



AMERICAN LEGION

The Oxley Post

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www.TheOxleyPost.org



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November/December 2020

Commander's Message

By: **Bruce Conklin**

Greetings to all. I hope this finds you and your family well. This is usually a very busy time of year at the Post, but as you know, this has not been a normal year. As such, many of our normal activities, such as our annual kids' Christmas party is unfortunately cancelled. We're still trying to come up with a way to have Santa stop by for some kind of drive-by party, but nothing has been finalized as of today. If you have ideas please give me a call or, better yet, stop by our Family Meeting on Nov 2 or December 7th.

Importantly, **we will be having** our regular Veteran's Day Ceremony at 6PM on Wednesday, November 11th. Please make an effort to attend. Social distancing and masks will be required.

It is with mixed emotions that I have to report that our Adjutant **Jack Tomkins** will be moving to Cape May, New Jersey. While this is an exciting time for Jack and Pat, it is going to be a real loss for the Post. Jack has been one of the true "go-to" guys here at the post for a long time and I have relied on him extensively over my time as Commander for his advise and counsel. The good news is that **Bob Cummings** has stepped up and accepted the position of Adjutant. Bob has done a great job as our Chaplain and newsletter editor and I am confident that we won't miss a beat with him as our Adjutant. Please join me in wishing Jack and Bob best wishes as they move into their new adventures.

On the canteen front, **Greg Aschendorf** is stepping down as House Chairman to concentrate his efforts on his other roll as Finance Chairman. S.A.L. member **Bill Prella** and Auxiliary President **Shelly Teesdale** have stepped up and agreed to co-manage the Canteen. This is a big job and also one of *the most* unappreciated jobs one could ever volunteer for. Please join me in thanking Greg for doing an outstanding job for the last four years and thanking Bill and Shelly for taking on this challenge! I'm sure they will do a great job!

Congratulations to **George Busch** for celebrating **50 years** as a member of the American Legion. George serves on our Board of Directors and is a former member of our Honor Guard/Rifle Squad. Way to go, George! Thank you for your service. We look forward to having you around for a long time to come!

I'd like to thank everyone for your continued financial support. The donations to the post (which are tax deductible) have been extremely helpful in getting us "through these trying times." Speaking of trying times, as you may know, we've had two trip and fall cases on our sidewalk in the last 3 years which resulted in the loss of our last insurance carrier and now we are paying twice as much for our liability insurance. Well, we found a contractor who gave us a great price and they are pouring new concrete as I write this. The truth is we would not have been able to do this without a *most* generous contribution from a member who wishes to remain anonymous.

Finally, I'd like to wish you all a wonderful holiday season. Hopefully, we'll be moving toward a resumption of normal activities soon. As always, if you are need of assistance or support, please let us know and if we can't help you we can probably find someone who can.

Happy Birthday to all of my Marine Corps friends.... And Go Army, Beat Navy!!

Adjutant Report
By: Bob Cummings

Talk about big shoes to fill.... As Bruce mentioned in his Commander's report, I've accepted the Adjutant's position after Jack announced that he'd be moving to Cape May. Jack has done a great job as Adjutant and he always made it look easy. I'm learning that its anything but easy. So far, we are on pace to make our 2021 membership goal of 100% retention but we'll need a strong finish. I'm asking each of you take a moment to check your Legion membership card. If it doesn't say 2021 you haven't paid your dues. Please take just a few minutes to send in a check for \$30. You can also pay safely and conveniently online with a credit or debit card by going to www.legion.org/membership/renewals. For your convenience and to get the most recent information for our records, please fill out and return the member information form below with your dues. Please call me at 267-471-9607 if you have any questions. **Please mail your 2021 payments to the post in c/o Adjutant Bob Cummings.**

As discussed in previous newsletters, earlier this year Congress passed the LEGION Act into law which recognizes that the United States has been in a continuing state of war since December 7, 1941. The bottom line is that if a person has served honorably, they are eligible to join the American Legion. Membership at the Oxley Post (like most posts across the country) has been dwindling as more and more of our older members are dying. We need to make it a priority to actively recruit and retain new members. Now, with the Legion Act, anyone who has served can join our ranks. As we move forward we'll be announcing some initiatives to help try build our numbers, but we'll need your help if we're going to succeed. I look forward to serving as your Adjutant.

Please give a warm Oxley Family Welcome to our new Legion member, Balla Traore, call him "Tra".

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

Gerard Beaver Nov 3; Joan Hunt Nov 7; Ed Pekala Nov 8; Chuck Phraner Nov 10;
John Etsell Nov 11; Giacamo Bruno Nov 14; Raymond Delmont Dec. 17; James Gourley Dec. 29;
Happy Belated B-Days to Bruce Conklin 9/8, Richie Carr 9/13, Dave Bartholomew 10/23 &
Carmella Mapes 10/26

Sick Call: Please keep the following members in your prayers: **Joe Arrison, Bill Castillo, John Comitale Jr., George Busch, Paul Palmer & Jake Pielacha.** If you know of someone who should be included on the sick list, please contact Bob Cummings at 267-471-9607.

Post Everlasting: Sadly, we must report the passing of one of our comrades, **Edmond Boyer.** Please keep him and their families in your prayers.

✂ _____ cut here _____

2021 Dues Remittance

Please fill out the information below and make check or money order for \$30 payable to the William D. Oxley Post #133 and mail to the post at 4637 Decatur St, Phila., PA 19136

NAME _____ 2020 Legion Card Number _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE: _____ HOME CELL

CITY _____ ST _____ ZIP _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____ EMAIL _____

BRANCH OF SERVICE _____ YEARS OF SERVICE _____

Finance/Building Report:

By: Greg Aschendorf

As you know, its been a tough year for the post, but we're doing the best we can with limited resources. We've canceled our contract with Waste Management for our trash collection and are now utilizing the city trash which creates more work on our part but saves us several hundred dollars a month. As Bruce has mentioned, the cost of our liability insurance doubled as a result of two trip and fall lawsuits. We're in the process of replacing the bad concrete in front of our property. We got a very good price from a friendly contractor, but it's still very expensive. On another front, thanks to **Eileen Cummings**, we're in the process of converting our financial records to Quickbooks which will allow us to have a much cleaner financial reports than we've been able to put out previously.

Post Work Day



We have a lot of small projects that have been piling up at the post so we are having a Post Work Day on **Saturday, November 7th at 10AM**. You don't need any special skills to help, just show up with a desire to give a hand. We really need your help. Call Greg Aschendorf @ 215-970-8035 for more information.

Run, Ernie, Run!

On October 7, 2013, 90-year old WWII Navy veteran Ernie Andrus, dipped his toe in the Pacific Ocean near San Diego, California and began running east with the goal of reaching the Atlantic Ocean. Almost three years later, on August 20, 2016, Ernie reached the Atlantic at St. Simon's Island, Georgia. Two years ago, at age 95, he decided to try again – this time reversing course and heading to the Pacific. He's only running 13 miles a week now, so he expects to reach the Pacific in 2023 when he will be turning 100!

So what motivates this real life Forest Gump to run across the country? Well, during WWII, Ernie served aboard an LST (Landing Ship, Tank) and he's raising money for the LST 325 Ship Memorial. The LSTs were used to land equipment and troops on hostile shores. LST 325 was one of 1,051 built during World War II - so many that the Navy didn't even give them names. The LST 325 was built here at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard and was involved in the invasion of Sicily and Normandy. From June 1944 to April 1945, LST 325 conducted 43 round trips between England and France. The 325 was brought back to the US after service in the Greek Navy in 2001. It is now the only remaining LST that is restored and operational and is 'home ported' on the Ohio River in Evansville, Indiana.

To donate to the LST 325 Memorial, go to Ernie's Home Page www.Coast2CoastRuns.com

UPDATE: Two years into his return trip on August 27th, near Houston TX, a severe foot infection forced an end to Ernie's run. After driving Ernie home to be with his family in California, his friend and companion John Martin returned to the exact place Ernie ended his run and is continuing it in his name.

We now have new Oxley Post T-shirts in sizes from S to 3X. These are introductory priced at \$15. On December 1st, the price will increase to \$20. We are also selling Oxley Post Pint Glasses. These beautiful glasses are locally sourced and hand-etched with 'William D. Oxley Post' above the American Legion Logo. Glasses are \$15 each with proceeds supporting the Post. Glasses and T-Shirts would make great Christmas gifts! For more information, call Bob Cummings at 267-471-9607.

SSgt. Herbert A. Kirk, USAF
MISSING IN ACTION: 11 March 1968

Houaphanh Province, Laos



Herbert Kirk, a Philadelphia native and Northeast High School graduate, was a career Airman and radio technician when, in early 1967, he volunteered for a Top Secret assignment called Project Heavy Green – a joint CIA/Air Force mission. He had to sign a secrecy agreement and was to be temporarily relieved of duty in the Air Force to take a civilian job with Lockheed Aircraft. He would be running Lima 85, a radar base in Laos, whose official neutrality prohibited U.S. military presence. No one was to know.

In 1966 an air navigation (TACAN) system had been installed atop a mile-high mountain called Phou Pha Thi in the Annan Highlands about 15 miles from North Vietnamese border. In 1967, the site was upgraded with a TSQ-81 radar system that would guide US bombers on missions deep into North Vietnam – regardless of weather conditions. The mountain was protected by sheer cliffs on three sides, and was guarded by 300 tribesmen working for CIA. The Laotian government would allow the US to maintain the site only if operated by unarmed US "civilians".

For three months in early 1968, a steady stream of intelligence was received which indicated that communist troops were about to launch a major attack on Lima 85. Intelligence watched as enemy troops even built a road to the area to facilitate moving heavy weapons, but the site was so important that William H. Sullivan, U.S. Ambassador to Laos, made the decision to leave the men in place. When the attack came March 11, a platoon of North Vietnamese Special Forces supported by five battalions of NVA regulars quickly overran the site. Some of the personnel were rescued by helicopter, but eleven men were missing.

In mid-March, Kirk's family was notified that Lima Site 85 had been overrun by enemy forces, and that he and the others who had not escaped had been killed. Many years later, they learned that was not the whole truth.

Two separate reports indicate that all the men missing at Phou Pha Thi did not die. One report suggested that at least one of the 11 was captured, and another indicated that 6 were captured. Information has been hard to get. The fact that Lima Site 85 existed was only declassified in 1983 and finally the families could be believed when they said their men were missing in Laos. Some of the men's files were shown to their families for the first time in 1985. Kirk's remains have yet to be recovered. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) lists Kirk's case status as 'Active Pursuit' which means there is 'sufficient information to justify research, investigation or recovery operations in the field...(and) are the priority for operational planning and allocation of resources.'. He is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall on Panel 44E, Line 18.

ASIDE: The secrecy surrounding Lima 85 led to the delay of awarding the Congressional Medal of Honor to CMSgt. Richard Etchberger, USAF, a native of Hamburg, Pennsylvania. Etchberger was one of a handful of survivors of the attack and is credited with helping to treat the wounded and repelling the attack until a rescue helicopter could arrive. Etchberger was subsequently killed in the helicopter by groundfire. He was nominated for the Medal of Honor shortly after his death, but the application was denied due to the secrecy surrounding the operation. He was awarded instead the Air Force Cross which was awarded to his family in a private ceremony at the Pentagon. In the early 2000s, veterans' groups began pressuring the military to upgrade his award. In 2008, Air Force Secretary Michael Donley approved the upgrade and on September 21, 2010 the Medal of Honor was presented to Etchberger's three sons by President Barak Obama. Etchberger is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall on Panel 44E, Line 15. A portion of I-78 in Berks county is named the CMSgt. Richard Etchberger Highway in his memory.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, Nov 2: Oxley Family Meeting 7PM followed by A.L. Board Meeting. All members of the Legion, Auxiliary and Sons are invited and encouraged to attend the Family Meeting. Masks are required. We will be social distancing. The S.A. L. regular meeting will be held at 8PM.



**“Talk is Cheap,
Voting is Free;
take it to the Polls.”**
Nanette L Avery

Tuesday, Nov 3rd: Election Day. VOTE

Saturday, Nov 7th: Work Day at the Post

Tuesday, Nov. 10th: Marine Corps Birthday “Semper Fi”

Wednesday, Nov. 11th, 6PM: Veteran’s Day. Our Ceremony will be held as usual at 6PM at the Post.

Monday, Nov. 16, 7:30: A.L. General Meeting



Sunday, November 14th 12PM: Eagles Tailgate Party Catch all the action when the Eagles take on the Giants on our giant 10 foot screen. The SAL will be firing up the grill. The party starts at noon and runs throughout the game.



Sunday, Nov. 24th, 10:00 AM: Post Work Day

Thursday, Nov. 26th: Thanksgiving.

Saturday, Dec 12th, 3 PM: Army vs. Navy Game

Monday, Dec. 7th, 7PM: Oxley Family Meeting 7PM followed by A.L. Board Meeting. All members of the Legion, Auxiliary and Sons are invited and encouraged to attend the Family Meeting. Masks are required. We will be social distancing. The S.A. L. regular meeting will be held at 8PM.

Monday, Dec. 7th, Pearl Harbor Day – “A day that will live in infamy”

Sunday, Dec. 20: US Space Force celebrates First Birthday

Monday, Dec. 21, 7:30: A.L. General Meeting. We will be hanging the Space Force Flag in our canteen prior to the meeting.

Tues, Dec. 25: Merry Christmas

PLEASE GIVE BLOOD



Due to the Covid-19, the need for blood has never been greater. Please make a commitment to donate an hour to donate the gift of life! There is a convenient blood donation center at Rhawn and Dungan Streets that is open 7 days a week or go to www.redcross.org/give-blood.html or call 1-800-RED-CROSS to schedule an appointment. After you’ve donated, please call Bill Castillo at 267-974-8808 to let us know you’ve made the donation.

Poppy Volunteers Needed



We are in need of volunteers who are willing to help with our Poppy Drives. If interested in helping out with this important fundraiser, call Bruce Conklin at 215-495-9912

VA expands Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)

Last month, the Veteran's Administration announced the expansion of the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). This program provides resources, education, support, a financial stipend, health insurance (if eligible), and beneficiary travel (if eligible) to caregivers of eligible veterans.

Currently only available to family caregivers of eligible veterans seriously injured in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001, the program expansion opens up the program to eligible WWII, Korean and Vietnam Veterans. In addition, eligibility will change to eligible Veterans who have a single or combined VA service-connected disability rating of 70% or higher. This applies regardless of whether the disability is the result of an injury, illness or disease.

PCAFC is now open to eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty in the active military, naval or air service on or before May 7, 1975. In 2022, PCAFC will expand again to include eligible Veterans from all eras who have a serious injury – incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active

For more information contact our Service Officer, Mike Vokes at 267-968-4124 or call the Philadelphia American Legion Service Office at 215-381-2032.

Happy 245th Birthday to the Marine Corps and...

Happy Belated Birthday to America's oldest living US Marine, Dorothy (Schmidt) Cole. Cole, now 107 years old, was born September 19, 1913 in Warren Pennsylvania (about 50 miles SE of Erie) and was 29 when she enlisted. "Everyone was out doing something, Cole said in a birthday video posted to the Marine Corps' official Twitter account. "The women were helping the Red Cross, or even in churches, they were knitting things. So, I decided that I wanted to do something." Having been turned away by the Navy because she was too short, she decided to go into the Marine Corps. After enlisting in July 1943, Cole underwent six weeks of basic training at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina with 1st Battalion, Marine Corps Women's Reserves. "I even took flying lessons of about 200 hours, thinking it would impress the Marines. But it didn't. They put me behind a typewriter instead of an airplane." She served in the Marine Corps until December 1945 - a typist at a time when the military was reticent to open up career fields to women, despite being in dire need of personnel. Dorothy was discharged at the rank of Sergeant. Upon her discharge (at the rank of Sergeant) Dorothy married her boyfriend Wiley Cole who served in the Navy on the USS Hornet and both got jobs at Ames Research Center (which later became NASA). "Semper Fi" to Dorothy and all Marines who served. Source: Young, Victoria. "Oldest Living Marine Turns 107 This Month." *Independent Tribune*, 6 Sept. 2020.

YOGA at the Oxley Post

There can be no doubt that 2020 has been a very stressful year. Come join us and discover the combination of mental and physical exercises that have existed for thousands of years and have been proven to reduce stress. Yoga is for everyone and no experience is needed. Whether you are young or old, overweight or trim, yoga has the power to calm the mind and strengthen the body. Classes are led by a great friend of the Post, Tracey Levine. The cost is \$10. Classes are held every Thursday evening at 6:45.

Chaplain's Corner: A Prayer for Thanks in a Hard Year

God, this year has been hard for many of us at this table. While this is a sweet moment, it's also hard. The challenges we have faced this year have been overwhelming, and as we gather today, we cannot ignore the fact that these feelings still linger as does the pain. But for these next few hours, we remember that you are a God who loves us, cares for us, heals us, and forgives us. Help us to enjoy this time. In the lingering bitterness give us peace. We thank you for this meal and pray a blessing for our strength. Amen.