who served in Vietnam and suffer from conditions VA has deemed presumptive. It is important to note that since three new conditions have been added to the list, veterans who suffer from one of the three may now be considered part of the Nehmer class. This is particularly relevant to veterans who previously filed a claim for one of the three conditions but were denied. These veterans may now be able to secure benefits with an effective date back to the date of the original claim.

Veterans who served in Thailand, Korea, and other areas may have also been exposed to and affected by Agent Orange. In this instance, a veteran suffering from one of the established presumptive conditions would still have to prove the first two elements of service connection (i.e., a current diagnosis and an in-service event), but they would not have to prove the medical nexus, or link, between their diagnosis and the in-service event.

Updates for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

Currently, VA is offering COVID-19 vaccine to Veterans who are currently receiving care from the VA, based on CDC and VA risk criteria. If you’re eligible to get a vaccine, your VA health care team will contact you. Currently, enrolled Veterans 65 years of age or older are qualified to receive the COVID-19 vaccine based on supply availability. Veterans do not need to call and request the vaccine because they will be notified when they are eligible and provided the instructions on how to schedule an appointment. The vaccine requires two doses 21 or 28 days apart. When you are notified to schedule your appointment, you will be scheduled for both vaccination dates and times. If you are under 65, but you want to express your interest in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, visit www.maryland.va.gov and click on https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/stay-informed so the VA can contact you once you become eligible.

On 12 February 2021, Dr. Richard A. Stone, the Acting Under Secretary for the Veterans Health Administration, released a video encouraging Veterans that were exposed to airborne hazards and burn pits to sign up for the VA registry. According to records, over 3 million Veterans may have been exposed to these hazards but only about 300,000 have signed up for the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pits Registry. Dr. Stone encourages Veterans to sign up even if they are asymptomatic. While on active duty, military service members may have been exposed to a variety of airborne hazards including:

- Smoke and fumes from open burn pits
- Sand, dust, and particulate matter
- General air pollution common in certain countries
- Fuel, aircraft exhaust, and other mechanical fumes
- Smoke from oil well fires
- Some of the conditions associated with this exposure are respiratory diseases other than allergies such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, constrictive bronchiolitis, and idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. Those in both the burn pit and the dust storm exposure groups also reported higher rates of insomnia, liver conditions, chronic multisymptom illnesses and decreased physical function, such as walking, running or climbing steps.

To check your eligibility for the registry and complete the online questionnaire, visit the secure registry portal at https://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry/#page/home Please send any questions to serviceofficer@mdlegion.org. Our office is open normal hours so please call or leave a voicemail message. Monday-Friday, 8:30am to 11:30am and 12:30pm to 4:30pm. (410)230-4420.

Thank you.

Adrian G. Gamboa
Department Service Officer

Reminder:To continue to receive the Warrior Please make sure your dues are paid by the end of the year.

The American Legion
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The War Memorial
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