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American Legion Post 1758 Newsletter

May 2019

American Legion Post 1758,
<https://al-ny1758.org/>

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HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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Our next meeting will be **Tuesday June 11th, 2019 at 7:00 PM** at the **East Fishkill Old Town Hall, Rte. 52**, next to the Police Station. Please try to attend.

Don't forget to check out our Post web site at <https://al-ny1758.org/>. There is a wealth of information there.

Blue Water Navy

The U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed legislation on May 14th to extend benefits to Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans.

The service members served aboard ships off the Vietnam coastline during the war and were exposed to the toxic chemical Agent Orange. However, until recently, the Blue Water veterans were not eligible for the same disability benefits as those who served inside Vietnam itself.

"It has been a long hard fought battle to secure these benefits," said Rep. Mark Takano (D-California), chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. "In the process, we have let Blue Water Navy veterans and their survivors experience immeasurable pain and grief."

The passed legislation, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, would extend the presumption of exposure to Agent Orange to veterans who served offshore of Vietnam.

The bill passed the house 410 to 0.

"I have never met a man so ignorant that I couldn't learn something from him."

— Galileo Galilei

Special Notice: If you are a veteran in emotional crisis and need help **RIGHT NOW**, call this toll-free number

1-800-273-8255

available 24/7, and tell them you are a veteran. All calls are confidential.

Memorial Day Activities

As usual May is probably our busiest month.

Our Post will be placing flags on local cemeteries on **Saturday May 18th**. We will meet for breakfast at the Falls Diner at 8:30AM then move on to St Denis about 9:30 to start placing flags. Don't forget your screwdriver or other tool to make a pilot hole for the flag.

On Wednesday **May 22th we will be at John Jay High School** at 7:00AM for their Memorial Day Service. On this somber day we do have a good time when we get to interact with the students after the ceremony.

Then on **Saturday the 25th**, we will be distributing poppy's and collecting donations at Stewarts on Lake Walton Road, Flory's North on Route 82, and The Convenient Mart at the intersection of Routes 52 and 82. Hours are 8:00AM until 3:00PM

On **Monday, May 27th** we will be hosting the East Fishkill Memorial Day Parade and ceremony. Please be at the Community Center on Route 82 by 10:30. Our Color Guard may be a little rusty and we'll run through a couple of drills.

Retrieval of the flags from the cemeteries will be at 10:00AM on **June 1st** starting at St. Denis.

On Friday, May 10th, seven members of our post raised the flag at Fishkill Elementary School. Caroline Pogge, an alumnus of the school led the students in the Pledge Of Allegiance. Thanks to Bill Meyer, Don Burns, Dan Oberhauser, Bill Kriebel, Jim Broughton, Caroline Pogge, and Jim Reynolds for representing the post so well.





We anticipate attending another West Point Football game this Fall. Currently we are looking at the **October 5th** game against the Tulane. We had 10 members and 15 guests sign up at our May meeting. The cost is \$40 pp with a dollar of each going toward tailgating. Those signed up are: Call, Burns, Broughton, Ryan, Meyer, Livermore, Ashworth, Graser, and Kriebel. More details such as tailgating are forthcoming.



Good of the Legion:

Bob Logan's name was drawn at our May 14th meeting and he took home \$109.00 from the Pot Of Gold. Congratulations Bob!

Welcome

To **Mark Graser** who joined the American Legion and our Post at the May meeting. Mark is an Army Veteran of Vietnam having served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade

Donation

The Avalon Assisted Living Center contacted Commander Reynolds with another donation. They added \$96.00 to their previously collected donations.

MOH



M/Sgt. (then S/Sgt.) Roy P. Benavidez, 455-02-5039, United States Army, who distinguished himself by a series of daring and extremely valorous actions on 2 May 1968 while assigned to Detachment B-56, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam. On the morning of 2 May 1968, a 12-man Special Forces Reconnaissance Team was inserted by helicopters in a dense jungle area west of Loc Ninh, Vietnam, to gather intelligence information about confirmed large-scale enemy activity. This area was controlled and routinely patrolled by the North Vietnamese Army. After a short period of time on the ground, the team met heavy enemy resistance, and requested emergency extraction. Three helicopters attempted extraction, but were unable to land due to intense enemy small-arms and anti-aircraft fire. Sgt. Benavidez was at the Forward Operating Base in Loc Ninh monitoring the operation by radio when these helicopters returned to off-load wounded crewmembers and to assess aircraft damage. Sgt. Benevidez voluntarily boarded a returning aircraft to assist in another extraction attempt. Realizing that all the team members were either dead or wounded and unable to move to the pickup zone, he directed the aircraft to a nearby clearing while he jumped from the hovering helicopter, and ran approximately 75 meters under withering small-arms fire to the crippled team. Prior to reaching the team's position he was wounded in his right leg, face, and head. Despite these painful injuries, he took charge, repositioning the team members and directing their fire to facilitate the landing of the extraction aircraft and the loading of the wounded and dead team members. He then threw smoke canisters to direct the aircraft to the team's position. Despite his severe wounds and under intense enemy fire, he carried and dragged half of the wounded team members to the awaiting aircraft. He then provided protective fire by running alongside the aircraft as it moved to pick up the remaining team members. As the enemy's fire intensified, he hurried to recover the body and classified documents on the dead team leader. When he reached the leader's body, Sgt. Benevidez was severely wounded by small-arms fire in the abdomen and grenade fragments in his back. At nearly the same moment, the aircraft pilot was mortally wounded, and his helicopter crashed. Although in extremely critical condition due to his multiple wounds, Sgt. Benevidez secured the classified documents and made his way back to the wreckage, where he aided the wounded out of the overturned aircraft, and gathered the stunned survivors into a defensive perimeter. Under increasing enemy automatic-weapons and grenade fire, he moved around the perimeter distributing water and ammunition to his weary men, reinstilling in them a will to live and fight. Facing a buildup of enemy opposition with a beleaguered team, Sgt. Benevidez mustered his strength, began calling in tactical air strikes and directed the fire from supporting gunships to suppress the enemy's fire and so permitted another extraction attempt. He was wounded again in his thigh by small-arms fire while administering first aid to a wounded team member just before another extraction helicopter was able to land. His indomitable spirit kept him going as he began to ferry his comrades to the craft. On his second trip with the wounded, he was clubbed from additional wounds to his head and arms before killing his adversary. He then continued under devastating fire to carry the wounded to the helicopter. Upon reaching the aircraft, he spotted and killed two enemy soldiers who were rushing the craft from an angle that prevented the aircraft door-gunner from firing upon them. With little strength remaining, he made one last trip to the perimeter to ensure that all classified material had been collected or destroyed and to bring in the remaining wounded.

Only then, in extremely serious condition from numerous wounds and loss of blood, did he allow himself to be pulled into the extraction aircraft. Sgt. Benevidez' gallant choice to join voluntarily his comrades who were in critical straits, to expose himself constantly to withering enemy fire, and his refusal to be stopped despite numerous severe wounds, saved the lives of at least eight men. His fearless personal leadership, tenacious devotion to duty, and extremely valorous actions in the face of overwhelming odds were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect the utmost credit on him and the United States Army.

Post Elections

Post elections were held at our May meeting. The 2018-19 officers chose to continue in their positions for 2019-2020. They are:

Commander - Jim Reynolds

1st Vice - Don Burns

Sgt of Arms - Jeff Boes

Historian - Bill Kriebel

Adjutant - Lance Ashworth

Finance - John Call

Judge Advocate - Jay Livermore

Chaplin - Danny Oberhauser

The Wappingers Central School District has recently purchased two plaques, one for each high school. They will list names of graduates that were KIA (killed in action). John Jay and Roy C Ketcham High Schools were both built in the 1960's and the school district is seeking names for the plaques. Hopefully there will be few.



Veterans History Project

The town of East Fishkill, John Jay High School, and the East Fishkill Historical Society are interested in interviewing veterans of all ages.

The Veterans History Project collects, preserves, and makes accessible the personal accounts of local veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans about their experiences in the Armed Forces.

Students from John Jay, under the direction of two of their teachers, will be conducting the interviews which will be videotaped.

I encourage all of you to participate and share your experiences. The only criteria is that you are a veteran. Whether you served in combat, stayed stateside, or traveled the World you all did your part and future generations need to know what it was like to serve in the 1940's through to 2019.

The first interviews were held on Saturday May 4th in the library at John Jay High School.

Please contact Jim Reynolds if you are interested in participating.



Honoring Enlistees

We would like to honor the students graduating from John Jay High School who are going into the military service after graduation. Details are still being worked out but we have set aside Saturday, June 15, 1:00PM to have lunch and meet these young men and women.

Due to privacy issues the school cannot provide the names to us. But we have made contact with the John Jay administration and they will send a letter to all students giving them Jim Reynolds' contact information. It will be up to the students to notify us.

This is our first attempt at doing this and we're not sure how many students will be involved. But we'd like to have the students and their parents join us for lunch. We will present the parents with a blue star banner and hopefully some gifts for the enlistees as they prepare for their new adventure. So far we have two participants.

The Town of East Fishkill and Semper Fi Parents of the Hudson Valley will be participating in the event with us.

If you have any suggestions for the event please contact Jim via email or at 845-221-7273.