Department Commander

My Fellow Legionaries

The month of May was a very exciting month for me. First I was able to represent GR07 in Baumholder Germany for their JROTC Awards, on the 1st of May. The program that the, Baumholder High School JROTC Cadets, put on was both, outstanding, and very impressive.

On the 26th of May I along with the Department VCAL, Department Auxiliary President, and the SAL Detachment Commander, attended the Memorial Day Ceremony in Saint Avold, France. This was a very solemn ceremony, with many respects rendered to our fallen heroes of WWII. Afterwards we attended the annual GR01 BBQ at their Post Home, once again a great meal, provided by the post members, of GR01.

After many hours of coordinating with Military officials, via phone calls, and Emails, by our Department NECMan John Miller and myself for the visit of our National Commander, James Koutz, and National Auxiliary President Peggy Thomas, we were finally able to greet them on the 30th of May at Frankfurt International Airport.

During their visit to the Department of France, the National Commander, and the National President were able to tour a portion of the Heilbronn area, a Dinner Ball was also hosted by JWP GR79, and the turn out for this Ball, was awesome and was supported by other post within the department. In addition they received briefings from the Stuttgart Garrison Commander, the Deputy EUCOM Commander, USAFE Commander and several other briefings. The briefings given were full of information for the National Commander, and National President to take back to National Headquarters. We also had a chance to visit the Landshul Fisher House and LRM, and the USO Wounded Warriors Center, where Post GR01 provided a BBQ for the Wounded Warriors and our National visitors.

On the 3rd of June we bid farewell to the National Commander, National President and their party. We wished them the best on their continued travel to France, and especially their visit to Normandy. I am sure that the National Commander, and National President, were assured that the Department of France is doing good things here in Europe, for Veterans and their Families and that we fully support National and its programs. I would like to take this time to thank all, who helped in the planning and support of Nationals visit to the Department of France.

In Closing I hope to see all of you at the upcoming Department Convention on the 13th of June in Wuestenrot, Germany. Please keep those and their families in harm’s way not only in your thoughts, but your prayers also.

James M. Settle
Department Commander

Phone 07138-67359
E-Mail pisces@c-online.de

Vice Commander Stephen Ward
Greetings, Commanders & Legionnaires,
Many thanks to the Commanders and Legionnaires participated in the Memorial Day ceremonies. The family and I attended the Memorial ceremony (Castlebar, Ireland). It rained throughout the event, but the dedication of Legionnaires was commendable.

Memorial Day, Saturday, 25 May 2013
the three American Legion Posts of Ireland rededicate two WW1 graves with the assistance of the Mayo Peace Park Garden of Remembrance, Castlebar, Co. Mayo. The Mayo Peace Park (MPP) as part of Gathering Ireland honored by presenting flags at two WW1grave side ceremonies to the relatives and grandchildren. The U.S. grave rededication in Burriscarra graveyard, Co. Mayo of Pvt Patrick J. Scullion, killed in action 18 July, 1918 WW1 and U.S. grave rededication in Mayo Abbey cemetery of Pte Martin Davin, killed in action, 5 October 1918 WW1. The playing of taps and bag pipes

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(Department Officers Continued on Page 2)
(Continued from Page 1)

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Alt NECMan

From the Editor
Please send all input for the Department Newsletter to my e-mail address by the 26th of the month. Please use Word document format. Constructive suggestions to improve the Newsletter are also welcome.

Thank You.

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Continued from Page 1

from Achill Island, Michael was killed in action in Korea, 13 February 1951, buried in Bunnacurry, Achill, Co. Mayo. Presentation of certificate, medals, jacket and tie pin. Presentation to the family of Sgt Mark James Brennan, 78th AAA Battalion, from Kiltimagh, who died in a non-hostile air crash, while returning from R&R to his unit at Suwon Air Base Korea. Presentation of certificate, medals jacket and tie pin. Presentation of a US Presidential Memorial Certificate In respect of Pvt Thomas Carey, Supply Company, 115th Field Artillery, US Army, from Bekan Claremorris, to Mrs. Bridie Culliney at the Halequin Hotel. The Irish Posts website: www.americanlegion-ireland.com Also, John F. Kennedy Post IR-63 is listed on facebook. http://www.facebook.com/AmericanLegionIRL

The National Commander program this year is Operation Comfort Warrior. The Posts are asked to have collection cans for this program and the monies sent to NEC Miller. Post Consolidated Report is sent to the Department Adjutant (Rice) after the Post Elections but due to National NLT 1 July 2013. Hand copy of the Post Consolidated Report to the Department Adjutant, but the Post can use the online form to National www.my legion.org The Department of France website is being updated by Cale Hale. Please contact him, if you have any questions. If your Post has Facebook, please contact the Department Webmaster Carl Hale.

I stress the importance of membership in the Posts, Department, and the National Organization. Membership is our Voice on Capitol Hill. Rhein Main Post GR05 is at 104% (67) members, Riley Leroy Pitts Post GR07 at 100% (71) members, Thomas W. Barnett GR14 107% (60) members, Father Francis Duffy Post IR-02 at 96.72% (59) members, Comm. John Barry Post IR-03 at 92.59% (25) members, and John F. Kennedy Post IR-63 at 64.00% (55) members. I encourage the Posts to transmit each month to the Department Membership Chairman (Joe Dan Brown).
The next Leroy Riley Pitts Post GR07 Post meeting is: 5 June 13/6:30 P.M. NOTE: Post GR07 has moved to Coleman Barracks (Mannheim) which is the German Kantine Building next door to the AFN Headquarters building. The next TWB Post 14 meeting is: 12 June 13/7 P.M. (Buedingen) at the Gastatte Schroth (Buedingen Orleshausen). If your Post has Americans Reports, please send to Carl Hacksworth.

Doug Haggan (FODPAL Secretary) is asking the Department and Posts to submit pictures and small articles to the FODPAL website: http://www.legion.org Click FODPAL site listed below the Legion Homepage. FODPAL (Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion) is asking for traveling tips in Germany and other Countries, special programs and events from the Department and Post, and face book sites. The Department of France Newsletters is posted on the FODPAL website. Click Newsletters. Listed in the Newsletter are Post IR-03 and Post IR-02.

Attended the National Commander Visit at John Wayne Post 79 (31 May). The National Commander (James Koutz) asks the Posts to be active with his program (Operation Comfort Warriors). It’s posted in the National website: www.legion.org Posts and individual members can donate to this program. Many other Posts representatives were there. The Post Commanders present gave a briefing to the National Commander what the Posts were doing at their Communities. Attended the National Commander Visit at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center Wounded Warriors Center (USO) 1 June 13. Post GR01 members provided the food at the Posts were doing at their Communities. Attended the National Commander Visit at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center Wounded Warriors Center (USO) 1 June 13. Post GR01 members provided the food at the LRMC Wounded Warriors Center (USO). Many thanks to them for their dedication. Also, present were National Auxiliary President (Peggy Thomas), NEC John Miller, Department Commander (Settle), VCAL Brown, Department Adjutant Rice, and eleven National Commander Staff and relatives. Nine new members signed-up and the National Commander performed the initiation (Oath) of the new members. AFN (Kaiserslautern) conducted the camera interviews with the National Commander (Koutz), National Auxiliary President (Thomas), and 1st Vice Commander (Ward) Kaiserslautern Post GR01.

John Wayne Post 79 plans to host the upcoming Department of France Convention (13 – 15 June 13) location: Hotel Restaurant Café Schönblick Kretschmerstrasse 1 71543 Wustenrot The information for the convention package was sent to all Posts. The POC: J.D. Charly Brown Email: joedan.pascall@googlemail.com Handy: 0170-1888034. Please let Joe Dan Brown know, what dates you plan to attend. It’s important for the delegates from the Posts to attend the Department of France Convention to voice their opinions, selection of Department Officers, and to discuss important issues affecting the Posts, Department, and the Organization. Each Post has the opportunity to submit Resolutions to the Department. Change needs to be made for the betterment of the Posts, Department, and the Organization. The VFW Department of Europe Convention is held at the Edelweiss Lodge and Resort (14 – 16 June 2013) Garmisch, Germany. If you like to attend, please contact the Edelweiss Lodge and Resort either by email: Vacation@edelweisslodgeandresort.com or telephone number: 0049-8821-9440. Group Reservation Code: I306FWANN. POC: Dept. Jr. Vice Leo Robbins email: robbins_lm1@hotmail.com

Commanders & Fellow Legionnaires, many thanks for what you do for your Posts and the communities you serve.

STEPHEN A. WARD
VICE COMMANDER
DEPARTMENT OF FRANCE
My fellow Comrades

Once again I was very honored to attend the Memorial Day Ceremony at Saint Avold France on the 26th of May, and participate in the wreath laying ceremony in the name of the Detachment of France. There also to represent the Department of France was the Department of France Commander, the Department VCAL, and the Department Auxiliary President. Also present were the JROTC Cadets from Stuttgart American High School, and they provided support to the Department of France during the ceremony. Although weather conditions were less than suitable (rained the entire time) the ceremony was very respectful of our fallen during WWII. Although I have attended this ceremony many times, I still get chills when TAPS are played and our Nation's Flag is brought to full Staff.

Thanks to the Department Commander, I was able to greet The American Legion Commander James Koutz, and the National Auxiliary President Peggy Thomas, and traveling party on the 30th of May at Frankfurt International Airport. I was able to do some limited travel with them, to the Stuttgart and Kaiserslautern areas, where we visited the Fisher House and LRMC. I was also able to attend the Commanders Ball hosted by JWP GR79 in Heilbronn. I had a great time being there, and being around all present, the comradery was non stop. I had the chance to speak with old friends as well as making new ones. The conversations I had with both the National Commander and National President were very inspiring, and something I will carry with me for a long time to come.

Membership we have done a really great job in Membership this year, lets keep up the good work for this upcoming year. Remember Membership is everyones responsibility.

I will be attending the Department Convention in Wuestenrot, Germany I hope to see all of you there. In closing please keep those and their families in harm's way in your prayers.

Yours in Comradeship
Service to God and Country
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Newsletter – Spring 2013

1. We remember our fallen comrades: Today, Monday May 27th is Memorial Day.

2. Department of France Conference is June 14, 15 & 16 in Wustenrot, Germany, hosted by Post GR-79. We will be represented by 4 delegates from our Post.

3. The John Barry Maritime Festival and Ceremonies at Statute of Commodore John Barry, Wexford take place on June 21 – 23, 2013. Post members will be part of ceremonies on Sunday to honour WWI vets from Ireland, Britain and the U.S., plus 50th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy’s visit to Wexford. Parade at 10:00 AM Sunday, ceremonies in the afternoon and dinner provided by Borough of Wexford in the evening. Caps/suits/blazers required. Please confirm your attendance to Post Adjutant John Shanahan by Monday, June 3rd, 2013.

4. We will have our Spring Meeting at the Garda Social Club, 8-10 Harrington Street, Dublin 8 on Monday evening, June 24th, 8:00 – 9:30 PM. Note that this date follows on immediately after our gathering in Wexford. The meeting will feature a presentation to the Social Club and a report on the Spring convention. It will also lay out plans for upcoming events, many of which are listed below, and look to involve more members in the work of the Post.

5. We celebrate American Independence Day, July 4th. Freedom is never free.

6. We participate in the National Day of Commemoration ceremonies at Royal Hospital Kilmainham, with Post members in place at 10:00 AM on Sunday, July 14th, 2013. Mark your calendars for the event. Caps/suits/blazers required.

7. We attach an updated membership list and contact details for members. Please review and check your entry for accuracy. Also -- please supply an e-mail address for timely contact information. Replies are to be made to the Post Adjutant, John Shanahan. John’s contact details are noted above.

8. We invite you to take an active role in YOUR post and call for volunteers:
   a. Post programs officer – organize programs & speakers for Post meetings.
   b. Post services officer – identify and support member needs/services.
   c. Post public relations officer – communicate Post activities & events to the public and maintain/support our new Facebook site, shown below.

Please reply to Post Commander and/or Adjutant with your expression of interest.

9. Please note that we now have a new Post Facebook site:
http://www.facebook.com/AmericanLegionIRL

Members are cordially invited to log on, supply information of interest to fellow members and to the Legion generally, and stay abreast of new developments. Also, you can see what other Irish posts are doing and use this tool to keep your Legion calendar up to date. Welcome aboard!
Post 1982 Ansbach Memorial Dedication

On 19 April 2013, American Legion Post 1982 joined the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade and USAG Ansbach in dedicating the Wall of Heroes memorial. The Wall of Heroes is located in the new Ansbach PX/Commissary complex on the right hand side hallway as one enters the PX and heads toward the Commissary. Legionnaires John O’Brien and CPT Travis Oscarson designed and built the wall with help from American Legion Post 1982, the VFW and Spouses and Civilians Club. The wall is dedicated to the memory of the fallen Soldiers from the Ansbach community since the start of the Iraq War. There are 3 TV’s mounted that show slide shows of the Soldiers and their achievements.

COL. Kelly Lawler USAG Ansbach Garrison Commander speaks about the nine Soldiers that have given their lives in combat from the Ansbach community since the start of the Iraq war.

American Legion Post 1982 members from left to right, Ken Aungst 2nd Vice Cmdr, WWII veteran Paul Parent and Estus Smith, Adjutant read through and talk about the Soldiers they had personally known.
Members of American Legion Post 1982 in Ansbach and local VFW members help set up for the Wall of Heroes Memorial dedication ceremony on 19 April 2013.
Greetings fellow Legionnaires,

I wanted to take a few minutes and highlight some of the successes and one of our members from David Chavez Post GR1982 in Ansbach, Germany. We have grown our membership from 92 in 2012 to 101 currently in 2013. We are building on our Past Commander, Johnnie Walkers successes and have been busy supporting the community. On April 19th we joined the Ansbach community in completing the Wall of Heroes, a memorial dedicated to the fallen Soldiers of Ansbach.

Later that day COL. Kelley Lawler the USAG Ansbach Commander recognized our oldest member Paul Parent (93) at the Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony with a certificate of appreciation. I was able to present Paul with the NCO Creed from CSM Leeford Cain, Garrison CSM, who was unable to attend the ceremony. SFC (Retired) Paul Parent joined the Canadian Army in 1939. Paul became a member of the Cambron Highlanders of Canada, where part of their uniform was to wear a kilt. In 1940, Paul’s unit was sent to Reykjavik, Iceland to act as a defensive force against the German 5th Columnists who were attempting to enter Iceland. After 11 and a half months on duty, his unit was replaced by U.S. forces, and his unit was sent to Aldershot, England where they went through rigorous training in preparation of war. In 1942, Paul’s unit participated in the “Diepe Raid” where they suffered heavy losses and moved on to participate in the Italian Campaign Invasion of 1943. Perhaps the most infamous invasion during the war was “D” Day in 1944, where Paul was on the 2nd wave, left flank at Juno Beach, Normandy, and can remember his Lieutenant on the boat telling everyone on board, “You better get off this boat, or I’ll shoot you myself.” At the end of the war, Paul decided to leave the Canadian Army, and in 1950 enlisted in the United States Army. Paul retired from the U.S. Army in 1970, and is now currently residing here in our community of Ansbach.

On 5 May 2013, Post 1982 gave out 12 JROTC medals during a promotion ceremony at the Ansbach Middle/High School and attended the JROTC change of command on 23 May. Also in May, Post 1982 held their first night of bingo. The bingo party was a 10 on the fun scale and almost all participants won a prize. May 29, 2013, Dick Miller 1st VC and Ken Aungst 2nd VC participated in the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade and USAG Ansbach Memorial Day Dedication Ceremony where an engraved stone was dedicated to CW5 John Pratt and CPT John “Jay” Brainard; two
deceased pilots who were killed last year in combat operations in Afghanistan.

At our May meeting NECman John Miller swore in our new post officers. I am honored to be elected the new Commander and look forward to learning from my fellow and past commanders. The year ahead should be a fast and fun filled time. If you would like to keep up to date with Post 1982 “Like” us on Facebook; just search, “American Legion Ansbach Post 1982”. We are growing in numbers and activities and look forward to supporting the Department of France.

Chris Buchanan, Post GR1982
Commander
E-Mail: christopherbuch@hotmail.com
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/AmericanLegionPost1982?ref=hl
Surviving family members reminded to explore VA entitlements

Marine Corps Honor Guard members carry a casket to a burial plot at Arlington National Cemetery in May 2013.
Carlos Bongioanni/Stars and Stripes

This can be a serious problem for overseas spouses who do not read or understand English.

For spouses of Disabled Veterans there is a possibility of a pension if the death was linked to the disability and many deaths are so linked.

Here in Portugal we have a number of Disabled Veterans with wives who speak only Portuguese and are not aware of the surviving spouse pension.

Gilbert Wells, Adjutant
American Legion Portugal Post #1
Tel 351 21 929 1372

By Thomas Brennan
The (Jacksonville, N.C.) Daily News
Published: May 11, 2013
Female Soldiers Honored at Grand Ole Opry

What does it take to become part of the Grand Ole Opry? For most, it takes commitment, practice and hard work. The ability to sing helps. For a very few, all it takes is an invitation.

Fifteen female Soldiers from Fort Campbell were asked to share the stage with country singer Ayla Brown as she made her debut at the Grand Ole Opry. All 15 Soldiers wore combat patches, indicating they had served in a combat zone.

The Grand Ole Opry is a weekly country music stage show in Nashville that has been performed and broadcast on radio since 1925. The Opry has been called "country's most famous stage" and "the show that made country music famous."

Regular performers at the Opry included country legends such as Hank Williams, Patsy Cline and Minnie Pearl. Recent stars include Brad Paisley, Rascal Flatts and the Dixie Chicks. Add to that list Ayla Brown and Fort Campbell Soldiers.

The Soldiers provided a backdrop for Brown's song honoring female service members, "Hero in Her Hometown." Brown said a song honoring women who serve our country is long overdue.

"I thought of all the songs about the people who serve in our country's military and realized there are no songs about the brave women who help defend our country," she said.
The song tells the story of a small town homecoming queen that joins the Army, goes to war and returns a hometown hero.

For Brown, the performance was validation that she made the right choice for a career path which included being a finalist on American Idol in 2006.

"I remember going to my first Opry show when I moved to Nashville two years ago," Ayla said. "I thought to myself, 'If I ever get to perform at the Opry then I'll know I've made it.'"

For the Soldiers, the experience was an evening of VIP treatment. A backstage tour included the opportunity to chat with Brown and other Country stars including Vince Gill, Steve Warnier and John Conlee. As the Soldiers walked on stage, the audience gave them a standing ovation. The audience remained standing throughout the song.

Sergeant 1st Class Andrea Howard said it was a once in a lifetime experience.

"It was a huge honor to have the entire audience give us a standing ovation and to be part of Ayla Brown's debut," she said. "I came from a small town in Georgia, so I can identify with the song. I'm not a hero, but I'm proud to be part of a group to represent all the women who serve our country."

Backstage, a Soldier took her "Screaming Eagle" combat patch from her right shoulder and presented it to Brown. Brown experienced time in a combat zone herself in November 2010, when she visited Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan and entertained 15,000 troops.
As veterans with honorable discharges pass away, many surviving families are unaware of benefits they are entitled to through the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.

“It is important for veterans’ families to know about survivor benefits because these are benefits the veteran has earned through his or her service to our country,” said Wayne Peedin, the interim director with the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs in Raleigh.

For the surviving families of deceased veterans there are many benefits available to commemorate and honor a service member’s military career. By applying to the Department of Veterans Affairs, family members may be eligible for a burial flag, headstones, presidential certificates and others.

“Providing survivor benefits is an obligation, and I would hope the VA would feel privileged to live up to that obligation,” Peedin said.

At no cost to the family, a United States flag is provided to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased veteran who served honorably in the United States armed forces. The furnishing of a burial flag is meant to memorialize the veteran’s military service to his or her country.

The flag is generally given to the next of kin after its use during the funeral service. If there is no next of kin, a friend requesting the flag may have it presented to them. For VA national cemeteries with an Avenue of Flags, families may donate the burial flags to be flown on patriotic holidays.

Burial flags cannot be replaced by the Department of Veterans Affairs if lost, destroyed or stolen. In order to obtain a flag, the applicant must fill out VA Form 27-2008. Flags may be picked up at a VA regional office or the U.S. Post Office.

Under a program called “Honoring Those Who Served,” the Department of Defense is responsible for providing military funeral honors at the family’s request. The ceremony includes folding and presenting the United States burial flag and the playing of Taps.

Military funeral honors consists of two or more uniformed persons, with at least one being a member of the veteran’s parent service. The local funeral home handling arrangements can also arrange the military honors.

Headstones or grave markers for the deceased veteran can be applied for through the VA by filling out VA Form 40-1330 if the veteran is being buried at a private cemetery. The headstone or marker must be applied for by the next of kin or an authorized representative. The veteran’s military discharge documents must be provided.

When a burial or memorial is at a national, post or state veterans’ cemetery, a headstone or marker will be ordered by cemetery officials.
By request, the VA also provides a medallion that can be affixed to an existing privately purchased headstone or marker. The medallion is inscribed with the word “Veteran” across the top and the branch of service at the bottom. In order to apply for the medallion, next of kin should file VA Form 40-1330M. Veterans are not entitled to both the headstone or marker and the medallion.

All veterans’ surviving family members are entitled to a Presidential Memorial Certificate. More than one certificate may be provided to the next of kin and loved ones. The certificate is meant to express the country’s grateful recognition of the veterans’ service. Those interested must file VA Form 40-0247.

If you think you may be entitled to something, look into it, Peedin said.

“Contact a local service officer,” Peedin said. “They may not be eligible but they can’t be eligible if they don’t look into it and apply.”
VA Announces New Grants to Help End Veterans’ Homelessness

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced two new grants to support Secretary Eric K. Shinseki’s goal of ending Veterans’ homelessness in 2015. Under these new programs, homeless providers can apply for funding to enhance the facilities used to serve homeless Veterans, and acquire vans to facilitate transportation of this population.

“Those who have served this Nation as Veterans should never find themselves on the streets, living without care and without hope,” said Secretary Shinseki. “Homeless prevention grants provide community partners with the opportunity to help prevent and end homelessness on the local level. This is a crucial tool to get at-risk Veterans and their families on the road to stable, secure lives.”

Approximately $22 million in rehabilitation funds will be available to current operational Grant and Per Diem grantees as part of the effort to increase the useful life of the facilities previously funded under the program. VA expects current Grant and Per Diem grantees will apply for funding to rehabilitate their current project location and enhance the safety, security and privacy issues associated with the homeless Veteran populations they serve. A maximum of $250,000 is available per award and the award will not be more than 65 percent of the estimated total cost of the rehabilitation activity. VA has established funding priorities to support its oldest capitally funded projects.

In addition, approximately $2 million in funds will be available for current operational Grant and Per Diem grantees to assist in the acquisition of vans in order to facilitate transportation of Veteran participants to medical appointments, employment opportunities in the community, and facilitate grantees’ outreach activities. The maximum award for a van will be $35,000. The amount of the award will not exceed 65 percent of the total cost of the van.

Applications for both awards are due to the Grant and Per Diem office by no later than 4 p.m. Eastern time on June 28, 2013.
This funding is available under VA’s Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program for current operational Grant and Per Diem grantees. The Grant and Per Diem Program provides community-based organizations with funding to develop and operate transitional housing and supportive services for homeless Veterans. The Grant and Per Diem Program has over 15,000 operational transitional housing beds nationwide.

The 2012 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, prepared by The Department of Housing and Urban Development, estimated there were 62,619 homeless Veterans on a single night in January 2012 in the United States, a 7.2 percent decline since 2011 and a 17.2 percent decline since 2009. The AHAR reports on the extent and nature of homelessness in America. Included in the report is the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count, which measures the number of homeless persons in the U.S. on a single night in January 2012, including the number of homeless Veterans.

Additional information is available at http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD.asp or contact the Grant and Per Diem National Program Office at 877-332-0334.

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I attended the Memorial Day Ceremony at Saint Avold, Lorraine Cemetery on the 26th of May. I was very honored to participate in the laying of wreaths for the Auxiliary Department of France in remembrance of those that gave the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the United States of America. Memorial Day is a day that we should never forget; it is a day, we should remember the fallen heroes of the Great Wars. It is a day that we should take a few minutes out from our BBQ’s, visiting with friends, neighbors, and families, and pay respect to them.

The American Legion National Commander James Koutz, and the National Auxiliary President Peggy Thomas, just finished their visit to the Department of France. They were presented with many briefings, and visited the Wounded Warriors at LRMC and the Fisher House in Landstuhl Germany. I was very inspired by National President Thomas’s remarks and her ideas on how to improve the Auxiliary relationship with the department and post. We are all in this for the same reasons, taking care of Veterans, and their families.

We need to take a closer look at ourselves and improve our involvement supporting the Legion with their events and efforts in supporting our past, present and future veterans and their families. If we all pull together we can accomplish this and much more.

Membership in the Department of France Auxiliary has been very low over the past few years. Legionnaires, with wife’s, daughters, sister’s, mothers, and granddaughters should consider letting them joining the Auxiliary, and let them help you in your support of Veterans and their families. Female Legionaries are also eligible to join the Auxiliary.

Remember the Department has its convention, and elections on the 15th of June in Wuestenrot Germany. In closing please keep those in harm’s way and their families in your prayers.

Isolde Settle
Department President
A donation to the Fisher House serves our military and their families in times of need. Providing shelter and support during medical crises, Fisher House’s many “homes away from home” provide a comforting environment to injured service members, veterans, retirees and their families. While a loved one is undergoing medical treatment in an unfamiliar town, city or state, the offer of a welcoming refuge to help families stay close together is appreciated by the brave men and women who serve our nation with valor.

Become a hero to someone special by contributing to the Fisher House today. For more information, call toll-free (888) 294-8560 or visit www.fisherhouse.org. The Sons of the American Legion support the fundraising efforts of the Fisher House, visit www.sal.legion.org for more information.

Through the generosity of the American public, you can find Fisher House facilities in the following states:
California • Colorado • District of Columbia • Florida • Georgia • Hawaii • Kentucky • Maryland
Minnesota • Mississippi • New York • North Carolina • Ohio • Texas • Virginia • Washington • Europe
Devotion to mutual helpfulness – report from Paris Post 1 Commander Carl Hale

I received an email in mid-April from Ms. Nikki Koves, the managing director of a company called “Procom America”, who organizes historical tours to Europe. Ms. Koves explained that she had a special group of WWII veterans returning to their European battlefields between 1 – 8 May. She asked if the Paris Post #1 would be available to meet the group. The returning veterans would visit Paris, Normandy, Luxembourg, Bastogne and end with a Rhine River cruise in Frankfurt. The tour was called, “Beyond Band of Brothers”. For more information about the tours see the website www.beyondbandofbrothers.com

The veterans and their families arrived in France in the morning of 1 May and began their tour with a morning visit of Paris. They then proceeded to the Normandy beaches, the WWII museums and the Normandy American cemetery at Colville Sur Mer. I couldn't meet the group in Paris because of work requirements but our Legion Auxiliary President, Ms. Beth Herwood, did meet and help the visiting veterans.

Ms. Herwood helped coordinate for the group to have a lunch in a Parisian restaurant and assisted with the bus tour of Paris including the Arc du Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower. This was a great example of the Legion Family supporting visiting veterans.

I was able to join the group in Bastogne on Sunday, 5 May. I also brought my Post Adjutant, WWII Veteran Maurice Sperandieu. Mr. Sperandieu, 88 years old, was assigned with General Patton's 3rd US Army in C. Company, 512th Military Police Battalion. Together we met the veterans at the Best Western Hotel Melba (the same place we held a 3rd DEC meeting several years ago). I introduced myself to the group during dinner. I explained how the Department of France and Paris Post was honored to assist during their visit. I explained we hoped to help with more veteran visits to Europe.

The eleven veterans were:

Mr. James McWillie, 97 years old, who served in the 9th Air Force, Army Air Corps on 23 missions with the 386th Bomber Group, 553rd Squadron, as a radio operator and aerial gunner on A-26 and B-26 aircraft. He was stationed in Belgium and France. Mr. McWillie flew at the Battle of the Bulge and Remagen Bridge.

Mr. Baron Wilkes, 96 years old, who served with the 30th Infantry Division and the 9th Air Force, Army Air Corps. He joined the Army Air Corps and graduated from pilot training. He was told they didn’t need any more pilots, so he was sent into the Army. Mr. Wilkes was injured on the way to the Battle of the Bulge and received the Purple Heart medal. After recovering from his injury he was sent back to the Army Air Corps.

Mr. Hulan Roberts, 92 years old, who served with the 8th Air Force, Army Air Corps, 452nd Bomber Group, 730th Squadron, as a B-17 bombardier on 32 missions including at the Battle of the Bulge.

Mr. William Travis Hawkins, 91 years old, who served with the 612 Tank Destroyer Battalion, Bravo Company. He went in at Normandy and was captured at the Battle of the Bulge. He was a Prisoner of War held at Stalag XIII-C at Hammelburg which is east of Frankfurt, were General
Patton’s son-in-law was also held. The 14th Armored Division liberated Mr. Hawkins on April 6, 1945.

Mr. Vince Rowell, 89 years old, who served in the 29th Infantry Division arriving in France during the second wave at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944. Mr. Rowell served as a machine gunner and fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

Mr. Will Day, 87 years old, who served in the 26th Infantry Division, 328th Regiment. He arrived through Omaha Beach in August 1944. He was captured just before the Battle of the Bulge and was held as a prisoner of war at Stalag XII-A as a transit camp in Limburg, near Koblenz. He then was transferred to Stalag IX-B in Bad Orb, near Frankfurt. The 44th Infantry Division liberated Mr. Day on April 2, 1945.

Mr. James Melbourne Bennett, 87 years old, who served with the 2nd Infantry Division landing on Omaha Beach on D-Day and received the Purple Heart medal.

Mr. William Drewry, 87 years old, who served in over 30 missions as a B-24 tailgunner including over the Battle of the Bulge.

Mr. Richard Fuessle, 87 years old, who served in the Navy on the LST 60 during the Normandy D-Day invasion.

Mr. Glenn Johnson, 86 years old, who served as a U.S. Navy gunner assigned to the Merchant Marine Ship USS West Honaker at Utah Beach on D-Day. The USS West Honaker bombed into the night of 7 June. It was one of the “Gooseberry” block ships scuttled on 10 June for the Mulberry Harbor and served as an antiaircraft platform until 14 June.

Mr. Elvis Chambers, 86 years old, served with the Big Red One, Golf Company, 26th Infantry Division as a “Replacement”. His service brought him through France to the German Black Forest region.

I couldn’t tell which veteran was in their 90s because they all where in great health and good spirits. Monday morning we all began with breakfast and then boarded the tour bus at 0830. The first visit was at McAuliffe Square and memorial. The tour guide was a Belgian man from Bastogne who was a witness to the war as a young boy. He gave a first hand view when talking about the Sherman tank on display at McAuliffe Square. We then visited the General Patton memorial. The group made photos with the wreath placed to honor the Battle of the Bulge veterans. The Mardasson Memorial was the next visit location. Again, a wreath was placed in honor of the veterans and photos were made. We then boarded the bus and visited the nearby forest that still has actual foxholes remaining from the war. Some of the veterans did not want to go in the fighting position, “once was enough”. The Bastogne Hotel de Ville (City Hall) welcomed the group with a champagne toast, words of honor and remembrance, and gifts of thanks for the veteran’s contribution to freedom. Each veteran signed a special book that is being created by the City of Bastogne. The book will include a photo of the veteran at the age he fought in the war and a photo when he returned to Bastogne for the visit. The Bastogne Barracks was the final stop for the tour. Belgian Army soldiers welcomed the American veterans on
arrival. The veterans received a special briefing about the Bastogne Barracks detailing General McAuliffe’s historical service there including his “NUTS” reply to the Germans when asked to surrender. Each veteran received a framed Christmas message composed by General McAuliffe in December 1944. We then toured the General’s basement headquarters offices where history was made during the war. The Bastogne Barracks soldiers also repair and refurbish WWII military vehicles in direct partnership with the Belgian War and Military History museum. We were offered a tour of the vehicle warehouse that held many different tanks, trucks, and artillery pieces.

The veterans expressed thanks to each group who thanked them. The Bastogne tour ended with lunch and the afternoon for free time to explore the town. Maurice and I returned home grateful to meet the fellow veterans. We hope to do more for the next planned tour of veterans.

If the Department, Posts or individuals would like to assist with future WWII veteran visits the contact information for Ms Koves is: nkoves@procomtours.com
HOUSTON TEXAS
Site of the 95th American Legion National Convention
August 23rd to August 29th 2013

If you are planning on attending the National Convention in Houston please e-mail me dhaggan@sbcglobal.net with the following information, the date you will arrive and depart, the person you are sharing a room with if any, and any special room request.

Cutoff for the reservation is 15 July 2013.

Hope to see you in Houston, a good time will be had by all.
National Commander and National President’s Visit to the Department of France