

April 2019
Post Newsletter
WesternSpringsVFW.org

Commander's Stuff

By Rich Jesswein

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We have a lot to get through this month, but before we do, I'd like to go over some brief historic notes. We do the pledge of allegiance every time we get together, but do you know everything about our flag? I know a lot of you know the 13 stripes represent the 13 original colonies and the stars represent the 50 states. But, did you know the RED represents hardiness and valor? BLUE represents vigilance and justice? WHITE represents purity and innocence? So much for history.

If you are looking for veterans' benefits or job opportunities, go to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and click on Employment Compass. I looked at it, and there are a lot of different types of jobs available.

On Wednesday, March 27, from 3-6 p.m. the VA is holding a meeting to explain vets benefits, employment opportunities, VA home loans and more. The meeting will be held at the Cook County office building, 69 W. Washington St., 22nd Floor conference rooms A and B. You need to RSVP by Friday, March 22, to veterans.affairs@cook county gov.

Save the Dates

April 9th – 7:30 p.m. **Post Regular meeting** at Grace Lutheran Church
April 11th – Hospital Visit
April 13th – deadline for April newsletter
May 14th – 7:30 p.m. **Post Regular meeting** at Grace Lutheran Church

It is getting to be that time of year again, YES!! Poppy days!! We have the license from May 18-27. You can volunteer to be on the street corners any of those days, however, we will actively be out there May 21-23. Please contact Mike Winner at (708) 829-0069 to register for a particular place and time.

On Saturday, May 18, Burr Ridge is celebrating Armed Forces Day with numerous activities for the whole family. It starts at 10 a.m., and sounds like fun.

Then, when you leave Burr Ridge, take a road trip to Peru, Illinois, for its salute to veterans. They will have a squadron of TBM Avengers air craft, flying the missing man formation. They will also have famous warbirds from WWII, Korea, and Vietnam doing flight demonstrations, formation flying and simulated torpedo runs.

I know it is early, but don't forget our own Memorial Day Parade. It starts at 10 a.m. on Monday, May 27. DON'T MISS IT!!

I talked a lot about May activities but, on April 1st we have, of course, April Fools' Day!!

Once again, I've run on long enough,
sooooooooooooooooooooo

*Roses are Red
Violets are Blue
Hooray for Spring
It eases my arthritis too*

Till next month CHOI

Quartermaster Report

By Mike Winner

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Statement of funds as of 3/12/19:

Post General Fund	\$10,667.95
Post Relief Fund	897.15
TOTAL:	\$11,565.13

For the very few of you that responded to my last month's request, Thank You!

Semper Fidelis!

Hospital Chairman Report

By Walt Bergenthal

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As a follow up to Jim Boland's last newsletter article, our Post Color Guard consisted of Walt Bergenthal, Milt Kwake, Jack Lund, Dick Demski, Seedy Ulrich, Doc Mathews, Keith Kohlmann, Jim Boland, Bob Flock, Carl Lohrmann, Gordy Martin and Joe Kot. We each paid for our uniforms and boots.

We not only appeared at our Memorial Day parades, meetings and funerals, but also served as the 4th District Color

Guard for several years. We presented the colors at the 4th District meetings and retired the flags at the end of each meeting. We were paid \$25 per meeting, which we put into our Post General Fund.

Milt Kwake, by the way, was an infantry browning automatic rifleman. Like Milt, Seedy Ulrich also helped open the gates to a Nazi concentration camp. Seedy was a 30-caliber air cooled machine gunner.

VA, Parade Committee Updates

By Chuck Bosko

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Some interesting stuff from the VA with an Illinois focus*:

- Number of veterans living in the land of Lincoln- 646,939
- VA expenditures in Illinois (compensation & pension)- \$1.8 billion
- Number of veterans receiving VA compensation- 103,793
- Number of users of the GI Bill and other VA education benefits- 26,304
- Number of home loans backed by VA guarantees- 12,949. Value of those- \$3.6 billion
- Number of veterans buried in Illinois VA cemeteries- 5,347
- Number of headstones and markers provided for graves of Illinois vets and survivors- 13,873

(*from VA stats -November 2017)

Parade Committee stuff

Event is developing quite well with all the traditional participants committed. Number of WW II participants so far is five (Walt, Seedy, Jack, Dr. Paul and Rich Demski). I also received a call from Harold Held, however, I am unable to leave a message. Should a member know Harold, please call him – ask him to call me again.

We all know and appreciate the fact that the Western Springs businesses and some surrounding communities' businesses are the primary financial supporters for the Memorial Day parade. Donations will be accepted by our members as well. After all, it is our Post that plans and manages this event. Donations can be forwarded to:

VFW Post 10778
P.O.Box 73
Western Springs, IL 60558

A Camel Corps for the American Military? No, not just for “hump day”- an actual reality! Or was it? Tell me at the next meeting. There just may be a door prize- just to get over the hump.

Allons and airborne

A Horse Named Bucky

By Jim Boland

Past Commander, 1989-91

The other day I was watching a movie called “Secretariat” that came out a few years back. It starts off about a horse ranch which is about to go out of business. As I sat there with two of my grandchildren, there is a scene where a horse is about to give birth. The female lead actress calls to her young son to come out to the barn to witness the birth of a foal. As the young horse comes out,

the boy and the mother are excited and the boy wants to name the newborn.

It was at this point in the movie my interest dropped as I found myself flashing back to February 1967. I had been medevacked from Vietnam out to the hospital ship USS Repose, which was stationed off the coast of Vietnam to take care of the wounded who could not be cared for in field hospitals. As luck would have it, after a few days aboard ship we were told the ship was going to the Philippine Islands for re-supply.

A few days later pulling into Subic Bay, PI, we were informed that we would be there for 10 days and those of us, Marines, who were ambulatory would be given liberty in a town called Olongapo. Being one of those who indeed was ambulatory, I was given a generic khaki uniform along with other Marines and went off in the evening hours to explore the liberty town of Olongapo.

It must have been my second or third night in town when I found myself in a bar sitting next to another Marine who too, was off the Repose. We got talking, and I learned his name was Ken Kessinger. He was 19 years old from the state of Washington and had been wounded in the shoulder by an enemy combatant. Recovering quickly, as was apt for many young men of the age of 18 - 22 serving in Vietnam, he was now sitting there talking about his family. I learned from Ken that he had been brought up on a horse ranch in the eastern part of Washington state. He related how he had a falling out with his parents and joined the Marines. Prior to going off to Vietnam, he had gone home on liberty and again had a fight with his mother and father. In fact, he told me how he left for Vietnam without even

saying good bye. He expressed regret that he didn't say good bye to them.

Now sitting there with me, after a few drinks, he opened up how he didn't think he would be coming back from Vietnam. He had already been wounded and knew he was being sent back once the *Repose* returned to the coast of VN. I tried to reassure him that he would return home again but he was not convinced. He told me how he thought he should call his mother, via a system called MARS on ship. Shortly after that conversation a few other young Marines recovering from wounds came in and I didn't see Ken the rest of the evening.

Two days later, again sitting in that same bar, who should walk in but Ken Kessinger. He sat down next to me, ordered a beer and told me he felt better. He said he called his parents and his dad was not home, but he had apologized to his mother. Ken told me he had his own horse back home named Bucky. He had given the horse that name due to his unusually big front teeth. His mother had told Ken that Bucky missed him, which made Ken smile. His mother had also told Ken that one of the mares on their ranch was about to give birth and Ken could give it a name when he returned home. Again, Ken smiled telling me this.

We sat there quietly a few minutes when Ken looked up, with a sad smile and told me he didn't think he would ever see Bucky again and that he would never have the opportunity to name that new-born foal. I tried to ignore what he said and gave a half-convincing argument that sure he would be going back to the ranch when his tour was over with.

We went on to have a few more beers, a Filipino band came and began to loudly play country music and I don't remember the rest of the evening.

I never saw Ken again. About a month later, having now returned to Vietnam, I got a copy of the *Stars & Stripes*. It was rare to get a copy, but by chance, I got a copy and in each issue was a column titled KIA and WIA. I learned in the past of a few boot camp buddies who had died or been wounded in Vietnam and now glancing at it, I saw what I feared I would see. It stated that a U.S. Marine Corporal by the name of Ken Kessinger of the 7th Marines had been killed April 5. I knew it was my buddy from my time in the Philippines, but yet still didn't want to believe it. So much was going on in VN that there wasn't much time to dwell on Ken's death.

So, it all flashed back to me Saturday afternoon, sitting with my grandchildren watching a movie about a horse. I thought of Ken.

That night, I went to sleep or tried to that night, but kept thinking of Ken Kessinger from so many years back. Finally, I got up, went on the computer and typed in his name on a site called Virtual Wall. There it was. I guess what I was hoping I would not see the name of Marine Corporal Ken Kessinger of Jovan Washington, KIA in April 5, 1967.

I wonder what happened to Bucky and what name was given to that young foal. Ken was the only son of the Kessinger family and I can only imagine the grief they felt. I looked up Govan, Washington, and it is now considered a ghost town. I won't let him be forgotten.

Semper Fi, Kenny Kessinger.