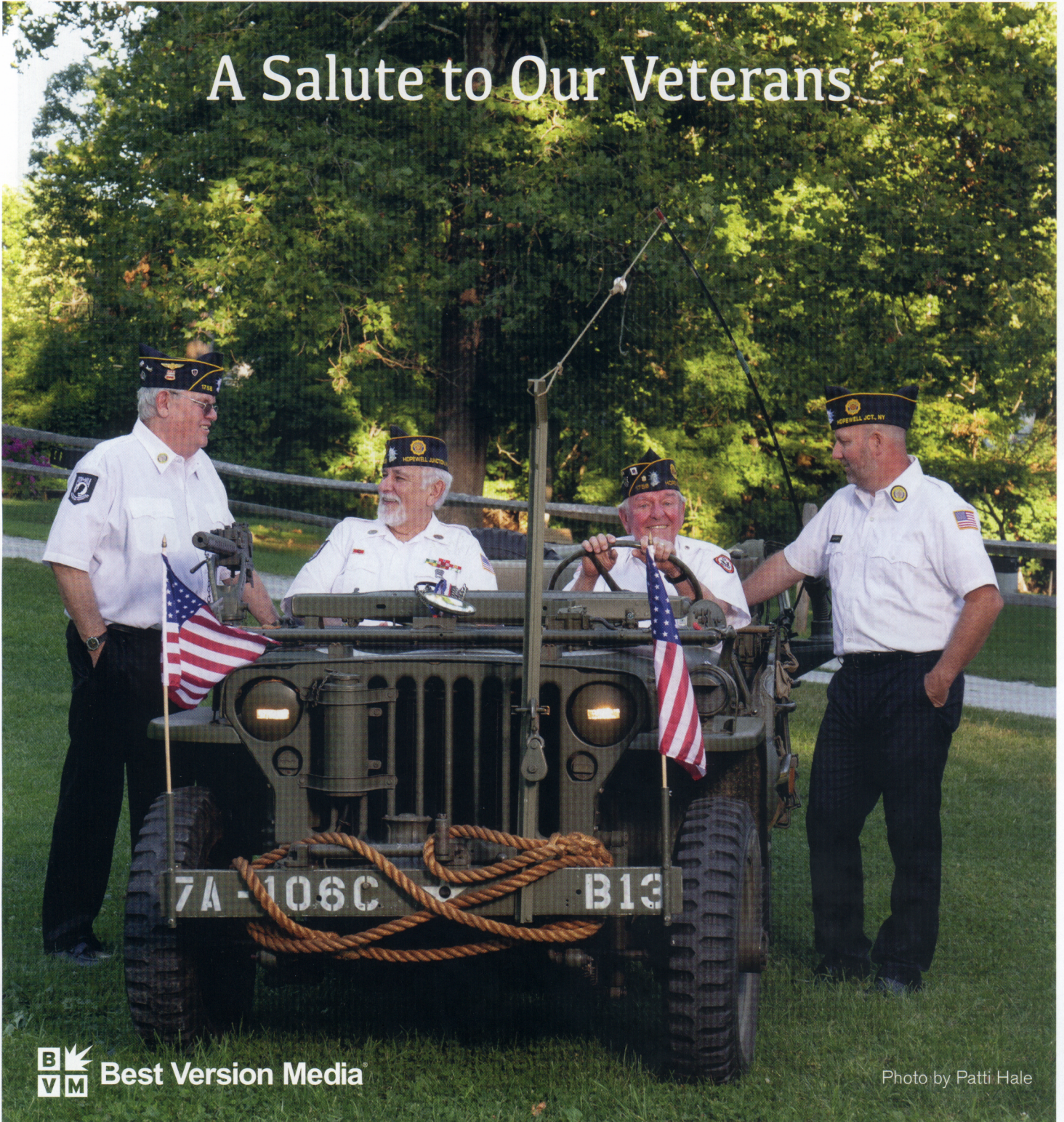


East Fishkill *Living*

November 2020

A Salute to Our Veterans



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE, PAST AND PRESENT

By Jeanne Cotroneo Darrow & Lauren Fitzgerald / Photos by Patti Hale



Members of Hopewell Junction's American Legion— Finance Officer John Call (U.S. Navy 1961-65), Norm Dauerer (U.S. Army 1962-65), Commander James Reynolds (U.S. Army 1965-68) and Adjutant Lance Ashworth (U.S. Army 1991-95, Army Reserves 1995-96). They are pictured on the cover with Norm's fully restored 1942 Ford GPW jeep from WWII.

Jim, a U.S. Army Veteran, joined the American Legion in the late 1990s but originally was unaware of the Hopewell Junction Post until he spotted members fundraising around East Fishkill in 1999. He's been a member ever since, serving as Commander from 2012-2013 and again since 2018.

With no permanent building with signage, visibility for the Legion is limited. However, the Town of East Fishkill lets them use the Old Town Hall at 2464 Route 52 (next to the police station) for their monthly meetings, held the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m.

WELCOME, VETERANS!

Today, Post 1758 has 115 members and welcomes more. The Post identifies new national members within a radius of Hopewell Junction and invites them to join. Currently, less than 1% of the U.S. population has served or is serving in the military. "With fewer Veterans getting out of the Service these days, it's harder to identify local, young Veterans and let them know help is available," Jim points out.

That help, in addition to the Vet-to-Vet comradery, includes connecting Veterans to resources, including the Dutchess County Division of Veterans Services, Hudson Valley Veterans Alliance and VA Service Officers, who can help write and submit benefits claims.

John Call, a U.S. Navy Veteran and Post 1758's Finance Officer, has been a member for four years and appreciates being part of a national organization. "We're many small organizations with the clout of a national organization behind us," he says. John volunteers at the Castle Point VA Medical Center's food pantry, where he makes weekly deliveries of food collected at a donation box at Adams Fairacre Farms in Wappingers Falls, as well as shoes and clothing items that members purchase or collect.

Commander James (Jim) Reynolds remembers holding back tears during the full military service for Kevin Walsh, a fallen East Fishkill Vietnam Veteran who had no living relatives. Jim and fellow members of Hopewell Junction's American Legion Manny Bacon Post 1758 had done this many times before, but this one—held outside McHoul's Funeral Home this past August during the pandemic—was particularly difficult. The Marine was not a member of Post 1758, and little was known about him. Still, members made sure he was given a proper sendoff. "Being able to be there for a funeral for someone you don't know, it makes you feel good," says Jim.

The American Legion, chartered in 1919 to serve Veterans, Servicemembers and communities, has nearly 2 million members, men and women, in 13,000 posts worldwide, 15 of them in Dutchess County. Post 1758 was created in 1949 and named in honor of Charles P. "Manny" Bacon, the first East Fishkill resident killed in WWII.



Norm loves to drive his U.S. Army jeep from WWII.



Post 1758 always welcome new members.

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

U.S. Army Veteran Lance Ashworth joined the Legion five years ago and serves as Post 1758's Adjutant. "The American Legion was founded on four pillars: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth," he explains. "We support multiple programs that fall into those pillars."

Those programs are funded by donations, along with a portion of membership dues. Here in our community, in addition to military Servicemember funerals—for which the Legion arranges buglers and provides a color guard—its members also:

- ★ Coordinate East Fishkill's Memorial Day ceremony and parade, plus Veterans Day and Memorial Day ceremonies at John Jay High School. They also put flags on more than 800 Veteran graves in East Fishkill cemeteries.
- ★ Line Route 82 in Hopewell with over 200 18-inch American flags on Veterans Day, funded with donations received during the distribution of handmade crepe-paper poppies on Memorial Day. Although the fundraiser was unable to proceed this year, those flags will still be on display.
- ★ Honorably retire, every Flag Day, worn American flags with a ceremony at the burn pit behind the East Fishkill Community Library.

- ★ Teach American flag etiquette to area elementary school children and Cub Scout troops and present citizenship awards to local Eagle Scouts.
- ★ Hold a luncheon, in partnership with the Semper Fi Parents of the Hudson Valley, for John Jay graduating seniors who are entering the military. "When they get out of the Service, they might not come back to East Fishkill, but they will remember the American Legion and hopefully join their local post," says Jim.
- ★ Host an oratorical competition for local high-school students to help develop deeper knowledge and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution. Applications are being taken now. The national program has featured prominent contestants over the years, including U.S. Vice President Mike Pence. A local student recently represented Post 1758 and won at the county, district and state levels, earning an \$18,000 scholarship and the opportunity to compete nationally for additional scholarship awards.
- ★ Pay to send students to Boys State or Girls State to a highly selective, week-long educational program for high-schoolers about citizenship, leadership and state and local government.
- ★ Sponsor a local junior shooting sports team, ages 14 to 21, teaching basic safety and marksmanship using air rifles.
- ★ Organized efforts by Post members, local volunteers and businesses to repair the home of a hospitalized East Fishkill Vietnam Veteran.

For these efforts and more, East Fishkill is fortunate—and grateful for the brave men and women who put service before self and continue to give back locally. The community is encouraged to support the Legion, and Veterans are urged to join: "If there are Veterans in the area who are oriented toward service and keeping lit the ideals of America," adds Lance, "they have a home with us." ♦

**We would like to thank THE DARLIND COMPANIES
for bringing you this cover story.**