

July 2019
Post Newsletter
WesternSpringsVFW.org

Commander's Stuff

By Rich Jesswein

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JULY, the “dog days of summer” have started. Though, I must admit, I’m not sure we ever had spring, much less summer. However, it is a time to “kick-back,” relax, and maybe go on vacation. So, there is not that much news to impart to you.

POPPY DAYS once again was a huge success!! You will never guess who our big seller was-----YEP!! Danny Legan did it again!! Congratulations Danny!! Our Post collected a total of \$8,289! THANKS to everyone who hit the bricks to make Poppy Days so successful. We did better this year than we did last year!!

Some important days in July are, of course, Independence Day (don’t get caught lighting off fire works). Towards the end of the month, the Voice of Democracy, Patriots Pen, and Teacher award forms will be sent out in preparation for the future awards. This brings up a point I want discuss at our next meeting. We’ve had a lot of participation with our Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen projects. To continue getting that kind of participation, I believe we need to

Save the Dates

July 9th – 7:30 p.m. **Post Regular meeting** at Grace Lutheran Church
July 11th – Hospital Visit
July 12th – Deadline for August newsletter
Aug. 13th – 7:30 p.m. **Post Regular meeting** at Grace Lutheran Church

reward them for their labor. In order to cut back on spending, I suggest we have a winner and an alternate, instead of 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners. I’m looking for your thoughts on this subject.

Since it a slow month, I have a question about our flag for you. The flag that inspired 1814’s “The Star-Spangled Banner” had 15 strips and 15 stars. Which two states had joined the original 13 ? The answer is at the end of this letter.

Well, I’m getting ready to go on vacation, sooooooooooooooooooooo

*Roses are Red
Violets are Blue
If you go on vacation
Enjoy the view*

Till next month, CHOI

Answer: Vermont and Kentucky

Quartermaster Report

By Mike Winner

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Statement of funds as of 6/11/19:

Post General Fund	\$10,057.66
Post Relief Fund	8,337.59
TOTAL:	\$18,395.25

Poppy Donation total for 2019 was \$8,288. That is \$700 more than last year. Danny Legan, Val Price and Tom Higgins led the pack with \$870, \$770, and \$750 collected respectively. Parade Donations totaled: \$2,775. After parade expenses, we netted over \$1,500. Our annual dinner actually made \$10. We can continue to support the Children's Home and Hine's Hospital as we have in years past. Great job to those that made this happen!

Semper Fidelis!

Hospital Chairman Report

By Walt Bergenthal

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A heartfelt thanks to the men and women who helped with Poppy Days. A special thanks to John Flood who spent all three days counting money and was a bank deposit runner. Thanks to Mike Winner and Bruce Harken who opened the doors early each morning and got things rolling.

Keep the following in mind – they are the ones who brought in the bucks to refill our Relief Fund: Danny Legan, Guy Vorsanger, Val Price, Tom Higgins, John Palla, Rich Jesswein, Mike Winner, Bruce Harken, Bill Nawrot, Buddy G, Vince and Sue Huml, Bill Staunton,

Rich Jesswein's daughter, Jack Schaus' daughter and Chuck Bosko.

Remember, 100% of the monies collected goes toward helping veterans. Next year, we will need your help!

The Memorial Day Parade Committee is to be congratulated for another good outing. Chaplain Bob kept the rain away and other than a balky mike things went well. Parade Marshall Dr. Paul Thomas spoke of what Memorial Day means and of his WWII Air Corps and later Army Medical days. What an interesting life he has led - has the makings of a good book!

Seated in the front row and also honored were WWII veterans Dick Demski, Harold Kulat, Jack Lund, Seedy Ulrich and Walt Bergenthal along with Dr. Thomas – all Post members.

At our Installation Dinner, the amazing Past National Commander George Cramer came forward again and installed the members of our Post to their respective offices for the coming fiscal year. We're always in awe the way George can rattle off the oath of office.

Remembering a Fellow Vet

By Jim Boland

Past Commander, 1989-91

I first met him in late afternoon Aug. 26, 1990. Plainfield, IL, had been struck by a terrible tornado resulting in 29 deaths and hundreds of injured, along with millions in damages. He walked into my ice cream shop, introduced himself as Terry Sereda and informed me that he was on his way out to Plainfield. Terry asked if there was anything I could donate to help the people affected by the tornado. I was commander of our Post at the time, and after rummaging around for canned goods and non-perishable food items, he

asked me what our VFW Post was going to do to help. As I walked out to his car with several food items, I noticed his car was full of shopping bags. I asked him where that came from, and he said he had bought them and was on his way to deliver them to Plainfield.

After he pulled out, I thought what could our Post do? Well, we started the Plainfield Tornado Relief Fund where we collected funds, clothing, bottled water, etc. The Fire Department was our collection point. It would not have happened if not for Terry Sereda.

Who was Terry Sereda? His real name was Adrian Sereda, and he was a U.S. Marshal who lived in Western Springs. As a bit of background, he was Italian/Polish, a married father of three who joined the U.S. Army in the early 50s. After he got out, he joined the Western Springs Police Department and went on to join the U.S. Marshals.

He became the most highly decorated U.S. Marshal in its history. In Washington, D.C., the Justice Department has a wall with badges representing the most outstanding law enforcement officer of the year. Terry has TWO badges on the wall and at that time he the only law enforcement officer to be given that recognition.

He received one for tracking down, and arresting, two American spies, and the second one for his work in tracking down renowned Auschwitz death camp commander, Dr. Josef Mengele, aka "the doctor of death." Israeli intelligence, Mossad, had traced Mengele down to South America and lost him. They then turned to the U.S. Government for assistance, and the U.S. Marshals assigned Terry to go down there and help. With this incredibly keen intelligence, Terry traced Mengele to Brazil, where he discovered Mengele

had recently drowned. Terry had the body exhumed and flown to a lab in Philadelphia where it was confirmed to be Mengele. He received his second badge for that action along with Israel's highest award.

I could go on and on citing incidents from his career in law enforcement, but I want to tell about another side of this man. When he retired, at his invite, I went downtown to the Federal Building. There he received accolades and awards from the FBI, the DEA, CIA and every federal agency you can imagine. Representatives from Washington heaped praise on him.

He had to take an early retirement due to Lupus. As a result of this disease, he was not able to shave and he ended up growing a big beard. If you had seen him around town in his cowboy boots, blue jeans, flannel shirt and beard, you would never know he was the highest decorated U.S. Marshal.

I got to know him through my ice cream shop and in all my life, I have never known anybody like him. He was all about service and helping others. He joined our VFW Post and continually made a difference. He helped us in every event we sponsored. Back then, we did book drives, Voice of Democracy contest, blood drives, garage sales, membership drives, pancake breakfasts, spaghetti dinners, etc. Terry was always there helping out. To this day, we still collect books for the VA Hospital. Terry was the one who started that program.

In 1991, in one of our most unusual membership drives, Joe Kot and I went down to the State of Illinois Building in Chicago where we set up a table. Now let me say, that had never been done before but due to Terry, on Law Enforcement Day in Illinois, he got our Post a table in the lobby of the building.

Our little Post received exposure to thousands of people passing through the building. I sat there with Joe, who approached everybody passing by and asking if they were veterans. If they responded affirmatively, then Joe would attempt to get them to join our Post.

We ended up with five new members that day, but it would never have happened if it weren't for Terry. Members of other VFW and American Legion Posts would ask how we got to set up a table in the lobby of the building. They didn't know our secret was Terry.

One time, at the Washington Convention in March 1991, I was in the lobby of a convention center waiting along with thousands of others to hear Colin Powell, Secretary of State, speak. We all were wearing our VFW caps and as you may know many if not most of us wear commemorative pins in our caps.

Along with the two dozen pins in my cap, I had one that had been given to me by Terry. It was a small U.S. Marshal pin. So, while standing with thousands of others, I felt two men grab my elbows and lead me to a hallway. They advised me to try not to break away. When we got to the hallway, I was asked if I was a U.S. Marshal. Of course, I responded 'no' and was then asked where I got the Marshal's pin. I told them Terry Sereda gave it to me. At that, the men literally dropped their mouths as they asked how I knew Terry. They then couldn't get their words out fast enough as they told me that Terry or "Mr. Serena" as they called him had trained them. They went on to praise him over and over about how he was the finest human being they had ever met. They apologized to me and pleaded with me to say 'hello' to Terry when I saw him again.

Another time, when Terry learned about out National Home, he went up there discovered that the rooms had no drapes the children had no bikes. Guess what Terry did? He approached a drapery manufacturer and got them to donate drapes for the rooms at the National Home. Terry, along with John (Tiger) Hill, personally delivered them to the National Home.

What about the need for bikes? Terry drove around town looking for old, broken bikes and approached the Police Department for unclaimed bikes and brought them back to his garage. There, he single-handedly worked on each bike, putting on new tires where required, new brakes, new seats, handle grips and touched up scratches. After he collected more than 100 bikes, he and John Hill arranged for a huge truck to pick them up and deliver them to the National Home. He made sure every kid had a bike.

A few months later, I was at the Indianapolis Convention in 1992, when the doors opened onto the convention floor and in came a contingent of young teens from the National Home on their bikes. They had ridden their bikes from the National Home in Eaton Rapids down to Indianapolis to say "thank you" to the VFW. It would never have happened if not for Terry.

In 1991, a fire struck the roof of the Water Tower in Western Springs. A great deal of damage resulted to the Western Springs Historical Society. Again, Terry asked, "What is the VFW going to do about it?" Well, because of him we started a fund drive called the Western Springs Historical Restoration Fund. Every cent collected went directly to the Historical Society. This drive continued for over a year and ran into local newspapers. I can only guess it was

hundreds if not thousands of dollars collected. If that was not enough, Terry decided the Children's Museum within the Water Tower should have a playhouse. On his own, he built a big playhouse for children to play in. If you go to the third floor of the museum, within the Water Tower you will find his playhouse still being actively used by young children.

Unbeknownst to me, there were a number of needy people in Western Springs. I would never have guessed, but the Health Commissioner informed us of that fact. I mentioned it to Terry, and we got together with the Western Springs Rotary Society to begin a food drive that resulted in a turkey for every needy village family at Thanksgiving along with canned goods and pies. Terry personally bought 10 turkeys for the needy.

Finally, I want to cite that, as though all this wasn't enough, Terry started a program called SENIOR CARE. How it worked is that if a senior needed assistance for minor repairs, he would go over to their house and made the repairs. It might be putting in a new electric outlet, repairing a broken railing, fixing a leaky faucet. Terry, who seemed to be able to do anything, would make the repairs out of his own pocket.

I am so very proud to say that former commander Rich Flatley and I got talking, and agreed that Terry should be acknowledged for all that he had done. So, Rich, Jack Lund, Mike Marshall and I got together and proposed re-naming a park for Terry. We had to go through the Park District, appear before the Village Board and launch a publicity campaign, but we actually got a park re-named for Terry. Today, if you drive down Hampton from Ogden, you will see a beautiful park named SEREDA PARK.

Our Post in October 2003 dedicated it with a huge granite boulder and a brass plaque. We figured that maybe at some time in the future, the village might try and re-name the park, so we installed that huge granite stone to ensure it will always be SEREDA PARK.

Margo Sereda, his widow, informed me that when Terry passed away a few years after that, they spread his ashes around that stone. Let him never be forgotten. He was a patriot who sought no publicity for himself, but who was always making a difference in the lives of not just veterans but for anybody needing help. RIP

Four Fun Fourth of July Facts

- The Declaration of Independence actually was signed on July 4. In fact, the bulk of the men signed an official engrossed copy on Aug. 2.
- Massachusetts became the first state to recognize Fourth of July as a holiday on July 3, 1781.
- On June 28, 1870, Congress designated the first four federal holidays: New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Originally the holiday was for federal employees in DC, but it was eventually expanded to all federal employees.
- According to the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council, we'll eat about 150 million hot dogs on Fourth of July.

Source: Mental Floss

