



AMERICAN LEGION

The Oxley Post

4637 Decatur Street
Philadelphia, PA 19136
215-332-2457



January/February 2019

Commander's Message

By: Bruce Conklin

Wishing everyone Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year! I want to thank all who donated to the Children's Christmas Party. The kids had a great time and we had a very nice turnout. As always we appreciate everyone's efforts to keep our post going. We also thank those advertising in our newsletter – please support these businesses. On Martin Luther King Day, let's have a day of service here in our community. Anything from policing trash around our block to helping a veteran here in our neighborhood... all ideas are welcome. We just need the participation to make things happen!

Adjutant Report:

By: Jack Tomkins

Membership: National Headquarters is now requiring each member provide their **Phone Number, Gender, Date of Birth, Email and Branch of Service** when renewing their memberships. So, if paying your dues by mail, please include this information along with your check. **(Please mail payments in c/o Post Adjutant Jack Tomkins. Dues are now payable for 2019 in the amount of \$30.** There are some members who have not paid their 2018 dues. Each of you who are in arrears have been notified in a separate mailing. You will need to pay \$30 to catch up plus the 2019 dues of \$30 (which is due now). You can also renew your membership conveniently and safely online with a credit/debit card. To pay online visit www.legion.org/membership/renewals. If you have a hardship and are unable to pay, please contact a post officer.

Please give a warm Oxley Family Welcome to the following new and transferring members

Manny Mapes – New Member
Al Jones – New Member

Christmas Party Recap

By: Shelly Teesdale

Legion Auxiliary President

I would like to say "Thank you" to all the moms, dads and grandparents who came and spent the day with us at our Children's Christmas party. We had about 40 kids and it was a beautiful day! I would like to put out a special thanks to those who helped out that day and to those who made donations to help make the day so special for the children. My thanks go out to my beautiful ladies: **Noreen, Nikki, Chris, Maureen, Eileen and Barb** and to the 'Sons': **Tommy, Dave, Chuckie** thank you for helping with the decorations. A very special thank you to all those who made generous donations that really made the day memorable: **Pat Ryan, Bernadette and Arthur Melnick and Richie Carr**. Last but certainly not least Thank You Santa (and Uncle Wes, too!)

Happy Birthday: Please join us in wishing a Happy Birthday to the following Oxley Family Members.

**Joseph Shovlin - Jan. 4th; Bill Hubbard - Jan. 8th; Joseph Case - Jan 21st; Ed Hays - Feb 4th;
John McAndrew - Feb 14th; Charles McCloskey - Feb 23rd; Shelly Teesdale - Feb 23rd**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, January 1: Happy New Year!

Thursday, Jan 10, 7:30: Legion Family Meeting followed by AL Board and General Meeting

Monday, Jan. 14, 8 PM: S.A.L. Meeting

Saturday, Jan 19, 10 AM: Work Day at the Post. There are always things to do. Please come out and give a hand for an hour. No special skills necessary. For more information, contact **Greg Aschendorf** at 215-970-8035.

Monday, Jan 21. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. In 1994, Congress designated MLK Jr. Day as a national day of service. For the first time, the Oxley Post will be answering that call and conducting a block cleaning event beginning at 10AM. Please consider joining us for a couple hours to improve our community!

Sunday, Feb. 3, SuperBowl LIII. Kickoff 6:30 PM. Party Details TBA

Saturday, Feb 9, 8PM Night at the Races This is an important fundraiser for the post. **Please come out and have a good time while supporting your post.**

Monday, Feb. 11, S.A.L. General Meeting

Thursday, Feb. 14, 7:30 Legion Family Meeting followed by AL Board and General Meeting

Friday, Feb. 15, 7:00 Day-Late Valentine Dinner. Bring your husbands & wives, boyfriends & girlfriends (*but preferably not both*) to the post for a romantic (?) Italian dinner. \$20 per couple which includes 2 drink tickets.

Saturday, Feb 16, 10 AM: Work Day at the Club.



**MAKE A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION
TO GET MORE INVOLVED IN THE
OXLEY POST!**



Sick Call: Please keep the following members in your prayers: **Peter Pytrysson & Paul Palmer**. We do have some good news to report. **Jake Pielacha** recently visited the doctor and can announce that he is now cancer free for 10 years! If you know of someone who should be included on the sick list, please contact Jack Tomkins at 215-280-2033.

Post Everlasting: Sadly, **Bill Bieringer** passed away on December 22 after a brief stay in hospice care. Please keep Bill's wife Phyllis and daughters Ashley and Kristen in your prayers.

We're Here to Help!

The Oxley Post family is continuing an initiative begun last year that matches up our members who are in need of assistance with those who might be able to help. Some possible examples would include rides to the doctor, snow shoveling etc. (although we will try to accommodate any request). Do you need help getting a handicap placard or license plate? Do you want a "Veteran Designation" on your state issued driver's license or non-driver ID? Contact our Service Officer **Mike Vokes** at 267-968-4124 for assistance.

Darts "Luck of the Draw" to Begin in January

Every Friday night, beginning January 18, we'll be hosting Friday night "luck of the draw" dart tournaments. For anyone not familiar with the format, all skill levels are welcome and you'll have a partner that is selected at random. We'll be playing "501 single-on/double off" best of three games. There is a \$5 entry fee. Registration begins at 7:30 - darts at 8. These events are a great way to improve your skills and have fun. If you have questions, contact **Mike O'Leary** at 215-570-2568.



January is National Blood Donor Month.

January is the month for new beginnings; for making resolutions and setting goals for the coming year. It is also National Blood Donor month. There is no substitute for blood. It cannot be made in a lab. It can only be given by donors like you. This year, resolve to give the gift of life by donating blood. Every day, blood donors help patients of all ages: accident and burn victims, heart surgery and organ transplant patients, and those battling cancer. Each donation can save up to three lives.

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FIND A BLOOD DRIVE NEAR YOU BY CALLING 1-800-RED-CROSS.

SOURCE: WWW.REDCROSSBLOOD.ORG



This year, instead of having a traditional blood drive at our post, **we are asking all our Oxley Family members to make an appointment and donate at a date and time convenient to them.** We have set up a “Sleeves Up” campaign page in coordination with the Red Cross to help track donations. Go to the link below to make a pledge and make an appointment:

<https://sleevesup.redcrossblood.org/campaign/wm-d-oxley-post-133-american-legend/>

Or, you can make a donation on your own and let us know. **We’ve set a goal of 25 pints for 2019.** Bring a friend or neighbor and we’ll get credit for two pints! We’ll be tracking our progress throughout the year here in the newsletter as well as in the post.

There is a convenient blood donation center at Rhawn and Dungan Streets that is open 7 days a week. To make an appointment or find a blood drive near you call 1-800-RED-CROSS or go to

www.redcross.org/give-blood.html. To report a donation, call Bill Castillo at 267-974-8808.

We’re also looking for all members who have donated a lifetime total of more than 1 gallon (8 pints) of blood. If you have, please call Bob Cummings at 267-471-9607

Chaplain’s Corner

Now the Work of Christmas Begins

By Howard Thurman (1899 – 1981)

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.

Disabled Vets getting biggest pay raise since 2012

Military retirees and disabled veterans will be seeing a 2.8% increase in their pay beginning January 2019. This ‘Cost of Living Adjustment’ (COLA) will also affect those receiving Social Security. For veterans with a 10 % disability rating, that raises monthly compensation from \$136.24 to \$140.05 each month, while a veteran with a to 100 percent disability will go from \$2,973.86 to \$3,057.13 monthly.

(Source: <https://themilitarywallet.com/va-disability-pay-rates-rise/>)

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'Nothing short of horrifying:' Veterans' groups demand fixes at VA nursing homes

Donovan Slack, USA TODAY, and Andrea Estes, The Boston Globe

Source: Slack, Donovan, and Andrea Estes, "Nothing Short of Horrifying: 'Veterans Groups Demand Fixes at VA Nursing Homes.'" USA Today, 19 November 2018, www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/11/19/va-nursing-homes-veteran-groups-want-fixes-after-horrifying-reports-trump-administration-congress/2018781002/

(Editor's Note: This article has been edited for length)

WASHINGTON – Six veterans' groups are calling on the Department of Veterans Affairs to improve the quality of care at its nursing homes following a story by USA TODAY and The Boston Globe detailing "blatant disregard for veteran safety" at a VA nursing home in Massachusetts.

"Anybody who respects veterans should be angered by this," **American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad** said. "America's veterans deserve better."

The groups, who together represent nearly 5 million members, said veterans who risked their lives for our country shouldn't have to risk their lives in VA nursing homes.

In Brockton, Massachusetts, investigators found two nurses asleep during their shifts, even though the facility knew it was under scrutiny and inspectors were coming to visit, looking for potential signs of patient neglect. A whistleblower had reported that nurses and aides did not empty the bedside urinals of frail veterans, they failed to provide clean water at night and didn't check on the veterans regularly. The VA said the napping nurses no longer work at the facility.

The story was the latest in an investigation by USA TODAY and the Globe that revealed care at many VA nursing facilities was worse than at private nursing homes in the agency's own internal ratings, kept secret from veterans for years.

The stories detailed disturbing examples of substandard care – a veteran with undiagnosed scabies for months, another struggling to eat in Bedford, Massachusetts; and a third sitting for hours in soiled sheets and another writhing in pain without medication in West Palm Beach, Florida.

A Navy veteran was declared dead after he walked out of a supposedly secure VA nursing home and was never found in Tuskegee, Alabama. An Army vet landed in intensive care suffering from malnutrition, septic shock and bed sores after a stay at a VA nursing home in Livermore, California.

VA 'striving to improve'

VA spokesman Curt Cashour said the residents the VA typically cares for are sicker than those in private nursing homes, making "achieving good quality ratings more challenging." He said that overall, VA nursing homes "compare well" with the private sector. "We look forward to briefing each of these groups in the near future regarding these crucial facts," Cashour said, adding that the VA is "continuously striving to improve all of its health care facilities." The VA has 133 nursing homes across the country that serve 46,000 veterans annually.

Newly released VA data show that 95 of them – about 71 percent – scored worse than private nursing homes on a majority of quality indicators, such as rates of infection, serious pain and bed sores. Roughly the same number, 93, received only one or two stars out of five for quality in the agency's own ratings.

Call for transparency

Reistad, the Legion's commander, added, "We not only expect VA to fix these problems immediately, but we want transparency." On Sunday, after his group met with VA officials, he said he is confident they will work with the Legion and the other groups to "institute needed improvements."

The VA released the quality information on its nursing homes only after learning in June that USA TODAY and the Globe planned to publish it. The agency still has not released the results of inspections. Why not?" asked Rick Weidman, co-founder of Vietnam Veterans of America. He said his group often has to "fight like hell with VA in order to get information."

The reports can include instances of neglect or poor conditions that can be a tip-off to current and prospective residents about problems at a facility.

Cashour said the VA is working with an outside contractor who conducts the inspections, Wisconsin-based Long Term Care Institute, to remove patient information from its reports before they are released, maybe by the end of the year.

Private nursing homes have three years' worth of inspection reports posted on a federal website, Nursing Home Compare.

Lawmakers demand answers

In September, Congress passed and President Donald Trump signed into law legislation requiring the VA to publish quality ratings going forward. The law does not mention inspection reports. The Republican-led House VA Committee launched an investigation of VA nursing home care after the initial USA TODAY and Globe reports, but a spokeswoman, Molly Jenkins, said the probe won't be finished in time to hold a hearing this year as anticipated. The Democrat poised to take over the committee in January, Rep. Mark Takano of California, said it is a "critical issue that will continue to be a priority."

"The fact that we can't treat Americans who put their lives on the line with dignity when their lives are on the line here at home later in life is disgusting," said Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass, a veteran who receives his medical care at the Bedford VA.

VA Nursing Home Ratings

Editor's Note: Here is how local VA nursing homes were rated by the VA as of June 30 on a one-to-five star scale, with one being the worst (Source: USA Today)

Philadelphia: 1 Star
Coatesville, PA: 1 Star
Lebanon, PA: 2 Star
Wilmington, Delaware: 4 Stars

*It is important to note that the Delaware Valley Veterans' Home located in Northeast Philadelphia is operated by the Pennsylvania Department of Military Affairs – **NOT** the Veterans Administration. It is rated as a 5 Star Facility according to Medicare.gov.*

To check out a skilled nursing facility, go to www.medicare.gov/nursinghomecompare/search.html

Remembering the Tet Offensive January 1968

The Lunar New Year, known as 'Tet' in Vietnam is the most important holiday in Vietnam. In fact, prior to 1968, Tet had been the cause of informal truces between North and South Vietnamese forces. In late January 1968 however, the North Vietnamese Army in conjunction with their Viet Cong (VC) allies in South Vietnam staged a coordinated attack against a number of targets in South Vietnam.

The goal of Ho Chi Minh and the North Vietnamese leadership was twofold: to create unrest among the South Vietnamese people in the hopes of toppling the government and to shake the American resolve in the conflict and force the US to the negotiating table. At the end of the offensive, both sides claimed victory. Despite American losses exceeding 500 per week, the U.S. and South Vietnamese militaries quickly retook the ground lost during the offensive and annihilated the Viet Cong forces. It is estimated that 50,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers were killed or wounded in battle. And while there was no uprising among the South Vietnamese populace, the North won a strategic victory in that the battle convinced the American

public that achieving victory was far different from the view of General William Westmoreland, Commander, Military Assistance Command Vietnam, who declared "We have reached the point where the end begins to come into view," in a November 21st speech to the National Press Club.

The first phase of the assault began on January 30 and 31, when Viet Cong forces simultaneously attacked five major cities, including Saigon and Hué, 36 provincial capitals and numerous other hamlets. The strikes on Hué and Saigon had a strong psychological impact, as they showed that the Viet Cong troops were not as weak as the Johnson Administration and the Pentagon had previously claimed. A VC platoon even managed to breach the outer walls of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. Four American soldiers and one marine died repulsing the attack which never penetrated the embassy building. All the Vietnamese attackers were killed or captured.

In the aftermath of Tet, General Westmoreland asked for 200,000 additional troops for a counter-offensive believing that the U.S. was in a strong position to defeat the North. President Johnson and his advisors disagreed. On March 31st, in a nationally televised address, Johnson announced that he was seeking to de-escalate the war and that bombing of North Vietnam would cease above the 20th parallel and a limit was being placed on U.S. troops in South Vietnam. Surprisingly, he also announced that he would not seek a second term as president. In June, Johnson recalled General Westmoreland. The job of finding a way out of Vietnam was left to the next U.S. president, Richard Nixon.

Sources: <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/tet-offensive> , <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/tet>
Lindsay, James M., "TWE Remembers: General Westmoreland Says the 'End Begins to Come Into View' in Vietnam" Council on Foreign Relations 14 Dec. 2018 <https://www.cfr.org/blog/twe-remembers-general-westmoreland-says-end-begins-come-view-vietnam>

Veterans Shopping Benefits

At our December meeting, we discussed the various shopping options available to veterans. For clarification:

Honorably discharged veterans are eligible to shop **online** at "The Exchange" (shopmyexchange.com) which gives access to exclusive military pricing, special offers and tax-free shopping. This has been in effect since November 2017. You need to register online to take advantage of this benefit.

Currently, Base Commissaries are open to Medal of Honor recipients, all active duty and reserve personnel, retirees, 100% disabled veterans and authorized family members. Moral, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) facilities are open to any active duty or retired veterans, National Guardsmen or reservists and 100% disabled veterans and their families. **Beginning in January 2020, access to Base Commissaries and MWR facilities will be expanded to include Purple Heart and Medal of Honor recipients and all service-connected disabled veterans.**

Congratulation to Oxley Post (Team 2) for winning the Division 19 Quaker City first-half Dart Championship!

Al Jones	Gerry Kolb
Dan O'Leary	Brian Comatalo
Ed O'Leary	George Sullivan
Mike O'Leary (Capt'n)	Tom Cheeseman
Tracey Levine	Dennis Terry

The Sinking of the U.S.A.T. Dorchester and the Story of the Four Chaplains February 1943

On Feb. 3, 1943 at 12:55 a.m., the U.S.A.T. Dorchester, crowded with 902 soldiers and her merchant seaman crew, fell prey to a German submarine's torpedo in the frigid waters of the North Atlantic. She would sink in less than 20 minutes.

After the torpedo hit, panic and chaos had set in. The blast had killed scores of men, and many more were seriously wounded. Others, stunned by the explosion were groping in the darkness. Those sleeping without adequate clothing rushed topside where they were confronted first by a blast of icy Arctic air and then by the knowledge that death awaited.

Men jumped from the ship into lifeboats, overcrowding them to the point of capsizing, other rafts, tossed into the Atlantic, drifted away before soldiers could get in them.

Through the pandemonium, four Army chaplains brought hope in despair and light in darkness. Those chaplains were Lt. George L. Fox, Methodist; Lt. Alexander D. Goode, Jewish; Lt. John P. Washington, Roman Catholic; and Lt. Clark V. Poling, Dutch Reformed. Quickly and quietly, the four chaplains spread out among the soldiers. There they tried to calm the frightened, tend the wounded and guide the disoriented toward safety.

One witness, Private William B. Bednar, found himself floating in oil-smeared water surrounded by dead bodies and debris. "I could hear men crying, pleading, praying," Bednar recalls. "I could also hear the chaplains preaching courage. Their voices were the only thing that kept me going." Another sailor, Petty Officer John J. Mahoney, tried to reenter his cabin but Rabbi Goode stopped him. Mahoney, concerned about the cold Arctic air, explained he had forgotten his gloves.

"Never mind," Goode responded. "I have two pairs." The rabbi then gave the petty officer his own gloves. In retrospect, Mahoney realized that Rabbi Goode was not conveniently carrying two pairs of gloves, and that the rabbi had decided not to leave the Dorchester.

By this time, most of the men were topside, and the chaplains began distributing life jackets. When they ran out the chaplains removed theirs and gave them to four frightened young men.

The altruistic action of the four chaplains constitutes one of the purest spiritual and ethical acts a person can make. When giving their life jackets, Rabbi Goode did not call out for a Jew; Father Washington did not call out for a Catholic; nor did the Reverends Fox and Poling call out for a Protestant. They simply gave their life jackets to the next man in line.

As the ship went down, survivors in nearby rafts could see the four chaplains – arms linked and braced against the slanting deck. Their voices could also be heard offering prayers. 672 men died that night, leaving 230 survivors. When the news reached American shores, the nation was stunned by the magnitude of the tragedy and heroic conduct of the four chaplains.

That night Reverend Fox, Rabbi Goode, Reverend Poling and Father Washington passed life's ultimate test. In doing so, they became an enduring example of extraordinary faith, courage and selflessness.

The chaplains were posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and Purple Heart. A one-time only Special Medal for Heroism was authorized by Congress and awarded by the President Eisenhower on January 18, 1961. The special medal was intended to have the same weight and importance as the Medal of Honor.

Source: <http://www.fourchaplains.org/the-saga-of-the-four-chaplains/> (edited for length)

Editor's Note: The Chapel of the Four Chaplains is located at the Philadelphia Navy Yard and is open to the public.



The Four Chaplains

From Left: Lt. A.D. Goode, Lt. G.L. Fox, Lt. C.V. Poling, Lt. J.P. Washington



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We hope you have enjoyed this issue of the Oxley Post. This is *your* newsletter: if there are things you'd like to see included, please let us know. In order to make this successful, we will need help and support. With a distribution of almost 400 households, we need help with distribution – that is folding, labeling, stamping etc. **Finally, in order to offset the production and mailing cost, we are selling advertising space. If you know of a business that may be interested in advertising, please let us know.** Our introductory rate is \$100 for a business card sized ad for one year. If you're interested in helping in any of these areas, please let me know. Thanks.

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