

**July 2015**  
**Post Newsletter**  
WesternSpringsVFW.org

**Commander's Stuff**

**By Mike Winner**

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Fellow Veterans,

I have graciously taken the helm for another year. I do not take this lightly. You all have my utmost respect and I consider it an honor to call myself the Commander of this Post. I will fulfill my obligation to the highest standards worthy of your service and the sacrifices of our fallen members. I also wish to Thank You for the gift of a Lifetime membership in the VFW. I am humbled and most grateful.

Now, let's get to work.

First off, we need new members. It is going to come down to word of mouth and convincing our fellow veterans to be a part of the VFW. It doesn't necessarily have to be our Post, but they need to be a part of the VFW. There are veterans that need a voice and they need our support. It is the least that we can do. So, go out each day and set the example as you run across a fellow veteran. Talk to him or her and tell them it's a way to continue serving.

Lastly, enjoy the summer! I have just returned from my annual training with a Marine infantry battalion in the deserts

**Save the Dates**

July 9<sup>th</sup> – Hospital Visit

July 14<sup>th</sup> – 7:30 p.m. **Post Regular meeting** at Grace Lutheran Church

July 17<sup>th</sup> – Deadline for August newsletter

Aug. 11<sup>th</sup> – 7:30 p.m. **Post Regular meeting** at Grace Lutheran Church

of 29 Palms California. Temperatures were 110+, sleep was minimal, the chow was MRE's but the morale was high! Our fellow veterans are ready for the next fight. We conducted several exercises to prove our metal and we performed well under very adverse conditions. I am very fortunate to be on both sides – civilian and active veteran. I think this gives me a good perspective when I say, appreciate the sacrifices that you and our fellow veterans have made and continue to make. Enjoy this summer, enjoy the company of friends and family, and always remember that if it wasn't for our sacrifices, none of this would be possible.

Semper Fi,  
Mike Winner

## **Poppy Days Huge Success**

### **Thanks to Volunteers**

**By Walt Bergenthal**

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#### Statement of funds as of 6/9/15:

Post General Fund	\$13,523.93
Post Relief Fund	11,121.76
Post Dues Reserve	130.25
TOTAL:	\$24,775.94

Our sympathy to the family of Chester Krope. We were just notified by national headquarters that Chet had passed away. He served overseas with the Marines during World War II in the Asiatic Pacific Theater from September 1943 to May 1945.

A grateful thanks to all who participated in our annual Poppy Days drive. We couldn't have done it without your help. The top five collectors were:

1. Joe Episcopo
2. Dan Legan
3. Jack Lund
4. Val Price
5. Al Jacobson

And a special thanks to the men who held down the fort and counted money: John Flood, Fred Rodriguez, Dan Legan and Seedy Ulrich. (Dan also hit the streets as you can see above). Poppy Days collections totaled over \$10,700 ... money to be used for veterans in need. Congratulations! You did yourselves proud.

Our Chaplain's prayers for no rain on our parade were half met. Nevertheless, it was amazing the number of people that stayed through to the end of our Memorial Day observances. The Parade Committee, headed by Chuck Bosko, did a terrific job. Kudos all around.

Another great Installation Dinner thanks to Commander Mike Winner. Good food and lots of laughs. After the

swearing in of the new officers for 2015/16 by Past National Commander George Cramer, Mike presented "Appreciation" plaques to Seedy Ulrich, Al Jacobson and Pastor Bob Geaschel. Jack Lund's plaque is on the way and should reach us by our July 14 meeting.

### **Reorganization of the POW/MIA Accounting Effort Putting Lipstick on a Pig**

**By Carol Anne O'Donnell**

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*The following information was taken from the Jan. 24, 2015, edition of Bits N Pieces, the publication of the National Alliance of Families:*

"To understand the deterioration of the effort to reorganize the POW/MIA accounting effort, we need to go back to March 31, 2014. That was the day Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel named Deputy Assistant of Defense for Special Operation/Low Intensity Conflict, ... Michael Lumpkin as the man to head the reorganization effort. Lumpkin promised a new day, with transparency in the process and equal treatment of all POW/MIA family organizations. Shortly after Mr. Lumpkin took over this mission the Personnel Accounting Command Task Force (PACT) stands up for an 18-month mission.

Heading the PACT team is Alisa Stack. Among the team's tasks, working with all POW/MIA family groups to gain input on how best to improve the POW/MIA accounting effort.

Joining the mix is The Clearing, a Washington D.C., consulting firm whose expertise is the reorganization of dysfunctional operations. We begin to hear phrases like 'the families are the

customer' and the 'families are the stakeholders' and the new organization should 'serve the families' and by extension our missing men. The Clearing engages individually with POW/MIA family members and organizations. This engagement includes weekly conference calls with the leadership of the five POW/MIA family groups. (Note: After the first call, one family group declined further participation.)

The weekly calls with the four remaining groups continued.

While we had little hope for a true reorganization, watching the process unfold was interesting.

There was a new approach. The reorganization team became accessible. Michael Lumpkin took and returned phone calls and emails, as did Alisa Stack and the staff at The Clearing. They listened. Whether they truly heard we cannot say, but the feel was different. ...

Then in late July 2014, Michael Lumpkin was gone! This despite the fact we had assurances Mr. Lumpkin would see the mission to its end. Taking over for Lumpkin was Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Christine Wormuth. The promised transparency never happened and summer turned into fall. Questions posed to the PACT and The Clearing remained unanswered. When the PACT finally provided solid information, in October, it was to announce the formation of Working Groups to provide suggestions and direction for the new organization. In our opinion, this is where the PACT team made a huge mistake. Named to staff these working groups were some of the individuals directly responsible for the dysfunction currently facing the POW/MIA accounting mission. We made our objections known, as did many other organizations and individuals. ...

At this point, Jan. 9, 2015, it is important to note that in the space of six months, we went from direct access to the head of the reorganization effort, the PACT, and The Clearing, to sending our concerns to a shared email, monitored by DOD's Public Relations Department. In an opening statement, Admiral Franken (*EDITOR'S NOTE: the new Interim Director*), to his credit, acknowledges he knows nothing about the POW/MIA issue. As with The Clearing and PACT team before him, the learning curve begins. The difference, this time access is limited and monitored, leaving us to wonder, if they will truly hear our concerns and suggestions. When we expressed our concerns over a new learning curve, Admiral Franken assured us that he would take advantage of the expertise of individuals with decades of experience in the POW/MIA issue. We were quick to point out it is those very individuals who are responsible for the current dysfunction. ... Since the Jan. 9 conference call we learned the PACT team and The Clearing submitted reports containing its recommendations for the new organization. When several individuals requested copies of the reports DOD claimed no such reports exists. Yet, various well-placed sources confirm the existence of the reports.

*Transparency, once again, is dead on arrival.*

Please continue to keep all our POW/MIAs and their families in your prayers.

**YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN**

