

TEXAS

Amado Trevino
Commandant



MARINE

Department of TEXAS
Marine Corps League

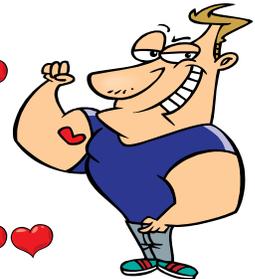


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Commandant's Corner

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AS WE SAY GOODBYE

to 2014 and welcome 2015, I hope that you all had a great year.

I know that we are going to start asking for reports from the Detachments (990s, EINs, and PLMs) and as most of the Detachments are now getting ready to install new officers, some of you will stay in office. I'm asking that once you know who your new officers are that you check the last roster **dated 9/30/2014** and make sure the new officers are up to date on their **dues**. Also, I would like for each Detachment to send me and their District Vice a list of the New Officers *before they are installed*. As most of you know Texas is a



large state and I wouldn't be able to install all the new Officers. If your Detachment has a qualified officer to do your installations, let me know. If I'm not mistaken, some Detachments have already selected their New Officers and their Installing Officers and I have no problem with that. **Just send me the list.**



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I would like to remind everyone that there will be a ceremony to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the battle of Iwo Jima at the Harlingen Marine Corps Academy on February 19th, 2015, at 1600 hours (4:00 PM). It is a Thursday. If your Detachment has any Iwo Jima Veterans let them know or if you would like to go, Marine Richard Torres has gotten us a Hotel La Quinta Inn in Harlingen at a rate of \$52.80 in case someone wants to spend the night. Hope to see some of you there.



The Holiday Inn Hotel in San Antonio is ready to take reservations for the Department Convention in June 2015. There should be more information in this newsletter.

Right now I'm getting ready to go to Falls Church, VA, for the Mid-Winter Conference. I will be leaving on February 10th and should be back on February 17th and attend Iwo Jima Ceremonies on February 19th in Harlingen. In March I will be headed to Fort Smith, AR, for the Southern Division Conference. There should be more information on these Conferences in the newsletter in case anyone is interested.

I want to thank Marine Edgar Ermis for taking over our web page for Department. He has put in a lot of time and work on this web page. It is loaded with information, but we still need more. We are asking that all members who have computers to **PLEASE** log in to the web page. If you are an officer with the Department or Detachment please let him know when you log in. For the Detachments that have newsletters you can go to this web site and get information about events that are going on at both Department and National. It also has all the forms that your Detachment needs. You will be able to access contact information on Department Officers and Detachment Commandants.



The District Vices have been doing an outstanding job getting the word out to their Detachments and it looks like we got most of the PLM reports out on time. I look forward to working with them this coming year. Keep up the good work.



I have been getting newsletters from some of the Detachments. If your Detachment has a newsletter I would like one. You may email it to me if you like. I enjoy reading them.

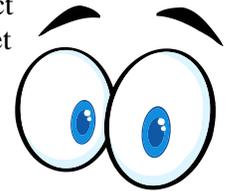
I would like to wish each Detachment and members of the Department a Happy New Year. On behalf of myself and my wife Viola, Southern Division Vice and Department of Texas Auxiliary President... **May God bless each and every one.**

Senior's Segment



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EVERY DAY AS AN officer of the Department of Texas, my respect for each of you increases. We set some goals at the 2014 convention and everyone has kept their eyes on the target.



Timely, coordinated communications is key to helping insure success in any organization, and the District Vices have done an excellent job communicating with their District Detachments and keeping the Department Staff abreast of progress this past year.



We determined that we would attack the following goals with the enthusiasm of 11th week recruits. Although we did not achieve 100% compliance, we made great strides, thanks to all of you. Our first goal was to get our Detachments high and tight, assisting them in submitting 990 reports, and helping them to submit the Life Member Audits. Participating Detachments will directly benefit from their involvement of the PLM Audit by receiving a check from National.

We are now involved in encouraging our Detachments to conduct Officer Installations with the proper documentations submitted to our Paymaster Polly Weidenkopf.

I also would like to encourage all Detachment Sr. Vices to submit Activity Reports. I know many Detachments are involved in some fantastic activities, and sharing about these projects and service activities would be helpful to everyone as well as provide for accounting of our League's involvement. Thank you to all the Detachments that have been sending in regular activity reports. To make this process even easier, try using the form on our new Department web site. If you are not successful, please copy and email to me.

Speaking of the web site, we are pleased to announce the addition of Edgar Ermis as our new Department Web Master. The launch of the web site completes our communications circle; however, we need your participation to make sure the web site effectively serves your needs. Please sign up at www.texasmccl.com to create a personal profile and offer comments and suggestions. On the web site, you will find contact and general information about the Department of Texas Pack and Auxiliary Officers. We also included our National award winning Department newsletters, starting from 1999.

I cannot say enough about how much I appreciate all the work Edgar Ermis of the Longhorn Detachment has performed. Edgar allowed me the privilege to contribute to the



project, which I have been enjoying myself. We tried to think of everything, but we are still open to your suggestions.

Junior's Journal

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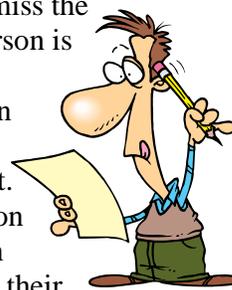
GREETINGS MARINES!

I wish a belated Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everyone. The New Year is underway, and, once again, we are tasked with recruiting new members to the League, while retaining the ones we have.

I have thought about what is involved in the recruitment process, and I have come to the conclusion that the most important element in that process is the individual Marine. That is correct, you and me. Everywhere we go, everything we do, and the way we each display our pride, draws attention to ourselves and our organization. The outcome of all the above is opportunity. Marines usually can spot other Marines, and it is not uncommon to have a stranger ask if we are Marines.



When we wear our "Marine" gear (hats, t-shirts, etc.) we are often met with the offer of a hand and a proud, "Semper Fi, Marine!" Therein resides the opportunity. Somewhere in the conversation that follows, we miss the boat if we do not ask if that person is a member of the Marine Corps League. If not, then you explain what we are, and why they are needed in the local Detachment. Have them fill out an application and offer to pick them up when you hold the next meeting. Get their



dues money, DD-214, anything to get them invested, involved, and hopefully, committed.

I know that all of this sounds like a rehash of other articles, both mine and those who held this position before me. Of course, you are correct. That fact indicates how basic, and important, your participation is to the survival and ultimate success of the League.

Recruitment is only half the story; however, because once we have them in the fold, the challenge becomes to keep them there. If



recruitment seems somewhat tangible, the process of retaining them is much less so. As I review the rolls of the Texas Detachments, I see that there are those with excellent retention numbers, while others struggle to retain their members.

The difference is hard to pinpoint since both have enthusiastic members who are dedicated to the League. I wish there was a quick and easy fix, but there is not. The motivation to remain active is complex. The responsibility for both recruitment and retention rests with the Jr. Vice Commandant.

Most of us come to the job with little if any experience in the position. The best way, short term, to increase our knowledge about the position is to communicate with those who held the position before us. Their experience is invaluable. Do not forget the other members of the Board of Trustees. Long term, however, the best source for “how to” information is the Professional Development Program (PDP) available for download on the Marine Corps League home page. You will find suggestions and guidance that will help provide direction to your recruiting and retention program.

Remember, as the Jr. Vice Commandant, your efforts will embody the primary goal of the League... to bring Marines on board, to keep them on board, and to perpetuate the purposes of the League. Without members, and successful programs to recruit and retain them, there is no way to ensure that we will be able to carry on the traditions of the Marines after we leave the Corps.

Until next time, Semper Fi!

Adjutant/ Paymaster Postings

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AS WE ENTER into 2015, now is a good time to confirm that your Detachment’s



registration with the Texas Secretary of State is current. All Detachments are required to register with the Secretary of State as a nonprofit corporation. Once you have registered, you are then **required**

to update your registration every five years.

To check your status:

- You will go to the Secretary of State web site www.sos.state.tx.us.
 - Once you have entered the site, click on “Business Filings.”
 - Then click on “SOSDirect” – online searching & filing.
 - If you have a user ID and password, you will enter it in the appropriate spaces. If not, you will need to create an account.
 - On the next screen, you will click on “Business Organizations.”
 - Then click on “Find-Entity.”
 - On the next screen you will enter “Marine Corps League” and your Detachment name and hit “Search.”
 - When you find your Detachment, click on your number and it will bring up your Detachment record.
 - You can then click on the “Filings” tab and view you Detachment’s filing information. The cost to change your registered agent is \$5.
- As always, if you have any questions, you can email me at polly.weidenkopf@texasmcl.org.

Chaplain's Comments

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WE ARE JUST BEGINNING

the brand New Year of 2015 and I wish the best for you and yours. I may be late wishing you a happy new year but this is my first opportunity, so

“HAPPY NEW YEAR MARINES.” How are your

New Year resolutions holding up? We all make

at least one but some make many. And I bet

you have already broken most of them.



What were your resolutions? Give up smoking, stop drinking, lose weight, and quit worrying about everything. Most resolutions are ones that would make our lives easier, happier, healthier or maybe change direction. There are things in our lives we just want to change or stop or improve and we just can't seem to get it done by ourselves. We make resolutions and break them before

the sun goes down. Sometimes our lives are not going the way we want and we just can't put our finger on why. Well, listen up folks! You can't continue the same life routine with the same thought processes and expect different results. The beginning of change is between your ears. It's called “Rightful Thinking.” Have you ever heard the old saying “You're not what you think you are, but what you think, you are?” Think and ponder that for a minute or two. Even with this understanding we have little chance overcoming all our problems alone. Something's still missing. Well get your chin off your chest, straighten your shoulders, smile and be happy.... I have the answer for you.



We need help - big help - and his name is **Jesus Christ**. Try starting your day with a prayer. Take the first fifteen minutes of each day and talk to Jesus. Give Him all your problems and worries; He can handle them. I guarantee it will change your life. Just try it!

Walk with God.



Veteran's Voice

Texas Veterans Newsletter is available to any MCL member or any Veteran. It pertains to the

Veterans of the State of Texas and is available at

www.tvc.state.tx.us.



Submitted by Juanita O'Dell, Editor

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SOME OF THE

highlights since publication of the November 2014 newsletter are:



VA Silent Over 'Pill Mill' Concerns; Charleston Team To Study Veteran Pain Management

By Lauren Sausser, *The Post and Courier*
October 26, 2014...

The Department of Veterans Affairs has been giving South Carolina's congressional delegation the silent treatment in response to their concerns that VA hospitals here and across the country have become “pill mills.”

Seven Republican members of the Palmetto State's delegation sent the federal agency a letter in July, saying they fear doctors are overprescribing addictive painkillers at VA hospitals, including those in Columbia, Augusta and Charleston. They cited data that the number of narcotic prescriptions written for veterans



increased by 270% between 2001 and 2012.

The lawmakers have yet to receive a response from the federal agency, a spokesman for Rep. Mick Mulvaney, R-SC, confirmed last week.

Republican Senator Tim Scott of Charleston “is very disappointed at the delayed response from the VA,” his spokesman Sean Smith said.

“As stated in the letter, the Senator is concerned with the dramatic increase in narcotic prescriptions at VA facilities,” Smith said. “We will continue to push the VA for answers on this to ensure our veterans are receiving the proper treatment.”

Congressman Trey Gowdy, who represents the state’s 4th District, said his office also would continue working to get answers from Veterans Affairs about the issue. But he, too, was disappointed in the agency’s failure to respond to the delegation’s letter.

“It should not be expecting too much for the VA to provide a thorough and timely answer on the alarming increase in narcotic prescriptions and our veterans’ health care,” he said.

In response to an inquiry from *The Post and Courier*, the Department of Veterans Affairs said Friday it is still in the process of preparing a response to the delegation’s concerns.

“VA takes medication safety very seriously,” the agency stated. “We are to

doing whatever it takes to minimize the risk of overprescribing narcotics to veterans. We employ a variety of alternative therapies to assist veterans with pain management. In addition, patients who are prescribed narcotics are counseled on using medication safely.”

Using narcotics to manage long-term chronic pain is problematic – particularly because these drugs are so addictive and the evidence that they improve symptoms over an extended period of time is mixed, at best.

“It’s one of those issues that’s up for debate in the research literature,” said Jeffrey Borckardt, a psychologist at Medical University Hospital. “There are certainly risks associated with those medications, so when you’re looking at potential risks associated with a medication that has

questionable benefits... it becomes really important to start investigating other treatments.”

This isn’t an issue only plaguing the VA. A task force assembled by Governor Nikki Haley to combat prescription drug abuse in South Carolina is expected to publish a report later this year.

In the meantime, Borckardt wants to test a theory that electric brain stimulation combined with psychotherapy may help ease a patient’s dependence on pain pills. His team of scientists in Charleston won a \$3 million VA grant earlier this month to study how transcranial direct current stimulation and cognitive behavioral therapy affects veterans’ lower back pain.

He has proposed that a low electric current delivered to specific regions of the brain via small electrodes may help ease long-term pain and that pairing that treatment with talk therapy could enhance the benefit even further.

“We have no idea what happens when you combine the two,” he said.

Borckardt will enroll 120 veterans in the study over five years. Patients will undergo 11 45 minute sessions over several weeks. To qualify, the patients must suffer from chronic lower back pain and demonstrate a history of prescription narcotic misuse, which may include taking medication differently than prescribed by a doctor, taking pills prescribed to someone else, or running out of medicine ahead of schedule.

In a separate trial at the Medical University Hospital, Borckardt will study how brain stimulation and psychotherapy improves fibromyalgia symptoms.



Does the VA Have a Women Veterans Problem?

By Jordain Carney, *National Journal*
October 26, 2014...

Advocates Fear that the Department’s Male-Dominated Clinics Leave Female Service Members Feeling Isolated



When Angela King left the Navy and enrolled in Ohio State University, she struggled to find classmates who could understand her military experience.

But instead of turning to a local branch of the Veterans Affairs Department for support, she looked for help in a student veterans group on campus.

“I think a lot of women feel like they don’t fit in [at the VA]. I think there’s not a lot of trust in the community to receive care there,” said King, 28, who is now a graduate student at Duke University School of Medicine in North Carolina.

And it’s not just King. Officials and advocates agree: The department has a long way to go in its handling of the many issues faced by women veterans.

In many ways, female veterans face tougher challenges than their male counterparts, as they are more likely to be uninsured, unemployed, divorced, and suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder - often the result of a sexual assault.

They were in theater, they were in very different traumatic types of environment. And they’re coming back to a VA that is built more for male veterans,” said Garry Augustine, the

Executive Director for Disabled American Veterans, a Washington-based advocacy organization.

As advocates like to point out, gaps in care reach the most basic levels. For

example, about one-third of VA clinics don’t even have a gynecologist on staff, requiring them to send their female veterans elsewhere.

At the same time, the number of female veterans is on the rise. By 2043, the VA projects that the number of female veterans will increase by 16%, while the number of male veterans will

decrease by almost 40%.

But women are still an overwhelmingly small part of the veteran population. In 2014, women accounted for almost 10% of the total veterans’ population, or 2 million veterans out of a total U.S. population of nearly 22 million. And females account for more than 18% of veterans who enlisted after September 11, 2001.

This minority status of women veterans is largely to blame for the gender gap in coverage at the VA, according to a Disabled American Veterans report released late last month. It notes that discrepancies in treatment of women at the VA “result from a disregard for the differing needs of women veterans and focusing on the 80% solution for men.”

Women make up roughly 7% of the veterans using VA health care, according to department data. With such a small population, service members stressed the importance of creating more female-centric care at the VA, including establishing health centers specifically for women veterans.

“I wouldn’t have gone to the VA if they didn’t have that women’s clinic,” said Jill Finken, a member of the Army National Guard in Iowa. “...I kind of felt embarrassed, because it’s a bunch of men who served in WWII and Vietnam... Having the women’s clinic was a place where I didn’t feel like such a fraud.”

The VA has made progress in recent years, including a requirement that every medical center have a women veterans’ program manager who helps coordinate female care. But top officials acknowledge that hurdles remain.

“I will tell you that after their separation from service, [women] have a fundamentally different experience,” said Allison Hickey, the VA’s Undersecretary for Benefits, at a Council on Foreign Relations event in New York last week.

And for department staffers, the challenge begins with trying to get women to sign up for VA services. Some service members won’t self-identify as a veteran after they leave the military, meaning they opt out of receiving VA benefits - including health care, education, disability, and employment assistance. And most veterans who don’t self-identify are female.

“The tendency as a woman veteran is... when you hang up the uniform, you are disconnected



with your colleagues in service... I mean, the lines are cut. There is no - connection,” Hickey said. “...They seem to fall off into invisible environments. And so we have to do some things very strategically to grab them and pull them back in.”



But a VA spokesperson said that because they don't come forward as veterans, it's impossible for the department to know, or even estimate, how many are choosing to opt out.

Service members said that females choosing not to self-identity as veterans reflects long-standing issues of gender inequality within the military, where many combat-heavy, infantry jobs are all but closed off to women.

“There has to be a change to some degree within the service component...”



The reality is that the infantry is the... crown jewel of the military,” said Finken, 36, adding that this leaves some women with a “second-class citizen feeling.”

This can be compounded by societal pressures. Women go from the military - where traditional feminine characteristics are discouraged - to a very different civilian world.

“All of a sudden you're supposed to be this caring, loving, folding-laundry person,” Finken said. “... That is going to be difficult. It's because of society's expectations of females.”

But advocates are hopeful that the VA is dedicated to improving services for female veterans.

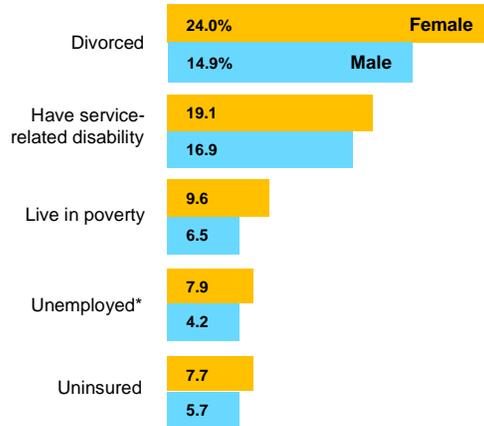
“I think in general the VA is making strides to change the culture that has caused the problems,” Augustine said. But he said Disabled American Veterans doesn't have a specific timeline for wanting to see specific changes within the organization.

“What we would like to see is progress,” he said... It's like turning a battleship when you try to change a bureaucracy.”

Veteran Gender Gap

Female veterans are more likely to suffer from a divorce and life in poverty than their male counterparts

Percentage differences between veterans, by gender (2012)



*Unemployment data as of September 2014.
Sources: Veterans Affairs Department; Bureau of Labor Statistics



VA Employee: Vets Pressured to Drop Claims to Improve Giant Backlog

By Jeremy Schwartz
Austin American-Statesman Staff
December 13, 2014...

Vietnam veteran Felipe Sanchez says he received the phone call in March 2012 about his two long-standing disability benefits claims for post-traumatic stress disorder and neuropathy, a diabetes-related condition that causes pain.

The voice on the line, he recalled, urged him to drop one of the claims. “They didn't care which one, but if I dropped it, I would get the other one approved,” he said. “That irked the hell out of me.”



Vietnam Veteran Felipe Sanchez

He said the caller didn't clearly identify herself. However, when he used the caller ID function on his phone, the call went to the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Benefits Office in Houston.

Larry Sellers, another Houston-area Vietnam veteran, said he has received similar phone calls. "They tried to trick me into dropping my claims," he said.

While the VA has struggled recently to whittle down a massive backlog of disability claims, officials in Texas say they don't pressure veterans into dropping claims. VA regional spokeswoman Jessica Jacobsen said that while VA officials do contact veterans about their claims to explain their options, "ultimately it is always the veterans' decision that will dictate the actions taken on their claim."



It's also unclear how many vets have complained of such calls. But according to a former employee of the VA's Houston Regional Office, VA employees there were ordered to engage in practices to artificially reduce pending claims in a frantic effort to address the backlog that helped fuel a national backlash against the agency's inefficiency. The actions could potentially deprive veterans of thousands of dollars in retroactive pay by moving up the origination date of their claim.

Charleston Ausby, who worked at the Houston Regional Office from 2002 until 2012, said that during part of his tenure employees were told to

strike a deal with veterans with multiple pending claims, offering a favorable rating on one claim if veterans agreed to withdraw their additional claims and refile them later.

"There is no reason to do that," he said. "You do that to reduce your pending claim count."

If dropped, backlogged claims - defined by the VA as older than 125 days - would be erased from the waiting list. A refiled claim, even if for the same illness, would start the clock ticking from the beginning.

An internal agency document obtained by the *American-Statesman* suggests that such phone calls made to veterans were authorized by at least one member of senior management. If Ausby's accusations prove true, the tactic would be the latest in a series of questionable methods used by VA officials in various local offices across the country to quickly reduce the number and wait times of veterans due disability benefits.

Pressure was "relentless"

To receive disability benefits, veterans must convince the VA their illness or condition is related to their military service, a process that usually involves medical exams and gathering service records. It often involves the help of a specially trained service officer. After sifting through the evidence, the agency either denies or approves the claim and assigns a disability rating that determines monthly payments.

Over the past few years, a surge of applicants fueled by returning Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans and new rules on Agent Orange-connected illnesses for Vietnam veterans created a backlog that has resulted in what can be years-long waits for vets to receive their disability payments. The delay has been particularly acute in Texas. At one point, the Waco VA Regional Office had the nation's longest wait time for pending claims. Houston saw its pending claims climb from 16,151 in January 2011 to more than 28,000 by June 2012.

The VA embarked on an ambitious plan to eliminate the backlog nationally by the end of 2015

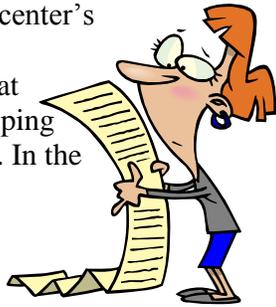


by retraining employees, authorizing massive overtime and transitioning from a paper-based system to a digital model.

Texas also has provided more than \$5 million to hire more workers. As part of their duties, those state workers review existing claims and, in some cases, recommend to veterans that they be “refiled.” But according to state officials, it is done in a way to preserve the original claim date.

In Houston, which has hosted pilot programs for the efficiency initiative that later went national, backlogged claims have fallen to fewer than 14,000. VA officials say the drop has been accomplished through hard work, not data manipulation; Jacobsen added that the center never had a policy aimed at persuading veterans to withdraw pending claims and refile them later.

But according to an August 2012 internal memo, the Houston service center’s manager, a high-ranking position, authorized calling at least one veteran about dropping and resubmitting old claims. In the letter, Manuel Longoria, identified as a program management czar, directs an employee to call a veteran and inform him that a portion, but not all, of his claim has been awarded.



“Contact the veteran and ask him if he wishes to withdraw his deferred issues,” it says. “Explain to the veteran what our decision currently is. The goal is to finalize the (claim). Tell the veteran that he can reapply once he receives our notification letter.”

The service center manager “approved this recommended action,” Longoria wrote. The memo doesn’t name the manager. However, according to the VA, Emile Dufrene has held the position since 2011.

Advocates say that while refileing an old, pending claim can seem innocuous, and in some instances can lead to a quicker rating decision, it can also cost veterans money because they are paid retroactively to the date they opened a claim, even if the claim isn’t approved until years later.

Maryland-based attorney Glenn Bergmann, who represents veterans, said the retroactive pay “basically pays them for all the delay,” adding that

some veterans “aren’t savvy enough to know they are giving up a lot.”

“Under the guise of speed and efficiency, they are actually hurting veterans,” he said.

VA officials did not respond specifically to the memo. But Longoria said in an interview that he was told by leadership at the office to come up with a plan to resolve the office’s oldest pending claims and “speed them up.” He said the pressure to reduce the backlog was “relentless.”

“When management continues to demand ever more production from limited resources, something has got to give,” said Longoria’s attorney, Adam Conti.

Longoria said that the veterans his team contacted who agreed to drop their pending claims were advised on how to maintain access to their retroactive pay if they filed a new claim.



An internal investigation earlier this year concluded Longoria had mishandled pending claims by making them appear completed and misrepresenting the office’s “claims inventory and timeliness measures.” The report acknowledged that Longoria thought his actions were appropriate and he told investigators that he hadn’t been directed by his bosses to take the questionable actions. He later conceded he’d acted improperly because of “immense stress.”

Hiding claims

Ausby said data manipulation occurred regularly in Houston on older claims, especially those that had been lost, sometimes for years, and only recently discovered.

When the employees whose job it is to rate a veteran’s claim came across such an old claim, they were told to enter it into the system under the current date, rather than its original date, he said.

Ausby said employees were also directed to enter such claims under categories that aren’t counted among the office’s backlogged claims. “They would mask it, hide it on a date that wasn’t true,” he said.

Other VA offices have been caught trying to reduce their caseloads in unethical ways. In Philadelphia, VA inspectors found employees were

time-stamping previously lost claims with a “discovered date,” which artificially erased years of wait times. Officials attributed the tactic to misapplication of a May 2013 VA memo.

The American Federation of Government Employees Local 520 in Columbia, SC, also told Congress last year it was concerned that its regional benefits office was undercounting pending claims through administrative sleight of hand.

The VA has identified problems in its mailrooms across the country, where mistakes can lead to lost or destroyed claims or claims that languish in the wrong file for years. A 2009 audit by the VA’s Inspector General Office found numerous misfiling practices, including mail “inappropriately placed in shred bins, a problem that appeared to be systematic.”



Meanwhile, new rules will soon make it more complicated for veterans to file claims. Historically, veterans have been able to file so-called informal claims in letters or even scraps of paper — a system designed to aid veterans without “legal sophistication.”

This year the VA halted the practice and will now require all claims to be filed on a standardized form, a change expected to reduce the number of lost and languishing claims. But advocates say the change will hurt veterans suffering from brain injuries and homeless veterans without access to help in filing the forms, reducing the number of claims they file.

Disability claims pending more than 125 days at the VA’s Houston Regional Office:

- January 2011 - 16,151
- January 2012 - 25,554
- January 2013 - 28,095
- January 2014 - 27,865
- Current - 13,797

Division/District/Detachment Digest

SOUTHERN DIVISION

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MARINES!!!

I was glad to have the chance to visit with many of you during the last few months of 2014.

From the Department of Texas Fall Staff Meeting to Marine Corps Birthday celebrations through Toys for Tots it has been a busy past few months.



It is now time to look forward to 2015 and all the business we need to conduct

during the first few months of this new year. Most of you should be in the process of your officer installations for the coming year, and with that comes the Report of Officer Installations. Please make sure that you fill them out completely and accurately as the information contained is very important.

In addition it will soon be time for the Southern Division Conference which will be held this year in Fort Smith, Arkansas. This is the time that the membership will make their choice as to who will represent the Division for the next two years. I do plan to run for a second term and would like your support for another two years as your Division Vice Commandant.



Goals for the Southern Division in 2015 will be much the same as those for 2014 with a few adjustments based on how things went in 2014. There will be more on the 2015 goals presented at the Southern Division Conference as part of my



report to the Division, but listed below are the goals for 2015:

1. Reduction in unpaid membership to an average of at least 15%.
2. On time Report of Officer Installation.
3. On time IRS filing of 990E-Postcards or standard 990.
4. On time filing of annual PLM audit.
5. Current Detachment locator pages.
6. Increase in new membership by 2% over 2014.
7. Participation in National meetings and programs.
8. No article nine hearings.
9. Membership engagement!

I look forward to seeing you all in Fort Smith in March.

**DISTRICT 3 | DEANE HAWKINS
DETACHMENT
EL PASO**

Submitted by Robert Way, *Commandant*
(915) 593-9370 (H) • robert.way@texasmcl.org

THE DEANE HAWKINS

Detachment members have had a very active past three months.

The Honor Unit Firing Detail provided Honors for five veterans (4 Marines and 1 soldier) during the last three months.

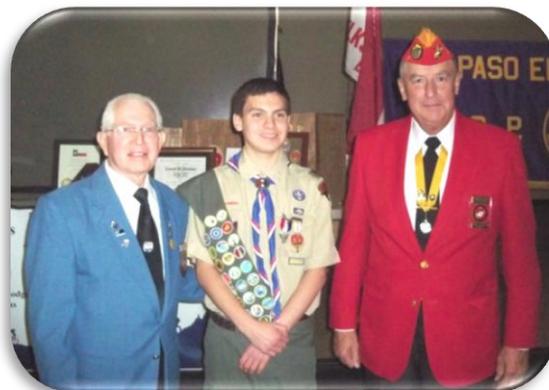


Rifle Honor Detail at Ft. Bliss National Cemetery

Members of the Detachment helped the Marine

Reserve Unit with Toys for Tots by helping to collect, sort and distribute toys in the El Paso area.

Donations of boots and camping equipment were made to the Yucca Council Boy Scouts and three Eagle Scout award presentations were made.



Wally Gonzalez, Eagle Scout Joseph Ornelas, and Bob Way at Court of Honor Ceremony.

The Detachment members helped with putting up and taking down the Avenue of Flags at the Ft. Bliss National Cemetery. The Avenue of Flags is done twice a year... once on Memorial Day and once on Veterans Day. They usually stay up for three to four days. A small group of people from various Veterans organizations put them up and take them down. The flags that are flown have all been donated to the Ft. Bliss National Cemetery for this purpose. Over 180 flags are put up on Memorial Day and about 60 on Veterans Day.



Flag raising detail at Avenue of Flags at the Ft. Bliss National Cemetery

Members participated in two different Marine Corps Ball ceremonies, one with the Marine Corps Reserve Unit and one with the 19th Rifle Co. The Detachment, along with the Marine Corps Reserve Unit and the 19th Rifle Co., also organized and

conducted a cake cutting ceremony at the Guillen Nursing Home for the Marines and other veterans who are being taking care of there.



*Veterans at cake cutting ceremony,
Guillen Nursing Home*

The Detachment members were instrumental in organizing and lining up the Annual Veterans Parade in El Paso. There were over 80 units that participated in the parade.



Veterans Parade - 19th Rifle Co.

Connie Pena was recognized and received an award, along with nine other veterans, at the 2nd Annual Ft. Bliss Veterans Gala for their past and present service to the Country and community.



*Col. Coward presented
Connie Pena with the
Ft. Bliss Veterans Gala
Award Certificate*

Pete Gomez was recognized as the Deane Hawkins Detachment Marine of the Year at the Detachment's annual Christmas party.

Geronimo Polanco played Santa Claus at several children's events in the El Paso area over the Christmas season. He does this every year.



Geronimo Polanco as Santa Claus

The El Paso Young Marines have moved to a new location on Ft. Bliss. Although it is a little smaller, it should be a more permanent location. They will again be sharing the building with the Marine Corps Reserve Unit.



DISTRICT 6

Submitted by Sal Vera
District Vice Commandant
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MY NEW YEARS MESSAGE to

District Six is as follows: Together we must start thinking of continuing the progress of the work in the District 6 Detachments and explore the idea of getting the Detachments involved in the District activities and events of the Department of Texas.

Getting involved with the activities of the Department by the Detachments of District 6 will not only bring about a better understanding of what the District does, but will allow members to become closer in comradeship and productivity.

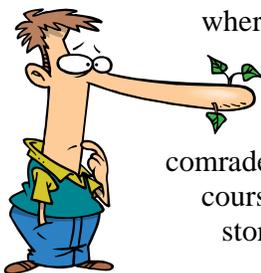
The Department of Texas 2015 Convention is our next major gathering of the Department. It will take place June 25th – 27th, 2015, in the Holiday Inn San Antonio Downtown Market Square, 318 West Cesar E. Chavez Blvd. For reservations call (210) 225-3211. The room rate is \$99 per night with breakfast included. Make sure you mention the Marine Corps League when calling. Start making plans on attending this convention. You may attend individually, car pool with fellow Detachment members, or make other special arrangements.

The Department Convention is important because it is where the Department Officers are elected. Those are the members who are chosen to lead the affairs for the Department for the following year.

It is also important because it is the place where Detachments and individual members are recognized for the work they have done. And you get to see former comrades and meet new members. Of course, scuttlebutt and colorful sea stories will make this gathering a memorable event as well.

I will keep you abreast of the happenings of District 6 as well as those of the Department of Texas. I am in the process of developing priority required reports guidelines and procedures which will ease the burden and time consuming required reporting.

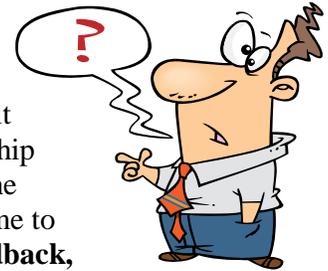
As I have stated in my previous messages to you, my continued learning experience in this endeavor will be shared with you. Together we will enhance the operation of each Detachment and



District 6 as a whole. I will be providing you with up-to-date information as I gather it as well as support as you require it.

Do not hesitate to ask for any assistance. If I do not know the answer, I will find out for you. In return, I ask you to keep me informed on your unit operations and membership activity participation. One important request from me to you - **I need your feedback, suggestions, and ideas.** No matter what they are or how they may sound, do share them with me.

Remember, start planning now to attend the Convention in San Antonio. Conventions are historic and memorable events. Visit one.



DISTRICT 7

Submitted by Con Shuck
District Vice Commandant
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JANUARY 10TH



was supposed to be the day of the Pound 268 Growl in Mesquite which I had planned to attend. The Growl was cancelled as we all know. It appears the weatherman missed again; but no big deal as it has been rescheduled for 31 January.

It has been a busy time here in the District. On Tuesday Carol and I were paid a visit by Ted Newman, a member of the East Valley Detachment in Phoenix. Ted and I served together in Vietnam in 1962 during Operation Shufly. He was enroute to visit the Florida Keys in his motor home.

He joined me as we visited the Longhorn Detachment in Crowley and installed their officers.

*L-R: Ted Newman,
Con Shuck &
Commandant Bill
Carver, Longhorn
Detachment*



*L-R: Ron
Payne, former
member of
Pecan Valley
now of
Comanche
Peak,
congratulating
Commandant
Sanchez, on
commendation
award.*



Commandant Bill Carver really has shaped this Detachment up to where it is one of the best I have seen. There is great cooperation between members with a “can do” attitude.

On the 8th of January with great weather ahead Ted headed east in his motor home and I headed west and south to Brownwood to install a couple of interim officers until they have their annual Election of Officers in April. Looks like I will be going back in May to install the complete slate of Officers.

Commandant Reymundo Sanchez and Billy Murphey have a real job ahead of them to get the membership up and become a viable Detachment again.



*L-R: Billy Murphey, Interim Chaplain & Judge
Advocate, and Alan Gastinger, Sgt-At-Arms,
Pecan Valley Detachment*



*L-R: Commandant
Reymundo Sanchez,
Pecan Valley
Detachment,
accepting the
National Vice
Commandants award
for Membership*

**BIG D DETACHMENT
DALLAS**

Submitted by Melody Bronson, *Commandant*
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HAPPY NEW YEAR

from the Big “D” Detachment! We have certainly been busy in November and December with all of the Veteran’s Day and Marine Corps Birthday events, Eagle Scout presentations, parades, banquets and Toys for Tots events. Our activity lists have been full! Oooh! Rahh!



*We had another
successful year
with our Toys for
Tots event!*

Melody & Max Bronson had the honor of visiting “The Wall that Heals” while it was on display at UT of Dallas from November 20th - 23rd. Very touching to see this wall! It was a time to reflect on the Americans who served our country and gave their lives during the Vietnam War.

Big D honored our veterans during the city of Mesquite's Veterans' Event.



L-R: Detachment Commandant Harry Alfeo, Past DOT Commandant Arnold Leal, and present DOT Cmt. Amado Trevino.



We had a "wet" but great time at the annual Parade of Lights in Grapevine. All vehicles & walking participants had to be decorated in lights!



L-R: Amado Trevino, Bill Bogard, Toni Infante, & Harry Alfeo.

**COASTAL BEND DETACHMENT
CORPUS CHRISTI**

Submitted by Harry Alfeo, *Commandant*
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THE COASTAL BEND Detachment was invited to participate in the Corpus Christi Wreaths Across America Ceremony.

The Detachment's Memorial Team and Color Guard was honored to present the Colors at the Coastal Bend Veterans State Cemetery at the Wreaths Across America Ceremony on Saturday, December 13th, 2014. Over 1,000 veterans are interred at the cemetery. Wreaths were placed, all across America, at the same precise time, 11:00 AM in our Central Time Zone.

The Coastal Bend State Veterans Cemetery was dedicated on December 29th, 2011, the 70th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack.



**COMANCHE PEAK DETACHMENT
GRANBURY**

Submitted by Con Shuck, *Chaplain*
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HERE AT HOME I WILL ASK

everyone to keep Alex Azar in their prayers. Sometime just before Christmas Alex started having problems with his balance and coordination. He is very unstable walking, even with a cane, and has fallen several times. He has just received a report from the neurologist that he may have neuropathy, but they did another series of tests on him... blood work, etc.

Another member of Comanche Peak, Alden Bailey, age 91, was rushed off to the hospital two weeks ago where they discovered some clogged arteries but the hospital said he probably would not survive the surgery and refused to allow the doctor



to do it. His doctor called a couple of days later and told him he would be able to do it in another hospital. He went back the next morning where they put him in surgery, stopped the surgery for some reason, and restarted the next morning and put in three stints. I guess the rules are changing for us older guys.

They told his wife Dorothy that if they had not done the surgery he only had two to five more days to live. That is cutting it pretty close. He joined us this morning for breakfast and looked very good.... color, etc.



Pete Sanfilippo, our 94 year old WWII Marine who made the landing on Pelieu, has started having dental problems. They must be pretty optimistic as they are doing implants.

Other than his teeth hurting and being blind he is in good spirits. I suppose that's because he can't see the bill for the implants. I'm the expert when it comes to jaw pain and implants and the cost.

We lost one of our members, Gene Bennett Erwin, Sr., on January 10th, 2015.

**Gene Bennett Erwin, Sr.
1938 – 2015**

Gene Bennett Erwin, Sr., 76, of Granbury, a retired U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col., died Saturday, January 10th, 2015.



Gene was born April 17th, 1938, in Newton, Kansas, and raised in Blum. He graduated from Sam Houston State University where he was a charter member of the Delta Tau Delta Fraternity.

On September 3rd, 1960, Gene married Nancy Bartlett, his beloved wife of 54 years. Amidst 27 moves during his 23-year military career, they raised two daughters, Elizabeth and Melissa, and a son, Gene Jr.

Gene was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1961. He served in the Cuban blockade, the Cyprus Crisis and the Vietnam War. He was awarded the Republic of Vietnam Service Medal with four stars, Combat Action Ribbon, Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with palm and gold frame, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with 1960 device, Meritorious Unit Commendation, Sea Service

Deployment Ribbon, Bronze Star with Combat "V" for Valor, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, and National Defense Service Medal.

Following his retirement from the Marine Corps in 1984, Lt. Col. Erwin taught mathematics and athletics at Marlin High School in Marlin for 14 years, retiring from his second career in 1999.

In 2001, he and Nancy moved to Granbury. As a member of Granbury First United Methodist Church, he served in numerous activities including the Church Food Program, the Angel Tree Program and the program that provided fans and blankets for the needy. He also mentored young people in the Confirmand Program and tutored mathematics in Brandon's Hope.

Survivors: His wife, Nancy; daughters, Elizabeth Meschwitz and husband, Ken, Melissa Kinzel and husband, Brian; son, Gene Erwin Jr. and wife, Jennifer; grandchildren, Lauren and Alex Meschwitz, Bennett, Riley and Charlie Kinzel, and Thomas and William Erwin; brothers, Bill Erwin and Bob Erwin; and sister, Cecelia Ann Waits.

No other news from here in Granbury. The lake is still 8½ feet low so Carol and I are looking forward to the Department Convention in San Antonio as we hear they still have water in the river on the river walk.

**EASTEX DETACHMENT
CONROE**

Submitted by James Andrews, *Commandant*
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james.andrews@texasmcl.org

2014 HAS WRAPPED UP very

well for us. We had one of the best Toys for Tots seasons imaginable. Our campaign netted us:

- Toys Distributed 15,485
- Books Distributed 4,192
- Stuffers Distributed .. 1,242
- Money Raised \$59,512

The Toys for Tots campaign has always been one of our more successful efforts. The season is ripe with giving and the members are always there to support the children. A special **Thank You** needs to go out to our Toys for Tots Coordinator Jeannine Warren and her trusty elves Steve

Thomas, Bob Warren, Bill Collins, Ray Priest, Russ Shoup, Marge and Karl Schwebe, Max Martensen and the countless spouses and other members that I have forgotten to mention. This Detachment has always been active, but really seems to come alive when the Toys for Tots season comes around.

Now we are preparing for a busy and successful 2015, focusing on community involvement, actively seeking engaging events that will bring the efforts of the Marine Corps League and the Eastex Detachment #779 to the forefront of news and recognition within ours and surrounding counties.



L-R: Bill Collins, Steve Thomas, Bob Quinn, Bob Warren, & James Andrews



L-R: Winnie Lucas, Bob Warren, Jeannine Warren, unknown, & Steve Thomas



L-R: Bob Warren, James Andrews, Jeannine Warren, Santa Claus



Kicking off the 2014 Toys for Tots Campaign at the Montgomery County Library

**SGT. JAY HOSKINS DETACHMENT
PARIS**

Submitted by John Ropella, *Commandant*
(903) 732-3037 (H) • jjropella@gmail.com

DOZENS OF MEN and women, both veterans and civilians, gathered for Lamar County's first Marine Birthday Ball. To celebrate the 239th Marine Corps Birthday, Sgt. Jay M. Hoskins Detachment planned the formal event and has plans to make it an annual celebration.

We've tried to do one here for several years, but there isn't a high Marine population. There is, however, a high veteran population, so we decided to honor all veterans.

Veterans from every branch were invited, but Marine traditions were held true, especially the Commandant's Message, the cake cutting, and recognizing the youngest and oldest Marine.

"You never hear a Marine say he is an ex-Marine, because Once a Marine, Always a Marine," guest speaker Lt. Col. (Col. select) Eric Ropella, son of Detachment Commandant John Ropella said. "It's in who you are."

The presentation was filled with many inspirational and entertaining remarks, including a bit of Navy vs. Marine bantering. But, when all was said and done, there was nothing but kudos from all in attendance. Did this old Navy guy proud!



*Lt. Col. Eric Ropella,
Guest Speaker*

Auxiliary Announcements

Viola Trevino
Marine Corps League Auxiliary
Southern Division Vice President
(361) 960-0142 (H)
viola.trevino@auxiliary.texasmcl.org



SOUTHERN DIVISION NEWS

☼ Southern Division will be holding their 2015 Conference on March 20th and 21st, 2015.

☼ It will be hosted by River Valley Detachment #1248 in Ft. Smith, Arkansas.

☼ It will be held at River Valley Inn and Suites, 5103 Towson Avenue, Ft. Smith, AR 72901. For reservations call (479) 646-2931. The room rates will be \$55.25 + tax per night, and will be available Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Hope to see you there.

Department of Texas MCL Auxiliary President

GREETINGS EVERYONE!

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Since I last reported three months ago I attended the Fall Staff Meeting in October in beautiful Granbury, TX. I'd like to thank the Comanche Peak Detachment for hosting the Staff Meeting and for the warm hospitality and great accommodations. We had

a very productive meeting and a fun Flea Scratch. I would like to thank the members and officers who attended. We had a great turnout.

The month of November was a busy one. I attended several Marine Corps Balls and a couple of Marine Birthday Cake Cutting Ceremonies. On Veterans Day I attended ceremonies at Sherrill Park, Banquete High School, and West Oso High School. Both had great



*Father and Son
L-R: John & Eric
Ropella*



*Recognizing the
youngest Marine
(Lt. Col. Ropella)
and the oldest
Marine (Bob
Ogg).*

JROTC performances. Thanks to all Veterans for all you do.

On the 19th of November I traveled to San Antonio with the Commandant to meet with the Convention Chair, George Simpson, and Jr. Past Department President Dorcas Simpson from Heart of Texas Unit. We met with the hotel personnel and with Bob and Shirley Otto from Alamo Detachment and Unit to discuss the June Convention. After the meeting I had the pleasure of having lunch with Dorcas Simpson, and members of the Alamo Unit... President Martha Cisneros-Martinez and Mary Rose Elizondo.



Luncheon with the Auxiliary Ladies

I volunteered a couple of hours to collect food for the Coastal Bend Detachment's First Annual Thanksgiving Food Drive. On the 26th of November Marine Tony Infante, Frank Garcia, Amado Trevino, Jr., along with myself, and Ben and Samantha Sullivan (Tony Infante's grandkids), volunteered to deliver twelve boxes of food to the Food Bank. Other volunteer helpers were Harry Alfeo, Bill Bogard, and Ed Horton. I hope to get Auxiliary members involved next year.



Delivering boxes of food to the Food Bank

On the 13th of December I participated in the laying of wreaths for Wreaths Across America Ceremony at Coastal Bend Veterans State

Cemetery. The Coastal Bend Detachment presented the Colors during the Ceremony. We laid wreaths on burial sites of Marines Charles Culpepper and David DelaCruz. It was a beautiful day and beautiful ceremony.



Participating in Wreaths Across America Ceremony

On the 19th of December I traveled to San Antonio with the Department Commandant for the Alamo Detachment's Installation of Officers and their Christmas celebration. It was nice to see the ladies of the Alamo Unit. We enjoyed their hospitality and good food and look forward to attending the State Convention in San Antonio in June.

I attended the Coastal Bend Detachment's Christmas Party on December 20th. Thanks Ken and Graciella for hosting a great party in your beautiful new home.

Thank you ladies for all your support in the past year.

**AUXILIARY FALL STAFF
PHOTOS · NOVEMBER 2014**



*Operation Little Angel –
L-R: Brenda Tomonelli & Dorcas Simpson*



L-R: Barbara Hixson, Johnnie Lopez, National Big Flea Colleen English, & Brenda Tomonelli



MCLA Members L-R: Viola Trevino, Karren Ogg, Esmerelda Vera, Johnnie Lopez, Barbara Hixson, Dorcas Simpson, Ann Danford, & Brenda Tomonelli



Viola Trevino presenting Americanism Certificate to Connie Chambers (L) for her donation of American Flag to the Auxiliary.

Flea Fiddlings

Brenda Tomonelli
 DOT MODDF Hide
 Scratchy Flea
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 brenda.tomonelli@
 auxiliary.texasmcl.org
 and



Dorcas Simpson • DOT MODDF Hide Big Flea
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 dorcas.simpson@auxiliary.texasmcl.org

THE MODDF HELD A successful and fun filled Scratch at the Fall Staff Meeting in historic Granbury hosted by the Comanche Peak Detachment. The Flea room was decked out in all things Boo! related - from skeletons to ghosts. We were very proud to have National Madame Big Flea, Colleen English, attend our very rambunctious M.O.D.D.F. “Boo-Bash” Scratch.

The attendance at the Scratch was the largest in recent years. Way to Go Texas Fleas!!

Texas Hide Big Flea, Dorcas, presented Madame Big Flea, Colleen English, with a MODDF certificate thanking her for her presence. The Hide also presented her with a gift basket filled with Texas treasures and she participated in our costume party in her “bag lady” attire.



L-R: Madame Big Flea Colleen English being presented with certificate by Dorcas Simpson



Madame Big Flea being presented with gift basket.

Dressed-up Fleas held a very competitive costume contest with 1st Place awarded to Esmerelda Vera, 2nd to Linda Rigg, and 3rd to Barbara Hixson. Prizes consisted of candy treats and wine glasses.



R-L: Esmerelda Vera, Linda Rigg, and Barbara Hixson - 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in costume contest.

Other Fleas participating in the costume contest.



Big Flea, Dorcas, also presided over the initiation of one new Crawler to the Hide of Texas Fleas. Welcome Crawler Jeannine Warren! The Fleas were also tickled to have Greg Lopez and Esmerelda Vera return to our Hide. In addition, the Fleas collected and donated Dog Bones & Flea fines to the Leatherneck Foundation - our largest donation in a few years.

The Hide is now in preparation for the Southern Division Scratch in Ft. Smith in March. The Texas Fleas are looking forward to seeing our Arkansas Sister Crawlers and partying with them to the theme: Frontier Days (as Ft. Smith is known for their Marshals, Hanging Judge, and a somewhat dubious house ("social club" - we'll dub "saloon

gal frivolity"). All Fleas are invited to dress for the contest (think *Miss Kitty* and/or *Little House on the Prairie* and/or *antebellum Old South*) and attend the Scratch with all intents to have Dog pesterin' fun!!! We understand we may be able to welcome some more Crawlers from Arkansas to the Hide!

Hope to see you in Ft. Smith.

National News

*Commandant
John Kovalcik
Communications*

JKovalcik@MCLeague.org
*Semper Fi article
Nov/Dec 2014...*



THE MARINE CORPS League's National Convention was held 2-9 August in Charleston, WV, and it was a great event! Thanks to the local Convention Committee Chairman Owen Stout and Co-Chair Todd Morris, as well

as Mike McLain, Roger Ware, John Nanny, Jim Ingram, Frank Armentrout, Rich Given, Richard Shank, Mike Francis, John Hancock, Dexter Owsley and

Medal of Honor Recipient Hershel "Woody" Williams. Great job, West Virginia! Be proud to hold your heads high!

I was proud to introduce my family the evening of the banquet, especially my two 10-year-old granddaughters from New Jersey. Cousins Jennifer and Lindsay came to the floor and waved to one of the largest groups ever to attend a convention dinner as though they were the future Miss New Jerseys! That was all they ever talked about during the following days. I know this is an event of Poppop's they will never forget.

My first trip to National Headquarters, 26-29 August, was very rewarding. I met the staff and



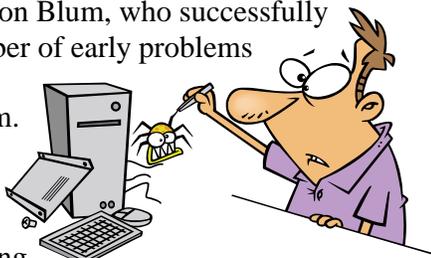
discussed their jobs. All of them are doing a great job and are working hard to respond to your needs and make the League even greater.

Please thank the staff whenever you communicate with National Headquarters. Johanna in the membership office had a number of metal Life Membership cards in front of her ready to be mailed when we talked. As orders come in to the Semper Fi Store, the merchandise is gathered along with the paperwork and stacked on a worktable for packing and shipping. If you are ever in the area, stop in and see the operation at work.

I also spoke with Beth Snider in inventory control; Brian Koonce in the Semper Fi Store; Greg Potestio, membership; Chris Atkinson, administrative assistant; Kathy Foxwell and Kathryn Smith, order fulfillment; and Dave Brown, who fills in wherever needed.

Last but not least, thanks to the IT team of Richard and Jason Blum, who successfully resolved a number of early problems with the new computer system.

They keep up with the future of information technology during a very challenging time when there are those who would try to do us harm electronically.



The overall operation of National Headquarters and management of the staff falls on the shoulders of Executive Director Mike Blum along with the National Adjutant Paymaster Meg Thorburn, both of whom work very hard on your behalf every day.

In September I attended the Modern Day Marine Expo. It was a great success again, and seemed larger than the past few years. Our team traveled through the crowded viewing area thanking the vendors for their participation. Many had never been there before. I hope that the number of new participants indicates new growth in the Defense industry and a bright future.

Semper Fi article Jan/Feb 2015...

GOOD MORNING FROM a very chilly South Carolina where it seems winter came in for one night. The past two months were very

busy visiting Marines and getting ready for the 239th Marine Corps Birthday on 10 November, which was followed by the Veterans Day ceremony on 11 November. I was home on 8 November for the Grand Strand Detachment's ball in celebration of our Birthday. Thanks to Don Marsh and D.L. Koontz for their effort. Early on 9 November, Judy and I left for Washington, D.C., arriving at the Marriott in Falls Church, VA.

On Monday, 10 November, we attended the wreath-laying ceremony at the Iwo Jima Memorial, where we were thoroughly impressed by the active-duty Marines and our senior military officers. The audience was filled with veterans from around the country who came to attend the ceremony. As usual at ceremonies such as this, the President's Own Marine Band gave an outstanding performance. The air was filled with pride as everyone there gave reverence to the beautiful statue of the flag raising on Iwo Jima.



At 6:30 a.m. on 11 November, we left the hotel for Fort Myer to receive instructions for our breakfast at the White House. After showing a photo ID and being scanned, we followed those before us into a room in the White House where we enjoyed a buffet breakfast.

Several cabinet members and other notables were in attendance for this occasion. As we exited after breakfast, we had a photo opp with the Vice



Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

President, the Honorable Joe Biden. We then left for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier where the wreath-laying ceremony was conducted by the Vice President.

After this ceremony, we went to our assigned seats in the amphitheater where a flag ceremony was held, followed by speeches by Vice President Biden and the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Robert A. McDonald.

Wreaths from attending military organizations were then presented to the Honor Guard at the Tomb. Jackie Hunter, President of the Marine Corps League Auxiliary, and I brought up the Marine Corps League wreath. We were joined by my wife Judy and Jackie's husband David.

It was a memorable two days.



Jackie Hunter
Natl. MCL Aux.
President

Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, NC...

ON A SEEMINGLY AVERAGE

Saturday morning, nine Marines set foot on American soil and closed a chapter in Marine Corps history.

The pre-dawn arrival of a single C-5 Galaxy at Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, NC, marked the end of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing's support of Operation Enduring Freedom and delivered the Marines from Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 467 home to their families December 6th.

According to Sgt. Ross P. Hodish, a native of Ft. Lauderdale, FL, and the embarkation chief for HMLA-467 while deployed, the Marines spent more than seven months at Camps Leatherneck and Bastion in Helmand Province.

Since November 2008, Marines called Leatherneck and Bastion home, but with the final combat troops departing Helmand Province, it was up to the few Marines who remained to hand the camps over to the Afghan National Army.

While United States ground forces trained the Afghans, HMLA-467 took pride in being their eyes in the sky, according to Sgt. Jeremiah P. Hammond, a native of Chillicothe, OH, and a UH-1Y Venom crew chief with the squadron.

"Our job while out there was to support the ground troops still operating in the area," said Hammond. "Our missions covered everything from patrolling the immediate areas around the base to providing armed escorts for convoys."

Along with providing close air support, the main mission for the Marines was to ensure the functionality of 14 aircraft before returning to the states, according to Hodish.

"As soon as we landed there, we went to work getting 'eye's on' everything that needed to come back, then started the prep for retrograde," said Hodish.

For most of the Marines, return home was their favorite part of the entire deployment.

"It feels outstanding to be back," said Hodish. "I cannot wait to just have the opportunity to relax and see my family again."



From the Front

By Cpl. J. R. Heins, II Marine Expeditionary Force
December 9, 2014...

2nd MAW Closes a Chapter in History



The final nine Marines representing the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing's involvement in Afghanistan walk down the flight line at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, NC, December 6, 2014. The Marines belong to Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 467 stationed at Marine Corps Air Station, New River, NC, and served more than seven months in Afghanistan.

By Dave Majumdar, *The National Interest*
January 8, 2015...

The U.S. Marines' 5 Most Lethal Weapons of War

THE U.S. MARINE CORPS prides itself on being America's 911 force – a fire brigade that the President can call upon to fight an emergency. Here is why.

Though the Marines have largely been treated as a de facto second land army over the past dozen years, the service is an integral component of the Department of the Navy and is primarily a maritime force. Therefore, the Marines - as a specialized amphibious force - argue that they need unique hardware to conduct their unique missions. While the service has many different types of weapons, here is a selection of their five key systems:

Marine Rifleman:

While not a “weapon system” in the traditional sense of the word, the Marine Corps warrior ethos and superb training make the service what it is. Every single Marine, from the lowest private to the Commandant himself, is trained first and foremost as an infantryman.

Even the Marines' naval aviators undergo nine months of infantry training as part of Officer Candidate School and the Basic School before they go off to flight school. The shared experience of fighting alongside Marines on the ground gives the service a level of cohesion that the other branches lack. Ultimately, it is the Marine Corps' people that make it arguably the most effective branch of the armed forces.

With the United States theoretically ending combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the service will shrink to a total strength of 182,000 Marines by 2017. But even at that reduced manning level, it will be nearly as large as the entire active British military.

M1A1 Abrams Tank:

While the Marine Corps prides itself on being a strategically mobile medium-weight force, there are times when it needs the brute force of heavy armor. That brute force is provided by the General Dynamics M1A1 Abrams.



While not quite as advanced as the U.S. Army's M1A2 SEPv2, the Marines' M1A1 Firepower Enhancement Package suits the Marine's purposes of supporting the service's infantry. The Abrams is armed with a 120mm cannon and is protected with an armor matrix that incorporates depleted-uranium armor. With a 1,500hp Honeywell gas-turbine engine, it can move at more than 45 miles per hour.

The Marines are not a heavy, mechanized force in the mold of the Army's heavy brigade combat teams. The entire Marine force has only three tank battalions - and the service has just shy of 400 tanks in total, most of which are stored in pre-positioned stocks.

AH-1Z Viper Helicopter:

The Bell AH-1Z Viper is the latest iteration of the Vietnam-era Cobra attack helicopter. While outwardly the AH-1Z looks like its predecessors, it is basically a completely new machine.



The AH-1Z is powered by a pair of 1,800shp General Electric T700 turboshaft engines that is coupled with a new four-bladed composite rotor system that gives the helicopter exceptional agility. It carries a suite of advanced sensors including a Lockheed Martin target sight system and can carry

the Longbow radar system. Like the Army's AH-64E Apache, it can carry sixteen Hellfire missiles, but also adds an air-to-air punch with its ability to fire AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles.

The AH-1Z also shares many common parts with the Marines' Bell UH-1Y Venom version of the UH-1 Huey, which helps with the services logistics. However, on the downside, the Viper and Venom are unique platforms with the Defense Department, and have not been built in huge numbers like the Army's Apache or UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters. That means the Marines have a more difficult time keeping their machines up-to-date with the latest advances - and it costs more.

Boeing AV-8B Harrier II Jet:

The AV-8B Harrier jump-jet affords the Marines' expeditionary units their own organic fixed-wing air support. For the Marines, who can't always afford ready access to heavy artillery, aircraft act as mobile fire support.



While the Harrier is not the best fighter or strike aircraft - until the Lockheed Martin F-35B Joint Strike Fighter becomes operational - it is the only short-takeoff, vertical-landing aircraft that can operate from amphibious assault ships. The subsonic attack aircraft, though perhaps a compromise in many respects, is essential to the Marines' unique concept of operations.

The Harrier will be replaced in favor of the Joint Strike Fighter over the coming years. The service hopes to retire the venerable jet by 2025, reversing an earlier plan to keep the AV-8B in service past 2030. Instead, the Marines will keep their Boeing F/A-18A/B/C/D aircraft until the F-35B replaces those jets also.

LAV (Light Armored Vehicle):

As a highly mobile, medium-weight force, the Marines don't want to be weighted down by heavy

armored vehicles. However, some mechanized forces are necessary.



For the Marines, many of those needs are met by versions of the General Dynamics Light Armored Vehicle series (LAV). A Marine light-armored reconnaissance battalion includes many variants of the LAV, which all have their individual functions, ranging from anti-tank and anti-air to command and control.

Fast and agile, the most common LAV-25 is packed with a 25mm automatic cannon and a pair of 7.62mm machine guns. It can move at speeds exceeding 63 miles an hour.

Marine Corps History

MARINE CORPS SYMBOLS



STEEPED IN HISTORY

, purpose and pride, these symbols represent the Marine Corps' rich war fighting heritage.

Eagle, Globe and Anchor

There is no better symbol for the purpose we serve than the emblem every Marine earns: the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor. The eagle represents the proud nation we defend. It stands at the ready with our coastlines in sight and the entire world within reach of its outstretched wings. The globe represents our worldwide presence. The anchor

points both to the Marine Corps' naval heritage and its ability to access any coastline in the world. Together, the eagle, globe and anchor symbolize our commitment to defend our nation - in the air, on land and at sea.

The eagle, globe and anchor emblem has been part of the Marine uniform since 1868 and became the official emblem of the Marine Corps in 1955.



EGA Enlisted



EGA Officer

Uniforms

Many details of Marine uniforms reflect the proud legacy of warriors who have served our nation for more than two centuries. The Marine Corps Combat Utility Uniform, or cammies, are worn by Marines as their standard uniform in garrison, during training and while deployed overseas. This photo also shows much of the personal protective equipment, weaponry and other gear that a Marine may use.



The Dress Blue uniform is worn in more formal situations.



*Dress Blues
Enlisted*



*Dress Blues
Officer*

Marine Corps Ranks

Marine Corps ranks represent more than the chain of command. Marines constantly strive to achieve, and every success demonstrates commitment to the mission and to fellow Marines. Each successive Marine Corps rank confirms that the men and women who wear it have earned positions of greater leadership and responsibility.

Enlisted Ranks

Starting with the first day of recruit training, recruits are assigned responsibilities designed to develop leadership skills. As Marines begin to earn promotions in the enlisted rank structure, both the demands and their responsibilities increase. These are the grades found in the Marine Corps' enlisted rank structure:

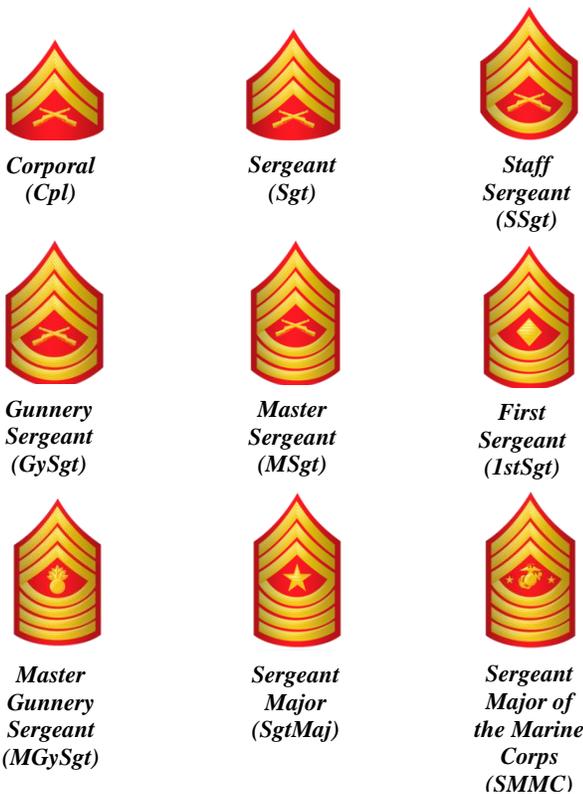


Private



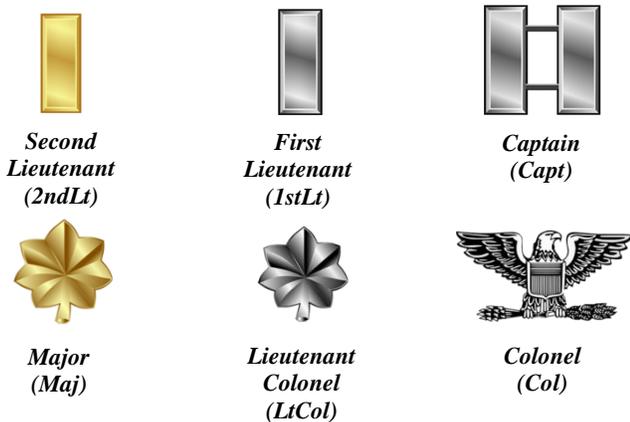
*Private
First Class (PFC)*

*Lance
Corporal (LCpl)*



Officer Ranks

Enlisted Marines look to their Marine Officers for guidance and leadership. These officers are distinguished by their “commission,” a formal document from the President of the United States, conferring the rank and authority of a Marine Corps Officer. These are the grades found in the Marine Officer rank structure:



The Sword

The oldest weapons still in service in the United States Armed Forces belong to Marines. Today, the swords Marines carry represent the Marine Corps’ rich heritage as America’s original defenders. Officers carry the Mameluke Sword, which was originally given to Lieutenant Presley O’Bannon in 1805 by a Mameluke chieftain in North Africa. Lt. O’Bannon and his Marines marched across 600 miles of North African desert to rid the “shores of Tripoli” of pirates and rescue the kidnapped crew of the USS Philadelphia. By 1825, all Marine Officers carried the Mameluke sword in recognition of this historic battle - the Marine Corps’ first on foreign soil.

Adopted in 1859, the NCO Sword is carried by Marine Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) and Staff Noncommissioned Officers (SNCOs). Used for ceremonial purposes, the M1859 NCO Sword was bestowed to NCOs and SNCOs by the 6th Commandant, Colonel John Harris, in recognition of their leadership in combat.



Enlisted Sword



Officer Sword

News from National

Submitted by Randy Rigg
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Michael A Blum, Executive Director MCL
(703) 207-9588
ExecDir@MCLeague.org
December 9, 2014...

Change in Marriott & Hilton Reservation Policy

Convention Chairman PNC John Tuohy has asked that we get this information out to all Detachments.

This is a change in policy for the **Marriott and Hilton Hotel chains.**

This policy change is not limited to our conventions and conferences. It relates to ALL reservations at these two hotel chains.

Currently guests have until 6 p.m. of their

scheduled date of arrival to cancel their reservation without a penalty.

Effective 1 January 2015 cancellations must be made at least 24 hours in advance or a single night's lodging will be charged to the credit card used to make the reservation.

Please see that this gets down to all your Detachments and hopefully gets into Detachment and Department newsletters.



U.S. Marine Corps News

Sgt. Maj. Ronald L. Green Named Top Enlisted Marine

By Jennifer Hlad, *Stars and Stripes*
January 20, 2015...

SAN DIEGO - SGT. MAJ. RONALD L. Green will be the 18th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Marine Commandant Gen. Joseph Dunford announced Tuesday.



*Sgt. Maj.
Ronald L. Green*

Green, the current sergeant major of I Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Pendleton, CA, will assume duties as the senior enlisted leader of the Corps on February 10th in a ceremony at the Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, VA.

“His dynamic leadership is well known throughout the ranks of our Corps,” Dunford said in a written statement. “His wide range of experience in both peacetime and combat, and his record of performance, make him extraordinarily well-qualified to serve as our senior enlisted leader.”

Green enlisted November 27, 1983, and after completing recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, SC, was assigned as a cannon cocker with Hotel Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marines, according to his official biography.

Green served as a drill instructor at Parris Island from 1990 to 1992, and was selected to the rank of sergeant major in December 2004. He has deployed to South America and Iraq, and previously served as force sergeant major for Marine Corps Forces Europe and Marine Corps Forces Africa.

“It truly is an honor to be selected as the 18th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps,” Green said in a written statement. “I look forward to serving as the Marine Corps’ senior enlisted advisor and serving our Marines, sailors and their families.”



Sgt. Maj. Ronald L. Green speaks with Marines participating in Exercise Desert Scimitar at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, CA, on May 3, 2013.



Southern Division Conference

River Valley Inn & Suites
5103 Towson Ave. • Ft. Smith, AR 72901
(479) 646-2931 • **March 20th – 21st, 2015**



Marine South Expo

Marine Corps Base • Camp Lejeune, NC
April 22nd – 23rd, 2015

Upcoming Events



Department of Texas State Convention

Holiday Inn Downtown-Market Square
318 Cesar E. Chavez Blvd. • San Antonio, TX 78204
(210) 225-3211 • **June 25th – 28th, 2015**



National Mid-Winter Conference

Fairview Park Marriott
311 Fairview Park Dr. • Falls Church, VA 22042
(703) 849-9400 • **February 12th – 14th, 2015**



National Convention

Scottsdale Plaza Resort
7200 N. Scottsdale Rd. • Scottsdale, AZ 85253
(SOLD OUT)
Alternate: Scottsdale Resort & Conference Center
(800) 540-0727
August 8th – 15th, 2015



Modern Day Marine
 Marine Corps Base • Quantico, VA
September 22nd – 24th, 2015



Department of Texas
Fall Staff Meeting
 Crowley / Ft. Worth
October 2015
Details To Be Determined

DEADLINE



for
Texas Marine
Spring Edition
 will be
April 15th

Please submit articles/
 photos to
 Bernie & Juanita O'Dell
 at 515 Hall St.,
 Graham, TX 76450
 or
juanita.odell@texasmcl.org



DEADLINES FOR STATE CONVENTION AWARDS



AMERICANISM SCRAPBOOKS



Juanita O'Dell, Americanism Chairman
 (940) 549-3944 (H)
juanita.odell@texasmcl.org

Detachment Americanism scrap-
 books should be turned in at the
 MCL Registration Desk

NO LATER THAN
NOON ON FRIDAY,
JUNE 26TH!, at the Convention.

Books should include all activities (*from June 1st through May 31st ONLY*) that the Detachment participated in or supported to further patriotism in their local, state, or national communities.

The "Americanism Questionnaire Criteria" form (**that must be in the front of the scrapbook and signed by the Detachment Commandant AND Detachment Americanism Chairman**), the "Coversheets" (**that must appear in front of each section**), as well as the instruction sheet can be downloaded from the Department web site.

Any questions can be directed to me via phone or e-mail.



CAM POSEY SCHOLARSHIPS

Helen F. Hicks, Chairman
 Cam Posey Scholarship Cmte.
 (972) 272-6384 (H)
helen.hicks@texasmcl.org



MAY 1ST

is the **DEADLINE** for applications for the Cam

Posey Scholarships to **be in the hands of the committee chairman.**

Applications are available on the Department web site. They must be filled out completely (**by hand**) and must be accompanied with all relevant documentation.

Please mail the completed applications to Helen at 600 Freeman Dr., Garland, TX 75040-7759.



DETACHMENT ACTIVITY REPORTS



Charles Ynman, Chairman
Awards & Activities Committee
(361) 852-3900 (H)
charles.ynman@texasmcl.org

APRIL 30TH

is the **DEADLINE** for submission of your Activity Reports. Mail those to me at 12442 Briar Forest Dr., Houston, TX 77077 or e-mail them to me at charles.ynman@texasmcl.org.



MARINE OF THE YEAR

Bernie O'Dell, Chairman
Marine of the Year Society
(940) 549-3944 (H)
bernie.odell@texasmcl.org



Texas MCL members are reminded that nominations for Department Marine of the Year **must be received no later than**

MAY 1ST.

There are many Marines within the Department who should be nominated for the award, and it is an honor to every individual nominated that they are so well regarded. Although only one nominee will be selected for the MOY award, all those who are nominated will be recognized at the awards ceremony.

Letters of nomination may be submitted to any member of the Society or sent directly to the

Marine of the Year Chairman, Bernie O'Dell, at 515 Hall St., Graham, TX 76450.



PACK DOG OF THE YEAR



George Simpson, Pack Leader
(254) 666-4081 (H)
george.simpson@texasmcl.org

Nominations for Pack Dog of the Year should be sent to George Simpson by

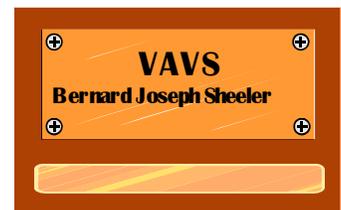
MAY 1ST.

They can be mailed to 11474 Chapel Rd., Lorena, TX 76655 or emailed to George at george.simpson@texasmcl.org.



VAVS BERNARD JOSEPH SHEELER AWARD

George Simpson,
Chairman
VAVS Committee
(254) 666-4081 (H)
george.simpson@texasmcl.org



The Bernard Joseph Sheeler Award was created in the year 2000 to recognize our members for their devotion to our veterans. The deadline for nominations in the form of a letter need to be sent in no later than

APRIL 30TH

to George Simpson, VAVS Committee Chairman, to 11474 Chapel Rd., Lorena, TX 76655.

LEAGUE MEMBERS:

Please submit the required documentation for those deserving Detachments & individuals, and GOOD LUCK to all!

