



AMERICAN LEGION POST 305 “THE WOODLANDS POST” THE BUGLE



December, 2012

Volume 8, Issue 12

COMMANDER'S CORNER



Commander Pete Koch

Dear Fellow Legionnaires,

Another month has quickly passed and December is upon us. As the old saying goes, the older you get, the faster time goes. November has been quite a busy month for the Post. On November 5th, several of the members participated in the Woodlands Annual Fall Car Show. Veterans Day was held on the 11th and 12th of this month, with **Kimberly Biggerstaff** (Finance Officer) presenting certificates and speaking to the veterans at the Park Manor Nursing Home Care in Tomball, together with **John Nanninga** and the undersigned presenting certificates and speaking. We did the same at Autumn Leaves Assisted Living Center in the Woodlands. **Jim Bolin** (Sergeant-at-Arms) and I also participated in the Conroe

ISD JROTC Veterans Day Parade at the Moorhead Stadium.

On the 15th of November, we enjoyed our annual Thanksgiving Dinner. I want to thank the Auxiliary and everyone who helped with the preparation and serving of a fantastic meal of turkey, ham and all of the trimmings. The meeting on the 15th was an abbreviated one because we honored **Dayton Denton's** (Service Officer) leadership of the Boys State program. After we closed the normal meeting, he took over and explained the program to the audience of fellow Legionnaires, parents, counselors and Boys State participants. He also brought the young men to the front of the room, presented each of them with a "Good Citizenship Citation". Each of these young gentlemen told us of their experience at Boys State and in Austin with the politician presenters. It was an outstanding meeting Thanks go out to **Dayton** for all he did as Chairman of the Boys State Committee. [See the dedicated page showing the nine boys in attendance.] Deep felt congratulations go out to each of the 14 boys the Post sponsored and their school counselors.

We added to our roster seven transfer members and two new members in the month of

November. Despite that growth, membership is still an Issue and we need those renewals returned to the Post as soon as possible. Additionally, I would like to request that all members update their information with **Pickens Jones** (Adjutant) where their information changes, in order that we can update our records and those of the Department.

Don't forget that in January we have our Annual Chili Cook Off. If the coming year is anything like this one, there will be some fine chili, so break out the recipes that have been gathering dust and put them to work. The Post will judge the Unit's offerings and vise-versa.

I would like to take this time to wish you and your family members a very safe, happy and prosperous Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. May the Holiday Season be filled with the love of family, friends and friendship.

Keep in mind the Post Commander's training session in Austin on the 15th and 16th of December

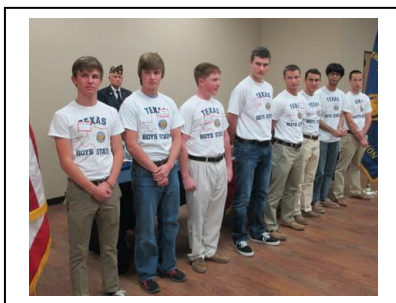
Our next meeting will be at 7:00 PM on the 20th of December at the South County Community Center on Lake Robbins Drive in the Woodlands. Keep our veterans

and active duty members in your prayers this season and hope they will be safe in their ongoing efforts to protect our country.

For God and Country,
Pete Koch

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS
November 15, 2012

The meeting was convened in the prescribed manner. The business meeting was kept short, and was presided over by **Commander Pete Koch**. It encompassed a motion by **Jim Bolin** to donate 10% of the Rummage Sale's gross earnings to the Post Auxiliary for their help. By motion made by **Dayton Denton** and unanimous vote, the rendering of reports on finance, membership and other committee topics was dispensed with. The colors, which had been advanced by **Sergeant-at-Arms Jim Bolin**, were retired, and the formal meeting was closed at 7:15 PM in the customary manner. **Dayton Denton** took over as Service Officer and became the master of ceremonies for the presentation of the Boys State program, the boys the Post sponsored and their families.



[See the description on the dedicated page 4 in this Bugle.]



VETERANS ADVOCATE

VA CLAIMS BACKLOG UPDATE

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced on September 20 that the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), which oversees the delivery of disability compensation and other benefits to the nation's Veterans, processed over one million disability claims during fiscal year 2012, marking the third year in row VBA claims processors have exceeded the one million mark. "We have made great strides, but we realize much work remains to be done to better serve Veterans," said Undersecretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. "Too many Veterans still wait too long. That's unacceptable, and that is why VA has begun implementing a paperless, digital disability claims system -- a lasting solution that will transform how we operate and eliminate the claims backlog." In August, VA had its most productive claims processing period in its history, completing a record 107,462 claims and surpassing the previous monthly record of 103,296 set in 2010. This high level of production is accompanied by an increase in the overall accuracy of rating decisions, which has risen from 83 to 86 percent since September 2011, as determined by VA's national quality assurance program.

The Department is administering pensions for World War II veterans while handling new claims from Vietnam veterans struggling with the multiplying ailments of age. Indeed, nearly a third of all pending new claims are from Vietnam-era veterans, roughly equal to the number from Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. Thanks to superior battlefield medicine and armor, those Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have survived combat at a higher rate. As they return home with more wounds, and perhaps more savvy, the ones who file for disability compensation are claiming on average nearly ten disorders or injuries each, compared with six for Vietnam veterans and fewer than four for World War II veterans. Their complex claims are often more time-consuming to process, adding to the backlog. At the same time, a higher percentage - nearly half - of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are filing for disability compensation, partly because of the weak economy. That is double the rate for previous wars.

While claims production is at historic highs, incoming disability claims have increased nearly 50 percent since 2008, outpacing VA's current claims processing capacity. "Our employees are working very hard to sustain this level of production," said Hickey. "This is a testament to their dedication to meeting the increasing needs of our Veterans." VA's goal is to process all disability claims within 125 days, at a 98 percent accuracy level, and eliminate the claims backlog in 2015. On September 17, the Department reported it had 895,248 compensation and pension entitlement claims pending, with 592,792, or 66 percent, pending for more than

125 days. This year, VBA is beginning a nationwide organizational transformation to increase its claims decision output by retooling procedures and deploying paperless data systems that will speed claims processing and improve quality. All 56 VBA regional offices will be operating under the new organizational model by the end of 2013. [Source: VA News Release]

THE NAVY LODGE AT GULFPORT, MISSISSIPPI

If you have plans to visit the Gulf Coast, remember that the Navy Lodge in Gulfport, Miss., opened its new 43,930 sq. ft., 50-room expansion on August 14. This brings to 80 the total number of rooms available to guests. Navy Lodge Gulfport held the ground-breaking ceremony for the new lodge on April 6, 2011. "We are so excited to be opening this new lodge for our military guests," said Janice Baker, General Manager, Navy Lodge Gulfport. "Guests will find all the latest amenities and comforts that are offered in civilian hotels, but at a significant savings. Navy Lodges offer a 40 percent savings compared to other hotels and there are no extra person charges." The new Navy Lodge features three different types of rooms to fit the needs of all its guests. There are 10 two-bedroom, family suites that include full kitchenettes with dishwashers and a balcony off of the living area. There are 12 business class rooms that feature one queen bed, microwave and refrigerator. Finally, guests can stay in one of the 28 extended stay rooms, which have two queen beds and a full kitchenette with dishwasher. The Navy Lodge also offers guests a fitness room, vending areas, guest laundry, a patio area with gas grills and free Wi-Fi. Guests can also take

advantage of the free continental breakfast offered each morning. To make reservations at any Navy lodging facilities or to receive a Navy Lodge directory, call 1-800-NAVY-INN, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, or go online at <http://www.navy-lodge.com>.

Reservations are accepted on an as-received basis without regard to rank. Like other facilities on military installations, these are open to eligible customers of all branches — active-duty, National Guard and reserves, and retirees. [Source: Militarylife Newsletter]

<p><u>Important Contact Numbers</u> Houston Regional VA Office: 1-713-383-7842 County Veterans Serv. Offices: Montgomery 1-936-539-7842 Harris 1-281-876-6600 Texas Veterans Commission: 1-800-252-8387 www.tvc.state.tx.us State Legislators: Dist. 4 – Tommy Williams 281-364-9426 Dist. 15 – Rob Eissler 281-681-9655 Dist. 16 – Brandon Creighton 936-539-0028 Dist. 126 – Patricia Harless 281-376-4114</p>

THE HOLIDAY FLOWER

Joel Poinsett was an ambassador, a congressman and, from 1837 to 1841, Secretary of War. In 1825, while serving as ambassador to Mexico, he got a little too embroiled in the political intrigues swirling about Mexico City. Some even said he was plotting with revolutionaries who wanted to bring down the government. Mexican authorities grew angry at his heavy-handed interference in Mexican affairs. They coined a new word to describe his officious and intrusive

manner – "*poinsettismo*". He was eventually asked to leave Mexico.

Poinsett was an avid botanist, and he became enchanted with a flower he found that grew only in southern Mexico. The Aztecs called it *cuetlaxochitl*. He began growing the flowers in his greenhouse and started shipping samples back to the U.S. Eventually, the winter-blooming plant became a holiday hit, and the season of peace became a little brighter, thanks to the flower that bears the name of a Secretary of War --- the poinsettia.



A California rancher named Paul Ecke pioneered the idea of marketing the poinsettia as a holiday flower in the 1920's. His untiring efforts to promote the poinsettia over the next decades made it the ubiquitous Christmas flower it is today.

Poinsett, as Secretary of War, helped reorganize the Army and expanded West Point. He also spearheaded the founding of the Smithsonian. But still, it is with a flower that he made the greatest impact.

Jordan Lewallen



Ryan Belanger



Mohammad Khan



Nicholas Bustos



Jeff Sitarski



THE BOYS STATE PROGRAM (2012)

Every year, under the direction of the Post's Service Officer, Dayton Denton, Post 305 makes it possible to send junior-year, high-school boys to the Legion's Department of Texas Boys State. For this year, 13 boys from College Park High School, Oakridge High School, The Woodlands High School and John Cooper High School, and one boy, who is being home-schooled, were sponsored by the Post.

Traditionally, the Post recognizes the Boys State grads it sponsored at its November Membership Meeting, and that was the case at the November 15 meeting. Nine of the 14 boys attended, along with parents, siblings and counselors. The graduates were:

JORDAN LEWALLEN, RYAN BELANGER, MOHAMMAD KHAN, NICHOLAS BUSTOS, JEFF SITARSKI, JACK CLARK, LOGAN MULLEN, RYAN TRAUFLER, CALEB WILKINS, BAILEY CUADRA*, JOHN HODGES*, GRANT PARKS* and SHEN YOON*.

Each graduate was presented with a framed "Good Citizen Citation". Those at the meeting received theirs from Post Commander Pete Koch.

*(Not present at Post meeting.)

Jack Clark



Logan Mullen



Ryan Trauffler



Caleb Wilkins



Service Officer
Dayton Denton



AUXILIARY UNIT 305 NEWS



Dayna Salter, President

November was a busy and productive month. Our Poppy Campaign during Veterans Day was extremely successful with donations totaling over \$1,600. Thanks to all who helped out at the Kroger and Post Offices and special thanks go to our Poppy Chairperson, **Rosalie Fryer**.

A portion of that money will be put to good use to help four female veterans have a happy holiday as part of a statewide Department campaign to sponsor formerly homeless female veterans. We also voted to help out a local family as they welcome back their serviceman from Afghanistan. The kids will be given warm coats and shoes as well as Christmas presents to complete the holiday.

Our November meeting was the annual Thanksgiving feast which was provided by our Unit. A special guest was **Brett Mulvihill**, son of our Vice President, **Geri Mulvihill**. He is an Army ranger now home safe and sound from Afghanistan after four tours.



Our care package shipping efforts continue thanks to **Annie Smith** who identified 11 more service personnel to whom we will ship holiday packages.

Don't forget the ALA Unit 305 table at the VFW Crafts show on December 1-2 at 9am – 4pm. It will be held at the corner of SR242 and Moss Oaks Road in Conroe. We were offered a table free of charge, so we will be selling our crafts and t-shirts. I will be emailing the membership to

make sure we have adequate staff at the table. Please collect your crafts as well. More info to come.

On December 7, **Annie Smith** will be hosting a holiday potluck luncheon for the women of Unit 305 and the Woodlands VFW Unit. Please RSVP to Annie (281-367-4714) by December 1 if you would like to attend. This is a great opportunity to socialize.

Our December meeting will be a festive holiday potluck. **Veronica Maiolo** will be calling around to coordinate the dishes presented. I hope to see you there. Since the third Thursday this year will be December 20th, and since we managed to conduct a lot of business in November, let's plan on a low key meeting looking ahead to 2013 programs.

Finally, I want to thank each and every one of our Unit 305 members. It doesn't matter at what level you participate. Your member dues are important to our mission by providing necessary funds for our programs. Your time and efforts are important to our mission as a unit of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year from **Dayna Salter**.

AUXILIARY UNIT OFFICERS & CONTACT INFORMATION

PRESIDENT: Dayna Salter; Tel: (281) 229-1365; E-mail: dayna.j.salter@exxonmobil.com

VICE PRESIDENT: Geri Mulvihill; Tel: (832) 620-6265; E-mail: geri.mulvihill@yahoo.com

SECRETARY: Sandie Holzinger; Tel: (281) 364-8590; E-mail: zing1991@yahoo.com

TREASURER: Ursula McConnell; Tel: (713) 822-6139; E-mail: ursjmccconnell@gmail.com

HISTORIAN: Stephanie Marshall; Tel: (832) 637-2909; E-mail: edaymemories@hotmail.com

CHAPLAIN: Mary Lee Mulvihill; Tel: (281) 353-5574; E-mail: mulvihill1954@yahoo.com

PARLIAMENTARIAN: Rosalie Fryer; Tel: (936) 520-8895; E-mail: rcfryer@charter.net

SGT-AT-ARMS: Annie Smith; Tel: (281) 367-4714 E-mail: c.smith@thewesternsystemsinc.com

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS-AT-LARGE:

Mary Bolin; Tel: (281) 251-2352; Email: jpb20006@sbcglobal.net

Liz Heuermann; Tel: (281) 362-8431; Email: lizheuermann@peoplepc.com

Jenny Le; Tel: (281) 323-4530 Email: jmlchirp@yahoo.com

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

<u>DAY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>LOCALE</u>
Fri.	Dec. 7	Pearl Harbor Day (1941)	
Fri.	Dec. 15 & 16	Post Commanders' Training Course	Austin
Mon.	Dec. 17	Post Executive Committee Meeting	South County Community Ctr. @ 7:00 PM
Thurs.	Dec. 20	Membership Meetings	South County Community Ctr. @ 7:00 PM
Tues.	Dec. 25	Christmas Day	Ho! Ho! Ho!
Tues.	Jan. 1	New Years Day	
Mon.	Jan. 14	Post Executive Committee Meeting	South County Community Ctr. @ 7:00 PM
Thurs.	Jan. 17	Membership Meetings (Annual Chili-Cook-Off Contest)	South County Community Ctr. @ 7:00 PM
Mon.	Feb. 18	Post Executive Committee Meeting	South County Community Ctr. @ 7:00 PM
Thurs.	Feb. 21	Membership Meetings	South County Community Ctr. @ 7:00 PM

The Officers of American Legion Post 305 and of Auxiliary Unit 305 wish all members of both associations a Very Merry Christmas and a New Year which brings good health and prosperity.

POST OFFICERS & CONTACT INFORMATION

MAIL ADDRESS: American Legion Post 305, P. O. Box 9336, The Woodlands, TX 77387

<u>POSITION, NAME & TELEPHONE NUMBER</u>	<u>E-MAIL</u>
COMMANDER: Pete Koch (936) 273-3588	petekoch@comcast.net
FIRST VICE CMDR: Emery Heuermann (281) 362-8431	emeryheuermann@charter.net
SECOND VICE CMDR: Mickey Fussell (281) 367-7115	v.h.fussells@gmail.com
ADJUTANT: Pickens Jones (281) 367-7631	pickensjones@usa.net
FINANCE OFFICER: Kimberly Biggerstaff (281) 296-9344	kimgator5747@sbcglobal.net
SERVICE OFFICER: Dayton Denton (832) 928-6054	whselfstorage1@yahoo.com
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Jim Bolin (281) 251-2352	ipb20006@sbcglobal.net
ASS'T SGT-AT-ARMS: Robert Earl Jones (281) 651-7083	ejones2100@aol.com
CHAPLAIN: Jerry Mulvihill (281) 353-5574	mulvihill1954@yahoo.com
ASS'T CHAPLAIN: Rudy Charest (281) 363-9710	rrgc26@aol.com
JUDGE ADVOCATE: Everett Ison (281) 298-9524	eison01@comcast.net
HISTORIAN: (open)	
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS-AT-LARGE:	
Steve O'Driscoll (281) 367-2711	ssodriscoll@sbcglobal.net
Victoria Glover (832) 813-9415	goldvicgoddess@gmail.com

OTHER INFORMATION:

THE BUGLE BRASS: EDITOR: Jim Bolin

CIRCULATION: Emery Heuermann

WEBMASTER: Emery Heuermann

www.alpost305.org and www.mypost.org

FACEBOOK MANAGER: Kimberly Biggerstaff

MEETING DAY & PLACE: The Post and Auxiliary meet at the South County Community Center in The Woodlands at 7:00 PM on the third Thursday of each month. The Auxiliary Unit hosts a pot-luck supper following the meetings. The Center is located on the southeast corner at the intersection of Lake Robbins Drive and Grogans Mill Road, next to the library.