Chili and salsa contest raises funds for local veterans

By Roy Dorantes

BRAWLEY, Calif. - The Brawley American Legion Post 60 hosted a chili cook-off and salsa contest on Saturday to raise funds for local veterans’ programs. Legionnaires from 5 districts in Southern California came together with local community to show off their cooking skills and support. Martha Romano, from Pacific Palisades American Legion Post 283, said, “I’m here to support the American Legion family. Every year, they’ve been doing this for 30 years.”

Some shared a little of their secret ingredients for their chili and salsa. Edward Romero, Riverside American Legion Post 289, said, “This is my mom’s recipe. I’ve been having this salsa for over 50 years. This is homemade salsa.”

Edward Romero, Riverside American Legion Post 289, said, “This is my mom’s recipe. I’ve been having this salsa for over 50 years. This is homemade salsa.”

“I’m using fresh jalapenos and serrano chilis. I have another salsa that I have, [I use] chile de arbol and tomatillo sauce,” Romano said.

And some refused to share all of their recipes. “There’s other ingredients in it but I can’t tell you because it’s a family secret. I could tell you but then you know the outcome,” Romero said laughing.

The money goes to helmets for heroes. Tracy T-Dog Rascoe, El Centro American Legion Post 25, said, “It’s a program that we started just last year where all the change, every penny counts to help our California veterans.”

They said it’s a way of saying thank you to veterans. “If you enjoy the freedoms that you have every day you should give back. They gave to us, so we’re giving back and thanking them for their service,” Romano said.

“Love and care. Go pour and pour love and care right into that chili,” Rascoe said.
California American Legion Family, Happy New Year!

I hope you and your family had a great Christmas with family and friends and had a safe and Happy New Year, as well.

We are well underway for our next 100 years as a Legion Family. January 1st started out with an unprecedented event during the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, the American Legion float commemorating the American Legion 100th year and the beginning of our second 100 years of service to our Veterans, God and Country. What an impressive way to bring in the new year, with renewed purpose, renewed enthusiasm, and renewed energy.

We are TEAM 100. Our members in the American Legion Family are our greatest asset. Our programs reflect ideals set forth by our founding Legion fathers in 1919 and continues today on the eve of our second hundred years, due to our greatest asset, YOU. I’m proud of each and every one of you who put on a uniform, left family behind to serve our country and knowing you and your family continue to serve this country.

I’m a private person, deep down, yet I want you to know who I am and my “WHY”. My brothers and sister are first generation American born citizens of the Leonardo clan. Three of my brothers including myself joined the Navy at a time when the military service was looked down upon. My father immigrated to America after 11 months struggling and waiting to immigrate to American. He left his family and friends behind because he knew he could have a better life in America. At the US Airbase in the Azores Islands, he met American GI’s during the closing years of WWII and heard their stories about the United States. HE Got married, immigrated to California and 20 years later he took the test and became an American citizen. And his children were proud of that fact. As children we grew up in two cultures, American and Portuguese, but we weren’t Portuguese-Americans, we were Americans of Portuguese decent. We celebrated our father’s heritage and honored our father’s desire to allow us to embrace the American culture and lifestyle. He worked hard, never asked for anything that he couldn’t work for or afford. We honored our father’s life-altering decision and voluntarily served in the US Armed Forces when two of us could have applied for an Agricultural deferment. And we all continue to serve our communities to this day. I continue to serve as a member of the American Legion and I’m damn proud of that fact.

What does this have to do with the American Legion? It has to do with YOU, our greatest asset. Department Adjutant, Paul Brown, recently wrote, “What is your WHY”. Each of us has a unique story of our WHY, but the common thread is, we joined the US Armed Forces for individual reasons, yet we pledged an oath to protect the Constitution from ALL enemies, foreign and domestic. We made it through Boot Camp and we all served honorably. Continuing service is the common glue that binds us together to become members of the greatest Veterans Service Organization on earth, to serve our communities, our veterans and their families. A truly noble and honorable endeavor. My wish is to be part of an organization that truly believes in America, its Veterans, their families and their Communities. That is the American Legion, and I am the American Legion. Just like all of you, my comrades, my brothers and sisters. I didn’t join the American Legion to advance my career; yet the American Legion helped me be a better citizen. I didn’t join the American Legion to monetarily enhance myself, I didn’t join the American Legion for the accolades, I joined to help my fellow veterans brothers and sisters by joining an organization where its members once placed their lives on hold, placed their lives in harm’s way and continued to serve long after the uniform came off. What better way to serve, knowing that one person CAN make a difference but to belong to an organization of over 2 million like-minded comrades, we can do anything, and by God we are.

WE ARE TEAM 100.

As I pen the article, volunteers are working to make our report forms “user friendly” whether through electronic submission or reporting using a hard-copy of those report forms, the choice is yours as we update and get our system ready for the eventual future transition to full electronic reporting. We have the talent to accomplish these tasks when we work together.

We have moved forward with our communications and we strive to make it better and more informative and useful to our members. We continue to work hard to bolster our membership at the Post level but also recruit new members to grow our organization that enables us to project a powerful effort for Veterans causes on Capitol Hill and we mentor our newer members on our programs, our mission and our causes. Your WHY and my WHY is what makes the American Legion the most prestigious Veterans Service Organization on earth. Without our number one asset, we accomplish nothing. Be proud, be an active American Legion member. Moving ahead, evolving and being progressive will be part of our collective DNA.

Over 100 years of Service to Community, State and Nation.

By the Numbers: 100 years...Four Pillars...One Team

Thank you,
Larry Leonardo,
Department Commander
Dept of California
The American Legion

Larry Leonardo, Sr.
Commander

--ADJUTANT, see page 3

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT
Paul Brown
paul@calegion.org

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER
Larry Leonardo, Sr.
commander@calegion.org

EDITOR
Marilyn Rideaux
(310) 293-1246 M
(310) 819-8815 H
aide_deptcmdr@att.net

DEBRA LEAK, ADVERTISING SALES
1130 C Street, Reedley, CA 93654
Debra Leak, Advertising Sales
debra@midvalleypublishing.com

DUBY Trevino, Graphic Artist
duby@midvalleypublishing.com

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NOTICE:
- Submissions to the California Legionnaire must be submitted by the due date published in the California Legionnaire and on the Website www.calegion.org
- Photos should be no less than 500KB. If emailing from your smart phone, send at the highest resolution. Do not embed photos into your Word.doc or mail as an email. Send photos as separate images, use a numbering system to match photos with their appropriate photo caption which should be typed in a Word.doc. Images that are pulled off of web sites will not reproduce well, if at all. PDFs must be saved as high resolution from their site. Photos should be no less than 580KB. If you are emailing from your smart phone, send at the highest resolution. Do not embed photos into your Word.doc or mail as an email. Send photos as separate images, use a numbering system to match photos with their appropriate photo caption which should be typed in a Word.doc. Images that are pulled off of web sites will not reproduce well, if at all. PDFs must be saved as high resolution from their site.
- All submissions become the property of The American Legion Department of California. All submitted material is subject to edit, rework and omission. We are not responsible for lost items or misplaced material.
- Please send “Change of Address” and “Decreased Notice” to: ahl@gdcs.com or mail to: The American Legion, Department of California, 1601 7th Street, Sanger, CA 93657-2801. Do not direct them to the Editor of the California Legionnaire.

FROM THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER’S DESK

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT
Paul Brown
paul@calegion.org
Hello Team California,

Well we’re half way through the membership year and it’s time to assess where we are. We hit the ground running in September and October but fell short in November by only 44 members. We missed the target date by approximately 850 members in December, and as I am writing this article, we are approximately 716 members short of 80 % target date due on the January 17th. We still have a lot of work to do, but I believe we can exceed our membership goals. How is that possible you ask? It’s possible if we do a 90-day membership blitz. That means that for the next 90 days we recruit, retain and renew members like our very lives depended on it, because our legion life does. If the American Legion Department of California is to survive another 100 years, the time is now to get to work on solidifying the foundations of our ranks. It is also important to remember that we don’t just want to meet our goals but exceed them.

That being said, the tools we have are getting better all the time, in addition to being able to send transmitals electronically through mylegion.org, we can now process revitalization transfers and post 1000 transfers, at department. In other words, they don’t need to go to National. The transfers can be sent by snail mail or they can be scanned and sent to our membership coordinator, Nicole at Nicole@calegion.org. Be sure to use the subject line to let Nicole know what transfers you’re sending. An example would be District 35 revitalization transfers or Post 123 post 1000 transfers. The major advantage to this is that, we’ll be able to process them much quicker than National, and we’ll be able to see the fruits of our labor sooner. I’ve been told by the adjutant that every effort will be made to get all transmittals in as soon as possible.

If you’re trying to make a target date please get the transmittals into Sanger two days before.

I would be remiss in my duties if I didn’t talk about the renewal rate in the department. Did you know that approximately 20% of members do not renew every year? Therefore; we must emphasize Retention, Retention, Retention and not just for new members, but our loyal post members that renew every year now, but could be lost next year. Communicate with your members both old and new and be sure to listen to their response. The easiest way to do this is simply ask questions and listen. First, ask about the family situation, even if you know someone, things can change quickly. Second, ask what they do for a living, listen carefully here, they may not really like their job and just do it to make a living. Third, ask them what they really like to do, do they have a hobby that really get fired up about? Fourth, ask what did they did in service and see if that was their passion? Fifth, ask them why they joined or are considering joining the American Legion.

Finally consider asking someone in the post with similar interest and or background to mentor your new members. Mentoring is used in business all the time and that’s because it works to keep valuable employees.

We’ve got six revitalizations scheduled for January alone, these events will get our momentum going and it’s up to you to keep it going. Attend the revitalizations in your area and make things happen. Once your revitalization is well underway, start planning to get some of the 2014-16 expired members and make some money! We’ve got the tools so all we need is you! Keep on working when the lights go out and there’s no one around. Willingness to keep working when the lights are out, is a characteristic of both a leader and a winner. We all have a winner inside us, so let your winner shine Team California. Commit to our common goal to exceed our membership goals for 2018-19.

That’s is Team California
Believe and Achieve - Doubt and go Without
Keep looking for the Gold.

--ADJUTANT, from page 2
we will mail physical copies of these forms to your post upon request.

We encourage every post to process their membership and reporting online and ask you to reach out to your district leadership for assistance in getting your post over this threshold to get every post in California functioning at a level of expected by our upcoming generations of military veteran leaders. Remember, if we want more members to volunteer and help us in our mission, our operations need to make sense to them.

Keeping California Unique & United,

Paul M. Brown
Department Adjutant

--YOUNG GUNS, from page 1

Greetings, Area 2 and Department of California. This will be a brief article due to the pending deadline for sending it forward. As I write this, National Commander Brett Reistad is currently in Southern California. I joined him with his entourage on Sunday, January 6, 2019 at Mission San Juan Bautista. We then went to the Meet & Greet at Prunedale Post 593. We were enduring one of our rare severe weather storms, which limited outside activities. We had a terrific presentation at the Monterey County Veterans Transition Center (VTC). Commander Reistad was so impressed he is planning on providing assistance from the American Legion to promote what the VTC is doing. Commander Reistad also saw the new VA Clinic and the California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery. The next day, we visited Commander Leonardo’s home post, Mission City Post 564. The Mayor of Santa Clara was on hand to provide Commander Reistad with a proclamation from the City of Santa Clara for all the American Legion does for and in the city.

We next had a Meet & Greet at Redwood City Post 105. Lunch followed. From there, our journey took us to the Veterans Memorial Building in San Francisco. Commander Reistad is an avid connoisseur of history, so he really enjoyed the tour. We later had dinner at the New Asia Restaurant to finish the Commander’s time in Area 2. I want to thank everyone who showed up to visit with Commander Reistad. I also want to thank all the people who worked so hard to provide the food and beverages that were served. Last, but absolutely not least, I want to extend an enormous “THANK YOU” to all of the American Legion Riders who escorted the Commander throughout his visit through California. The conditions they performed under in District 28 were horrendous, yet they persevered. Bravo to Mick and his riders.

I was able to attend the annual District 28 Christmas visit to Palo Alto at the VA Hospital. I was able to deliver 63 of the Hero Bears that were sponsored by various auxiliary units and individuals. They were very well received.

I belong to a group called the Knights of the Rose – Order of St. Michael the Archangel. I represent the group as the veteran outreach person. Our group consists of military and law enforcement personnel. On December 6-7, 2018, we held an Active Shooter – School Safety Symposium in Salinas, CA. We were able to provide two days of very important training for the over 300 attendees. Guest speakers included victims from the shooting at Logan High School in Ohio, first responders to other active shooter calls within CA, and investigators who provided intelligence based upon their investigations. To the best of my knowledge, this was the first time this type of training was provided in our state.

ON THE WEB AT WWW.CALEGION.ORG

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The American Legion, Still Relevant

National Commander, Brett Reistad, offered an opinion in response to an article (see link below) which appeared in the New York Times on January 5. I was unable to obtain permission from the New York Times to reprint the article so I’ve included the link if you would care to read it.

The American Legion, Still Relevant: The group’s national commander offers perspective on a news article.

Jan. 18, 2019
Marilyn Rideaux, CA
Legionnaire Editor

To the Editor:

Re “Upstart Veterans’ Groups Elbow Their Way In” (news article, Jan. 5):

Yes, we are old. In March, the American Legion will have its 100th birthday.

And just as our founders and previous generations of Legionnaires have tirelessly served their communities and veterans since 1919, today’s American Legion is as relevant as ever.

We have thousands of certified service officers in communities across the country who will assist veterans with claims and benefits, free of charge and regardless of their Legion membership status.

We sponsor job fairs for veterans and welcome into our ranks any current active-duty, reservist or Guard member or honorably discharged wartime veterans of previous generations regardless of whether they served in the United States or overseas.

There are many important issues facing veterans today. From the enacting of the V.A. Mission Act, which consolidates community medical care programs into a single, streamlined service, to obtaining benefits provided by the “Forever” G.I. Bill, which removes the deadlines that veterans had to use their G.I. Bill educational benefits, today’s veterans can be confident that the American Legion will continue to be on their side, fighting for their interests in the halls of Congress and at V.A. facilities around the country.

This is why we exist.

Brett P. Reistad
Indianapolis

Veterans’ Groups Compete With Each Other, and Struggle With the V.A.


American Legion Post 177 Visits West LA VAMC

By Bob Chebi, Post 177 (District 23)

American Legion Venice Post #177 visited patients in the ICU at West Los Angeles VA Hospital to bring some cheer and present a large wreath made of individual candies on December 24, 2018.

The wreath was lovingly made by Linda Glaza, widow of Don Glaza of Post 177. Linda has been making these wreaths which contains 1000 pieces of candy for ten years now. She starts the wreath at Thanksgiving in order to have it completed in time for the Yule Holiday!

Legislative Advocate

By Seth Reeb

The State Legislature has convened for the 2019-20 Legislative Session. Legislation is being drafted and introduced during January and February. The members of the Senate and Assembly Committees on Veterans Affairs have been named and that information is included below.

CalVet Secretary

Newly elected Governor Gavin Newsom has been selecting his administration. The American Legion-Department of California supports the reappointment of Dr. Vito Imbasciani as Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Legion, together with all the major veterans service organizations in the state has encouraged the governor to retain Secretary Imbasciani so that he may continue the exemplary work he has been doing for California’s veterans.

Legislation

We will be sending out details regarding veterans’ legislation as it develops. Some of the issues being currently worked on are National Guard and Reserves eligibility for the veteran designation on the driver’s license, technical changes to the disabled veterans license plate program, veterans’ treatment courts, veterans’ hospital property tax exemption, and increased state funding for County Veterans Service Officers.

Day at the State Capitol event-
March 20

The Department’s 2019 Day at the State Capitol event will be on March 20. Please see the sign-up form in this newsletter and send it in if you are attending. Everyone who is attending needs to send in a form so that we can make sure there is enough food and seats. The American Legion always has one of the best turnouts at the Capitol and this year’s event will surely continue that tradition.

Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs

Bob Archuleta (D-Pico Rivera)-Chair, Army veteran
Shannon Grove (R-Bakersfield)-Vice Chair, Army veteran
Bob Archuleta (D-Pico Rivera)-Vice Chair, Army veteran
Bill Brough (R-Dana Point), Army veteran
Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance) (D-Encinitas)
Tasha Boerner Horvath (D-Pismo Beach)-Vice Chair, Army veteran
Senators on the committee that are on the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs:

Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs

Jaqueline “Jacqui” Irwin (D-Thousand Oaks)-Chair
Randy Voepel (R-Santee)-Vice Chair, Navy veteran
Tasha Boerner Horvath (D-Encinitas)
Bill Brough (R-Dana Point), Army veteran
Tom Daly (D-Anaheim)
Jim Frazier (D-Oakley)
Todd Gloria (D-San Diego)
Devon Mathis (R-Visalia), Army veteran

"American Legion Post 177 Visits West LA VAMC"
This year the American Legion is celebrating 100 years of service to veterans. During WW I, men fought on the front lines while most women were either clerks or nurses. Women were barred from serving in any active combat roles. At the conclusion of the war it became clear that there was a need for a veterans’ service organization to work to meet the needs of returning veterans to the home front. It was the veterans themselves who came to realize that no one could do more or understand more than they could. The American Legion was born by charter of the US Congress. The basic principle was developed under the understanding that a veteran is a veteran. There would be no rank among them and all would be treated equally based on need and not race, color, creed or sex. And so, it would seem. The country was in the challenging place of trying to find the soul if its noble ideal of equality and even today, though of women as veterans changed.

I have wondered how many times a Legion member would talk with a couple asking the man is he was a veteran. “Why yes I am” he would reply. The Legionnaire would go on to explain about the American Legion and all of what it had done and has to offer veterans. Inevitably he would turn to the spouse and say, “And we also have an excellent Auxiliary for the veteran’s spouse”, never stopping to think and she too just might be a veteran. I also hear from time to time less than supportive comments and actions concerning women veterans and their place in the American Legion. I sometimes sense that many feel women have not yet earned a place of acceptance in our great organization. The question bears asking where do women belong in the heritage of being an American Veteran and a fully entitled and respected member of the American Legion.

One doesn’t have to search deep or far to discover what the women of this country have offered as military members and even less to find what they are contributing today in defense of our core values and freedoms. For a very long time now, women have always had to sacrifice just as much, work even harder, and go even further only to be held back or treated with disrespect by a lot of their male counterparts. Even today in a world that is changing more and more to embrace equality through diversity, they still are often treated as second class veterans. It’s time for this to stop!!! Well guess what… they took the same oath that all of us did to protect and defend the constitution of the United States against… They signed up and issued the same blank check due and payable to the people of the United States for any amount up to and including their life just as many male veterans have committed to doing. For some, the check was cashed in and the price was paid in full (including women service members). This is the chief reason we must honor and respect these veterans as equals. If we don’t… then we violate the very ideals we served to defend. We have to always remember that it was the collaborative efforts of all veterans to empower our armed forces to do the job that is before them.

No job or veteran is insignificant when it comes to completing the mission of defending the freedoms we Americans enjoy each day. Regardless of race, color, creed, or sex, it takes us all to get the job done.

In 2017, the American Legion as a whole came to realize that women do belong. This happened when Denise Rohan was elected and installed as the first female National Commander of the American Legion. I was at the convention in Reno, Nevada when she stepped up to serve as our leader. It was a history making day to remember.

Today we are blessed to have women serving in many roles traditionally reserved for men. There are women pilots, fire fighters, generals, and others in a multitude of career fields and ranks. Some serve in combat roles and many are damn good at it!!! When Israel became a nation unto itself, it realized that their resources for manpower were limited and that it would take both men and women working hard together sacrificing to keep their nation alive through many violent times. Their very survival depended on it and they succeeded in grand style. As a result, Israel stands as a sovereign nation where all veterans are treated with respect. We could stand to learn a lot from this.

Another important thing to remember is that when a veteran serves their family serves with them as well. This is also true for women veterans. The support of parents, husbands, wives, and children are a critical part of a soldier, sailor, airman, and marine’s ability to serve. The service member often has to sacrifice a lot of family activities in order to complete the mission. No other career field demands more military service. The veterans of World War I came together to form the American Legion, they understood the principle that a veteran is a veteran, is a veteran… no exceptions!!! So is she really a veteran… You can bet your boots she is and as such, stands proudly with us all in the American Legion as equals.

Written by: Mark L. Rice, A Legionnaire from Fair Oaks Post 383, CA.

(Photo research by Marilyn Rideaux)
A salute to minorities’ service in the Great War

By Matt Grills

Blacks and Latinos proudly served their country in uniform overseas during the Great War, even as they faced discrimination at home, and a long- overdue records review may reveal that some were unfairly denied the nation’s highest military decoration.

At a Nov. 8 event honoring minorities’ contributions to the U.S. war effort, retired Army Col. Gerald York – special adviser to the U.S. World War One Centennial Commission and grandson of Sgt. Alvin York, recipient of the Medal of Honor – praised the Valor Medals Review Task Force, which is conducting the research necessary to identify and correct injustices.

“People say, ‘Why are you looking back, that’s 100 years ago,’” York told an audience gathered at Pershing Park in Washington, D.C., site of the future National World War I Memorial. “If we made mistakes, we need to rectify those mistakes. We’re not a perfect nation, but we try.”

York noted that his grandfather was initially awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for his bravery in the Argonne on Oct. 8, 1918. Further investigation resulted in an upgrade to the Medal of Honor. “Unfortunately, a lot of African-Americans and a lot of Latinos who did heroic things on the battlefield got lesser awards because of their race, because of their color,” York said.

The 1918 armistice ended the fighting between the Allies and Germany, but the work of the American Expeditionary Forces is still not complete, said retired Maj. Gen. Christopher Leins, chairman of the Valor Medals Review Task Force.

One significant post-war task was to make sure that the brave acts of U.S. soldiers were appropriately honored, leading to the initial awarding of 118 Medals of Honor. Yet seven decades passed before a black servicemember, Cpl. Freddie Stowers of the 371st Infantry Regiment, was recognized for his heroism. Reasons included an inconsistent understanding and application of standards, unclear writing, misplaced paperwork and, unfortunately, prejudice, Leins said.

In 1989, Stowers became the first African-American soldier from World War I to receive the Medal of Honor, opening the door to retroactive award recommendations for minorities who served in World War II, the Korean War and other conflicts. Yet there was little interest in expanding reviews to include conflicts. Yet there was little interest in expanding reviews to include minorities, even though there was growing advocacy for the 369th Infantry Regiment, an organization of African-American soldiers.

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Greetings. With half the year done we still have much to do. Thanks to all our Districts in keeping our Area in 2nd place. We now have three Districts in the Top 5 (D-12 #2, D-15 #4, D-11 #5). Congratulations!

Dates to remember, February 2, 2019, Area meeting at Amador Post 108 in the 11th District, April 20, 2019, Area 3 meeting at Ceres Post 491 in District 12. Big things on the horizon, Oratorical Contest, Boys State submissions, Four Chaplains, Lobby Trip to Sacramento, Centennial celebrations, Membership Revitalization (Districts 11,12, 14, 15 & 27) at HQ’s March 15-16, and nominations for Post/District officers. Keep up the visitations and Go Team 100!!!

National Commander’s Visit to Bakersfield Post 26

Frank Vail, Adjutant-Bakersfield Post 26

The visit to Post 26 by the American Legion National Commander, Brett Reistad, on January 5th was a big success. In spite of weather issues on the Grapevine and a slowdown due to an accident on I-5, the National Commander and his entourage were able to arrive not too much later than planned. After his arrival, a bit of meeting-and-greeting, the head table was seated. Master of Ceremonies, Mark Sandall, had the National Chief of Chaplains, Michael Lynch, perform the invocation. The National Anthem was performed by the violinist Issac Kim, a Post 26 American Legion Boys State Representative. Tony Strass, Commander, Post 221, conducted the POW/MIA Table Ceremony.

The Master of Ceremonies introduced: Eric Kurtz - Department of California Sargent-at-Arms, Dee Ann Graham - 15th District Auxiliary President, David Graham – Post 26 Commander, Paul Brown – Department of California Adjutant, Kenneth Knight – Aide to the National Commander, and Larry Van Kuran – National Executive Committeeman. The National Executive Committeeman introduced Larry Leonardo – Department of California Commander who, after a few comments, introduced the American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad. The National Commander thanked the attendees and the Post and updated the audience on Legion activities and his goals for the year. The Master of Ceremonies then thanked Michael Lynch - National Chief of Chaplains, Karen Goh – Bakersfield City Mayor, Mike Hale – Captain Bakersfield Police Department, Cody Sedano – on behalf of U.S. Representative Cox, and the American Legion Riders escorting the Commander on his travels for attending.

Lunch was served and the open-faced prime rib sandwiches were very well received. After lunch the Commander was presented with a U.S. Army leather jacket and his Aide was presented with a U.S. Navy leather jacket by the Post Commander from the members of Post 26. After more visiting and pictures the National Commander and his entourage continued on their way up the Valley.

Deadline for the next issue of the California Legionnaire is March 7, 2019
The American Legion, Department of California (Department) has named Senate Pro Tem Toni Atkins (D-San Diego) and Assemblyman Rudy Salas (D-Bakersfield) as recipients of their 2018 Leo P. Burke Legislative of the Year award. The Department’s Leo P. Burke Legislative of the Year award is bestowed to legislators who have gone the extra mile to support California’s veterans, military members, and their families. The Legislature oversees and deliberates on a wide array of issues important to California’s veterans and military members. Senators and Assembly members were also recognized for their support of California’s veterans.

About the American Legion

The American Legion, founded in 1919, is an organization of veterans of the United States Armed Forces who served in wartime. The American Legion is active in supporting the interests of veterans and lobbying on their behalf. Members are kept informed on legislation at the federal and state levels which impacts veterans. The American Legion, Department of California has over 79,000 members and represents the interests of California’s 1.7 million veterans and their families.

In 2018, Salas authored AB 2801: Veterans and law enforcement memorial crimes. AB 2801 clarifies that veterans’ memorials are afforded specific protection against vandalism under the California Penal Code and the Criminal Justice System, Non-Profit Organization Regulations, Veterans License Plates, Base Realignment, etc.

Assemblyman Salas was serving on the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee from the time he was first elected. He has been active member of this committee over the past 6 years.

During his first legislative session Assemblymember Salas authored, passed, and received the Governor’s signature on AB 756 (2013) Military and Veterans Fair Employment and Housing Act. Prohibiting employment discrimination against all active duty military and veterans of the Armed Services.

INDIANAPOLIS (January 2, 2019) – The American Legion kicked off 2019 by celebrating the organization’s 100th anniversary in the Rose Parade®. The American Legion is the nation’s largest wartime veterans service organization and the float theme highlighted a century of advocating for veterans, servicemembers and their families while providing impactful programs that have shaped the fabric of communities across America.

The American Legion 2019 Rose Parade float celebrates 100th anniversary

Riders on the float included four Medal of Honor recipients, the national commanders of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion and a representative from each of the five branches of the U.S. armed forces. The float also featured participants from many signature programs of The American Legion, including Michael Fox of Sanger, CA who represented the Sons of the American Legion.

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A native of Coronado, Thomas M. Rice was born on August 15, 1921 to a naval aviation family, Marcus and Katherine Rice. The 600-square-foot house that his father built on H Avenue is still standing and it is where Tom lives today. During Rice’s childhood, his father was killed in an air crash in the Panama Canal Zone in 1934. Rice graduated from Coronado High School in 1940 and he enlisted in the US Army at Fort Rosecrans in San Diego, California on November 17th. In 1943 he entered basic training at Camp Toccoa, Ga. and completed the parachute jumping school at Fort Benning in 1943. After eighteen months of training, he became a member of the 501st Regiment, newly formed infantry, 101st Airborne Division. While serving in the 101st Airborne Division, Rice led a squadron of twelve soldiers and served as a platoon sergeant for six months.

In the early hours of D-Day, June 6, 1944, Staff Sergeant Thomas Rice, 22, jumped into Normandy as part of Operation Overlord, the largest and most complex military campaign ever undertaken.

Rice remembers the hours before parachuting into France:

“On the night of June 5, 1944, as we boarded the planes that would lead us into combat, I am not sure that we realized the full extent of the dangers and difficulties we faced, or if we thought to the hundreds of thousands of other men who have faced similar or even worse trials, but if we had known all that, it would not have made any difference to us. We were ready and almost eager to go into action and get the whole bloody thing over with.”

Shortly after midnight, in terrible weather, Rice and thousands of other “Screaming Eagles” of the 101st Airborne Division parachuted into the night sky and over the Germans. While his plane was taking heavy anti-aircraft fire, the pilot maneuvered to escape the fire and, flying too fast and too low to jump, he hung up Rice in the door of the plane. Rice finally landed near Utah Beach, 4km north of Carentan, near heavily armed Germans and miles from the planned drop zone. He joined about fifty other Americans, and they fought in Normandy for more than a month, sheltering in hunting holes, having little equipment and capturing hundreds of German soldiers.

During the Normandy Campaign, a key event in the liberation of Europe, Rice was wounded by shrapnel and a sniper bullet that hit his left knee. He attributes success in Normandy to a “complex mix of physical and mental fighting spirit”.

Rice also made a fight jump in Holland during Operation Market Garden in September 1944, and the Battle of the Bulge from December 1944 to January 1945. He was seriously injured in Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge and other bullets tore a four-inch piece of the radial just below his right elbow. His last combat experience of the Second World War took place in Birtchengarten, Austria.

Rice’s military awards include a Purple Heart with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Two Invasion Arrows, Combat Infantry Badge, Bronze Star with Cluster, Good Conduct Medal, French Fourregue, Belgium Lanyard and Parachutist Badge. In April 2015, the French government honored Rice and thirteen other veterans by appointing them Knights of the Legion of Honor for their heroic service in the liberation of France during the Second World War. This prize is the highest honor that France grants to its citizens and foreigners.

Rice’s quote for Bronze Star Metal reads in part:

“He deployed his abilities and courage in the Normandy campaign on June 6, 1944, the airborne assault on Holland on September 17, 1944 and during the defense of the key town of Bastogne in Belgium from December 19, 1944 to December 27, 1944. Throughout the three campaigns, Sergeant Rice demonstrated his dedication to...”

TOM RICE, see page 13
In October, Sharlene Castillo, a teacher at Lunada Bay Elementary School in Palos Verdes Estates, contacted Chuck Camarato, Vice Chairman of the Department of California’s CALVAR Foundation, to inquire about setting up a school education project about the understandings of “Veterans Day”. Specifically, the school intended to teach children over a two-week period why Veterans Day is an important holiday. Utilizing videos, lectures and research materials, the students would learn about the various armed forces and the Veterans who have served and sacrificed for their Country.

To help teach the students about taking care of our Veterans, Ms. Castillo felt that “Helmets for Heroes” would be the ideal program as a tool for students to become engaged in Veterans Assistance. At the end of the two-week lesson plan, the students then organized a fundraising push over four days culminating on November 11th, Veterans Day.

Ms. Castillo stated, this drive was purely the efforts of the kids. The kids filled up 24 Helmets in four days with $600 dollars. As part of their lessons, they learned who the American Legion is, how our organization employs Service Officers, and how those Service Officers help Veterans.

Attending the Veterans Day ceremony, representing the American Legion, and receiving a check for the kid’s hard work, pictured is Jere Romano, Pacific Palisades Post 283, 24th District. Ms. Castillo at the end stated, the fundraising project and have now decided they wish to make it an annual event.

How is your District progressing on our NEW “Helmets for Heroes” program? There are many avenues for supporting this program. Individual members who take a helmet home and fill it for the year, local veteran’s friendly businesses that will make direct contributions or place Helmets at their businesses. Maybe you can even have a school project in your hometown. Together, we can ALL help the Departments Ways & Means Commission have a successful year meeting their targets to support the V & R Division. I am always ready to help any District with the implementation process. You can always call me or email me.

Visit WomenVetsOnPoint.org to:
• Talk to a WVoP team member, who can connect you with woman- and veteran-friendly mental health care providers in LA.
• Get resources to help better understand your symptoms, whether you have trouble sleeping, feel jumpy or nervous, or are disconnecting from people you love.
• Find essential LA-based services, such as housing assistance, child care, and employment services.

“Sometimes we find ourselves stuck and unable to move forward. We want you to know that, with Women Vets on Point, you’ve reached a place where you can take a moment to breathe. We’ll provide you with opportunities and options to help you continue on your journey.”

- Kristine Stanley, MSgt, U.S. Air Force (retired) Program Coordinator, Women Vets on Point

Call 213-335-5432 | Email wvop@usvetsinc.org
Visit WomenVetsOnPoint.org

ON THE WEB AT WWW.CALEGION.ORG
CALIFORNIA LEGIONNAIRE | February 2019 | 11
On January 5, 2019, at the Bob Hope Patriotic Hall 1816 S. Figueroa Street Los Angeles, CA 90015 three members of the Los Angeles Chapter NABMW were installed/appointed as officers of the National Association of Black Military Women:

Patricia Jackson-Kelley-National President NABMW
Irma Hagans Cooper-Vice-President
Military & Veterans Affairs
Martha Alpough-Marshall-appointed National Secretary

Congratulations to all the 2019 Elected Officers of NABMW.

Our own, General Rosetta Burke, CEO of the NABMW Foundation and General Kight, member NABMW were present. Members from the New York Chapter who were present were Blossom Ferguson, outgoing Treasurer and Stephanie Dawson, outgoing president. Irma Cooper, President, LA-NABMW, Charlotte Jennings, Vice-President Los Angeles Chapter NABMW, Martha Marshall, Secretary LA-NABMW, Keisha Dixson and La Netta Seay members of LA-NABMW.

After the ceremony, food and drinks were served. We also enjoyed the music. The DJ was awesome and we danced the evening away. The new NABMW President, Patricia Jackson-Kelley, thanks everyone for coming and promised to do her best to move the association forward.

By George W. Smith, Commander-District 26
ALRDOC Service Officer

Redwood City Post 105 had the honor of hosting a luncheon for our American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad and his entourage. American Legion Riders Chapter 82 along with ALRDOC President Mick Sobczak and ALRDOC Sgt at Arms Mike Smith and Healdsburg Chapter 111 Bill Noy escorted the Commander from Mission City Post 564 in Santa Clara to Redwood City Post 105 for a luncheon in his honor with Past District 26 and Past Post 105 Commander Romie Bassetto as our master of ceremony.

A partial guest list included National Commander Brett Reistad, NEC Committee Man Larry Van Kuran, DOC Commander Larry Leonardo, DOC Judge Advocate Paul Brown, Area 2 Vice Commander James Scarlott, District 26 Commander George Smith, Post 105 Commander David Collins, District 26 Auxiliary President Peggy Toye, ALRDOC President Mick Sobczak, Cathay Post 384 Commander Nelson Lum, George Tadlock, Post 472 Commander, Louis Dixon and San Mateo Post 82 Adjutant AC Ralston. Honored guests, San Mateo County Supervisor Warren Slocum, Sr Legislative Aide Marci Dragun, Redwood City Councilwomen Janet Borgens, Redwood City Police Chief Dan Mulholland, Redwood City Fire Chief Stan Maupin, San Mateo County Veterans Commissioners Ron Dixon and George Smith with many Legionnaires from around the area. I’d also like to thank the Officers of our Post 105 that helped make the event as great as it was; 2nd Vice Commander Leo Mc Ardle, 3rd Vice Commander George Silva, Judge Advocate William Jackson Jr, Sgt at Arms Mike Toschak, Chaplain Dennis Lopez and 1st Member at Large Chester Palesoo Great job gentlemen!

The National Commander talked about the American Legion’s last 100 years and the next 100 years, the soon to be minted AL coins coming out in March, Team 100 and what it means to our organization in addition to providing many interesting facts about the American Legions history. Helmets for Hero’s were on every table and we collected $200.00 for the VA&R.

In addition to this being the American Legion’s centennial, it is also the centennial of two Posts in District 26, San Mateo Post 82 and Redwood City Post 105. Celebrations are being planned for later in the year. Volunteers from District 26 Auxiliary, Blue Star Moms and Central Peninsula Church served everyone a light lunch prior to AL Riders continuing the escort from Post 105 to the War Memorial Building in San Francisco.

ON THE WEB AT www.calegion.org
family member sick or injured, please let me know so I can pray for them and send a Get-Well Card to them.

Remember our Deployed military members. I thank the many men and women currently serving in our Country’s Armed Forces. I know some of them missed being at home over the Christmas and New Year holidays. If copies of this Legionnaire should reach our troops, please know that The American Legion is thinking of you and praying for your safe return home. God Bless you.

Join me in praying for our Legion family members and our Military members serving around the globe.

Prayer for the sick and shut-in
Father God, thank you for the many Blessings we’ve received. Our American Legion Family continues to have faith and belief in you. Bless those suffering with comfort, Bless those who are weak with strength, and Bless those who are sick with a full recovery. Thank you, Father God, for your Divine intervention. Amen.

Prayer for our Military members
Father God, I pray for your protection over our Armed Forces personnel serving here at home and abroad. Bless our armed forces with strength, courage, and victory after victory to secure many freedoms from those who would oppress, Bless their family members with patience and understanding while they are away. Thank you, Father God, for your Blessings. Amen.

Veteran Memorials
If you haven’t heard by now, The American Legion defends the Ocicello Wells Memorial Cross in CA. visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKV9EydDVE and, the Bladensburg Veterans Memorial Cross in Prince George’s County, Md. visit: https://www.org/244229/department supports-bladensburg-memorial-supreme-court-filing

How do we serve God in the American Legion?

There are countless ways to serve God in our organization as well as in our communities. I’ve listed a few. First, we recognize him as our Father. Prayer begins with Praise. Our Bible(s) teaches us how to Pray. However, in order to serve God, we must know him. You must know who God is to you! We then receive from him. We then receive from him, Praying, Bible reading, giving thanks for God’s grace is working in our lives, Obeying God’s commands, forgiving our fellow man when we’ve been wronged by him, Praying, Bible reading, giving thanks and just spreading the word about God are ways of serving him. As Chaplains, we’re continuously spreading God’s word, but spreading God’s word is something everyone can do. Titling and offerings are used to build and advance God’s kingdom upon the earth. This cheerful act is a great way to serve God. Of course, you would do this to your local Church.

In The American Legion Chaplains handbook, under “Service to God”, the “Service to God and Country” program has three spiritual objectives: Regular worship, daily family Prayer, and Religious training of children. Please refer to Chaplains Hand book for a detailed description of each objective. It will help clarify the Legion’s position on service to God.

“Religious Emphasis Week” is a part of the “Service to God and Country”, Americanism program. It also refers to the Legion’s long-standing policy of “A Back to God Movement”. This movement is designed to raise the community’s awareness and participation in religious activities or events. Most Posts will hold their Four Chaplain Day services the first weekend of February. The Department reserves the second weekend to hold their service. This year Religious Emphasis week runs from February 3rd to February 9th. The Department of California will hold a Four Chaplains Day Inter-Faith Service on Saturday, February 9th at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Sanger. The program starts promptly at 2:00 pm. The program gives a short bio of the Four Chaplains, a reading of their interfaith cooperation, and an illustration of their selfless service to help save the lives of their fellow shipmates. Also, the Department Chaplain gives a Religious Emphasis message. A reception will be held immediately following the service. Military Units are welcome! Invite your family and friends. Hope to see you there.

Joy is the fruit of God’s Spirit within us. Romans: 14:17
Scouting Commission

Michael Feist, Chairman
Department of California

The Department Scouting Commission had the Call-In in Lompoc on Dec. 8th which was well attended. Great things are happening with Scouting with several new, young, experienced Scouting Commissioners. The goals for 2019 are to be more proactive at all levels, with better communications and service. “CA Legion Scouters” now has a Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/groups/CA.Legion.Scouters/.

To be of best service to the Posts and Scouts, each District needs an active District Scouting Advisor to train and assist the Posts’ Chartered Organizational Representative (COR), and to serve the District Commander. At this time the annual Scouting Reports are due from each Post, and sent to the District for review and nomination for Scouting Awards.

Legionnaires are excellent role models for Scouting. There are many opportunities for Posts and individual Legionnaires to serve our Scouting program as mentors, merit badge counselors, and advisors. You have exceptional skills from your military service that is needed by the young parents who fill positions on the Troop Committee. Your organizational skills and discipline are needed to teach the Scouting parents. We all can’t be Scoutmasters leading a 50-mile hike, but we can all be of service to American Legion Scouting. Also, during this year the Mormon Church will be leaving Scouting, which means that many Scouts and experienced parents will be looking for a new sponsor to continue in Scouting. Your Post can pick up a full troop.

We are celebrating the 100th year of partnership between the American Legion and the Boy Scouts of America. We encourage each Legionnaire to join the BSA Alumni Association, called “Scouting Alumni and Friends” (SAF), and to be a member of the Dept of Calif, “Legion Scouters.” At Convention in June, we will be offering a gold 5D commemorative pin to all who sign up for this program.

These Comrades who serve in an official CA Legion Scouters service position as a COR, District Scouting Advisor, or Commissioner will receive a limited-edition silver pin.

Contact your local District Scouting Advisor or District Commander to learn how you can “reconnect” with Scouting in your community, and become a Servant Leader of the cornerstone youth program of the American Legion.

Yours in Service to God and Country.

—SALUTE TO MINORITIES—, from page 6

pretty much to the note. When they re-create that sound I’m up there tapping my feet like everyone else."

Europe said that as the Great War’s centennial began, he saw an opportunity to educate himself on his family’s musical roots. "My grandfather and (Sissle’s) father brought jazz to Europe and introduced the world to a whole new style of music," he said. "I’m proud of my legacy now, and I’m proud of all these young men who are reviving it. Together we’re bringing it back."

The 369th Experience is led by Isrea Butler, a sergeant in the North Carolina National Guard and chairman at the music department at North Carolina Central University who enjoys educating young people on “lost music” like that played by the 369th Infantry Hellfighters.

“"This is really part of the fabric of my mission because I’m the secretary on the board for the HBCU Band Directors’ Consortium,” Butler said. “As a band director, I had started incorporating this music almost by accident, because I was teaching about it in my jazz history course ... students before this, none of them heard about James Reese Europe.” There’s also the challenge of helping students reproduce the band’s improvisational sound. “If you try to play what’s on the page, it just sounds nothing like what you hear in the recordings,” Butler said. "We go back and forth, and it’s a lightbulb moment for them."

Stephen Gregory of Beaumont, Texas, heard about the 369th Experience opportunity from his school’s band director. He attends Southern University in Baton Rouge, La., where he plays French horn in SU’s Human Jukebox Marching Band.

“I auditioned and I was accepted, and the first trip we took was to New York,” Gregory said. “This program today at Pershing Park has opened my eyes even more. I’ve been able to learn more about the Harlem Hellfighters and the 369th Regiment. It’s a grand occasion. They could have gotten any other musicians from around the country, but they chose HBCU students, so I’m really blessed and honored.”
Greetings and Happy Centennial Year Legionnaires!!!

As a former Naval Instructor, Technical Trainer and College Director, I can’t help but value quality training.

Looking back at 2018, in various discussions, I’d have to say the need for additional training was one of the top items requested by many Legionnaires. With this in mind, I’d like to touch on TAL training a bit!

Most recently; on December 1, 2018, District 22 delivered some Post Operations Training. It was filled with some great information for both current and incoming Post Leaders (Commanders, Adjutants, Executive Board Members, etc.). As a Past Post Commander, I felt it was extremely applicable to the real world as it covered some of the obstacles I faced and some of the ones I observed as a District Commander and as I see Post with our Area face. The training was taught by a well experienced team – mostly graduates of California American Legion College (CALC) but all well versed in their topics. Kudos and much thanks again to all the Instructors, I do hope we can do this again and I highly recommend attendance to anyone wanting to become a better Legionnaire and better our Posts...our Homes!

The Department Weekly Membership Report Emails and our MyLegion improved and continues to do so. They each contain helpful and up-to-date information for all Legionnaires and Leadership to improve our Membership and Operations. The American Legion National has a training page https://www.legion.org/training that is packed with some great information each and every Legionnaire. I highly value the Training Newsletter as it gives me an insight of where we are going and all the effort that I can see but is being done to provide us information today and in the near future. I’d suggest considerations in sharing this kind information at your Post Meetings/Information Boards too.

Now as we kick off 2019, I’d like to start by expressing my great appreciation and a job well-done to all the Districts involved with our National Commanders Visit. From my observations and discussions, the attention to our Four Pillars, Mindset, comradery exhibited and more, made for an impressive visit for our guests. In addition; much thanks to the Legion Riders (Oorah! Brother Mick) and all for the great job getting our guests safely through the San Diego traffic. I’m very proud and honored by everyone’s efforts and of course Dawn and I always enjoy the great hospitality and comradery too!

In closing, did you ever hear this story growing up? A woodcutter strained to saw down a tree. A young man who was watching asked “What are you doing?” “Are you blind!” the woodcutter replied. “I’m cutting down this tree.” The young man was unabashed. “You look exhausted! Take a break. Sharpen your saw.” The woodcutter explained to the young man that he had been sawing for hours and did not have time to take a break. The young man pushed back... “If you sharpen the saw, you would cut down the tree much faster.” The woodcutter said, “I don’t have time to sharpen the saw. Don’t you see I’m too busy?”

We all know no one wants to cut metal with a dull blade...Let’s sharpen our saw in 2019 to ensure the Legacy Continues... We are #Team100! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoPa8J3LupM

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**Deadline for the next issue of the California Legionnaire is March 7, 2019**
The American Legion Membership Application

Sign-up on-line TODAY at: www.calegion.org  OR –
Mail Membership application and $47 to:
TAL DoC Post 1000 Application
1601 7th Street,
Sanger, CA 93657
Please make your check payable to
TAL DoC Post 1000
NOTE: $0.95 of annual dues goes to the California Legionnaire, the official publication of The American Legion-Department of California, to help offset the cost.

Commander calls on members to make ‘Buddy Checks’

The American Legion
JAN 24, 2019

American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad is calling on posts, districts, counties and departments to coordinate a team and call Legionnaires and former members simply to see how they are doing.

“Ask if there is anything The American Legion can do for them,” Reistad said in a letter to post leaders around the world. "Perhaps they have been sick, lost a spouse or just need to know someone cares. Perhaps they simply forgot to renew their membership because no one called."

Reistad said that more important than membership renewal – or retrieval of Legionnaires whose memberships have expired – is the personal contact to see how local veterans are doing and act accordingly if they need help.

“This is not a membership campaign,” he said. “It’s a comradeship campaign.”

He added that week leading up the Legion’s 100th birthday, March 11-16, is a perfect time to make the calls, but posts that have made other plans to celebrate the centennial at that time can choose another week in the centennial month if necessary.

A Buddy Check toolkit, including scripts for Legionnaires to use when making personal contact, is available online at www.legion.org/membership/buddycheck.