



**THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF  
MONTANA**

**DEPARTMENT CONVENTION REPORTS**

**2022**

**DEPARTMENT OFFICERS**

**&**

**COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN**

# Preamble to the Constitution

**FOR GOD AND COUNTRY, WE ASSOCIATE OURSELVES TOGETHER  
FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:**

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;

To maintain law and order;

To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;

To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all Wars;

To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;

To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;

To make right the master of might;

To promote peace and goodwill on earth;

To safeguard and transmit to Posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;

To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.



**DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**DEPARTMENT COMMANDER**

**Glen Sharbono**

I would like to thank Roger Hancock, his committee and Post #135 of Lolo for Hosting the 2022 Convention in my hometown of Missoula. Thank you also to National Commander Paul Dillard for making the trek out here to Montana for our Convention. Now on with my brief adventures and thank you for reading.

December 18<sup>th</sup>, along with VFW State Commander Ron Merwin, I went to the Veterans Cemetery in Columbia Falls, and participated in Wreaths across America.



January 28<sup>th</sup> attended the grand opening of the David J. Thatcher CBOC in Missoula. Neither the VFW State Commander Ron Merwin nor I was recognized. however, it is a nice state of the art facility. It will be something to behold when it is completely staffed.

February 3<sup>rd</sup>, I traveled to Helena with past Commander Jeff Nelson and was the narrator for the Four Chaplains ceremony organized by Department Chaplain Chaya Semple. It was an honor.



Department Oratory in Great Falls. I watched four contestants show us just how in tune with the Constitution of The United Sates they were. It gives one hope for the future.

Entertained Vincent James Troiola leading candidate from the Department of New York during and after District 4 and 5 meetings. After the meetings we managed to find a little time to relax, have dinner and unwind for the day.



I visited District meetings along with an entourage of Department Officers except for Culbertson and Terry.

**Big Sandy, wow! what a backdrop for a meeting!**



District lunches, not banquets. \$20.00 - \$26.00 is a bit much for some of the meals we were served. Except for District 5, who not only had a good lunch but also breakfast, now that was worth a 20-dollar bill! District #4 hosted by Ronan and Charlo only charged \$10.00 and still made money. This was done with the addition of a 50/50 raffle, silent auction, and door prizes. At a few of the other District meetings there was a few at the registration desk who were completely oblivious about not charging the guest speaker, to the point of being slightly rude.

This has always been customary for years. I do not think one comped meal is going to break the host Post considering the exorbitant prices they are charging. And not to mention they don't even seem to understand what the different color hats represent, or maybe just don't care. Complaints are abundant that no one from Department seems to care and yet after great expense for gas and motels we are received with a ho-hum attitude, most likely from the very same complainers. for the most part though most of those attending District meetings were very appreciative. I believe the Department picked up several pretty good new District Commanders. I am looking forward to watching how they progress and what direction they will take the Department.

Thanks to Susan Hocker of Miles City Post #5, her Father William Hocker WW2 Vet and Life Member of Ronan Post #138, and Hocker Farms Inc. Ronan Post #138 after 20 years now has a home of its own.



May 19<sup>th</sup> I accompanied District #4 Commander Dave Bennett to Whitefish in hopes to save the Post and install new officers. Whitefish Post #108 is a centennial Post, 101 years and worth saving. It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest Post in District #4. Although there was not a quorum, we held a round table discussion about the different options of maintaining or dissolving the Post. Two members had already agreed, before our arrival to take over as the Whitefish Roosevelt Post #108 Commander and Adjutant. The outgoing Commander Burt May promised to offer guidance and help not leaving them in the dark and I promised Department would give them all the help they needed as well.

Although this report is due before these events. I went to Helena to address The American Legion Boys State attendees at Fort Harrison on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May. Then on May 30<sup>th</sup> there will be two parades, two ceremonies to Honor the dead, in two towns, and two cemeteries (Polson and Ronan). And will conclude with the Dedication of a new Veterans section on Memorial Day at the Ronan Cemetery with VFW State Commander Ron Merwin, as we represent the Nation's two largest Veterans Organization. This will be a great honor as well.

Now to give you a brief understanding of what I have gone through in the past few months. I went in on December 30<sup>th</sup> for nasal surgery to remove some nodes and the repair of a deviated septum. I suffered a heart attack later that day and had to have a stent placed that night. I was in the hospital over the New Year until the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January. On January 12<sup>th</sup> I buried my Mother. I then attended the District meetings until I had to have a four-way bypass surgery on April 6<sup>th</sup> two days before what would have been my Mother's 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday. I am still recovering and doing much better. However, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May we received word from my Cousin and Legion member of Post #138, that her oldest daughter was murdered by the father of her baby. I tell you this not for sympathy, that is not what I want, but to stress the importance of family, and being ever vigilant of your surroundings especially with the recent shootings in Milwaukee, Buffalo and most likely too many other places across the Country as well as natural disasters. We seem to glaze over these tragedies until they hit too close to home. On a brighter side in June my eighth grandchild and fourth grandson will be born!

Please continue to stay safe and healthy!

## DEPARTMENT VICE-COMMANDER

### Lowell Long

Upon getting elected to be the Department of Montana Vice Commander, I have been busy. I started right away by attending the grand opening of the Veterans Home in Butte on June 29<sup>th</sup>. This was an excellent event and a very beautiful facility. July was busy as well. I attended Past Department President Barbara Monroe's funeral on July 17<sup>th</sup>. I attended the American Legion A Baseball Tournament in Havre on July 29<sup>th</sup> – August 2<sup>nd</sup>. It was awesome watching these players playing as hard as they did. I enjoyed sitting in the stands and visiting with the parents of the players and other American Legion members that came to the tournament. I was able to discuss some of our other programs with the parents as well. I was honored to be able to throw out the first pitch on July 29<sup>th</sup>. The Veterans Honor Guard from Havre presented the colors. This was an awesome event. If you haven't been to an American Legion Baseball game, I strongly encourage you to attend.

On August 21<sup>st</sup>, I was able to hear the American Legion Boys State and Auxiliary Girls State delegates from Chinook and Harlem give their reports to Post and Auxiliary 48. It is awesome hearing what the program meant to them.

I attended the National American Legion Convention in Phoenix, Arizona on August 26<sup>th</sup> through September 2<sup>nd</sup>. I represented Montana at both the Sons of The American Legion Convention and The American Legion Convention. I enjoyed joining Past Department Commander Larry Dobb and his wife Janice and Past Department President Kathy Long at the reunion of the 2018 year. We joined Past Commander Denise Rohan, Past President Diane Duschek, and Past SAL Commander Danny Smith and many other Commanders and Presidents from that year. I attended the National Commanders Banquet on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

I attended all the District meetings this year in both the fall and spring. I applaud the District Commanders that have worked hard to provide a quality meeting for their district. I am looking forward to working with each District Commander this next year.

I attended the Four Chaplains Ceremony in Helena on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. This was held in the Chapel on Fort Harrison. Thank you to Chaplain Semple for putting on this event.

I attended a post revitalization meeting in Fort Benton on January 28<sup>th</sup>. This meeting was to help the post to establish new officers. This was a very good meeting as we were able to get a commander for the post. We also were able to get a new member for the post at that meeting as well.

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, I attended the Grand Opening of the new clinic in Bozeman. I was given a tour of the facility prior to the event beginning. This facility is State-of-the-Art and will help provide quality medical care for the veterans in this area. I also took the tour after the ceremony to hear the providers talk about what they do and how they will better be able to help the veterans who use this clinic. On April 29<sup>th</sup>, I attended the Grand Opening of the Clinic in Butte. Again, this is a State-of-the-Art facility that will help provide better care to the veterans in this area. Both clinics will help the VA to better care for the veterans in Montana.

I attended the Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home in Helena at the Capitol on March 29<sup>th</sup>. We had a parade around the capitol building in which I was honored to carry the American Flag. The program was excellent and I commend the people who organized this event for an excellent program. The guest speaker was very good.

I attended the Department Oratorical Contest in Great Falls. We only had four contestants this year but I applaud the Chairman and his committee for doing a great job on this vital program. I also encourage each district to get a contestant for this program in the future.

I participated in 8 veterans funerals this year as part of the Honor Guard in Chinook. One was for our oldest Past Department Commander, Frank Pehrson. He was commander of the Department of Montana in 1964-65. He will be missed by all who knew him.

I attended the Memorial Day program at Chinook on May 30<sup>th</sup>. I was asked to be the guest speaker at this event.

Congratulations to all the posts that have made 100% or more of their goal. I will be presenting your challenge coin and certificate at the Department Convention or at the Fall District Meetings. I appreciate all you have done to achieve this.

I am looking forward to the Convention and getting together with all of you again. Please come and visit with me at the Convention. I hope to continue to serve you as your next Department Commander and get out to see more of you in the next year.



## ZONECOMMANDER – SOUTH CENTRAL

### Demorise Allen

CONVENTION 2021 was very good. Thanks to Post # 2 and Bill White's organization! Meals were great. Elmer had to leave because his wife had fallen. Fran & I joined Elmer for dinner as he headed out Friday evening. Congratulations Elmer on winning our Zone Race. I didn't get him his steak as he chose his favorite little Mexican place. It was an excellent meal. I ended Convention as the newly elected Finance Committee Chairman. I took our Post packet and helped Bruce load the rest of his Post packets. Been a very hectic summer but did make contact with all District Commanders and several members.

We were to have our District 11 Fall meeting on Sept. 10; but due to a Covid outbreak coming home from National Convention, Department Officers were unable to attend the meeting. I was asked to fill in for all of them. The auxiliary had made the decision to cancel their meeting. I then made the decision to postpone the District meeting. A new date of Oct 23 was settled on.

I attended the Fall District #9 meeting in Harlowton. A neighbor helped with shipping our calves and unfortunately his shipping date was Oct 10 and I had to help him and was unable to attend the District #7 Fall meeting. I visited at length with Bill Cummins before their District meeting. A hunting trip had been planned for over a year with friends from Pennsylvania prevented me from attending the District 11 meeting. I sent out emails to notify the Dept & Dist. Officers. Congratulations to Scott Miller and Post #71 for their # 1 membership. Very good job to Districts 7,9,11. All are doing great with membership, but we need a late push to beat Elmer's Zone. All the Zones are in a very good race.

The Fall Conference was quite hectic with finance meetings taking up massive time. Over the winter I did keep some phone connections with my District Commanders, especially Bill Cummins. Steady conflicts made it impossible for us to attend the Oratorical contest or District 7 and District 11 Spring meetings. All reports are that they both had great meetings.

I was able to attend my own District 9 Meeting. The Meeting went okay with the new format. The noon Banquet was good but, pricey! Congratulations to Bill Cummins for getting selected as the new South Central Zone Commander at the State Convention in June. Also congratulation to our new District Commanders DAN SMART, District 7; ROB MILLER, District 9; and SCOTT MILLER, District 11. Thank you Gentlemen for stepping up!!! See you soon at the State Convention in Missoula.

My membership challenge is still in place!! I have put it out there that I will give a \$35 gift certificate to the top recruiter in the top Post of each District. Go Get'em Legionnaires.

## **ZONECOMMANDER – WESTERN**

### **Elmer Palmer**

After the close of the Fall Conference, I returned to the Zone and spent time encouraging the District Commanders to work their posts to work the posts to continue their efforts on membership. I helped the District Commanders to encourage the posts to work the DMS members and get them transferred into a local post.

I attended all three of the District Meetings, continuing to stress the importance of membership. In the District 4 Meeting, I watched the election of my replacement, Dorothy Goodwin. Dorothy was the District Commander for District 4 during my tenure.

I represented the Department of Montana in the dedication of the new Missoula Veterans Affairs Clinic, an outstanding medical facility. The clinic was dedicated to David A Thatcher, second from the last Doolittle Raider. The dedication was conducted by Senator John Tester, assisted by dancing and Colors Presentation by our indigenous members of the Salish and Kootenai tribes.

I had the privilege of meeting and dining with Leading Candidate of The American Legion, Vincent James Troiola on his visit to Missoula. It was a pleasure to hear what he had to say.

Those of us that deal with membership are aware of the changes in our procedures with the newly introduced computerized membership system. When I placed a problem to the system through our department to National, I was given an answer that told that the percentage of error was less than 1%, and, basically, "So what!" I am submitting a resolution to the Executive Committee requesting that the Membership Section of National Headquarters requesting for more accuracy and accountability.

It has been a pleasure serving as your Western Zone Commander for the last four years. I have met many of you for the first time. I wish you the best. My service is finished!

## **ZONECOMMANDER – NORTH CENTRAL**

### **Kim Kay**

As North Central Zone CDR, I kept lines of communication open with District 2 CDR Vincent Schmoeckel, District 3 CDR Dusty Bailey, and District 8 CDR Larry Otis. I mostly communicated with them via email, but I occasionally called them. It was great to see District 2 leading in membership for a bit before falling behind. Each CDR did a good job and I was glad for the opportunity to work with each one. I was in attendance at each of the District Spring Conferences.

I was able to work out a date for Legion members in Fort Benton to come together with Dept Vice-CDR Lowell Long, District 8 CDR Larry Otis, Lonnie Johnson, Ken Simon, and myself. We met on 28 January 2022 at the Service Club in Fort Benton to discuss the roles of the officers in posts, the importance of Henry Griesbach JR Post 26 in the Fort Benton Community and the reasons for joining The American Legion in the first place. We were able to obtain officers for Fort Benton. I met with these officers on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 to show them how to fill out some paperwork for getting the post up and running. I also provided training to the officers on 9 February 2022 and I provided support to the officers at their 9 March 2022 meeting.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, Vice-CDR Long and I talked with District 3 Vice-CDR Keith Star and Leo Pollock from Browning. We talked about getting The American Legion Post in Browning up and running and what would be required to do so. Leo said when a meeting comes about in Browning his office can be used to hold the meeting. I was emailed by Leo last week with looking at 10 June as a day to meet but nothing set in stone on time. I emailed Leo today to verify a day, time, and place so everyone involved with this process can be notified. Hopefully we can get the Browning post up and running soon.

## **ZONECOMMANDER – EASTERN**

### **Joe Yeoman**

As Zone Commander I attended District 1 and 10 Fall and Spring District meetings. I feel this job should be given to the District Commanders as I could not look at membership of any post in either District. To do the job you need the tools to do it.

## **NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)**

### **Hal Rice**

First off, I have had a lot of jobs with The American Legion and being NEC man is the one I have enjoyed the most. I attended all spring District meetings except the last weekend as I went to Head Quarters in Indy for Spring conference. I flew in on Sunday and attended Finance Commission meetings on Monday and Tuesday. This has been a great experience that few get to do as there is only 4 NEC people that do this job as liaison from NEC to Finance Commission. I then attended 3 days of NEC meeting were we passed a lot of Resolutions, made lots of new friends. Looking forward to Dept. Convention and National Convention. I must say that being a member of The American Legion has been one of my life's best Decisions.

## **ALTERNATE NATIONAL COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)**

### **Larry Dobb**

Since my report to the Fall Conference in 2021, I have spoken at two Veteran's Day Dinners, attended several Department and Post programs, and attended four District Meetings. Starting on November 11, I spoke at the Veteran's Day dinner in Cut Bank held at the Moose Lodge by Glacier Post 40. Then on 13 November I spoke at the Veterans Day Dinner held in Great Falls at the Elks Lodge, which included ceremonies involving the American Legion Post 3, Scouts BSA and the Elks Lodge. Both these dinners were open to all veterans and the public at no cost. I counted between 60-80 people in attendance at each.

On December 4, my wife and I attended a breakfast/lunch fund raiser put on by Post 341 here in Great Falls. Then in January we attended an Appreciation Dinner put on by Post 341 open to members of Post 3, Post 341 and Post 130 as well as veterans and non-veterans from the community. On 13 February, I attended the Four Chaplains Ceremony held in Great Falls. It included participating members of all the three local posts (3 ,341 and 130), Chaya Semple, the Department Chaplain, as well as the Marine Corps League and Scouts BSA. It was great to see the cooperation between several posts, other veterans groups and civic organizations.

On 12 March I attended the Department Oratory Contest held in Great Falls. We only had four contestants this year, but it was still a good competition. The young lady that placed 2<sup>nd</sup> was representing District 9 and my home Post 15 in Harlowton. On 13 March, my wife and I attended the District 8 Meeting in Great Falls. On 18 to 20 March NEC Hal Rice and

myself went to Missoula to meet and escort the National Commander Candidate for 2022-2023 James “Jim” Troiola from New York to our District 4 Meeting in Ronan and District 5 Meeting in St Regis. Both District Meetings were well attended and very well run. St Regis went all out and provided a complete hot breakfast prior to the meeting and had a uniformed color guard present the colors to start the meeting. We were able to show National Commander Candidate Jim Troiola the Mission Valley, Mission Mountains and the Native American Veterans Memorial at Pablo.

On 3 April I attended the District 9 Meeting held in Lewistown. It was well attended with 8 of the 9 posts represented. Overall I was impressed with the attendance at all the District meetings that I attended, compared to some years in the past. On May 16, I attended the Post 3 meeting to install the incoming officers for the coming year. The Post has quite a schedule of activities planned for the summer on Memorial Day, Flag Day, a Poppy drive, the American Legion Baseball program and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade. There were two new/potential members who heard about the meeting and showed up. One currently belongs to a post out of state, but recently moved to Great Falls and is going to transfer. The other is an Army veteran who seemed very interested and I’m sure can be signed up.

As of this report, I am scheduled to speak at the Memorial Day services in White Sulphur Springs and have been in contact with William Cummins, Post Commander of Meagher Post 25. Any details will need to be in addendum presented at the Department Convention.

## **PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER**

**Jeff Nelson**

I attended last fall conference in Helena, October 2021.

I participated in our local Christmas festival of lights parade in Polson along with Past Commander Jack Mitchell riding in our Post 112 Navy jeep.

In January the Auxiliary President, Chris Nelson, and I attended Plentywood’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Legion Auxiliary. It was a memorable trip and wonderful hospitality from everyone at the Plentywood Post.

Department Commander, Glen Sharbono, and I travelled to Helena to observe the 4 Chaplains Memorial Service. It is always a somber moment to reflect on the sacrifice of those extraordinary men.

Spring district meetings took place throughout the state, and I made 10 out of 11 district meetings.

On many occasions I was involved in discussions over Legion matters with our Dept. Commander and Dept. Adjutant, giving my suggestions and advice when asked.

## HISTORIAN

### Ray Read

Good Day. To Legionnaire's to the readers my name is Raymond K. Read. I serve as the Department of Montana Historian and have served in this position since 2003. Telephone number is 406-235-0290. Email is: [myfun51@msn.com](mailto:myfun51@msn.com)

As the Department Historian, had the privilege and opportunity to travel the 102nd National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. It was refreshing, impressive and educational in all aspects of my position and appointments. I recommend that all Montana Legionnaires to attend. Next year is it is being conducted in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

I was also able to attend most all the 2021 Fall District meetings. It is a great feeling to visit the unique locations of Conrad, Sweetgrass, Glasgow, Forsyth, and others coming at Whitehall, Drummond and Red Lodge show the continued strength of community in the American Legion pillars. This allowed me to get my programs out to the American Legion posts and the Chinook attending leadership. I appreciate the interest shown by the various attendees to these events. I was also able to look at veteran monuments and local commemorations in various communities.

I attended the 2022 Spring District meetings at Three Forks (District 7) and Anaconda (District 6); I missed Great Falls, (District 8) St Regis (District 5) and Ronan (District 4); Attended Valier, (District 3); Laurel, District 11, Big Sandy, (District 2); and Lewistown, (District 9); Was not able attend Terry, (District 10) and Culbertson, (District 1). The experiences have been good, and I can tell you the efforts the posts in each district have been good but let's get the top. Just keep it up!!

I found throughout Montana that the American Legion is continuing to do what they have done best for 102 years. They are supporting the veterans and their families as best they can, utilizing the Four Pillars of the American Legion's National Program: That is Supporting the many facets of Veterans Affairs; Supporting a Strong National Defense; Supporting viable Americanism programs; and supporting our Nation's most precious resource our Children and Youth. I have been able to travel the State, meeting with many

seasoned, as well as newer, younger veterans who populate the 129 American Legion Posts, mostly in rural environments, with all the challenges that manifest themselves in the Frontier Treasure State of Montana.

I thank all who made my visits so memorable. I want to thank all those helped me with Operation Ruptured Duck program. This program is still active, and I am in the process of filling request by various posts. The program will continue if World War II veterans are living in our communities and still serving their fellow veterans.

I am asking all Montana Department American Posts to establish their Local Legacy-Your Post's History. National Headquarters has developed a webpage that will allow each participating post its own place online where photos, text and videos can be posted and shared. So, whether your post was established in 1919 to just few years ago you have the opportunity to tell your story in your community and throughout the American Legion.

A reminder to follow the American Legion Officers guide for your submission of the one-year Post Scrapbooks and/or Narratives. I encourage each post to create at least a one-year narrative report and submit it to Department so it can become a part of the annual record. Reference: Officers Guide pp. 137-143.

Of significance is my continued research in support of resurrection of the Malta Trophy as a leadership award. If you have knowledge of this iconic item, please bring it forward. A resolution to renew this program is being planned to be submitted to the Department Resolutions Committee for the 2022 Convention.

The Historian's office is continuing to work on s Centennial version of the Montana Department history started during the Centennial period. I need input from all Posts to complete this task.

The following partial list of dates/events should be a part of your planning each year:

\*Observe of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vietnam War thru 2025. [www.vietnam50.com](http://www.vietnam50.com).

\*Observance of the many aspects of the various anniversaries associated with all wars and American Legion history.

The Montana Military Museum located at historic Fort William Henry Harrison in coordination with the American Legion National Headquarters and the Montana Department is hosting two major exhibits, The GI Bill and "The Colors of Our Country" starting on the last week of May until the end of June 2022.

The exhibits are here to celebrate the 1944 Veterans Readjustment Act and honor the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Montana's American legion Boys State being conducted at Fort William Henry Harrison from May 29 through June 3, 2022. The Exhibit along with its companion exhibit is open to the public.

The GI Bill exhibit was built in New Orleáns in 2017 as an initiative to celebrate the American Legion 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and to educate audiences about one of our greatest achievements during that century.

The first venue for display was at the National WW II Museum in New Orleans in June 2017.

From there the exhibit was moved across country and displayed in multiple venues over the next two years, including the Montana Military Museum, as well as Patriotic Hall in Los Angeles, both the George W. Bush and the George H. W. Bush presidential libraries, the USS Intrepid Museum, two Student Veterans of America Conferences, the VA Medical Center in Little Rock Arkansas and the National Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus, Ohio. The large exhibit is permanently installed at the Indiana War Memorial Museum, 1 Block south of the American Legion National Headquarters in downtown Indianapolis.

## **DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT**

### **Duane Cunningham**

Having completed my first year as Department Adjutant I can say without hesitation it has been both challenging and rewarding. Because of mold issues in our main office on Fort Harrison; Department has been required to relocate three separate times. Operating from boxes and shipping containers has been very challenging. District Meetings are key to communication both from the Post to Department and Department to Post; I thought I might share a few stories about what we have seen, heard and experienced thus far. To complicate matters; we redesigned the format for District meetings, this change brought about many questions and believe it or not maybe even a little grumbling; why mess with tradition?

Well, one thing that I have noticed with District Meetings over the past few years is how the "guests" would sometimes just take over a District meeting. An American Legion District meeting is just that, a District meeting; Department personnel are the Districts' guests and should have very little input into the Districts' proceedings. That is where the changes in start time and order of business came from. I challenged each District Commander to conduct their meetings in this manner with the hope that it cleaned up some of the difficulties faced when holding a District meeting.



Our two-month journey began in Three Forks with District Seven; District Commander William Cummins was the lucky experimental test subject in hosting the first meeting. I must admit Bill, for his quiet unassuming demeanor runs a great meeting and at the end of the day, I felt it went very well; a few items were noted as potential obstacles but for a first time in the chamber, well done! Congratulations goes out to Dan Smart of Big Timber, your new District 7 Commander and the nomination of William Cummins to fill the vacancy of Zone Commander.

There was an interesting turn of events during the introduction of candidates for the 2022/2023 Department Commander; for the first time in many moons, the Department will be holding an actual election at Department Convention as both Lowell Long and William White have chosen to throw their proverbial blue caps in the ring and run for Department Commander. This is a great reminder of how each Post in Montana can impact the Legion's future. Get your delegates to convention!

The suburban loaded up the next day heading for Anaconda and the District 6 meeting, which is always an interesting one. Because Department is located in District 6, we often get more "Point of Procedures" regarding the proper Roberts Rules of Order procedures with regard to the nuances of the meeting. This year was no different in that aspect; as both Jack Nicholson and Tom Cruise eloquently pontificated parliamentary procedure much like in a "A Few Good Men". Or so it seemed. Despite the excitement, the meeting went well with the new format, and we completed the meeting in record time.

The following weekend we loaded up the Legion Rider and headed for two days in Great Falls. Saturday was the Department American Legion Oratorical Contest; The Oratorical Program is a function of the American Legions' "Americanism Pillar". The Oratorical Program is a constitutional speech contest for high school students, and it offers scholarships upwards of \$25,000 at the National level. The contest has a prepared oration and an assigned topic which is assigned the day of the contest. The prepared oration must be on some aspect of the Constitution, with emphasis on a citizen's duties and obligations to our government.

The same subject and oration used in the Department contest must be used in the National contest. The purpose of the assigned topic discourse is to test the speaker's knowledge of the subject, the extent of his or her research, and the ability to discuss the topic as related to the basic principles of government under the Constitution. While the contest and the contestants were outstanding, the turnout of participants was a little disappointing.

There were 4 outstanding participants this year; and our contest winner, Ella Henslee from Big Sky High School will do very well at the National contest. However, there are 116 active Posts in 11 separate districts in Montana; even in simple math, we should be able to have one representative from each district. Hopefully, we can do a better job getting into the schools and educating folks on the importance of this program.

Sunday, we held the District 8 Spring meeting in Great Falls; I would like to thank Larry Otis for all his hard work the last two years as District 8 Commander and welcome Andy Rice as the newly elected District 8 Commander. One question that came up during the meeting was the proper decorum for the POW/MIA empty chair ceremony, are Legionnaires covered or uncovered? The American Legion Post Officer's Guide contains the proper procedures.

Back on the bus the following weekend for our journey to Districts 4 in Ronan and District 5 in St. Regis. The district nominated Dorothy Goodwin to fill the vacancy of Zone Commander, congratulations. This trip also included a visit from the incoming candidate for 2023 National Commander Vincent James (Jim) Troiola. Your NEC Hal Rice and Alternate NEC Larry Dobb met the candidate at the Missoula airport and commenced providing him with a little Montana hospitality.

Commander Troiola specifically enjoyed the Post reports during both District meetings, as that was something he had not seen done before. During the Department report on American Legion Boy's State, Commander Troiola was introduced by way of his wallet on the initiative by Montana to put the "American Legion" back into the title of American Legion Boy's State with a couple of two-dollar fines for leaving out "American Legion". Commander Troiola provided his vision and upcoming initiatives for Legion year 2023 during the banquets. He is a very down to earth, positive person who I believe will make a great National Commander.

During Commander Troiola's visit, we made stops at the Eagle Circle Veteran's Memorial in Pablo and the Mission Church in St. Ignatius. The Commander had a good time and shared many stories and ideas about his vision for our future. We stopped for a beverage at a Missoula Brewery, and he is now a proud owner of a Montana Brewery Passport which it sounds like he has every intention to try and fill with stamps. Commander Troiola departed first thing Monday morning with both a great impression of the Department of Montana American Legion, but with the idea that the Montana delegation at National Convention would be there in full force ready to fine the Commander two dollars if he fails to use the proper American Legion Boy's State terminology. I say we should definitely make that happen.

Our next weekend found the Legion Mobile in the big cities of Valier and Laurel for the District's 3 and 11 meetings. I would like to thank Larry Tipton for all his hard work the last two years as District 11 Commander and welcome Scott Miller as the newly elected District 11 Commander. Both Districts ran their meetings well and because of the earlier start times it allowed us to have a little extra time to conduct an open session on American Legion Boys State. During this discussion I came to the realization that often Department is pushing District and Post Commanders to sell the various programs and opportunities that the American Legion offers without making sure that the individual Legionnaires

understand and comprehend what we are asking them to sell. We must do a better job of explaining these programs both up and down the ladder to ensure their success.

Regarding American Legion Boys State, the American Legion hopes to foster patriotism, citizenship, and leadership through its week-long Boys State programs. We emphasize not only the elective democratic process but also the legislative, bill-writing activities found throughout our government. As the week passes, each delegate finds himself in a variety of government situations at the city, county, and state levels. Well-rounded American Legion Boy's State graduates and community business leaders speak on keys to success and how they got to where they are today complementing the government simulations to provide a complete week of learning both in and out of the classroom.

Each delegate is given the opportunity to pursue both elected and appointed positions in his American Legion Boys State City or at the county or state level. Whether or not the delegate chooses to pursue an elected or appointed position, he will serve as either a state representative or senator and will be authoring, debating, and voting on American Legion Boys State legislation in his respective county legislature. Both the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary Boys and Girls State Programs offer once in a lifetime opportunities that not only change lives, but also develop our countries next great generation of leaders.

As we made our way to District 2 in Big Sandy and to District 9 in Lewistown before getting a couple of weekends off, it always is a bittersweet feeling; glad to have a break; but also, sad that the conversations and ideas that come from the long rides are coming to an end. It is an interesting and funny group of Legionnaires that volunteer to travel along and take the ribbing that they get. Both District 2 and 9 Commanders terms were up and I cannot thank Vincent Schmoeckel and Bruce Luhrsen enough for all they did for their respective Districts. We also welcome Jed Damson as the new District 2 Commander and Robert Miller as the new District 9 Commander.

There was a couple of items from these two District meetings that stuck in my head; first, the District 2 meeting was held in the Mint Bar in Big Sandy and the event room it was held in had a large number of mounted animals on display and every time someone got up to speak, they stood between a mountain lion and a bear; all I could think about was.....only in Montana. Second, I have always enjoyed the layout of Lewistown Post #16; it offers that old time historical feel to the building, but also that feeling of being in just the right place; Veterans in that area are lucky to have such a nostalgic location.

Finally, our last journey was our longest, with stops in both Terry and Culbertson. Post #32 is without a doubt my favorite, the Post is the center of the community and not only does the town support the Post; but the Post supports the Community. The recent addition of WWII airplane photos with the back-story of each plane adds to the ambiance and proud

history of the Post. If you ever get the chance, it's worth the visit. Culbertson and Post #81 brought a very good discussion on proposed resolutions and where and how the American Legion can continue moving forward. And the Lasagna was pretty tasty as well. Until next time. God Speed and God Bless the American Legion.

## **CHAPLAIN**

### **Chaya Semple**

During this reporting period held a Memorial Service for God and Country at the conclusion of the 2021 Department Fall Conference held in Helena; served as Post No. 2 Chaplain and Unit 2 Chaplain as well as Chaplain for Montana City VFD, Character Development Officer for Montana Civil Air Patrol and served as an active member of the Lewis and Clark Critical Incident Stress Management Team.

Served as chaplain at the Veterans Day Ceremony held at the Lewis and Clark Veterans Memorial participated in a virtual Statewide Suicide Survivor Event on November 20<sup>th</sup>; participated in a Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Ceremony on December 7<sup>th</sup> at Resurrection Cemetery in Helena.

Participated in donation and installation of classroom flags at St. Andrew School in December. Also volunteered at St. Andrew School helping with early reading and writing practice. throughout the second semester.

With the assistance of our Department Historian, Ray Read, held a Four Chaplains Day Ceremony open to the public on 3 February at the historic Chapel at Fort Harrison. I also served as chaplain for the Montana Welcome Home Ceremony for Vietnam Veterans on March 29<sup>th</sup> in the Capitol Rotunda in Helena.

Served as chaplain at Post No. 2, and District 6 Constitutional Oratory Competitions. (Missed the District 6 Spring Meeting and Department Constitutional Oratory due to illness.) Continued to facilitate character development instruction as available with Civil Air Patrol. Continued to actively participate as available in the Helena Ministerial Association, Lewis and Clark County Suicide Prevention Coalition, and with Lewis and Clark Critical Incident Stress Management Team debriefings of first responders. Have continued to serve as chaplain with Montana City VFD, conducting ceremonies, counseling with and serving as a sounding board for firefighters at the station.

Continued to pray for and send cards of condolence to bereaved Legion Family members and also to let those in hospital or nursing facilities, or with health challenges know they are not forgotten. Continued to call the sick and bereaved. When requested by the family, have continued to visit those dying at home.

Worked diligently over the winter preparing training materials for the Chaplains Conference that was to be held during Department Convention weekend. Due to space constraints at the Convention Hotel, it was cancelled this year and postponed to 2023.

## **SERVICE OFFICER**

**Kate Hahn**

As the MT DSO, I attended the following events:

National Conference, Washington, DC – March 5, 2022

During the National Conference:

- ❖ I was able to attend the PTSD/TBI Committee meeting
  - Discussion RE: Use of Lethal Weapons for Suicide
  - Buddy Checks
- ❖ Attended the National Commander's address
- ❖ Attended VA&R Committee Meetings

Attended the VA&R Meetings

- ❖ There are approximately 70,000 Legacy Appeals Remaining
  - Want to do 50,000 virtually
- ❖ Approximately 200,000 claims behind due to COVID
- ❖ Increase in the Use of Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) for Compensation & Pension Examinations
- ❖ Mission Act – no privatization of VA Healthcare; a hybrid of Gov't / Non-gov't care
- ❖ Helping Veterans Transition from Service life to Civilian life
- ❖ Mobile Orthopedic Vans are being utilized in several locations in the US for veterans unable to leave their homes.
- ❖ Legislative agenda includes:
  - Address Toxic Exposure & Burn Pits
  - Peer Support
  - Citizenship for Honorable Service
  - Military Awards for Minority Veterans
  - Improving Health Care for Women

Department Service Officer School, Washington, DC – March 7 – 27, 2022

- ❖ Over 19 million veterans in the US

- ❖ 4.8 million receive disability compensation
- ❖ 99% of BVAs are granted (B&M)
- ❖ Training included two new MVAD VSOs: Kara Blom-Santucci, Brenda Evans

District Meetings Spring 2021

- ❖ Attended meetings in Anaconda and St Regis
- ❖ Met with the Auxiliary and talked about DIC/WP
- ❖ Briefed on BWN, NSC, Evidence to support disability claims
- ❖ Briefed Legionnaires about Montana State Veterans Cemeteries and eligibility requirements for burial

**PARLIAMENTARIAN**

**Lonnie Johnson**

Again, as your Department Parliamentarian and a member of the American Legion, I believe that my report can be best presented within my duties as the Americanism Chair. Closing out 2021 and starting into 2022 we are back into full swing of our programs. My attendance at the Spring meetings in Indianapolis brought a couple of new things to think about. Several resolutions were brought to the table at the Americanism Commission meeting, some of which addressed tidying up of the books so to speak and some that may make it to the NEC and/or National Convention for consideration. Did you know that there are a couple of Departments that sponsor American Legion Softball? I did not know this until I attended this meeting. Is it something that Montana may be interested in? Also, Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Academy? I attended a committee meeting along with one of my classmates from NALC. Is this a program that we could promote in Montana? Again, I encourage everyone to be visible and promote Americanism every day!

**FINANCE OFFICER**

**John Joyce**

**JUDGE ADVOCATE**

**Tim Fox**

Greetings to all my Legionnaire friends and colleagues. I am writing this report just ahead of the Memorial Day weekend. I look forward to seeing some of my veteran friends on Memorial Day as we remember and honor all those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in service to America. Later this summer my wife Karen and I will be in Normandy France to pay our respects to my Uncle Jack who is buried at the American Cemetery near Omaha

Beach. I would be happy to share a little about Uncle Jack with anyone who asks while we are all in Missoula for our convention.

#### ADJUTANT CONTRACT

I assisted with finalizing the employment contract for our Adjutant, Duane Cunningham last September just before our Fall conference but after I submitted my report for that conference. As far as I know that contract is working well. The term of the contract is three years, so it will be a while before we need to revisit the Department's agreement with Duane.

#### AMERICAN LEGION BOYS STATE

Josh Clement is the new director for Boys State. I assisted Josh with finding some speakers for this year's Boys State. I also put Josh in touch with my former Chief Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Jon Bennion, who will share his expertise about the legislative process with the Boys Staters.

#### ADVICE TO THE COMMANDER

I provided some written guidance to Commander Sharbono last October about a potential lease of the North Crow Clubhouse for Post 138. Also In October, I assisted the Commander with an issue involving an altercation at a Post meeting.

#### ODDS AND ENDS

I made some inquiries about the future status of the Montana Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building relating to the Montana Historical Society's plans for renovating the building in conjunction with the construction of the new Montana Heritage Center. I arranged to have our Department Historian, Ray Reed, meet with the Executive Director of the Historical Society.

I assisted a Legionnaire with a scam e-mail he received, and advised that he should contact the Montana Consumer Protection office in the Montana Department of Justice.

I assisted Post 23 with a question about whether the Post should agree to the NRA's request that it act as a "pass through" for payment of wages to a person who would be an instructor for some firearm classes.

I assisted the Adjutant's Assistant with some questions about the Department's photocopier vendor.

I assisted a Post with a question about whether The American Legion's rules require a member to salute the Flag.

I assisted Post 135 with some questions about their bank not allowing the Post to set up a bank account. I had conversations with my bank to learn more about the applicable banking regulations and policies, and then contacted Post 135's bank to work out a solution.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the Department and its members. I wish you all a happy, safe, and healthy remainder of the year.

### **SERGEANT-AT-ARMS**

**Dave Haulman**

Fines at the Department Convention June 2021

A total of \$28.00 was collected for fines and donated to the NEF.

Fines were for excessive/loud talking, failure to properly salute when addressing the Commander from the lectern and not stating American Legion Boys State instead of Boys State.

Submitted an article concerning Crossing the Plane/Hallowed Ground.

### **EDUCATION & TRAINING**

**Jeff Holmes**

Congratulations to all of the following winners within their respective divisions. I would also like to thank all of the posts for sponsoring these contests as part of their post objectives. It is a great way to promote the constitution and government to our youth. They were all great entries. My cap goes off to you for all that you do. Thank You!

#### 2022 Winners!

##### High School Essay – 5 submitted

1 <sup>st</sup>	Ruby Waller @ Twin Bridges HS	Dan Brockman Post # 31
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Peter Harrington @ Hamilton Home School	Ravalli Post #47, Hamilton
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Rhett Wolery @ North Star High School	Liberty County Post #88

##### Junior High School Essay – 6 submitted

1 <sup>st</sup>	Hazel Sawfer @ Clinton Elementary	Clinton Post #83
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Haze Hardy @ Sheridan Middle/High School	Anderson-Simpson Post #89



3<sup>rd</sup> Ashley Carpenter @ East Valley Middle School Lewis & Clark Post #2

**Government Survey for Junior High 7<sup>th</sup> Grade – 3 submitted**

1<sup>st</sup> Kirsten Miller @ Dutton/Brady School 82% Dutton Post #64  
2<sup>nd</sup> Averi Maddox @ Twin Bridges Middle School 60% Dan Brockman Post #31  
3<sup>rd</sup> Saqqara Lapp @ Judith Gap Schools 58% Judith Gap Post #70

**Government Survey for Junior High 8<sup>th</sup> Grade – 4 submitted**

1<sup>st</sup> Ashley Carpenter @ EVMS 100% Lewis & Clark Post #2  
2<sup>nd</sup> James Reedy @ Sheridan Junior High 92% Anderson-Simpson Post #89  
3<sup>rd</sup> Riese Sattoriva @ North Star Schools 70% Liberty County Post #88

**Government Survey for High School Seniors – 4 submitted**

1<sup>st</sup> Katherine Tucker @ Sheridan HS 90% Anderson-Simpson Post #89  
2<sup>nd</sup> John Baringer @ Dutton/Brady HS 90% Dutton Post #64  
3<sup>rd</sup> Ethan Wayland @ Twin Bridges HS 77% Dan Brockman Post #31

A special thanks to Bud Redfield, Adjutant in Post #31 and Twin Bridges School Counselor and U.S. History Teacher for volunteering to update and add to our collection of survey tests. Thank you!

Keep up the work with our students and schools. What you do matters!

I work for you, so please let me know what I can do to make your job easier. Congrats to all the winners!

**DISTRICTCOMMANDERS**

**DISTRICT 1 - COMMANDER**

**Ken Simon**

My District Commanders year began by election at Post 122 in Opheim in April of 2021 and will end on June 19th at the Department Convention in Missoula. This has been a busy and interesting year in that I have visited the majority of my Posts and the reason for not getting to all of them was due to Covid and the extreme weather conditions.

I was able to make almost all of my Post meetings as well as assist with several funerals, helped put out Flags on Memorial Day at the two Plentywood cemeteries as well as the Dooley cemetery, walked in the Parade in Plentywood, worked with the Post Members at

the Sheridan County Fair in July, participated in the 9/11 Ceremony at Bolster Dam just North of Plentywood, and a December 7<sup>th</sup> Ceremony at the Sheridan County Court House.

During the month of June, I was at The American Legion Boys State program that was held at Carroll College from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup>. As an American Legion Boys State Committee person, I took a delegate from Plentywood to Helena and brought back the three boys from Valley County along with the one from Plentywood. It was a very rewarding and busy week again filled with some pretty amazing young men. I also attended the Department of Montana American Legion Convention in Helena from June 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup>.

In August I attended the American Legion National Convention in Phoenix from August 26<sup>th</sup> to September 2<sup>nd</sup>.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of September there was a 2024 Department Pre-Convention Meeting in Glasgow which I attended along with Convention Chair Joe Yeoman of Post 41. Department personnel attending were Department Adjutant Duane Cunningham and Bill White to assist with the planning meeting. Discussions were held with the Cottonwood Hotel where the Department of Montana will be staying and the following places were visited to determine feasibility for use by the Convention. The Elks Club and the Glasgow indoor Ice Hockey rink building for use by the American Legion. The VFW Post located on Hwy 2 West is another location that can be utilized by the American Legion family as needed. We met with the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce folks who were very accommodating and helpful towards the American Legion having a Very Successful and Rewarding Department Convention in 2024!

October 28<sup>th</sup> found me in Helena for the Montana Department of the American Legion Fall Convention where I stepped forward and announced my candidacy for the Department Vice Commanders position.

On December 16<sup>th</sup> I attended the Post 41 meeting for the draping of the Charter in Honor of my youngest brother Steve, who passed away in Billings on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Steve was a member of Post 41 and also the Sons of the American Legion for 33 years. He was very active in the Legion during that timeframe. He also served in the United States Marine Corps for four years.

## **DISTRICT 2 – COMMANDER**

### **Vincent Schmoeckel**

1. I participated in many Veterans Funerals throughout this time period.
2. I donated blood for the American Red Cross and wore my District Commander cap.

3. I attended conference in Helena.
4. New informational packets were mailed or hand delivered to posts within my district.
5. Was Master of Ceremony at the annual military dinner held in January at the VFW Club.
6. Participated with VFW, American Legion, Sons of the American Legion and Boy Scouts in a flag retirement ceremony. Approximately 200 flags were retired on a brisk winter night.
7. At the Dept. Commanders request, I attended two Zoom meetings concerning membership.
8. Conducted the Spring District meeting held in Big Sandy. Letters were mailed to posts prior to the meeting.
9. Collected items from individuals for the annual American Legion Yard sale. Worked the sale and helped clean up afterwards.
10. Participated with Sons of the American Legion in awarding a Certificate of Appreciation plaque to Hi-Line Packing for meat donations for Son's raffle.
11. Throughout the year, I contacted the posts within my district concerning reports and membership numbers.
12. With a recent break in the weather, I inspected and repainted several fatality markers north of Malta.
13. Will help the American Legion Auxiliary with the upcoming Memorial Day BBQ by setting up tables and chairs, cooking and cleaning up.
14. Volunteered hours at the VFW Club by cleaning, purchasing items and doing maintenance work.

### **DISTRICT 3 - COMMANDER**

#### **Dusty Bailey**

In May I participated in Post Memorial Day programs in Sweet Grass, Sunburst, Galata, and Shelby.

In June we held our Flag Day program in Shelby. With help from local Legion Posts and members of the VFW we disposed of over 200 unserviceable flags gathered from around the area.

In July our Post will serve food at the 100 years of oilfield celebration in Oilmont. I headed up the planning committee for this event. I will be the leader of the color guard for the 4-county fair parade held in Shelby.

In November I was the keynote speaker at the Post Veterans Day program that was held at the local high school in Sunburst. I assisted Shelby with their program. Our post also hosts a Veterans Day dinner to honor our local veterans.

In December we started a bingo night. In January myself and members from our Post took part in the freedom rally that was in Sweet Grass and opened our hall as a warming stating and served food to stranded truckers.

We performed over 34 military funeral honors throughout the local area.

#### **DISTRICT 4 - COMMANDER**

##### **Dave Bennett**

Since the fall conference I have spent a great deal of time sending out emails encouraging Commanders and Adjutants to make contacts and encourage membership. Most of which seem to have been ignored or at least not acknowledged. Offers were made to come to their posts and do a phone blitz which were turned down. I made several phone calls on my own only to hear "If I heard from my post I might pay my dues". Post 138 acquired a post home, but are required to drill a well. I attended a fund raiser spaghetti feed for this purpose. Commander Sharbono and myself attended a meeting to revitalize the Whitefish post. Had a very nice visit with them and they had pretty much worked things out and were going to continues as an active post.

Having pretty much completed my first year as District #4 Commander I realize that I have done many things incorrectly. I now have a better handle on things and am looking forward to my second year.

#### **DISTRICT 5 - COMMANDER**

##### **Terry Wahl**

Since my assumption of commander of District 5 on October 7, 2021 at the District 5 Fall Conference in Drummond, I have visited 4 out of 12 Posts. I attended the Dept of MT Fall Conference in Helena, the District 5 Spring Conference in St. Regis at Post 13, which I want thank for doing an outstanding job hosting a conference for the first time; and I attended the State Oratorical Contest in Great Falls.

Several District 5 Posts are involved with highway cleanup in their areas, Memorial Day Ceremonies to include placing wreaths at the local cemeteries, Flag Day Ceremonies, Veteran Assistance, Veteran Career Fairs, Sponsorship of American Legion Baseball,

Veterans Day Dinners, Wreath Across America, Veterans in the Classroom, American Legion Birthday, Four Chaplains Memorial, Donations to Veterans and Children's Foundation, Operation Comfort Warrior, Oratorical & Essay Programs.

Our Suicide Prevention Training is ongoing and will be a priority this year and beyond. I am glad to be the commander of District 5 at this time as all the posts have been very active in their communities upholding the great tradition of the service the American Legion was designed for.

## **DISTRICT 6 - COMMANDER**

### **Linda Cousineau**

I started with completing the last four Post visits for the first year of this two-year term as well as concluding the merger with Post 115 into Post 1 which at this time is a continued battle with membership in multiple different ways.

I attended a two-day 100-year birthday celebration for a Pearl Harbor survivor Charlie Dowd from Anaconda Post 21. Completed a successful District Oratorical Contest and attended the Dept Oratorical in Great Falls. I also attended The Capital Welcome Home Vietnam Ceremony and was invited and attended the Grand Opening Ceremony of the new Butte Veterans Affairs Clinic.

I visited the District 8 and District 9 meetings as well as conducted the District 6 Spring Meeting. During District 6 Meeting we were able to vote in a 0.25 cent increase to per capita, readjusted membership for the upcoming year and during the membership meeting had a very informative conversation on how to attract younger members into Posts. Also, during the meeting, we voted in Video Conferencing rules to be added into the Constitution and By-laws and passed a resolution from Helena Post 2 for the VA to screen all veterans prior to discharge for cancer indicators. 10 out of 11 Posts were represented.

I continued to keep all the Post Commanders and adjutants up to date with information passed down. Helped and encouraged them to meet the deadlines throughout the year and assisted Department with Buddy Checks and Membership calls.

## **DISTRICT 7 - COMMANDER**

### **Bill Cummins**

As my turn as District 7 commander is coming to an end, I can say it has been a challenge but also a very rewarding experience. The District still has a way to go as far as all posts

meeting their membership goals; but by adjusting the goals at the spring meeting I am hopeful there will be improvement in membership next year.

Post 78 is in the process of getting back on their feet. Larry Jent has stepped up to take the Commander's position. I am in the process of returning Post 78 equipment and belongings and removing me from their checking account. I feel that under the new leadership at Post 78, they will become a good viable Post.

Over the past two years I have tried to promote communication between the Posts in the District and between the District Commander and the Posts. During the Winter I had to arrange for Military honors for a Veteran and the Legion at West Yellowstone. With the Help of Ennis Post 65, Gallatin Post 14, Meagher Post 25 and two members from Post 78 in West Yellowstone, the Military honors were provided and it worked very well. This is a fine example of Posts within the District being able to help one another out when there is a need that cannot be filled by just one Post.

By the time of this convention I will have visited all Posts but one in my district. As the District Commander I have been welcomed at all the Posts. After attending their meetings I felt like a regular member of that Post and not an outsider. It has been great getting to know the Posts leaders as well as some of the members of the Posts in District 7. I know that I could walk into any Posts meeting or at their post club and be welcome just as well as one of their own members.

## **DISTRICT 8 - COMMANDER**

### **Larry Otis**

I attended the Post 64 meeting in Dutton and presented an award to the SAL Squadron 64 Commander. Post 64 handed out a list of members who have not renewed and asked members to get in contact with them and get them to renew their membership. I think this was a good idea and should be used by other Post. Fairfield Post 80 was scheduled to hold the Spring District 8 Meeting, however, they had to drop out and Great Falls Post 341 volunteered to hold the Spring Meeting. The problem was that it was being held at the same time as the C.M. Russell Western Art Show and Auction, and the Department Oratorical Contest, which meant that most of the hotels in Great Falls would be full. They did find space to hold our District meeting in one hotel in town. It was cramped quarters for both Legionnaires and District 8 Auxiliary members; however we did get it done.

Andy Rice from Post 102, Geraldine, was elected the new District 8 Commander, and Jerry Collins from Post 6, Choteau, was elected District 8 Vice Commander. Both will be sworn in at the 2022 Department Convention held in Missoula in June. I think they both will do a good job. Post 3 joined the Elks Lodge #214 for a Bingo night in which the Elks donated the funds from the night to Post 3. This may become an event to accrue more often during

the summer. When the Department sends me an email, I forward it to all District 8 Adjutants and Commanders instead of rewriting them and sending them out under my signature. I want to thank all members of District 8 for your support. It has been an honor to have serviced as your Commander.

## **DISTRICT 9 - COMMANDER**

### **Bruce Luhrsen**

Fall conference was held in Helena, MT on October 21-24, 2021. I did not attend. My position was covered by District #9 Vice Commander Rob Miller as I was detained on other family commitments. I have appreciated his responsiveness tremendously.

The attendance has given him a leg up on what to expect in fulfilling the position of District #9 Commander. At our recent Spring Meeting, he was elected to the position of District #9 Commander. This has been an evolved session for the Legion Executive Board as we have participated in zoom meetings as a new media of communication. It was a step up over the Spring meeting phone conference call we held in the spring of 2020 due to Covid 19 complications. It is also noted that Covid had an impact on many of our Posts in conducting regular meetings and function gatherings.

Veterans Day was celebrated in many ways by the various Posts in time honored traditions. Each is significant to the evolution of programs that have developed within each individual community. Thank you to each of those communities for supporting and honoring your many service members who have given so much.

Having become the arbitrator in the dis-settling, misunderstanding of our local Post and American Legion Baseball, I am happy to report that the situation has been brought to a close with fences being mended. There will always be some dissatisfaction, but with changes in leadership on both sides of the issue, the Post and the Baseball Club are moving forward in an agreement that American Legion Baseball and Youth development sponsored by the American Legion and its pillars will move forward. I am encouraging all Legion members to "show their colors" by openly wearing a Post ball cap, their Post jacket or uniform cap while attending any Legion Baseball function or game. Be reminded of the difference between sponsorship and subsidiary.

I feel that our own District #9 Spring meeting was a success that incorporated a new format for meeting presentation. All but one Post in our District was represented and due to Covid suppression in the immediate Post was a welcome improvement. The District Auxiliary was greatly appreciated in the absence of a host Unit representation in fulfilling the duties

normally filled by the local Auxiliary Unit. Post 16 Adjutant Sandy Youngbauer was a whirlwind in showcasing what a Post can do in hosting our District meetings.

As this is my last report as District Commander for District #9, I want to wish my successor, Rob Miller of Denton Post # 62 the absolute best in his "Tour of Duty".

### **DISTRICT 10 - COMMANDER**

**Dave Ofalt**

I served another year as district commander. I conducted the district meeting in Terry post 32. After numerous attempts to get someone to get someone to run the post in Eklaka, it was decided to close that post and transfer their membership to Baker. Colstrip post 44 has not had a commander in several years, and the adjutant has been doing all the work in that post for some time. Due to health concerns she can no longer perform that job. We cannot find someone to take over that post, it has been suggested to close that post and transfer those members to Forsyth Post 39. That will be determined at the next district meeting. Glendive post 28 has found someone to take over operations of the post and bar. We elected a new district commander at the spring meeting. It will be Dale Hewitt from Glendive.

I attended the Legion riders state conference in Billings in January. I have also been busy running Post 39 in Forsyth with a Veterans day program at the high school, Americanism night at the masons lodge, presenting boys state to the juniors at the high school, numerous military honors funerals, bingo at the legion hall, a garage sale, and now planning Memorial day program at the veterans section of the cemetery. It has been a pleasure being the district commander.

### **DISTRICT 11 - COMMANDER**

**Larry Tipton**

As this is the end of my term as District Commander, I would like to thank the Posts in the District for their efforts during the past years during the Covid-19 experience. It was also an honor to serve in my fathers' footsteps as he was the District 11 Commander in 1994. It would be interesting to see how many others have this, Legacy.

Good luck to all and if you are in the Columbus area stop by and say hello. Stillwater Post #34 is doing quite well these days. I cannot be in Missoula because I am in Great Falls for the Montana East-West Shrine Bowl that weekend.

### **DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRS**



## **AMERICANISM**

**Lonnie Johnson**

Again, as your Department Parliamentarian and a member of the American Legion, I believe that my report can be best presented within my duties as the Americanism Chair. Closing out 2021 and starting into 2022 we are back into full swing of our programs. My attendance at the Spring meetings in Indianapolis brought a couple of new things to think about. Several resolutions were brought to the table at the Americanism Commission meeting, some of which addressed tidying up of the books so to speak and some that may make it to the NEC and/or National Convention for consideration. Did you know that there are a couple of Departments that sponsor American Legion Softball? I did not know this until I attended this meeting. Is it something that Montana may be interested in? Also, Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Academy? I attended a committee meeting along with one of my classmates from NALC. Is this a program that we could promote in Montana? Again, I encourage everyone to be visible and promote Americanism every day!

## **BASEBALL**

**Ron Edwards**

As of June 1st, we have 65 teams that are registered and playing American Legion baseball in Montana and Canada. We welcome our Canadian teams back for the 2022 season. It's still not normal play, but at least the Canadian teams are able to travel into the US to play baseball. Our US teams are still not playing in Canada. There are 9 Class AA teams, 30 Class A teams and 24 Class B teams, and 2 Class C teams.

## 2022 MONTANA/ALBERTA AMERICAN LEGION TEAMS

### CLASS AA

Billings Royals  
 Billings Scarlets  
 Bozeman Bucks  
 Great Falls Chargers  
 Helena Senators  
 Kalispell Lakers  
 Lethbridge Elks  
 Medicine Hat Moose Monarchs  
 Missoula Mavericks

### CLASS A

Anaconda A's  
 Belgrade Bandits  
 Billings Blue Jays  
 Billings Cardinals  
 Bitterroot Bucs  
 Bitterroot Red Sox  
 Bozeman Bucks A  
 Butte Miners A  
 Calgary Strive  
 Cranbrook Bandits  
 Dillon Cubs  
 Gallatin Valley Outlaws

### CLASS A

Glacier Twins A  
 Glasgow Reds  
 Glendive Blue Devils  
 Great Falls Chargers A  
 Havre Northstars  
 Helena Reps  
 Kalispell Lakers A  
 Laurel Dodgers  
 Lethbridge Miners  
 Lewistown Redbirds  
 Libby Loggers  
 Medicine Hat Knights  
 Miles City Mavericks  
 Mission Valley Mariners A  
 Missoula Mavericks A  
 Sidney Patriots  
 Tri-County Cardinals  
 Vauxhall Spurs

### CLASS B

Anaconda A's B  
 Belgrade Bandits B  
 Billings Post 4 Blue  
 Billings Post 4 Red

### CLASS B

Bitterroot Bucs B  
 Bitterroot Red Sox B  
 Bozeman Bucks B  
 Butte Muckers B  
 Clark Fork Valley Riverdogs  
 Dillon Cubs B  
 Gallatin Valley Posse  
 Glasgow Reds B  
 Glendive Blue Devils B  
 Great Falls Chargers B  
 Havre Northstars B  
 Helena Independents  
 Kalispell Lakers B  
 Kootenai Valley Rangers  
 Lewistown Redbirds B  
 Miles City Colts  
 Mission Valley Mariners B  
 Missoula Mavericks B  
 Tri-County Cardinals B  
 Wolf Point Yellow Jackets

### CLASS C

Bozeman Bucks C  
 Kalispell Lakers C

We have 2 new teams this year, the Calgary Strive in Alberta and the Sidney Patriots are back. Plentywood tried to field a team this season, but they decided to hold off one more year and shoot for the 2023 season.

The tournament schedule for the 2022 season are as follows:

### 2022 TOURNAMENTS

TOURNAMENT	HOST TEAM	CITY	DATES	DAYS
NORTHERN DISTRICT A	HAVRE NORTHSTARS	HAVRE	JUL 21 - 24	THU - SUN
SOUTHERN DISTRICT A	BUTTE MINERS	BUTTE	JUL 21 - 24	THU - SUN
EASTERN DISTRICT A	BILLINGS BLUE JAYS	BILLINGS	JUL 21 - 24	THU - SUN
WESTERN DISTRICT A	KALISPELL LAKERS	KALISPELL	JUL 21 - 24	THU - SUN
STATE A	BELGRADE BANDITS	BELGRADE	JUL 27 - JUL 31	WED - SUN
STATE AA	BILLINGS SCARLETS	GREAT FALLS	JUL 27 - JUL 31	WED - SUN
REGIONAL AA	GILLETTE ROUGHRIDERS	GILLETTE, WY	AUG 03 - 07	WED - SUN
REGIONAL A (NWCART)	VERNAL UTAH	VERNAL, UT	AUG 05 - 09	FRI - TUE
WORLD SERIES		SHELBY, NC	AUG 11 - 16	THU - TUE

For more baseball information please visit us at [www.montanalegionbaseball.org](http://www.montanalegionbaseball.org).

## SCOUTS BSA

## **Roger Hancock**

This year we have competition for Eagle Scout Of the Year (ESOY). Both were well qualified and outstanding scouts but Samuel Waller, from Belgrade, stood a little taller and won the title of ESOY for Montana.

There was very little participation for Department Scouting Post Awards. Remember we have 3 categories and you do not even have to sponsor a Troop or Pack to compete. I have one entry for this year. Please down-load the Scouting Award Post Evaluation Sheet and see if you have any points at all. If you do it doesn't hurt to send it in. You can snail mail or scan it and email to me at [rogerhancockmtlegion@yahoo.com](mailto:rogerhancockmtlegion@yahoo.com).

## **BOYS STATE**

**Josh Clement**

Will be given following event

## **CHILDREN & YOUTH**

**Vacant**

## **CONSTITUTION & INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**Jared Flammond**

In December I was able to attend National American Legion College. During my week there I was able to attain a vast amount of knowledge and guidance from numerous mentors and make life-long friendships within the legion. As of currently I am working on reading thru and updating the constitution and bylaws for department.

There doesn't seem to be a lot as of now but also am looking forward to getting things current and up to date as things are needed. Also I am working on current resolutions that have been submitted and keeping them within the formatting to be presented before department meetings. I would encourage anyone seeking to gain more knowledge about how the legion functions and the programs we offer by attending any department or even submitting for national American legion college.

## **CONVENTION2022**

**Roger Hancock**

WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA 2022 CONVENTION

Welcome to Missoula for the 2022 Convention. Certain Post 135 members have "Convention Team" on their name tags. We are here to help so don't be afraid to ask any Convention Team member for assistance. We might not have the answer, but we can direct you to the correct person for help. We hope you have an enjoyable time in Missoula and an Outstanding convention.

## **CONVENTION2023**

**Duane Cunningham**

The 2023 Department Convention is going to be a fun and unique one as it is being hosted by Department Headquarters. We hope that this will give us a little perspective into what the realistic needs of a Convention are and fresh ideas to pass to host posts on future events. We are set to be in Lewistown at the Yogo Inn June 21-25, 2023.

## **CONVENTION 2024**

**Joe Yeoman**

Lodging and operation have been discussed with Glasgow Chamber of commerce and the Cottonwood Inn. A proposed contracted has been made which will be brought to Missoula for discussion. We want to encourage American Legion Members to come Visit an area of Montana that is as beautiful as the Mountains. With a lake of a shoreline of 1800 miles which is longer than California's We need members knowledge!

## **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS**

**Hal Rice**

As Dist. Guest I had a fun time with soon to be National Commander Vincent Triola we did a lot of touring and a lot of jokes were told. Looking forward to his year as Commander.

## DEPARTMENT EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATOR

### Chaya Semple

While COVID-19 continued to mutate from the Delta to the Omicron variant and now on to Omicron sub-variant BA.2.12.1, resulting in less serious illness, of concern are drought conditions that continued to prevail throughout much of the state, culminating in destructive wildfires in December.

On December 1<sup>st</sup>, the Gibson Flats fire, south of Great Falls, destroyed 11 homes – one belonging to a Legion member. Unfortunately, because it was an arson fire, the member was not eligible to apply for an NEF grant. Friends started a GoFundMe page which brought in over \$10,000 to help the member get re-established.

The town of Denton lost 24 homes to the West Wind fire on 2 December. Two of those homes lost belonged to Legion members and another member lost a building for his business. One member's family put in for an NEF grant which was denied due to no immediate expenses paid due to displacement – the member was hospitalized due to illness prior to and after the fire until his death.

Due to temperature extremes in early January 2022, ice jams and flooding were experienced in Three Forks, Ennis and Logan when the Gallatin River flooded. February began with 78% of the state in extreme drought conditions and relatively warm temperatures followed by an arctic cold front 19 February that saw temperatures plummet well below 0° over much of the state.

Topographic variability caused large variations in precipitation with higher elevations seeing more snow; however, precipitation remained below normal east of the Continental Divide so far this year, while it was above average west of the Divide. This has resulted in below-average snowpack across most of the mountains east of the Divide. Snowpack is vital as it feeds the streams and rivers as it melts in the summer.

As of 9 May, with the exception of a small portion of Northwest Montana, the majority of the state remained in abnormally dry to extreme drought conditions, portending a very active wildfire season. Legion Family members are advised to be prepared to evacuate should a wildfire occur near their area – wind-driven wildfires cannot be outrun or outdriven and often there is little time to gather important documents, medications, or

pets. Do not wait to be told to evacuate. Every year, the news reports of people who have died during a wildfire by not evacuating in a timely manner.

Go to <https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/ready-set-go/> to learn more.

Those living along interstate corridors are advised to be aware: human trafficking in Montana has increased dramatically. Signs to look for in a human trafficking victim:

1. They have no personal possessions
2. A minor with an unrelated and non-age appropriate looking male or an over-controlling “boyfriend” and sometimes another female, as they can recruit other females to become slaves.
3. Minors at hotels, strip clubs or truck stops.
4. Appearance of lack of sleep or nutrition.
5. Unexplained injuries.

You can help stop human trafficking. Please call 9-1-1 immediately and report what you suspect may be human trafficking.

## **FINANCE CHAIRMAN**

**Demorise Allen**

Thank You Elmer for all of your time and dedication as Finance Chairman!

I hope I can fill a lace or two of your shoes.

My first move was going to Helena on 10-8-2021 and meeting with Elmer, Duane, Gary, John and Erin. Hopefully learning as much about the budget as I can.

Our first meeting of the Convention was opened by Elmer Palmer on 6-23-2021 at 1615 hrs. according to the manual at Post # 2. Lexie of D. A. Davidson gave a great presentation about our finances. We reviewed the 2021 budget. Gary White made comments about our fundraisers, the Raffle, Big K and the Cash Calendar. We then discussed the 2022 budget. As it was decided last fall to support the idea to place a statue at the capitol in honor of JUDY MARTZ. Scott Miller made a motion we donate \$1000 towards the Judy Martz statue

Demorise Allen 2<sup>nd</sup>, passed 7-o Line 6151 was increased to \$5000 due wear and tear on furniture. Some will have to be replaced

Per diem went up to \$42 A DAY STARTING WITH Fall Conference.

There was a snafoo with a \$2000 scholarship out of District 4. National said request was made too late. Commander Nelson asked each Post in that District to help rectify this problem with a \$150 donation. There was little response. Ken Simon made a motion that Dept. pay the \$2000. Motion seconded by Scott Miller, pass 7-o. Money to come from line # 7024 and be deposited in #3053. Any payments received will be deposited back in line #7024.

We passed a motion that made it mandatory for travel vouchers to be turned in a timely manner. Travel Vouchers will become void if not turned in to Dept. within 7 days of travel. A motion was also passed that allows the Office Managers leave days to be carried over to year 2022. A discussion was then held about pay raises for our Adjutant, Duane Cunningham and Office Manager Erin Carpenter. Also discussed making both full time employees of the American Legion Department of Montana, and the costs associated with doing so.

We approved the 2021 Boys State budget at the Fall Conference after total amounts were settled. A discussion about the \$ 1500 spent on clothing and overall costs. It was requested that the Boys State Chairman attend Fall Conference and be ready to present a budget for 2022. It was mentioned 127 Delegates were needed to break even.

A motion was made to move additional income to D A Davidson A discussion by Dept. Commander and Gary White, amended the amount to \$10,000 to come from the money market account.

RESOLUTION 21-05 - A motion was made by Ken Simon to change Scouting awards Post sizes to 10 - 75/ 76 - 175 / 176 and above, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jed Damson approved 6-o

RESOLUTION 21-07 - Montana Legion College graduation pin. It was moved by Joe Yeoman to buy 300 pins for past, present and future graduates and to move \$600 from line 7100 to 6200 was 2<sup>nd</sup> by 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ken Simon, approved 6-o

One summer project was getting a phone vote from the members. It was decided Erin needed to attend National so she can meet face to face with the IT folks to hammer out issues in the membership reporting system. \$1364 is needed and can be pulled from lines 6071A and 6076. Approved.

Fall Conference was hectic with meetings. After reviewing our Portfolio with D.A. Davidson, Scott Miller suggested we as the Finance Committee be a little more diligent in watching our investments and our line items in our budget. Moved several AL bank accounts to Stockman Bank.

The winter was occupied by ironing out details of a new process of selling Ads for the Cash calendar, the Legionnaire and the Convention Program for the Convention 2023. All three bought as a (BUNDLE AD) for \$200. Duane, Erin and the finance committee have sold them and the Cash Calendar is at the printer.

## **HIGHWAY FATALITY MARKER**

**Jim Kelly**

It is with a heavy heart and sadness I start this report. I am going to have to let you know I am at a stage of life when I must give up one of my favorite things, working the Fatality Marker Program. My wife, my kids and my doctors have all told me "It's time!"

Age is working against me as my tremors, together with arthritis, become more pronounced and interfere with my work.

As I approach the point of surrendering my position as Chairman of the Fatality Marker Committee, I must tell you, my wife and I remain extremely thankful to all of you Legionnaires who continue to commit to fulfilling our responsibilities to the American Legion Fatality Marker Program. We are thankful to each Post, each Commander and each Adjutant who keep the focus on continued service to the communities we live in.

## **IT'S A TEAM EFFORT IN MONTANA!**

For most of us, teamwork is a part of everyday life. Whether it's at home, in the community, or at work, we are often expected to be a functional part of a performing team. A strong team benefits any organization and will lead to more successes than not.

The American Legion Highway Fatality Marker Program is a highway safety program and community outreach. It involves veterans from all branches of service "Still Serving America".



Partners invest time and money in the Fatality Marker Program. It has truly become a “team” effort as community businesses step in to assist with supplies, materials, services and money to support the program.

It is important to capitalize on the strengths of each member within our team. While some individuals are more visible than others, each contributes to the overall success of the program.

## **GUIDE TO STANDARDIZED MARKER HARDWARE**

Roadside safety policy, criteria, and technology is a rapidly changing field of study. As a result, every two years we review state and federal highway rules and regulations as they pertain to our Fatality Marker.

One of my primary duties as Chairman of the Fatality Marker Program is to review existing rule, regulations, and guidelines for the program. Correspondence between MDT and the American Legion have clearly stated our support posts needed to conform to the bendable, or as I call it, the “delineator” standard.

Our specifications and guidelines pertaining to materials and placement passed inspection of the Administration (Lawyers) at Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), with one exception: Two years ago, we were allowed to retain the phrase: **“Fatality Markers currently in place (pre-2020) are “Grandfathered” and do not need to be removed or corrected to conform to these standards.” This sentence was struck and effective immediately, support posts must be bendable/crash proof delineator posts.**

We also had a conversation concerning annual maintenance of American Legion Fatality Markers. It is my belief; Fatality Markers not being maintained properly should be removed.

These changes were published in the most recent issue of our Guide to Standardized Marker Hardware and included in one of our twice a month newsletter.

## **COMMUNICATE REGULARLY**

Twice a month a newsletter goes out to Department, District and Posts which have indicated a desire to receive information pertaining to recent fatalities with bits of relevant information which may prove helpful. Reports include recent fatalities across the state with the purpose of alerting Posts to fatalities in their area of responsibility. We attempt

to publish Date/Time of Crash, County and nearest Mile marker are included. Unfortunately, we are no longer able to communicate Mile marker to the nearest tenth of a mile.

## **INTERNAL DATABASE**

We continue to maintain an annual internal database which includes the following information on each fatality: Case ID, Crash Date/Time, Fatalities, Age, Gender, Highway, Mile Marker (nearest tenth), Direction of Travel, County, Latitude, Longitude and more.

This annual database is compiled at the end of each calendar year and can be sorted. We have made it available to District, County and Post Coordinators upon request. If you wish to have a record of all fatal crashes in your county, for any particular year, just say the word.

In the event you wish to catch up, we also have available Request for Fatality Markers over the past five years.

## **NEWS RELEASE**

Our most recent statewide release of information dealt with Decoration of Fatality Markers. It was released to news outlets and included a 10-minute segment on talk radio with Arron Flint on "Montana Talks".

A copy of the release was included in our bi-monthly newsletter for Post distribution to small local newspapers.

## **ANNUAL MAINTENANCE**

Recently sent out a couple of topics pertaining to Annual Maintenance which should have been completed prior to Memorial Day weekend. I will list them in this report for those Legionnaires who are not on our mailing list.

### **How to Clean Powder-Coated Aluminum**

One of the many, many advantages of powder-coated aluminum is that it requires little maintenance. Because it is so durable, powder-coated surfaces do not require the touch-ups that other finishes do. Your powder-coated Fatality Markers will maintain their glossy color and finish through rain, snow, and all kinds of other adverse circumstances.

Powder-coated aluminum is extremely durable, and it is very unlikely you could ruin it just by cleaning it wrong.

If cleaning a batch of stored Markers, pour hot water into a tub or bucket and add a few squirts of dish soap or another degreaser. Dunk the aluminum piece into the soapy water and clean away dirt with a non-abrasive sponge.

For extra dirty areas on the aluminum, use a mild abrasive to clean away gunk. Get a cloth wet with warm water and sprinkle a layer of baking soda over it.

### **Dealing With Rusted Steel Markers**

A trick learned long ago – have a couple of spares!

I would collect old steel Markers, grind them down in the off-season, and apply several coats of Rust-Oleum paint and install them as needed. You sometimes need several spares due to difference in mounting.

### **OUTSTANDING REQUESTS FOR FATALITY MARKERS**

We receive numerous inquiries about the Fatality Marker Program, along with many requests for fatality markers to be installed or repaired.

We take calls from individuals with disturbing news for the Program. Comments range from a woman who was told, “we don’t do that anymore” another was told one of our larger Posts “no longer existed,” to reports of unanswered published phones numbers and inactive websites. Others have asked local authorities and they are unaware of what organization put up the White Crosses. Other individuals have gone to an American Legion Post with specific intent to request a Fatality Marker, giving date, highway, location, etc. In some instances no marker had been installed.

My process includes a referral to the Adjutant of the nearest American Legion Post, with instructions “if their request is not filled within 30 days to recontact me. Upon their second call, attempts to contact the Post have been from my office via telephone or email. Again, the family member is asked to recontact me within 30 days. We now have a growing list of unfilled requests that are quite delinquent.

Worse case situations, a neighboring Post may be requested to install a Marker. We have Posts who have gone beyond their responsibilities to maintain and install Fatality Markers. Among them, Bozeman, Forsyth, Billings, Red Lodge, Missoula, Ronan, Roundup, Valier, Florence, Thompson Falls, Great Falls, Havre. I am sure there are more of which we are not aware.

Success is built on fulfilling our commitment and responsibilities to our communities and our organization.

## YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR THIS

I am beginning to think I may be a slow learner. Before retiring, my life was totally submerged in using e-mail, video conference calling, cellphone, computer applications, satellite communications, websites, digital presentations, distant learning and more. So yes, I am comfortable with using technology. BUT I am finding others are not.

Communicating with my partners in the Fatality Marker program, I relied heavily on electronic data. In the past months, I have traced my email communications to see (1) if individuals are receiving the messages, and (2), whether they are reading the messages because there has been little response coming back. One example: sent message to sixty-five individuals yielded four readings. Not a good sign.

Then my question turned to the program, is it lack of leadership on my part, a lack of consistent participation among Posts, apathy, boredom, too much information, too much work, or does it signify the demise for the 70-year-old program that was proclaimed to be **"...One of the finest projects I have ever seen undertaken by an organization. Motorists seeing the crosses should be impressed by the need for careful driving and safe speeds."** Harry Soderberg, Former Montana Highway Commission Chair

Only you can answer the last set of questions.

## KUDOS

Someone once said, "The friendship of those we serve is the foundation of our progress".

In the rush of our daily lives, we tend to overlook the important friendships that contribute to our working relationships. I for one, on behalf of the Montana American Legion Fatality Marker Program, am grateful for the opportunity to say thank you for your friendship and demonstrated goodwill. "Thank You!!" seems so inadequate when measured against your contributions.

It was my high honor and pleasure to have served you in the Fatality Marker Program.

## HOMELESS VETERAN COORDINATOR

**Ray Read**

The Montana Department's participation in The American Legion's Homeless Veterans Program is now moving into its fourteenth year. Glen Sharbono, 2021-22 Montana Department Commander, re-appointed me as the Coordinator of the Program as the as the Homeless Veterans Coordinator at the 2021 Department Convention effective July 2021. I respectfully submit the following report of the record to date.

Montana Statistics Related to Homeless Veterans is as follows:

Facts: Of the 92, 300 veterans recognized and recorded by the VA as being in Montana, 75,312 are indicated as wartime veterans. Breakdown by era is: Gulf War- 31,210; Vietnam- 35,105; Korea-7,831; WW II-3,987. Peacetime veterans number 24,244. The ratio of gender is Female veterans 9,000 and Male veterans 83,200. Comment: It is estimated that based on averaging 2.5 members per veteran's household that the total veterans' population including family members is at 249,000+- or nearly 1/4 of the total population of Montana.

National Statistics indicate that up to 3.8% of Montana's population of veterans is at risk or homeless. The definition of homeless as defined by United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is, "Without and abode or home, living with family or relative because they cannot afford or qualify for a home residence, or living in an institutional setting because they cannot qualify or are financially unable to rent or own a home."

**In the latest Montana Homeless Survey conducted in January 2021 of the total Homeless population in Montana was surveyed at 1,545 Total Household experiencing homelessness is 167 person respondents of which 165 Veterans were identified as to the as to being homeless<sup>3</sup>. This indicates that homelessness among Montana veterans was up 10.7% of the total homeless of Montana based on the Survey similar to the results from the previous year, This includes incomplete information on rural veterans' homelessness. The 2022 PIT is being processed at will be available later this year.**

The following information was provided for the January 2021 Point in Time Survey by Housing & Urban Development conducted in January 2021. These reflect the collection

effort based in cities and towns broken into Districts by Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These districts do not emulate Montana Department /American Legion Districts as currently configured. HUD District 1,2,3-Eastern Montana; District 4- Havre; District 5- Great Falls; District 6- Lewistown; District 7- Billings; District 8- Helena; District 9- Bozeman; District 10- Kalispell; District 11- Missoula; and District 12-Butte. **Survey areas did not totally encompass Montana rural areas.** The thing to take away from this is that Homelessness is still present and is a problem we must address at Post level and above:

I have within the last couple of months an increase in requests for assistance dealing with Homeless Veterans. These have come from Billings, Kalispell, Missoula, and some rural areas.

I was able to make a solid contact with the Fort Harrison Veterans Affairs, Homeless Veterans Program.

Dennis Hanson, LCSW, LAC, HCHV Outreach Specialist Helena, MT (406) 447-6045

Abigail Bridgett, MSW, HCHV Outreach Specialist, Billings, M 406-373-3926

Homeless Vets Hotline: 1877-4AID VET 1-877-424-3838

I have provided the Department Executive Committee with brochures related to all the programs other than the brochure *A Guide to Veterans Justice Outreach and Healthcare for Re-Entry Veterans*

If you have any questions contact Raymond K. Read, Homeless Veterans Coordinator, 406-458-9847/ 406-235-0290 Email: [myfun51@msn.com](mailto:myfun51@msn.com)

Recommendations for 2022-2023:

1. That the Montana Department of the American Legion continue to develop and conduct its Homeless Veterans strategy in coordination with the National Economics Division of The American Legion, the Veterans Administration of Montana, Federal Housing and Urban Development, the Montana Department of Health and Human Services and the many local service organizations who dedicate resources to reduce and eliminate homelessness in Montana.

2. That the Department of Montana of the American Legion strive to establish volunteer homeless Veteran's coordinators at Post, District and, Zone levels as necessary to interface with the Department on issues and offer solutions of Veterans homelessness. In lieu of dedicated resources the responsibility falls to the post, district, and zone commander by default.

3. That the Department of Montana of the American Legion supports the various Homeless Veterans Stand downs scheduled throughout Montana 2021-2022. One has been conducted according to the VA in Great Falls in Early October. Classified a veterans' resource programs rather than a full stand down. Veteran related events previously identified as being in Plains, Helena, Missoula, Dillon, Miles City, and Libby, and on the High line of Montana with Havre, Montana as the hub.

4. That those American Legion Posts conducting a Stand down coordinate and apply utilizing VA Stand Down Notice of Proposed Event Form available online and complete the VA Stand Down After Action Report available online at the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. Email [kmcevilly@nchv.org](mailto:kmcevilly@nchv.org) the website is [www.nchv.org](http://www.nchv.org). Telephone number is 202-546-1969.

## **INSURANCE DIRECTOR**

**Gary White**

As of April 21, 2022 - \$147,549.00 in premiums were paid in the Department of Montana for Long Term Care, HIP, AUX HIP and Cancer, Cancer Disability, AD & D and Life Insurance; a decrease of \$9,589.00 since 2021. Allocations paid to the Department were \$19,806.00 an increase of \$10,250.00; this is after last year's decrease of \$9,556.00. This year's increase was based solely on our tri-annual special dividend. We received a promotional bonus of \$841.00, a decrease of \$115.00, this after last year's decrease of \$103.00. The promotional bonus is based on membership; to increase the bonus we obviously need to increase membership.

This year our projection of income for 2022 was \$12,000.00, we exceeded that projection by \$8647.00 only because of the special dividend; without that due to less policies and lower membership we would have been under that projection by approximately \$4,000.00. With the aging of our membership we continue to lose paying insured members at a higher rate than new policies being written. We must rectify this by informing our members of the many insurance opportunities LIT offers.

The LIT offers 13 different insurance products, but our most popular products are the cancer and EA+ insurance. There is a myriad of promotional information available for the Post to use, please contact me if you require any information. Our job is not to be insurance salesmen, but to inform our members of the insurance benefits. Please remind your members of the Accidental Death benefit periodically so they can take advantage of this program and remind them they must register.

The information LIT gathers from these sign ups is the number one source of policies written. We only have 5,326 members currently registered to receive the AD. Signing up for the free AD is our best way of ensuring the LIT markets to the right age group. Remember when you transfer a member from DMS to provide them with the information on the free AD, they do not receive the info from National. If a member is in doubt about being registered, they can call LIT or go online at [www.theLIT.com/LegionCare2](http://www.theLIT.com/LegionCare2) to check their status, every year we have family members of deceased members attempt to file a claim only to find their loved was not registered. Once a member registers, they are now registered for as long as they are members.

We have got to ensure our members are registered for this benefit, especially our new members, and remember any member acquired through DMS has never been given a registration opportunity for the free AD. **Senior (18 or older)Auxiliary and senior Sons of the American Legion members can sign up for the free AD & D under the same conditions.**

Over the years the insurance program has been a “cash cow” for the Department, however unless we get more members interested in the LIT programs it will continue to decrease in allocations paid. The LIT recognizes that they must continue to offer good reasonably priced products and introduce new products to interest our new younger members.

Our best-selling policies continue to be the Hospitalization, EA+ and Cancer policies. This year the Auxiliary participated in marketing the EA+ and Cancer programs to their members, as a result they received an allocation of \$233.00, a decrease of \$16.00.

In 2020 the LIT instituted a new incentive program for those Departments with innovative membership programs; the best three will receive \$12,500, \$7500.00, and \$5000.00 respectively.

Since 1967, when our Department joined with the Legionnaire Insurance Trust the Department has received \$724,994.00.

Check out [www.theLIT.com](http://www.theLIT.com) for further information on LIT products.

The Department no longer receives insurance revenue from USAA, however we do receive a disbursement from USAA based on membership.

See attached for listing of number of members in your Post registered for LegionCare (Accidental Death no cost to you Accident Insurance Protection)



## **LEGION RIDERS' COORDINATOR**

**Gil Floyd**

As normal the riding season is upon us with Riders taking on multiple fundraising and community service projects across the state. Many of the Riders have events that cover every weekend during the summer. The American Legion Riders of MT had a meeting in January that was well attended and very productive. The group agreed that the Department Constitution would not be in the best interest of the Riders in MT. The Riders will be having a group event the same weekend as Department Convention and supporting the Lewistown post. We hope to have the Riders event a different weekend than convention when Department is back on the regularly schedule weekend. I want to take a moment to recognize the ALR members across the country that ride hundreds of thousands of miles each year too and in events for our communities.

## **LEGISLATIVE**

**Roger Hagan**

Your Legislative Committee continues to engage with both state and federal legislators to promote the issues most important to our American Legion membership. Your Congressional and Governor Liaisons have been in contact with their respective member over the past year. I want to welcome two new congressional liaisons to our team. For Senator Daines, Joe Foster has stepped away from the Liaison duties, and we are fortunate that our former Adjutant, Gary White, has been appointed to assume those duties. Gary will do outstanding in this position as he has a great rapport with the Daines team. Recently, Jim Korth stepped down from the Congressman Rosendale Liaison position and, to our good fortune, Scott Miller from Bridger has been appointed to coordinate with Representative Rosendale and his staff concerning our American Legion priorities. Larry Jent continues to serve you well as the Liaison to Senator Tester.

The newly established Governor Liaison position was filled by Bill White. Bill and I meet with Governor Gianforte's staff quarterly to keep the Governor apprised of our statewide efforts and interests. We have ongoing discussions about future Veterans Cemeteries and requesting an update of the 2006 Veteran Long Term Care Needs Study. It is our belief that the 'in-depth' study of veteran long term care needs that was done in 2006, and very instrumental in justifying the need for our 3<sup>rd</sup> Veteran's Home, should be updated. It is our wish that the new study would also include an analysis of future Veteran Cemetery requirements. Considering expanded qualification of burial eligibility in state veterans cemeteries, the future may indicate a need for additional cemeteries.

These 4 gentlemen are doing great work on your behalf. If you see them, thank them for their contributions to our efforts.

In February, while attending an Enlisted Association of the National Guard Legislative Workshop in Washington, D.C., I was able to get our American Legion Legislative Priorities list to each of our congressional members. Since the annual Legion Washington Call In was virtual again this year, I took this opportunity to discuss our Legion priorities in person while at the National Guard Workshop.

The State Administration and Veterans Affairs (SAVA) Interim Committee continues to be apprised of our legislative priorities and we remain attentive to any committee discussion on issues we are not aware of and offering our input to those 'pop up' issues. The Montana Department is respected by the committee and remains a source of information for them.

It is important that all of our members subscribe to the national program called VoterVoice. You can click on this link ([votervoicenet.com/AmericanLegion/home](http://votervoicenet.com/AmericanLegion/home)) and "Sign up for Alerts". Montana is near the bottom of the list of states who contact their congressional members concerning our national issues. In a recent email from the national legislative team, Montana's response to calls for congressional communications was .7% of our membership (membership compared to VoterVoice actions), which put us 9<sup>th</sup> worst in the nation. Be watching for an article in our July Legion newsletter about the VoterVoice program. Encourage your fellow members to 'Sign up for Alerts'.

I ask you to become/remain engaged in the political process. Since we just completed a primary election, take the time to get to know who your state legislative candidates are, and contact them early and often. Let them know your needs, interests, and preferences. Talk with them about military and veteran issues and find out where they stand on those issues. It is important that you have an informed vote in the November election. Then, let your Montana Department know of the results of your engagement. Grassroots is the lifeblood of legislative efforts, both on the state and national level.

If you have any questions or input, please be sure to share it with your post or the department so we can include your thoughts in our deliberations.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

**Jeff Nelson**

As membership chairman I travelled throughout the state this past spring discussing transferring members from Headquarters Post 105 into local post. The amount of members on the DMS list was significantly less than a year ago. It indicated that members were getting transferred, but there was always new members joining our ranks throughout the year and hopefully were being transferred. I encouraged a handful of dept. leaders to go over the list this spring and try and get them into a local post. I transferred close to 100 members this year and hopefully Montana moved up in the national rankings in membership with the help of those that reached out and transferred these members. It is upon everyone to check for members in their area on personify and get them into local post, they just might be your post new commander in a few years if given the right mentorship.

## NATIONAL SECURITY

**Ken Simon**

As I prepared to write this year's report, I got to thinking about what involves National Security and what we can do as citizens to be a part of National Security and how it affects our daily lives. Here's a definition of National Security: The safety of a country as managed through the exercise of economic and political power, intelligence agencies, and diplomacy. Further, it is described by Wikipedia as: **National security**, or **national defense**, is the security and defense of a sovereign state, including its citizens, economy, and institutions, which is regarded as a duty of government. Originally conceived as protection against military attack, national security is widely understood to include also non-military dimensions, including the security from terrorism, minimization of crime, economic, energy security, environment security, food security, and cyber-security. Similarly, national security risks include, in addition to the actions of other nation states, action by violent non-state actors, by narcotic cartels, and by multinational corporations, and also the effects of natural disasters.

Having this definition in mind, what instances come to mind that have made you think of or wonder about our Nations National Security? Was it the 2020 Election fallout, Covid becoming an alleged pandemic, with drawl from Afghanistan, the Capitol riot in Jan, global supply chain fallout, climate change push, the riots after the death of a black man in Minneapolis, or the state of the nation due to the new President shutting down the Keystone pipeline and stopping oil and gas drilling? It is many events that can affect our Nations Security as you can see.

Since the middle of last year there have been more events that gave rise of concern about the Security of our Nation. Open Borders which allowed thousands of people to enter

illegally across the southern border, many of whom never were ever stopped or vetted so we have no idea if there are terrorists, subversives, criminals, and drug cartel folks in our country. There are however laws in place to stop this and keep illegals from entering in vast numbers due to the vast expanse of unguarded border and few Border Patrol Agents to patrol and prevent this from occurring! The covid scare created holdups with imports of goods from foreign nations and the exporting of goods overseas. Seaports around the U.S. were running at less than full capability due to illnesses of dock workers as well as truck drivers and train crews to move what was off loaded from the cargo ships. This snowball effect created shortages of items necessary to keep our automotive industry successfully putting out new vehicles, some food items, and other essentials from reaching store shelves! And to make this all much worse was the fact that our elected representatives were unable to come together and conduct productive business for our nation and its people! Crime is on the rise throughout our country and there is still a shortage of law enforcement officers to fill the ranks of those who quit, due to the movement by some states to defund the police! All of the above and more affects our countries National Security.

Not withstanding the above information, the fact that our government once again began talks with Iran about its Nuclear Program and Russia's invasion of the peaceful nation of Ukraine added more for us to be watchful off. Why you might ask? Well, it appears that the Iran deal may not be in the best interest of our country and the world as a whole. They are well known for their terrorist activities and we are likely at the top of the list. If Iran continues with its Nuclear Program, do you think that they will not build a nuclear device and threaten the Western world with it? What would stop them if they possess all of the components?

A drastic turn of events occurred on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – the withdrawal from Afghanistan. The United States completed its military withdrawal from Afghanistan but not without issues including loss of American lives. To back up in time this withdrawal from Afghanistan was set up by the previous administration with a time line of how and when US troops would withdraw. When the present administration took over and the plan was presented to the President, he was briefed and advised by his military advisors to delay the withdrawal time line.

There were also calls from several elected officials from both sides of the isle that were in agreement with the military assessment of the situation. There were many unanswered questions about the withdrawal concerning the safety and security of not only the American and Allied forces but Afghan civilians and soldiers who had been advisors to all military forces in Afghanistan. Answers were required regarding the accounting of all the

military equipment and assets that were being left behind that would be in the hands of the Taliban. This ranged from weapons sights on personal firearms to helicopters costing millions, weapons, and ammunition. Concerns were what intelligence and insight could this provide to countries not favorable to the United States.

Quoting Congressman Daniel Webster," The tragic reality is our withdrawal from Afghanistan was ordered by President Biden without sufficient warning to our allies, Americans living in-country, or a plan for safe passage for the tens of thousands that would need to evacuate. Numerous reports on the ground were that we could not get every American and ally by the Presidents deadline. For days, I and many of my Democrat and Republican colleagues have called on President Biden to not stick with this arbitrary date. Additionally, this situation is not a failure of our dedicated men and women in uniform, but a failure of our top policymakers. Please join me in expressing gratitude to our active-duty troops and veterans who have served in Afghanistan, their loved ones and our gold star families. Take time to check in with your fellow warriors and family members who served. We owe them a debt we can never repay. America is safer because of their work, service, and sacrifice over the last 20 years."

By making the decision to change the withdrawal date, this disastrous decision early on in Biden's Presidency led to the biggest crisis and raised far-reaching questions in the ability and capability to build lasting institutions in their image overseas as well as their willingness to do so in the future.

The capture of Saigon by North Vietnamese forces in 1975 along with the speed of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan has drawn comparisons and shaken generations of U.S. veterans who served there and watched the wars' final days with sadness. Commending U.S. troops for carrying out the largest airlift in U.S. history, Biden in a statement said, Quote: "with unmatched courage, professionalism, and resolve." "Now, our 20-year military presence in Afghanistan has ended," he said. Nearly 2,500 Americans have been killed in the conflict, including 13 troops in a suicide bombing by Islamic State last week outside the airport. Many of them were just babies when the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks took place.

In a statement, General McKenzie said and I quote, "No words from me could possibly capture the full measure of sacrifices and accomplishments of those who served, nor the emotions they're feeling at this moment. But I will say that I'm proud that both my son and I have been a part of it."

Taliban Co-Operation: McKenzie said the Taliban helped secure the airfield as the United States carried out the evacuation. But he cited a rare convergence of interests: The Taliban wanted the United States out of Afghanistan, and the United States wanted to leave. But he warned that the Taliban would have difficulty grappling with Islamic State, a fierce

enemy of both the West and the Taliban. He declined to speculate about future cooperation with the Taliban following the U.S. departure. The withdrawal opens a new chapter in the U.S. effort to keep pressure on groups it sees as mortal enemies, including the Islamic State and al Qaeda. Following the suicide attacks, the U.S. military flew in drones for strikes in Afghanistan to attack Islamic State targets. Experts warn that U.S. intelligence is far harder to collect from overseas and strikes carry more risk now, because of the loss of allies who worked side by side with US forces over the years.

Then there is Russia flexing its muscle by invading the nation of Ukraine. Without any provocation except the false flag move they used to conduct ground, air, and sea operations, they began to send missiles and rockets at various targets inside the country followed by aircraft dropping bombs and tanks firing shells at what the Russian military said were military targets. The world knows well how this played out, because it was well documented by the press who were there on the ground to report first hand. As we saw, as time went on the missiles, bombs, rockets, artillery, and tank rounds were directed at the civilian community including homes, businesses, apartments, daycares, schools, churches, and train stations. They were not military targets, but the Russians would tell the world that there were military personnel in those buildings and so were military targets.

As the conflict wore on it was evident that Russia was not fairing so well and around the end of April Russia's dictator ruler, Vladimir Putin mentioned the use of nuclear weapons and even had a bomber that was alleged to have nuclear weapons on board to fly close to the Ukrainian border! It is unknown for sure if the aircraft actually was carrying a nuclear weapon or warhead, just the fact that it was indicated that that is what its main use was. It did raise the question as to whether the Russian leader would actually deploy a nuclear warhead into the Ukrainian War and what affect it might have on the rest of the world.

What is deeply troubling is the use of decoy weapons by the Russian forces. The purpose is to confuse the Ukrainian anti-missile detection system and overwhelm it so that missiles with actual explosive warheads can reach their intended targets more successfully! And the other discovery is that Russian forces have actually been able to seize a large store of NATO weapons and munitions. This could be cause for concern because they are the very antitank weapons that the Ukrainians were very successful in employing and destroying large numbers of Russian tanks and other combat vehicles.

Along with this invasion it has been stated that Putin has stated he would like to annex through moves like the war on Ukraine on other countries that were originally part of the Soviet Union. His vision was to bring those small countries or areas back under the full control of Russia. In so doing the Russian leader may end up causing an unintended conflict with the NATO and European Union countries which could escalate into a much larger conflict. This could possibly bring other countries into the fray like China and North Korea as well as many Middle Eastern countries. The only problem with this is the

possibility of it creating WWII and the use of nuclear weapons. That may be why Russia has not deployed any nuclear weapons or warheads in the Ukraine, because there would be wide spread destruction and devastation with no winners.

To perhaps bring some clarity into focus there was a comment by Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko about the situation in the Ukraine. Quote: “The unwillingness of Western countries to work on strengthening common and indivisible security, their disregard for legitimate interests and ignoring the concerns of other partners, primarily Russia, first resulted in trade, economic, and information wars, and then provoked a hot conflict on the territory of Ukraine,” Lukashenko said. “The security architecture in Europe has failed.” Unquote. Lukashenko also blamed other countries, not Russia, for kickstarting the war, claiming that they ignore Russian needs, echoing earlier complaints from Putin about Ukraine and NATO acting aggressively towards Russia.

Then there is the Taiwan situation with China wanting to take the country over because they claim it belongs to them. Taiwan continues to be repeatedly menaced by Chinese warplanes. The ominous development has some observers warning that the risk of armed conflict is a growing possibility. China recently initiated its largest-ever incursion into Taiwanese airspace in an exercise that involved some 154 aircraft, including some three dozen fighter jets and a dozen bombers, prompting Taiwan to make initial preparations for a worst-case scenario. The influx of military forces marked 72 years since communist forces cemented their control over mainland China.

“Military aggression”: Chinese incursion flights are also significant as it saw the election of the new Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. Taiwan Premier Su Tseng-chang voiced his objections to the latest Chinese actions, with Reuters quoting him as telling reporters during a briefing on Saturday that “China has been wantonly engaged in military aggression, damaging regional peace.” State Department reaction offered similar condemnation, saying in a statement, the United States “is very” concerned over China’s “provocative military activity near Taiwan.”

Price went on to add that such “destabilizing” behavior creates a risk of “miscalculations,” while undermining “regional peace and stability.” “We urge Beijing to cease its military, diplomatic, and economic pressure and coercion against Taiwan,” the State Department official stressed. Price concluded by insisting, “We will continue to stand with friends and allies to advance our shared prosperity, security, and values and deepen our ties with democratic Taiwan. The United States dispatched the aircraft carriers USS Ronald Reagan and USS Carl Vinson to the region alongside one aircraft carrier each from the United Kingdom and Japan. China has a long history of making aggressive moves towards Taiwan, although its rhetoric has grown more heated following America’s withdrawal from Afghanistan over the summer. A Chinese state-owned newspaper published an op-ed in

which it warned the people of Taiwan that the United States would abandon them just as it had allies in Afghanistan.

China has threatened to attack the United States if they came to the aid of Taiwan in case China should attempt to take the Island and bring it back under its sphere of influence. This was presented in an article called the Global Times, which is an official mouthpiece that prints the regime's propaganda. The paper stated that the People's Liberation Army will attack the U.S. troops heavily if the US goes to the aid of Taiwan. Remarks by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan elicited this threat from China for the remarks that the U.S. will render aid to Taiwan should China make an effort to attack the island. The threat to Taiwan has become more threatening since President Biden took office and our bolstering of the island's ability to defend itself and to warn the CCP against escalation. This was the first time that China has made an actual threat to attack U.S. troops should they be deployed to aid Taiwan.

The Chinese threatened that any attempt to come to Taiwan's aid would result in reunification by force and the more the two continue dialogue regarding support, the sooner China would force unification. Even though the Global Times indicated that China would not back down from any U.S. attempt to thwart a forceful takeover and reunification of Taiwan. Sullivan was warned not to get too boisterous about the U.S. involvement, otherwise he would only create a more embarrassing situation for the United States.

The United States, Japan, United Kingdom, and Taiwan form a grouping known as the Quad that is largely aimed at countering China's influence. While the government of President Tsai Ing-wen asserts Taiwan is already a de facto independent nation in need of wider international recognition, Beijing claims it as part of its territory that must be brought under control by force if necessary. Beijing does not want to get into a conflict due to the fact that a twice-a-decade congress is liable to give Xi a precedent-defying third term in power.

China's top diplomat again warned the US over its increased support for Taiwan, showing the island democracy remains a major sticking point between the world's biggest economies as Beijing sent more military aircraft toward the island. "If the US side insists on playing the Taiwan card and goes further and further down the wrong road, it will certainly lead to a dangerous situation," Yang Jiechi, Beijing's top diplomat, said in a phone call with National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. Yang said Washington should "have a clear understanding of the situation," according to a statement posted online by his nation's Foreign Ministry. "China will certainly take firm action to safeguard its sovereignty and security interests," he added. The White House issued a short statement on the Wednesday call, saying the pair "focused on regional security issues and nonproliferation."



Meanwhile, Taiwan's Defense Ministry said on its website that four People's Liberation Army aircraft, including a pair of J-16 fighter jets, entered its air defense identification zone, skirting close to the median line of the Taiwan Strait. China frequently lashes out at the US over its backing for Taiwan, saying it amounts to interference in its internal affairs. Xi told Biden in the March call that the issue could "have a disruptive impact on the relationship between the two countries" if it was not properly handled, and has referred to China's quest to gain control of the democratically ruled island as a "historic mission." Earlier this week, Admiral Michael Gilday, the top American naval officer, said Taiwan must prepare itself against potential Chinese aggression through military deterrence that includes getting the right weapons and training. Gilday said this was the "big lesson learned and a wakeup call" following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The US has stepped up its backing for Taiwan since the war in Ukraine started, with a group of senior senators Tiawan. China responded to that trip by conducting air and naval training near the island. The State Department updated a Taiwan factsheet posted on its website, dropping a reference to not supporting the island's independence, and describing it as "a leading democracy and a technological powerhouse." It also said Taiwan was a key partner in the semiconductor industry and "other critical supply chains." More than 50 senators signed a letter urging President Biden to include Taiwan as a partner in the proposed Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, part of Washington's efforts to counter China's clout in Asia.

## **ORATORICAL**

### **Jeff Holmes**

First off, I would like to congratulate Elizabeth Henslee a student at Gallatin Gateway and sponsored by District #7 work winning the Department Oratorical Contest on Saturday March 13<sup>th</sup>. You made us proud, and we are glad that you decided to further your leadership education through the American Legion Oratorical Program. We wish you all the success at the National Contest. Brilee Peters of Harlowton took second place followed by Dillon MacIlwraith of Darby for third followed by Teagan Clement of Helena placing 4<sup>th</sup>. I would like to thank all posts, districts, and participants for supporting the Oratorical Contest as part of their objectives.

Secondly, a huge shout out to Kim Kay Carol McCarty Martin for all her work as the local liaison in Great Falls and for lining up most of the workers and judges. I would also like to thank Lowell & Kathy Long for their continued support and help. I would not be able to

host such a successful contest without the work of all the people. Thanks also to the University of Providence for the use of their facilities.

We again used the new format this year, and again it worked great. Obviously we only had four contestants so we split the cash awards as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> - \$360; 2<sup>nd</sup> - \$255; 3<sup>rd</sup> - \$230; and 4<sup>th</sup> - \$205. We were also done by noon and able to save the money budgeted for meals. I am so thankful you approved this change to our oratorical format.

Next year's Department Oratorical Contest is scheduled to be held in Belgrade/Bozeman in early March 2023. Date TBD.

I work for you and try to make your job easier. As always, let me know what I can do to help. We are all in this together.

## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS & PUBLICATIONS**

### **Christine Miller**

The paper continues to pick up momentum as we are receiving more and more articles from posts that have not submitted in the past. I see this as a positive direction for the state as a whole and growth of the department.

All submissions must be made to [lmtpub@gmail.com](mailto:lmtpub@gmail.com) This continues to be the only way articles are accepted for print it simplifies the entire process.

WE continue to grow the paper to include more and work with the printer to improve color resolution and content. Delivery is touch and go and the last issue was delayed through no fault of the Legion or our layout designer. The printer was delayed, we continue to work this issue and the problems involved.

The winter issue of the paper I took the initiative to assist the Auxiliary in putting together their pages as their editor was dealing with many issues at home and felt that as part of the legion family this was the correct way to assist and ensure they were properly represented in the issue.

Lastly, I would like to approach department about using DROPBOX for communication with the publisher. I feel like it will clean up the process and make larger files able to be dropped without several emails. It's a minimal cost and would leave everyone involved with the publication simple access to the involved files. The DROPBOX option is something that needs to be addressed as storage is an issue within our GMAIL account as well.

I continue to learn and enjoy the many submissions that come in. I want to encourage more posts to submit articles, pictures and be involved in the department wide publication as Montana is a big state with so many posts.

### **SON OF THE AMERICAN LEGION (S.A.L.) ADVISOR**

#### **Eddy White**

The Detachment of Montana had reestablished vacant positions due to the resignation of Vice Commander Colter Landt. John Meacham was elected to be Vice Commander and Mike Schendel was elected as the Western Zone Commander for the remainder the 2021-2022 Year.

Also, the Detachment presented awards to the two Squadrons for the Membership Growth with the limited access to plaques: Plentywood Squadron 58 at 155% increase and Lolo Squadron 135 at 128% increase from 2020 membership year.

American Legion Boys State Chair, Josh Clement presented an update to the Detachment of Montana about the program and asked for continued support of the program.

We discussed the possibility of adding more Squadrons, Vice Commander Meacham, Commander Nelson and Past Alt-NEC Lowell Long all reported on the possibility of starting new Squadrons. More work is needed to be done along with the support of the Posts involved.

Current Detachment Membership as reported by National, as of the 100% Target date of May 11, 2022 is 87.33% Not an all time low, but as a Detachment, we have only made the first three target dates. We are still short of the goal by 147 members.

With that shortcoming, I do see a strong interest in the SAL, but engagement and involvement is important and needs to be encouraged by the rest of The American Legion Family

### **SHOOTING SPORTS**

#### **Larry Dobb**

Since my report for the Department Fall Conference, a lot has happened concerning the Junior Shooting Sports program. As I have reported in the past, Department of Montana has at various times had as many as twenty seven posts that participated in this program.

Some sponsored more than one team or individual competitor. In 2019 we had eight posts participate, in 2020 only six and in 2021 only four. In 2022 (the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual American Legion Junior Shooting Three Position Air Rifle Postal Tournament) there were only three. A fourth missed the December 15 deadline to have everything to National Headquarters by COB, so could not compete.

As I have stated before, there have been a number of changes in the registration process, such as a shorter time frame to register, an updated online only registration process and a credit card only option for payment all of which may explain some of those who did not participate in recent years. In addition, two years ago one post did not complete in time the Risk Management requirements required by the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-126) which was signed into law in February 2018.

The 2021-2022 competition did produce something I have not seen before. One club, The Gallatin Valley Sharpshooters (Manhattan Post 87) swept the entire competition. They were Montana Team Champions in both the “Sporter” and “Precision” disciplines and a member of each disciplines team won the title of Individual State Champion. I’ve never heard of such a complete sweep of the awards by an individual team.

The winners were Nicole Berger, Individual State Champion in Sporter discipline and Alison Sutherlin, Individual State Champion in Precision discipline. The members of the State Team Champions in Sporter are Nicole Berger, Natalie Samson, Marlie Sampson and Evan Lubick. The members of the Team Champions in Precision are Allison Sutherlin, Paige Hildebrandt, Ethan Bates and Mariah McPhee.

I have certificates from National Headquarters for all the winners and am awaiting arrival of medals to arrange award ceremonies with the Manhattan Post. At this time, I do not have any information of the results of Round 2, as to whether anyone from Montana will be attending the National Championship competition in Colorado. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Round Postal Match Competition ended 1 April 2022, so I should hear something soon.

If any post is interested in becoming involved with this youth activity, please contact me ([rgelar@gmail.com/406-452-2716/406-899-8885](mailto:rgelar@gmail.com/406-452-2716/406-899-8885)).

## **VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION**

**Kate Hahn**

As the MT DSO, I attended the following events:

National Conference, Washington, DC – March 5, 2022

During the National Conference:

- ❖ I was able to attend the PTSD/TBI Committee meeting
  - Discussion RE: Use of Lethal Weapons for Suicide
  - Buddy Checks
- ❖ Attended the National Commander's address
- ❖ Attended VA&R Committee Meetings

Attended the VA&R Meetings

- ❖ There are approximately 70,000 Legacy Appeals Remaining
  - Want to do 50,000 virtually
- ❖ Approximately 200,000 claims behind due to COVID
- ❖ Increase in the Use of Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) for Compensation & Pension Examinations
- ❖ Mission Act – no privatization of VA Healthcare; a hybrid of Gov't / Non-gov't care
- ❖ Helping Veterans Transition from Service life to Civilian life
- ❖ Mobile Orthopedic Vans are being utilized in several locations in the US for veterans unable to leave their homes.
- ❖ Legislative agenda includes:
  - Address Toxic Exposure & Burn Pits
  - Peer Support
  - Citizenship for Honorable Service
  - Military Awards for Minority Veterans
  - Improving Health Care for Women

Department Service Officer School, Washington, DC – March 7 – 27, 2022

- ❖ Over 19 million veterans in the US
- ❖ 4.8 million receive disability compensation
- ❖ 99% of BVAs are granted (B&M)
- ❖ Training included two new MVAD VSOs: Kara Blom-Santucci, Brenda Evans

District Meetings Spring 2021

- ❖ Attended meetings in Anaconda and St Regis
- ❖ Met with the Auxiliary and talked about DIC/WP
- ❖ Briefed on BWN, NSC, Evidence to support disability claims
- ❖ Briefed Legionnaires about Montana State Veterans Cemeteries and eligibility requirements for burial

## **VETERANS ECONOMICS**

**Clara Santopietro**

## **VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – BILLINGS**

**Sue Davidson**

## **VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – Fort Harrison**

**Bill White**

Since the last report many things have changed and as a result some communications and activities have had to be done different this time around due to COVID-19 and still remains the same today.

1. Attended V.A.V.S. Meetings at VA Fort Harrison, MT by call in or zoom.
2. Continued as an appointed representative to the National VA and R committee
3. Continue working with Duane Cunningham, Ms. Erin Carpenter and Grant Jackson to ensure that All American Legion Volunteers are registered so that the American Legion gets proper credit, and to make sure that those who were returning to the VA to Volunteer had their COVID and FLU shots.
4. Attended all Spring District meeting invited to as VAVS representative.
5. Worked with the Department of Montana in settling in a new families that had been accepted at Freedoms Village at VA Fort Harrison
6. Worked with Post 2 Helena members to do the buddy check with a 100% check
7. Helped with Post 2 and Department of Montana to make sure that Veterans had a Merry Christmas and helped make sure that Veterans were recognized during National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans at Fort Harrison VA Medical Center.
8. Worked with the Department of Montana American Legion to help honor personal working at the VA that go the extra mile to help the Veteran and or their family
9. The other two major facilities, Miles City and Billings that fall under VAVS are handled by Ms. Clancy Collins and Ms. Sue Davidson, reported they were limited to what they could do due to the health protocols in place by the VA for the foreseeable future.

## **VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – Miles City**

## **Clancee Collins**

I have not been able to access the CBOC or other locations to preform duties. We were able to donate gifts at Christmas time through the VA Giving Tree.

## **WOMEN'S VETERANS COORDINATOR**

### **Kim Kay Carol McCarty Martin**

March was Women Veterans Recognition Month, a month to recognize all women veterans for serving in our armed forces, for signing up and doing their part in defending our great nation. I want to thank all women veterans and all veterans for your sacrifice to our nation.  
Thank You

In Washington, DC is the Women Veterans Memorial, an interactive memorial where women veterans can put in their information on their service. I encourage everyone to check it out....see whom in the past, like our WWII women veterans from Montana, where they served, what job did they perform. If you or a member of your family already deceased are not in the data base at the memorial go to **Herstory** and put in all the information you know so others may see it.

Recognizing Women Vets is not always easy as most women don't wear shirts or ballcaps with our branch of service on it. So that makes it a little harder to recognize a female veteran. It's also harder to get them to join The American Legion because they may not know that they are eligible...so remember that there are at least 15% of legionnaires that are women.

In learning about the Cadet Nurses Corp from WWII this fall from Helen of Helena, a Nurse Cadet, I googled more information and found out quite a number of Nurse Cadets came from Montana. It was a program where the young lady signed up to be a nurse, took the oath of office, went to school paid for by the government and upon graduating were sent to a hospital to work in the state or another state. They were just as instrumental in our healthcare and caring wounded personnel being transported back to the states. There has been a bill in Congress in the past to recognize Cadet Nurses Corp from WWII but it never got out of committee.

There is currently House Bill 2568 United States Cadet Nurse Corps Service Recognition Act of 2021 introduced into the House on 20 Oct 2021. It is in the Armed Services Subcommittee and two more subcommittee's where it is stalled. Please call our MT Representative Matt Rosendale to have him co-sponsor this bill and get it out of committee

and passed in The House and get it sent to the Senate. MT Rep Rosendale's phone number is 202-225-3211 in DC.

In the planning stages for women veterans to come together for activities are a bicycle ride, a float on the Clark Fork River, on Missouri River and on the Yellowstone River. A day hike at Glacier National Park and an overnight hike near Sun Canyon. I'm doing what we have done in the past and that is get sponsorship to cover the cost of the events. If you are interested in any of these, Please call me at 701-260-2833 or email me at [kmccartymartin@gmail.com](mailto:kmccartymartin@gmail.com) so I may prepare properly.

I was able to attend 10 of the 11 Spring District Conferences held this year. It was nice to be able to reconnect with everyone and meet a few members of The American Legion I hadn't met before. This opportunity in talking with every District about women veterans, I hope encourages everyone to seek out more women veterans to join the American Legion. Every veteran is an asset to The American Legion.

One of the topics I talked about was having women veterans sign up with the Women's memorial in DC by going online at HERstory. It's fairly easy to fill out the information, as the veteran or family member can include as much information they want others to see. It's a great way to preserve the veterans history for future generations.

There were two WWII women veterans in Butte we were trying to get visitation with and a couple in Missoula. Covid-19 has really put a damper on being able to visit in nursing homes so we didn't get permission to present them with their WWII service medals yet. Unfortunately one lady, Lola passed away last month. Clara Santopietro and myself were honored to be able to join the Color Guard in Butte for Lolas funeral.

I wrote 2 articles for the Legionnaire this year and really somehow flubbed them up. I forgot to send the first one to the editor so the article never made it. The second article I sent to the Legionnaire in March but again it never made it in the paper but this time I think I sent it to the wrong email address. Therefore, I am including it in my report.