

January 2019
Post Newsletter
WesternSpringsVFW.org

Commander's Stuff

By Rich Jesswein

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January - A new year!! A lot of folks don't really care for January. It's dark, nights are long and cold, and, generally, it has a lot of snow. However, since I'm retired, I like January. I don't go out in the cold, the days are getting longer, and I still like to play in the snow.

January is also a time for making New Year's resolutions. I know, a lot of the resolutions are broken by Jan. 3, but I have a few thoughts about making resolutions for our Post. What if each of us scoured the Hi ways and Bi ways searching for just one new person to join our Post? Or maybe we could contact a former member that has fallen away from our Post. If each one of us did this, we could double our membership. Think of the good we could do with twice as many members!!

I would also like to see each of us spend one more hour on the streets and corners offering poppies to the folks on Poppy Day!! Again, think of the good we could do with that extra money.

Another thought: I know we do a lot for Hines Hospital (and that is a good thing), but are there other veteran organizations that we could help?? I would like to hear about them!

Save the Dates

Jan. 8th – 7:30 p.m. **Post Regular meeting** at Grace Lutheran Church

Jan. 10th – Hospital Visit

Jan. 11th – deadline for February newsletter

Feb. 12th – 7:30 p.m. **Post Regular meeting** at Grace Lutheran Church

My last (sane) thought is: I would like our Memorial Day parade to be better than ever! I know, it is in Chuck's capable hands (he is doing a **great** job). But if any member has additional thoughts on how to make it better, please let Chuck know.

Sooooooooo, with no more sane thoughts;

*Roses are Red
Violets are Blue
If you have insane thoughts
I would like to hear them too*

Till next month CHOI

Quartermaster Report

By Mike Winner

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Statement of funds as of 12/11/18:

Post General Fund \$12,493.59

Post Relief Fund 3,105.15

TOTAL: \$15,598.74

Happy New Year!!

Hospital Chairman Report

By Walt Bergenthal

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On the night of Dec. 7, Santa's Elves Seedy, Bruce Harken and Walt delivered a Christmas card with \$25 enclosed to each patient in the residential care facility at Hines Hospital.

These funds were made available from our Poppy Days collections. You can see how important it is to our Post that you get out and help with Poppy Days.

Memorial Day Parade Committee

By Chuck Bosko

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Fellow VFWer's- the committee has stepped off the yellow brick road and truly ventured onto a new trail!

Rather than select one outstanding veteran, we have decided to honor several veterans, specifically, our WW II veterans. Our rationale is rather simple really. Tom Brokaw said it best- "The Greatest Generation" of Americans not only saved our America, they saved the world! Once our enemies were defeated, these former fighters became re-builders on American lands from "sea to shining sea" constructing highways that carried folks from the

crowded cities to sprawling, new suburbs. They turned factories that built tanks, planes and ships, and began building cars, refrigerators, toasters. AND - at the same time - offered a gracious hand and heart to Europe and Asia helping to rebuild what devastating wars tore apart.

Truth be told fellow vets, these WW II Americans are our fathers and mothers, perhaps our grandparents! It is an opportune moment to honor these wonderful people during the one day of the year when we, as veterans and as citizens of a grateful nation, set aside time to remember those who died in battle so we, the living, can enjoy our families and America.

Committee members Jim Boland and Jack Lund have begun to review the Post membership roster to identify the WW II vets. Invitations will be forwarded to each WW II vet requesting their presence in the Memorial Day Parade on May 27, 2019.

Plan on attending this year with your family, neighbors and friends and honor those service personnel whom we served with as well as the veterans of the "Greatest Generation."

Remembering a Fallen Veteran

By Jim Boland

His name was Verner J. Miller. He was one of 10 children born to a Danish born couple. When WWII started, he joined the US Army and assigned to the 20th Combat Engineers Regiment. After training, he boarded a ship and sent off with his regiment to North Africa.

On Nov. 8, 1942, his regiment invaded Casablanca, which at the time was a Vichy French city ruled and occupied by the Nazis. After intense fighting, the city was taken and the 20th Combat Engineers took off in pursuit of the Nazis. Verner Miller was promoted to Corporal and his regiment

fought across over 1,000 miles of the North African coast driving the enemy eastwards. The German Nazis, however, had one of the most cunning generals of the war and his name was Gen. Erwin Rommel, also known as the Desert Fox.

After a 5 month pursuit of the German troops, they came across the Klamath Line. The British and American troops on the west side and the German troops on the east side of the line. Fighting was intense and went back and forth with casualties being very heavy for both sides. It was there on March 29, 1943 when Corporal Verner Miller was killed in action. His family was notified and his immigrant parents were never informed as to what happened to their son, Verner. If they had been informed perhaps due to the language barrier they did not understand just what happened to their son/brother. Years passed and when his name would on occasion be brought up, all that family members knew was that he was killed in Africa.

Then over this past Thanksgiving, in discussion with my wife's brother, we got talking about his uncle Verner and how unfortunate it was that nobody knew what happened to his remains. Afterwards, with the little information I had, I set off to try and learn what I could find about this young 1st generation Dane. In researching, I discovered that there is a North Africa American Cemetery in Cartage, Tunisia. In checking their online records, I was shocked to discover that Verner Miller's body was interred in the American Cemetery in Tunisia. I wrote and asked for a picture of his headstone and was again pleasantly surprised to have them send me a picture of a white cross with the name of Verner J. Miller and his date of death March 29, 1943.

I still don't know the circumstances of his death, but I have learned that 86 American soldiers died that day in battle with General Rommel's forces. The cemetery today,

holds the remains of 2,841 American servicemen including 240 whose names are known but to God.

In discovering this information, I have heard from some of his distant relatives who for one thing did know about Verner and his ultimate sacrifice for our nation and if they did know of him, they did not know what happened to his remains. I am glad I could provide that information for them. I feel it is so important that those who go before us are not forgotten. Unable to travel to this distant cemetery for our nation's war dead, I was pleased to learn of a book titled "An Army at Dawn" by Rick Atkinson. He writes of this cemetery the following:

"The cemetery is built on the ruins of Roman Cartage. It is incomparably serene. The scent of eucalyptus and the briny Mediterranean, barely 2 miles away, fills the air. The African light is flat and shimmering. The kikuyu grass is framed by orange berry, scarlet hibiscus, cypress and olive trees. A carillon plays hymns every hour and sometimes the chimes mingle with the distant call to prayers by a muezzin. There is a wall there inscribed with all the North African battles where the boys in the cemetery died."

What a lovely spot of Earth to be buried. Verner and his fellow comrade in arms are being well cared for and this has brought piece of mind to so many Millers who often wondered what happened to their son/brother/ uncle Verner.

When Verner was killed, his younger brother, Elmer, joined the Army to avenge the family's loss. Elmer was my father-in-law who is long gone but I am sure would have peace of mind knowing Verner rested with other heroes of that long forgotten conflict in North Africa.