



Post 20 Blood Drive, p.7



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MONUMENT CONFLICT RESOLVED

PALO ALTO HISTORIC RESOURCES STUDY SESSION ENDS WITH ALL SIDES AGREEING TO PURSUE A COLLABORATIVE PATH FORWARD FOR MEMORIAL FLAGPOLE'S RESTORATION

By Christian Southards
Staff Writer

On April 13, Palo Alto's Historic Resources Board heard presentations from both California American Legion Post 375 and Stanford University regarding

damage to the Memorial Flagpole outside the Julia Morgan-designed Veterans Memorial Building.

At the invitation of Post 375, The California Legionnaire attended the meeting virtually while Department Commander Jere Romano attended the study session in person.

BACKGROUND: PALO ALTO'S MEMORIAL FLAGPOLE WAS DAMAGED IN 2020

Over two years ago, alleged copper thieves damaged the base of the Memorial Flagpole, sparking Stanford University officials to remove four plaques commemorating Veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic — Union soldiers who served during the American Civil War — as well as the Native Sons of the Golden West,



The Hostess House as it was prior to the Memorial Flagpole's installation. The flagpole seen here was donated by The American Legion sometime after World War I and before 1930. (Photo: Palo Alto Historical Association)

California Pioneers with a controversial history. The plaques were then stored in a secure location on Stanford's campus while a protective barrier was

constructed around the flagpole's base to protect it from further damage.

Throughout this period, Post 375 has advocated for

the Memorial Flagpole's restoration, culminating in Thursday's Historic Resources Board, or HRB, study session.

See **FLAGPOLE** page 4

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West Los Angeles VA Opens New Permanent Housing Units with Supportive Services for At-Risk Veterans, More Complexes Planned

By Christian Southards
Staff Writer

On Feb. 28, the first of more than 20 permanent housing complexes on

the VA's West Los Angeles Campus opened its doors to at-risk veterans.

Additionally, the complex hosts both onsite management, intended to maintain a safe environment, and a supportive services case worker to help veterans stay off the streets and connect with VA benefits.

According to an email newsletter from The Veterans Collective, an

See **PERMANENT HOUSING** page 5



Officially designated Building 207, the complex was renovated by The Veterans Collective, a partnership between Thomas Safran & Associates, Century Housing, and U.S.VETS. The complex hosts 59 fully-furnished units, along with basic amenities and several common

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DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA**

1601 7th St., Sanger, CA 93657-2801

☎ 559-875-8387 ✉ admin@caLegion.org

— LEADERSHIP —

Department Commander Jere Romano commander@caLegion.org	Department Adjutant Sam Flores adjutant@caLegion.org
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— PRINT & DIGITAL —

Sr. Editor / Web Team Lead Jared Morgan editor@caLegion.org 310-750-9782	Web Team Founder Rick Pushies
Staff Writer / Email Newsletter Editor Christian Southards	Social Media Manager Lillian Moss facebook.com/caLegion
Communications Coordinator / Page Designer Makenna Uriarte	Photographer Fred Shacklett

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Honoring Women Veterans

By Nestor Aliga
Post 603

On March 18, the Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum and The American Legion Manuel L. Quezon Post 603 collaborated for the "Honoring

Our Women Veterans and Servicemembers" ceremony to commemorate Women's Military History Week (3rd week of March). Federal, state, county, and city personalized certificates of appreciation were

prepared for over 100 women.

The Travis Air Force Base Honor Guard and Band of the Golden West professionally supported the event.



Speakers of the ceremony included (from left to right): Xochitl Murillo - CalVet Deputy Secretary for Minority and Underrepresented Veterans; Lourdes Tiglao - Director, Center for Women Veterans, U.S. Veterans Affairs; CA Assemblymember Lori Wilson - author of 2022 ACR-205 and 2023 ACR-30 which respectively designate June 12 as Women Veterans Recognition Day and March 13-19 as Women's Military History Week; Vallejo Vice-Mayor Rozzana Verder-Aliga; and Delphine Metcalf-Foster - Disabled American Veterans 2017-18 National Commander, native of Vallejo, and which the Mare Island VA Clinic will be named after if H.R.251 passes.

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THE AMERICAN LEGION UNIFORM

By Larry Leonardo, Sr.
Alternate NEC, Past Dept.
Commander, Past Dept.
Sgt. at Arms

The official American Legion uniform has evolved over the years from the military style blouse coat with Sam Brown Belt to the current Dark Blue Blazer and grey colored slacks, however, the one item that has not changed is the official American Legion cap, the true recognized “uniform of the American Legion”. There is proper etiquette in the wearing of the “official uniform”.

Pins showing your military rank should be avoided as “there is no rank among us”. Civic and Fraternal organization pins or patches are prohibited, as well.

The question always arises; when can I wear my American Legion Cap?

You can wear your Legion Cap at any Legion function, events where you represent the American Legion and your Post, and you are a guest at a civic

function, but be aware that wearing the cap any place, such as political rallies, protests, and other controversial places that bring discredit to the American Legion is strictly forbidden.

You don't wear your cap during a meal (males only). Even though the established etiquette states that your cap is not to be worn during an official Legion or civic dinner or luncheon, social norms have been to uncover whenever eating.

The garrison cap is the “Official Cap” of the American Legion, not a ball cap with American Legion written on it or adorned with an American Legion emblem. (American Legion Riders beret with the ALR emblem is part of the official ALR uniform).

As stated in the 2023 Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies, the cap should NOT be worn in a place of worship, with the exception of the guard of honor, color guard, and commander of the same while in marching order or

standing guard. When one is seated, the cap should be removed unless your religion dictates otherwise or you are a female that has the option to wear her cover or remove it.

Posts marching in formation into a place of worship should uncover at the door, hold the cap with the right hand over the heart until arriving in the pews and commanded to take seats, and remain uncovered during the entire service.

At the close of the service, upon command, the post shall rise, hold the cap with right hand over the hearts, march out of the place of worship, and recover after marching through the door. Note: During funeral services, the cap should be held over the heart as one approaches the casket, and is not at any time worn in a place of worship except by the guard of honor, color guard, or commander of same while in marching order or standing guard.

Legionnaires not in formation will uncover upon entering the place of worship, remain uncovered

during the entire service, and re-cover after leaving the place of worship. At the graveside, the cap should be held in the right hand over the heart during the entire service. In cold and inclement weather, the cap should not be doffed.

In meetings, the cap should be worn except during the Pledge of Allegiance, prayer, and while standing in silent reverence in memory of departed comrades, when it should be held with the right hand over the heart. A Legionnaire wearing a cap should behave in proper accordance as to salutes, etc., the same as if wearing a military uniform. If not wearing a cap, observe ordinary rules of etiquette for civilian dress.

Female Legionnaires should wear their caps in the manner prescribed for women in the armed forces. This is suitable for most situations, but taste and common sense should prevail. By American Legion tradition, a female Legionnaire may leave her cap on during the Pledge of Allegiance, the national



anthem, prayer, and meals. Legionnaires wishing to attach decorations and/or other official insignia to their caps are advised of National Executive Committee Resolution No. 58, adopted by the National Executive Committee, April 30 – May 1, 1964 resolution on the subject.

Show your Legion Pride; wear your uniform properly, with knowledge, pride, and respect.

California Veteran Giovanni Roman, who was Injured by Russian Forces while Volunteering in Ukraine, has Returned Home

By Christian Southards
Staff Writer

After a successful crowd-funding campaign, Marine veteran Giovanni Roman has safely returned to the United States for further medical treatment.

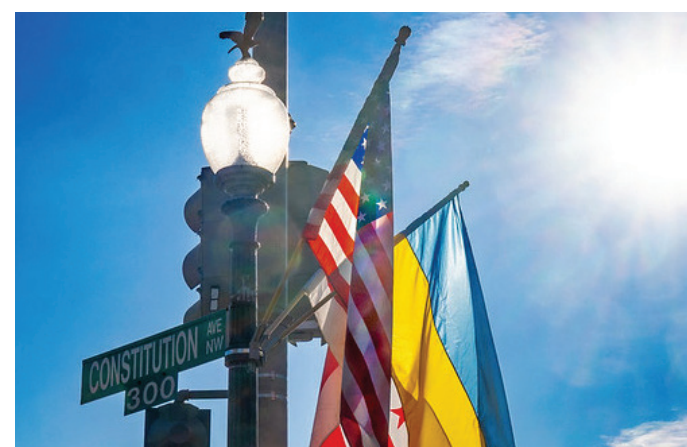
Per Stars and Stripes, 28-year-old California veteran Giovanni Roman, who was volunteering as a combat medic in Ukraine, has been severely injured by Russian Forces.

Roman, a Marine and Navy veteran, first joined the Ukrainian war effort in summer 2022 before returning to the United States. In December, Roman rejoined Ukrainian forces until early February, when his Humvee was allegedly struck by a Russian-held RPG. Roman suffered significant injuries, including losing his right eye as well as a traumatic brain injury.

Per the report, Roman is currently receiving limited

medical care somewhere in Ukraine. Russia's consistent targeting of civilian infrastructure, particularly along the eastern front where most of the fighting has occurred over the past few months, has severely limited Ukraine and allied forces' ability to offer medical care.

Roman is part of a growing number of American veterans and civilians who have joined the fight against Russia in combat or humanitarian roles.



Veterans nonprofit VETRAN estimates that hundreds of American veterans have traveled to Ukraine and Poland since the war began almost exactly one year ago. However, the exact numbers and roles of U.S. veterans volunteers are kept confidential by the Ukrainian government and military.

It's unclear if the United States keeps tabs on Americans traveling to Ukraine. Per U.S. policy, the U.S. State Department actively discourages Americans from joining Ukraine's war effort as the United States is unable to offer assistance.

Memorial Flagpole's Restoration

From FLAGPOLE page 1

CALIFORNIA AMERICAN LEGION POST 375'S CASE

Post 375's case was presented by retired Col. and Post 375's First Vice Commander Raymond Powell, who highlighted The American Legion's long-standing relationship with the Memorial Flagpole.

Per First Vice Commander Powell, Post 375 has been responsible for maintaining the flagpole since 1930, when the Memorial Flagpole was first moved to the grounds of the Veterans Memorial Building. Since the erection of the protective barrier, however, maintaining the flagpole has become "challenging" to the point that assistance from the Palo Alto Fire Department has been required.

Powell went on to demonstrate the Veterans Memorial Building's historical significance, particularly in light of a proposed 2021 plan that would replace the structure and its grounds with a housing development. Powell then noted that the Veterans Memorial Building, which is also known as the Hostess House, was, according to the City of Palo Alto, the first community house in the United States. Prior to its use by The American Legion and other local veterans groups, the building was part of Camp Fremont during World War I.

After the war, the property was to be used as a public space, and as such, Post 375 has regularly held its meetings at the Veterans Memorial Building since.

In his closing statement, First Vice Commander Powell said, "as a Veteran in Palo Alto, the Veterans

across the country are in a very different state than we were 100 years ago... obviously, we no longer have a draft so there are fewer Veterans. In Northern California, a lot of the bases were closed so there are fewer veterans here. And it is very important to those Veterans who remain that we have some sense of belonging and community and integrity about us, and that the community continues to value us... to see our final monuments here in Palo Alto disappear would be very heartbreaking to the Veterans of Palo Alto."

STANFORD UNIVERSITY PLEDGES TO RESTORE THE MEMORIAL FLAGPOLE WITH INPUT FROM POST 375 AND PALO ALTO'S HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD

Stanford University's case was presented by University Architect, Executive Director of Heritage Service, and Palo Alto native Dr. Laura Jones.

Stanford's case hit many of the same notes that Post 375's presentation highlighted, while also claiming that throughout the two-year period, "Stanford has acted in good faith to protect the flagpole. And we honor and respect the contributions of American Legion Post 375 in the care of the flags at the site."

While Dr. Jones lauded the "patriotism, honor and service" of the Veterans plaque and Memorial Flagpole, she also suggested that a "reconsideration of plaques that honor the Native Sons of the Golden West" be in order.

CONTROVERSY SURROUNDS THE NATIVE SONS OF THE GOLDEN WEST PLAQUES

The Native Sons of the Golden West played a large role in establishing California as it is today, but the group also perpetuated harsh discriminatory practices against Asian and Mexican immigrants. Most notably, a former Grand President of the organization once stated that "California was given by God to a white people, and with God's strength we want to keep it as he gave it to us."

The group actively advocated against minority groups in California through the early 20th century, including an attempt to disenfranchise Japanese-American citizens during World War II.

Nevertheless, when The California Legionnaire reached out to Dr. Jones for comment, she reaffirmed Stanford's support for restoring the Memorial Flagpole, noting that "I think everyone accepts that the Native Sons' political activities promoted discrimination. Now that we're aware of it, we need to somehow address the controversy. There will be more than one way to do that, and we just need to come together on a creative solution. Stanford is committed to working that out with the Legion post and [the city of Palo Alto]."

The Native Sons of the Golden West plaques were not mentioned in Post 375's presentation, which instead focused on restoring the flagpole itself.

The HRB, however, appeared divided. Some board members suggested that the Native Sons' plaques be restored and used as a teaching moment. Others either suggested that the pioneer group's continued involvement only invited further vandalism or should be



taken down in light of the organization's past.

A "COLLABORATIVE CONVERSATION" GOING FORWARD

Ultimately, Dr. Jones noted that the historical property represents the "shared heritage of Stanford, Palo Alto, and our Veterans' community, and it's important to us to address these choices in a collaborative conversation."

PALO ALTO MAYOR LYDIA KOU ENCOURAGES THE HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE WITH FOLLOW-UP ACTION

Once both presentations concluded, Palo Alto Mayor Lydia Kou asked the HRB to transition the issue from a study issue to an "action item," requesting that the board follow up with Stanford to ensure restoration efforts remain a priority.

After the session, The California Legionnaire reached out to Mayor Kou, who commented, "urban and population growth should not erase and eliminate buildings and places of historical significance. The Julia Morgan Veterans Memorial Building is an important piece of history and is tied to the Memorial Flagpole, which was dedicated to commemorating Veterans."

Reviewing the report Post 375 provided, the photo of the original flagpole was quite substantive. It would appear when the flag was flown, it can probably be seen from quite far, from the bay to the mountains."

The California Legionnaire also received a response from First Vice Commander Raymond Powell, who said, "the presentation and meeting went extremely well." Both Post 375 and Dr. Jones agreed that more discussions will need to take place to find a suitable solution.



Anniversary of the U.S. Victory at the Battle of Guadalcanal

By **Christian Southards**
Staff Writer

Part of the Solomon Islands Campaign, the Battle of Guadalcanal was a major turning point in the war against Imperial Japan in the Pacific theater of World War II. It ended Japan's outward expansion and allowed the Allies to gain a foothold in the Pacific, eventually leading to victory over Japan.

PRELUDE TO THE BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL

After Imperial Japan's surprise Attack on Pearl Harbor in late 1941, the United States struggled to protect its assets in the Pacific. Japan continued to conquer territories of strategic or economic importance through the first half of 1942, but a string of U.S. and Allied victories in summer and early fall sapped the Axis power's momentum.

First, the Battle of the Coral Sea — a decided stalemate at the time — significantly hampered Japan's aircraft carrier fleet. Any chance of Japan evening the score decisively failed after the Allies struck a critical blow against Japan's fleet at the Battle of Midway. Forced on the defensive, Japan tried to solidify its holdings in the South Pacific

with new airbases and entrenched troops.

Allied intelligence discovered that Japan had begun building on such base in the southern Solomon Islands, important because they were within striking distance of crucial Allied supply lines and bases. Seizing the momentum, the U.S. elected to capture the islands so the proposed airfields could instead be used against the Japanese.

AUG. 7, 1942 – FEB. 9, 1943: THE BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL RAGES BY AIR, LAND, AND SEA

U.S. Marines landed and captured Japan's major airfield on Guadalcanal within 36 hours, surprising the Japanese defenders. However, this success would be short-lived, Japan's counterstrike decimated the Allied naval presence, leading to a back-and-forth naval stalemate for the next two months. Significant casualties occurred on both sides, especially for the Allies whose only major advantage was the ability to quickly replenish ships and supplies.

Meanwhile, the ground battle, though severe, never fell out of favor for the Marines. The toughest fighting occurred in mid-October when a

sizable Japanese force was repelled, and the Marines were able to start pushing toward the northern end of the islands.

By late January, Japanese forces were forced to flee the southern Solomon Islands.

LEGACY OF THE BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL

The ground battle at Guadalcanal would prove to be a major success for Allied forces while the naval theater demonstrated the Allied navies' ability to better adapt, replace, and replenish their forces.

Exact casualty numbers among U.S. troops remain unclear as more died from tropical diseases than enemy fire. However, the number is estimated to be roughly 7,100 dead and another 7,900 wounded.

Japanese casualties were far more severe. Of the 36,200 men deployed to the southern Solomon Islands, it's estimated that only 12,000 survived, a preview of the harsh defeats Japan would suffer in subsequent campaigns.

Ultimately, victory at Guadalcanal served to boost American morale while beginning a long trend of retaking territory formerly occupied by Imperial Japan.



Post 550 Donates \$2000 to RTSC

By **Nestor Aliga**
Post 603

From left, WWII & Korean War Veteran E. Paul Ball and Vietnam War Veteran George Fuller of The American Legion Mare Island Navy Yard Post 550 are all smiles as they present a \$2,000 check to www.RebuildingTogetherSolano.org

[noCounty.org](http://www.noCounty.org) Executive Director Elizabeth Hoffman and volunteers. The much-needed donation will help pay for RTSC's ongoing Food Pantry program for home-bound and disabled Veterans and for their Veteran Home Rehabilitation program - which offers FREE home repairs to low-income Veterans.

Permanent Housing for At-Risk Veterans

From **PERMANENT HOUSING** page 1

unspecified number of veterans over the age of 62 are already moving into the units through a process being developed with the VA.

In addition to Building 207, The Veterans Collective has broken ground on three more complexes, which are expected to include an additional 268 low-income units. Construction on a further 112 units is set to begin in May. In total, the VA and its partners have plans to build close to 1,700 units on the West Los Angeles campus. Once complete, the campus will be able to house as many as 3,000

veterans and their families.

Financing for the housing project comes from multiple sources, both private and public. While the former includes unnamed philanthropic interests, the latter includes funding from the VA itself, the public housing fund, and tax revenue.

To date, it's unclear when all units will be completed, but construction is anticipated to last through the decade. Overall, the project is part of the VA's goals to eliminate veterans homelessness by first focusing its efforts on Los Angeles, widely seen as the epicenter of the issue in the United States.



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CAPITOL ADVOCACY DAY



By Nestor Aliga
Post 603

On April 19, The American Legion Department of California successfully hosted its Annual Legislative Day in Sacramento at the March Fong Eu Secretary of State Building.

About four dozen Legionnaires from all over our great state gathered to receive briefings from our Department Legislative Commission as well as from several prominent elected and appointed officials, then they visited the offices of 40 Senators and 80 Assembly members to campaign for our legislative priorities.



Left: Legionnaires with SEN Bob Archuleta, Chair of Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Below: Legionnaires with ASM Esmeralda Soria, Chair of Assembly Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.



Legionnaires with CalVet Deputy Secretary Xochitl Murillo.





Post 20 Blood Drive

By Michael Cassel Smith
State Director of The American Legion Riders and Past Post 20 Commander

Post 20 has been hosting a Blood Drive for the Central California Blood Center since October 2021. Prior to hosting their first Blood Drive, Post 20 sponsored a local Boy Scout who was working on his Eagle Scout project.

During the June 2021 Flag Day Ceremony, in Porterville, then Post 20 Commander Michael Smith was approached by the Boy Scout and his

mother, who proposed his Eagle Scout Project. Prior to meeting with the Boy Scout and his mother, Commander Smith had been in the planning phase of bringing a blood drive to Porterville as the Central California Blood Center had closed their local officer several years back.

Meeting this Boy Scout was the perfect opportunity for Post 20 to help him out with his project and support the Boy Scouts of America. Between June 2021 and the time of the blood drive in August 2021, the Boy Scout

remained in contact with Post 20 members. On the day of the blood drive, the Central California Blood Center brought their mobile unit to collect blood. Despite being in the midst of the pandemic and having a limited number of chairs for donors to sit in, 38 units were collected from members of the community and Post 20.

A short 8 weeks later, in October 2021, Post 20 marked its first blood drive with the Central California Blood Center. This blood drive has been held every 8 weeks since. Community members and Post 20

members alike come to donate blood at the Veterans Memorial Building, in Porterville. Since beginning their blood drive, Post 20 has seen 219 units (pints) donated as of their last blood drive in March 2023.

A few of the goals in starting this blood drive was to 1; strengthen the American Legions ties to the community and 2; provide a place to donate blood on a regular basis. An unexpected result, even though it cannot be conclusively proven, was a noted increase of blood drives held by other

organizations in the Porterville community.

According to givingblood.org, one pint of blood can save up to 3 lives. The Eagle Scout project and regular scheduled Post 20 blood drive has been donated 257 units. This equates into a potential of 771 lives saved.

As of the writing of this article, Post 20 is looking into hosting a blood drive every 4 weeks to accommodate more blood donors.



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SUICIDE SURVIVOR EXTOLS BE THE ONE MESSAGE

By Henry Howard
Legion.org

Jeffrey Freeman shared his story of surviving a suicide attempt for the first time to a live audience.

“This is a topic that is very near and dear to my heart,” said Freeman, an Air Force veteran and member of American Legion Post 190 in Ripon, Calif. Freeman, who had previously shared his story on The American Legion Tango Alpha Lima podcast, relayed how a back injury, subsequent fibromyalgia and inability to work led him down a spiral.

“I can say the Legion saved my life,” Freeman said during a presentation at a Veterans Campaign Awareness event Feb. 18 in Merced, Calif. “It was 10 years ago next month when I attempted suicide. And in the process of my recovery, I joined the Legion and that’s what

gave me what I needed in the past 10 years. It gave me purpose. It gave me a mission. Be the One is a fantastic campaign because anyone can ‘Be the One.’”

The American Legion is highlighting the initiative, which aims to reduce the rate of veteran suicide by raising awareness and destigmatizing mental health treatment. Freeman’s presentation played a prominent role in the Feb. 17-19 event at American Legion Post 83 in Merced, Calif. The beefed-up revitalization connected veterans with service officers, raised awareness about suicide prevention and more.

Freeman, the California Area 3 vice commander, is the architect of the event. He drew a parallel between his mission and that of Be the One.

“If I can save the life of one veteran with my story,

then I’ve accomplished my goal,” he explained. “By telling my story I can get veterans to realize the stigma of mental health treatment is not true. Asking for mental health treatment is not a weakness, it is a strength. If I can get anyone understanding that and getting help, then I have accomplished my goal.”

American Legion Department Chaplain Dave Whalen also spoke about Be the One.

“That’s what we need,” he said, referring to Freeman. “People talking about their experience and educating our comrades. I’m going to talk with you about a topic that is near and dear to my heart, veteran suicide.”

Whalen said that in order to make Be the One successful, it takes an entire organizational effort. Posts, districts and departments are encouraged to conduct

events to raise awareness.

“The American Legion says, ‘enough talk,’” Whalen told the audience. “It’s time to put boots on the ground. Be the One has been created to start saving veterans’ lives. How is The American Legion going to achieve this? By making it OK for veterans to ask for help with mental health issues.”

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Posts, districts and departments have conducted Buddy Checks, hosted educational symposiums and pushed out the Be the One message in other ways. There are promotional resources available at the Be the One webpage to assist in these events.

Among them:

- Brochures: There are two trifolds available. One introduces Be the One and can be used to promote an event in your community.

The second one, which is intentionally half blank, is intended for posts to customize with local resources and distribute to veterans in their community.

- Videos: There are videos available on the Legion’s YouTube playlist. You can also access the Vimeo channel, download videos and play them on a mobile device without WiFi.

- Sample press release: A template for a press release to promote your event. Download the Word document, update it with your specific event information, and distribute it local media, community partners and others.

- Wallet cards: A collection of printable business-card sized with Be the One branding and QR codes. They can be used as single-sided cards, combined for double-sided cards, or added to the back side of a personal business card.

LEGIONNAIRE, FILMMAKER DOCUMENTS FIRST AVIATION MECHANIC

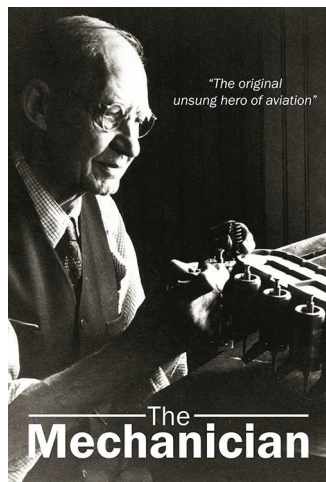
By **Kevin Burns**
Aeronautics & Aerospace
Commission Chairman

Joshua Lang, member of the Ronald Reagan Pacific Palisades Post 283, was influenced by stories of his grandfather Oscar, who used to work at Travis Air Force Base as a flying mechanic; a crew chief who would do all the maintenance test flights. Sadly, his grandfather was taken by cancer when Josh was only 2 years old.

In 2000, Joshua joined the Army and was a Longbow Apache attack helicopter mechanic in the 6th Cav for six years. His first unit was based in Germany and involved in the invasion of Iraq in 2003. While he was serving in Afghanistan, he was inspired to take his two passions at the time, which was photography and theater, and to go investigate the possibility of a career in film.

Ten years later, he has the skills and the tools to start his passion project, a documentary titled 'Apache Warrior' (2017) about his unit during the opening hours of the Iraq war, he says it was really a tribute to all those pilots that flew on that mission and as well as all that flew in the aircraft. But then that's almost always the case, movies are about pilots in aircraft on a mission, they don't make movies or write books about mechanics. He thought it was about time for a film for all the hard-working folk that kept those machines in the air, like he did and his grandfather before him.

In 2019, he stumbled upon the Portal of the Folded Wings, shrine to early aviation pioneers. And there under the massive dome is the final resting place of the grandfather of all aviation mechanics. Joshua did



some further research and found a book called Charlie Taylor 1868 to 1956 the Wright Brothers Mechanician, written by Howard R. DuFour, a retired model maker that was a veteran of the Manhattan project. Soon after this discovery, Joshua traveled to Dayton, Ohio to learn more.

Joshua screened the aviation war doc to the Huffman Prairie Historical Society, where he was introduced to the Wright and Taylor families and some of the people who helped DuFour write the book. Over the following nine months he produced a 12-minute short film that explained a brief history of Charles E. Taylor. Joshua has interviewed over twenty aviation historians, mechanics, pilots, and descendants, however, production slowed down when the pandemic hit in 2020. At the time, he was on his way to see Charlie Taylor's work station at the Henry Ford museum in Dearborn Michigan, when the whole state went into lockdown. Since then, he has been able to continue to research and edit together the film in part, thanks to a generous grant from the Aero Club of Southern California.

Charles E. Taylor has been called "the man aviation history almost forgot." When the Wright brothers went to work building the airframe for the first

powered aircraft, Taylor using only the simple tools he had in the shop – a drill press, lathe, and assorted hand tools – went to work designing and constructing a 180-lb., 12-horsepower engine that was used in the Wright Flyer at Kitty Hawk. Joshua Lang explained, "I'm just trying to find these fine threads of a man that preferred to be in the background and weave this elegant tapestry of his life, and his effect on aviation."

Joshua Lang explained that Charlie Taylor's story is very powerful for the American aviation community, from working with the Boys to helping with the Vin Fiz Flyer which was an early Wright Brothers pusher biplane, that in 1911 became the first aircraft to fly coast-to-coast across the United States, from Long Island New York to Long Beach, California. That is an amazing story and it plays a good part. Joshua says, "I'd like to do that as a movie; telling you about the Vin Fiz and the harrowing and crazy cross country flight."

Joshua Lang said, "I think that's important to be able to give those aviation pioneers recognition and I am very proud to be able to share this history with aviation maintenance technicians at the over 17,000 airports speckled all over the globe. I really feel the personal connection to the story and I hope I am able to put together a film that lives up to the legends of Charles E. Taylor and the industry he pioneered."

Lang would like to thank the Aero Club of Southern California for the editing grant to get the film to an inspirational rough cut. Check out the videos at: <https://www.mechanicaldragons.com/work#/the-mechanician-2022/>

Activities Report: Medellín, Colombia

By **Amado C. Salinas, II**
National Legislative Council Liaison, Area 5 Judge Advocate

I was asked to be the keynote speaker for an Annual Veterans Morning Symposium.

Although we have quite a number of veterans that live in Latin Americas, we have very few posts in Mexico, Panama, Ecuador, and Medellín, Colombia.

I met with the CEO & CFO of "HCA Global" (two brothers: CEO Dr. Rafael Melgar and CFO Alejandro Melgar). HCA Global provides medical services in Latin Americas. As a third party provider they have developed the capabilities to tend to our veterans and their dependents via the Foreign Medical Program (FMP). They have also staffed their services with individuals that work with the veteran to help file for ratings and medical services.

A challenge is the veterans and dependents need their DoD ID Card to verify they can get medical coverage via the FMP in these Latin American countries.

A Medical Retired SSGT Esteban Blis has taken the challenge and has secured

DoD Id Cards, and register the veterans and families into the FMP Medical Services Program.

I was able to disseminate information about the various bills, and "PACT Act" and "The Major Richard Star ACT". I addressed a lot of questions during Q&A.

I then proceeded into the "Welcome Home Vietnam War Era Ceremony", and presented about 20 pins and Presidential Proclamations to the Vietnam vets in attendance of the Symposium.

I then challenged them to start up an American Legion Post for Medellín, Colombia.

The two owners of HCA Global also see an opportunity to provide medical services in Mexico for our veterans and their dependents.

So, I put them in contact with the American Legion Banderas Bay Post 12 Commander Jessie Cole Rivera. It looks like we will be visiting Puerto Vallarta again to help move forward on the mental health facility and now include a medical hospital for that region.



Left to Right: Lt. Carlos Miller, Houston Police Department; Dr. Rafael Melgar, HCA Global (CEO); Amado C Salinas, TAL National Legislative Council Department of California; Alejandro Melgar, HCA Global (CFO); veteran; Kevin Collier, SFC 75th Ranger Regiment U.S. Army (RET); Esteban Blis, SSG U.S. Army (RET).

VA UPDATES HOMELESS VETERANS GOALS FOR 2023, LOS ANGELES TO REMAIN FOCAL POINT

By Christian Southards
Staff Writer

On March 15, the VA updated its annual goal for ending and preventing veterans homelessness across the United States.

The Greater Los Angeles Area will remain the focal point of the VA's efforts at least through the remainder of 2023. Last year, the VA placed 1,301 formerly homeless Los Angeles veterans into permanent housing. This year, the VA hopes to find permanent

homes for at least 1,500 veterans. Additionally, the VA hopes to connect at least 1888 unsheltered veterans currently living on Los Angeles streets with veterans support services that can help them build and maintain financial independence and mental well-being.

Numerous accounts, ranging from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority to independent veterans services organizations claim that there are still over 3,000 homeless

veterans in the city. However, some sources have suggested that the counting system the VA relies on is flawed and that the true number of homeless veterans living in Los Angeles is much higher. These claims, however, are difficult to corroborate.

To further combat veterans homelessness in Los Angeles, the VA and its partners have been converting unused portions of the West Los Angeles VA campus into temporary shelters and permanent

housing complexes. In February, the department opened the first of at least 20 planned permanent complexes on the northern section of the campus. Additional structures are set to begin renovations later this spring.

Nationally, the VA helped place over 40,000 — surpassing its goal of 38,000 — formerly homeless veterans into stable, permanent housing while also connecting these veterans with support services in 2022. Furthermore, the VA



is hoping to prevent these veterans from returning to the streets with a growing network of partners. Last year, of the roughly 40,000 veterans the VA helped, about 2,400 became homeless again. However, 86 percent of these veterans were able to find housing again. This year, the VA hopes to increase that safety net to 95 percent.



GAO Questions VA'S Current Methods for Serving Rural Veterans' Mental Health Needs

By Christian Southards
Staff Writer

A Feb. 9 U.S. Government Accountability Office, or GAO, investigation found that rural veterans are significantly less likely to seek

mental health care than their urban counterparts.

While urban veterans have a utilization rate of 79 percent — that is, nearly four in five urban veterans seek mental health care services

when they feel they need them — rural veterans only have a utilization rate of 21 percent.

Moreover, the GAO report notes that the U.S. Department of Veterans

Affairs does not have a mechanism for analyzing rural veterans' utilization of VA mental health care, suggesting the department does not know "which programs effectively reach rural veterans."

To that end, GAO found that common factors affecting rural veterans' ability or willingness to seek mental care include transportation issues, staff shortages, and "demographic differences." These factors are particularly evident in the western half of the United States, including veterans living in California's interior and eastern counties.

The VA agreed in principle with GAO's assessment and recommendation to begin analyzing utilization rates of mental health care programs by rurality in hopes of addressing obstacles or areas that are especially affected by low

utilization rates.

As of yet, the VA has not publicly proposed any policy changes, but the GAO report does indicate that a plan is in place to address this issue.

Readers can find the full GAO report at <https://gao.gov/products/gao-23-105544>



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Anniversary of the U.S.-Led Victory in the Persian Gulf War

By **Christian Southards**
Staff Writer

On Feb. 28, 1991, a coalition force led by the United States liberated Kuwait from Iraqi invaders, defeating one of the world's largest militaries in days and returning the Persian Gulf to a state of relative peace.

PRELUDE TO THE PERSIAN GULF WAR

Mired in debt from the Iraq-Iran War, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein invaded the oil-rich country of Kuwait in mid-to-late 1990, intending to eventually capture assets in Saudi Arabia as well.

AUG. 6–JAN. 17: THE UNITED NATIONS RESPONDS AND OPERATION DESERT SHIELD BEGINS

The United Nations and the United States immediately condemned Iraq's invasion. However, fearing a broadened conflict with global ramifications,

military force was not the first option considered.

With regional and United Nations Security Council support, diplomatic efforts would continue in earnest through Jan. 15, 1991, at which point a coalition force could be dispatched to liberate Kuwait.

Meanwhile, at the request of Saudi Arabia, the United States began staging its forces on the Kuwaiti border to deter Iraq from pressing its invasion further. The move worked,

Hussein's Iraq made some concessions on the diplomatic front, freeing western prisoners, for example, but never moved to retreat from Kuwait.

THE UNITED STATES AND A U.N. COALITION JOIN THE PERSIAN GULF WAR

After Iraqi forces refused to pull out of Kuwait after a Jan. 5 United Nations deadline, the U.S.-led

coalition moved to repel the Iraqi Military by force.

JAN. 17–FEB. 24: OPERATION DESERT STORM BEGINS WITH AN OVERWHELMING AIR CAMPAIGN

Iraq's air force and air defenses proved wholly incapable of competing with the U.S.-led air force. Within a week, virtually all of Iraq's invading air forces had either retreated or been destroyed — assuring air supremacy for allied forces.

Additionally, Iraq's small navy was entirely defeated.

In retaliation, Iraq launched a series of largely unsuccessful SCUD missile attacks against U.S. ally Israel, possibly in hopes of expanding the conflict. At the strong urging of the United States and the United Nations, however, Israel refused to respond militarily and Coalition Forces in Kuwait were

eventually able to destroy Iraq's missile capabilities.

FEB. 24–FEB. 28: OPERATION DESERT SABRE LANDS A DECISIVE DEFEAT ON IRAQI GROUND FORCES

As ineffective as the Iraqi Air Force fared, the country's ground forces performed far worse against the Coalition counterattack.

Deceptive tactics led Iraq to spread its forces thin in both Kuwaiti and Iraqi coastal territories. However, the actual Coalition invasion occurred elsewhere and at a lightning pace. Within 100 hours, 41 Iraqi infantry, mechanized, and armored divisions had been completely wiped out. Significantly more surrendered or fled. Meanwhile, U.S. and Coalition forces suffered comparatively minimal casualties.

In less than four days, Iraq was forced to accept a ceasefire.

LEGACY OF U.S. VICTORY IN THE PERSIAN GULF WAR

While only 147 Americans were killed in action in the Persian Gulf War, considerably more suffered from long-term health effects likely caused by the Iraq Military's destruction of Kuwaiti oil fields. It would take nearly three decades before comprehensive toxic exposure legislation would be passed.

In Iraq, Saddam Hussein remained in power following the war, and the remnants of the Iraqi military were largely allowed to remain intact. Tensions between Iraq, the rest of the Middle East, and the United States would remain high over the next decade, even briefly igniting additional military strikes against Iraqi targets associated with weapons of mass destruction in 1998.

Ultimately, these tensions would culminate in a second Iraq War in 2003.



TWO VETERANS AWARDED NATION'S TOP HONOR

By Kevin Burns
Aeronautics & Aerospace
Commission Chairman

Robert Behnken earned his doctorate at the California Institute of Technology, and served as an Air Force Colonel at Edwards AFB; where after attending the Air Force Test Pilot School he served as the lead Flight Test Engineer for the F-22

Raptor. Douglas Hurley was commissioned in the U.S. Marine Corps as an infantry officer after graduating from Tulane University, and then attended Naval Aviator School. He flew the F-18 with the "Vikings" of Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 225, and did three overseas deployments before

attending Naval Test Pilot School. As a test pilot at Naval Strike Aircraft Test Squadron (VX-23), Colonel Hurley became the first Marine pilot to fly the F/A-18 E/F Super Hornet.

Behnken and Hurley joined NASA in 2000 and were two of the 17 astronauts selected by NASA that year. Both

went to space twice on space shuttle missions, they both married astronauts from their class, and both have a son around the same age. After retirement of the Space Shuttle, the astronauts were teamed together for the first manned flight of the SpaceX Crew Dragon where they spent over two months on the International Space Station expanding the facilities and conducting experiments.

On 31 January 2023, on behalf of President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris awarded former NASA astronauts Douglas Hurley and Robert Behnken the Congressional Space Medal of Honor.

The Space Medal of Honor was authorized by Congress in 1969 to recognize an astronaut who in the performance of duties has distinguished himself or herself by exceptionally meritorious efforts and contributions to the welfare of the nation and humanity.[iv] Of the 30 people who have received the award, the majority of

them were made posthumously to those who died in American spaceflight.

Every time an astronaut goes to space, it is a dangerous assignment as evidenced by the number of astronauts that have perished on flight or training missions. Behnken and Hurley had accepted an especially dangerous assignment in this being the first time that astronauts went to space in an American rocket launching from the United States since the previous space shuttle mission in 2011.

It was also the first crewed test flight for the Commercial Crew Program with a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket carrying the Crew Dragon spacecraft.

If the two astronauts were not concerned with the danger when they were launched into space, their astronaut wives must have had thoughts of the catastrophic explosion of the Crew Dragon test article due to a leaky valve that had happened earlier in the program.

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