

Mike Seaton

1. What Year were you National Commander? 1968

2. How old were you? 19

3. How many visits were you able to make?

As the first National Commander I was elected as the first temporary chair and then permanent chair of a National meeting chaired by a member of the Sons of The American Legion. My duties were performed during the 1968 Legion National Convention in New Orleans.

Background

In 1964 the first SAL Workshop was held at a National Convention. In 1965 a large delegation from California attended the second workshop in Portland. I was the only Sons member to attend the National Membership and Post Activities Committee meetings of the Legion that oversaw the SAL at the time. From 1965-1968 I spoke at their convention meetings in support of a California Legion's resolution on National colors.

The Workshop evolved into the first National SAL Caucus. The four winners of the Houghton membership awards were "called" to the National Convention and charged with planning the meeting. Past National Commanders Bob McBride and Woody Mudge were among the four. At the National Membership and Post Activities Committee meeting the Legion's Director invited me to join the four called in at their planning meeting. The Director opened the meeting asking everyone to introduce himself and then asked the four representatives to select a temporary chair of the SAL meeting the next day. The four huddled in a corner of the room and after discussion asked the Director if they had to select a temporary chair from those called in? He responded no, not sure of what they had in mind, and they said they wanted to nominate me to be the temporary chair because of my past participation at National conventions and seniority as a Past Detachment Commander. So the next day I opened the meeting and the first order of business was election of the Permanent Chair, which I was nominated and elected by those present.

It was a few of us, the oldest in his late 20s, that gathered in a hallway in Portland, Oregon in 1970 during the National Convention, who decided to seek a meeting with John Geiger, the leading candidate for National Commander of the Legion. We met and from that meeting came our National Constitution and By-laws and in two years our first National Convention. Past National Chairmen were then designated as the Past National Commanders. The traditions of a motion to elect the National Commander by the senior PNC present and all PNC's escorting the new commander to the stage all began in Chicago.

4. What would you say to a Blue Capper that wants to someday be a National Commander? Start out young; have a vision and plan for moving the organization forward not just a theme; lead the organization as National Commander.

5. As of 2014-2015 how many years have you been a member?

64 years – I held my first squadron office at 5; my first Detachment office I won in a contested election at 9 over a member in high school; I was the elected the last Detachment Captain and became the first Past Detachment Commander at 13; and was at 18 chairing a National SAL meeting.

By the time I was National Commander I had attended 15 Department and Detachment Conventions and five National Conventions. I was approached to run and elected the American Legion, Department of California Sgt.-at-Arms at 23 in a contest races against a Korean vet. I have many times over the past 45 years credited my leadership in the SAL for who I am and the leadership skills I have demonstrated in my career and community positions. I learned public speaking, parliamentary procedure, and acquired my political interest growing up in the Legion family. I marched in my first Legion parade at 3 years old and carried the American Flag at the head of the California Legion Delegation the first time at 22. My point here is the Sons of the American Legion is missing an opportunity by not engaging and developing younger leaders to lead our organization.

6. Why did you join the S.A.L? My dad's post started a squadron in 1952 and my parents signed me up when I was two years old.

7. Are you still active in the S.A.L.? Yes