

LEGION

NEW YORK

**Seneca
Nation's
Last
WWII Vet**



AUTUMN
2020
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LEGION NEW YORK

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LEGION FAMILY MAINTAINS CAN-DO ATTITUDE

by MICHAEL McDERMOTT

I cannot tell you how inspired I am by the unwavering "can do" attitude of the New York Legion Family.

Despite the continuing restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic, Legion posts, Sons' squadrons, Auxiliary units and Riders chapters find ways to keep advocating for veterans, mentoring youth, promoting national security and fostering patriotism.

Perhaps Legion Riders Chapter 977 Director **Steve Oliver** puts it best when he describes the Riders' determination to find a way to keep their fundraising going.

"Just because one door got slammed on you, well, I'm a Seabee. We'll cut a hole in the wall and make a new door."

This issue of *Legion New York* is full of examples of this "can do" attitude.

There's a post's Boys State choice who helps an army medical unit. There are the birthday drive-by parades for elderly veterans. There's a post commander's farmer's market to help hard-hit vets. There are alternate ways to support the Legacy Run. There's a legionnaire who takes it upon himself to deliver 4,000 face masks to first



Department Commander Mike McDermott



Chapter 977 Director Steve Oliver

responders on behalf of ten posts. There's a post teaming up for a neighborhood cleanup. There are Canadian legionnaires who observe the Korean Armistice anniversary. There's a whole community that honors a legionnaire's 50 years of service to the Legion.

Thank you to every member of the Legion Family who stays the mission!

COVER

SENECA IN SENATE HALL OF FAME

The Seneca Nation, the NY State Senate and The American Legion all turn out to honor World War II aerial gunner Ralph Elliot Bowen. He is the last surviving WWII veteran from the Seneca Nation's Allegheny Territory. See Page 12. Photo provided by the Bowen family.

BACKCOVER: The 9/11 "Tribute in Light" shines over Manhattan from the site of the former World Trade Center. iStockphoto by cmart7327.



PANDEMIC GOODY BAGS

Post's Boys State Choice Helps Army Medical Unit

by THE AMERICAN LEGION

Peter Mura was supposed to attend New York Boys State this past summer as a representative from Malverne American Legion Post 44. But with the program canceled and spare time on his hands – and with some help from the American Legion Family – Mura came up with a service project to support members of the U.S. military.

Mura chose to provide support to an Army medical unit from Massachusetts that was stationed at the Javits Center in Manhattan to help COVID-19 patients; Mura's uncle was a nurse in the unit. The unit was stationed at Javits in April and May, so Mura put together goody bags and handed them out every Sunday morning. He delivered potted flowers to mothers in the unit on Mother's Day. Members of American Legion Riders Chapter 44, American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1033 in Elmont and Girl Scout Troop 2033 in Valley Stream helped him put together the goody bags.

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 44 also assisted Mura with his project, purchasing cards and sharing their own handmade cards from the Auxiliary juniors and the Sons of The American Legion Squadron 44. Each card Mura delivered contained a Life Savers candy, attached



Peter Mura, 16, with some of the goody bags he brought to Army medical personnel at the Javits Center.

to the message: "Thank you for being a great New York Life Saver."

Post 44 was planning to honor Mura with a Good Deed Award after being

nominated by Auxiliary Unit 44.

Unit President Carol Hassett cited "his leadership, tenacity, caring and professionalism" and told

LIHerald.com: "His service project benefited our neighboring citizen warriors who answered the call to help New Yorkers through the Covid-19 pandemic."

In Cedarhurst, Long Island

Post Commander Hosts Veterans Farmers Market

by JESSICA COACCI
Long Island Herald (July 28)

In Cedarhurst, “Rock and Wrap It Up!” has created a safe haven for veterans to shop that helps to reduce their exposure to the coronavirus.

It is in the form of a Veterans Farmers Market at the home of Syd Mandelbaum, commander of Lawrence-Cedarhurst American Legion Post 339. Mandelbaum is founder of “Rock and Wrap It Up!” and its “Andy Parise Veterans Toolkit”.

Rock and Wrap It Up! is an anti-poverty think tank, researching, discovering and nurturing potential sources willing to share renewable assets. The Andy Parise Veterans Toolkit (named after World War II vet and long-time mayor of Cedarhurst) aims to offer at-risk veterans job opportunities, vet-friendly colleges, services for female veterans and more.

When Mandelbaum saw many of his veteran friends were at high risk for the coronavirus in regular supermarkets because of long lines, he created a place to shop at a distance. “To me, it was all about protecting their health and having a place where we can control the numbers,” he said.

Veterans gather socially-distanced in Mandelbaum’s backyard on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays



Korean War veteran Harry Sidor, 88, picked up food at the Veterans Farmers Market launched by “Rock and Wrap It Up!” Photo courtesy Syd Mandelbaum.

from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Wearing masks, dozens of senior members from the Lawrence-Cedarhurst American Legion Post 339 and the Inwood Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1582 pick organic fruits, vegetables, salads, meats and fish.

The veterans choose from many perishable items kept in a refrigerated vehicle. Mandelbaum said older residents come as well, along with others who lost their full-time job because of the pandemic. Any remaining food is given to Gammy’s Pantry, a free food bank in the Five Towns Community Center in Lawrence.

Domenic Crici, 88, who is sergeant-at-arms of Post 339, said the market has helped him tremendously. “Syd is very generous,” Crici said, “I’m eating more vegetables

and fruit now ‘cause it’s not always there for me in the store.”

The veterans market relies on its partnership with Trader Joe’s in Hewlett and Costco in Lawrence. The market also receives donations from Wall’s Bakery in Hewlett, the Bagelry and Crawfords Coffee Bar & Café, both in Cedarhurst, private donors and some veterans, who in turn, shop at the market. Mark Schechner of Wall’s Bakery has donated to “Rock and Wrap It Up!” for over 20 years. He said he is proud to donate leftover bread rolls, and that Long Island needs more of these programs.

Pat Alesia, 72, who was an army brigadier general and a member of both posts, helps pick up perishable and non-perishable items from Trader

Joe’s. Alesia said the store accommodates the veterans by allowing them to avoid the long lines.

Post 1582 Commander Miguel Martinez, 47, who is a master sergeant with the United States Army Reserve, is a volunteer driver for the market. Martinez said he has a healthy family, making him glad these services help veterans who are alone and cannot go to a regular store.

“We’re very proud of the program and will use the success to help veterans markets across the United States, at risk, and in need,” Mandelbaum said. “If we can feed them and keep them safe, we’ve really done a job.”

For more information Mandelbaum’s anti-hunger efforts, visit <https://www.rockandwrapitup.org>.

LAW AND ORDER AWARDS



Department Commander Michael McDermott (5th from right) poses with police and firefighter honorees, along with Legion and city officials. Photo by Frank Carletta.

Department, Post Honor Utica Firefighters and Police

Two Utica firefighters who tackled and restrained a murder suspect are The American Legion's New York State Firefighters of the Year.

In addition, the Utica Police Department is the NYS Police Department of the Year, state Law and Order Chair David Riley announced. He cited the department's "outstanding service," "dedication," and "efforts in keeping their city and county safe for all the residents."

Department Commander Michael McDermott presented the awards to the firefighters and Police Chief Mark Williams during a July 28th ceremony at Utica City Hall, arranged by Utica Post 229 with the city. Utica Post also presented local law-and-order awards.

The firefighters -- Lt. William Scherer and firefighter Esher Kenyaw -- received the Department of New York award for restraining a man covered in blood at the scene of a motor vehicle

accident until police arrived. The man faced murder charges for allegedly killing his grandmother and an elderly landlord.

Utica Post had honored the firefighters last fall before nominating them for the state award.

"We respond to slightly more than 14,000 calls a year, and these two gentlemen always exhibit the highest qualities of what we have come to expect from

the Utica Fire Department," said Utica Fire Chief Scott Ingersoll said.

Utica Post also honored two investigators as Police Officers of the Year.

Utica PD Investigator William Williams and U.S. Marshal Greg Morawiec were honored for their work New York/New Jersey Regional Fugitive Task Force.

Williams and Morawiec "are assigned to our warrants division and they

go after the worse of the worse," Police Chief Mark Williams noted. They are "very capable and successful in getting those fugitives into custody."

Utica Post 229 Law and Order Chair Paul Wojcik noted that due to the pandemic, the usual awards dinner could not be held at the post, so he worked with Utica Mayor Robert Palmieri and Chief Williams to have a ceremony at City Hall.



Utica Police Chief Mark Williams addresses a crowd of first responders, city officials and legionnaires during the American Legion awards ceremony at City Hall. FROM LEFT: Utica Post 229 Law-and-Order Chair Paul Wojcik, Department Commander Michael McDermott, Chief Williams, Department Law & Order Chair David Riley, and Utica Post 229 Commander Bill Sequin. Photo by Frank Carletta.

'COWBOY' MORRIS LEADS NEW YORK'S LEGION RIDERS

Edward "Cowboy" Morris of Oneida County is the new state director for the American Legion Riders.

Department Commander Michael McDermott appointed Morris "to serve until the Department Convention in 2021," after Director Robert Wallace resigned for personal reasons, Department Adjutant James Casey announced.

Morris said his vision is to grow the Legion Riders, promote the Legion Family, advocate for veterans, educate the public, and promote patriotism. He said he wants "to bring a real sense of brother- and sisterhood to all our chapters."

A U.S. Army veteran who served during the



Lebanon/Grenada era, he is a member of the Meeker O'Rourke 1309 in Taberg. As a member of the Sons of the American Legion, Ed honors his late father, Air Force Veteran Edward R. Morris, who served in the Korean War and Vietnam Conflict.

As an American Legion Rider, Ed was the 5th & 6th

District vice director, a road captain, chapter vice director, and chapter director.

He has participated in a number of ALR activities such as, Feed The Vets, Clear Path, events for Injured riders, rides to support the Disabled American Veterans, Legacy Rides, Rolling Thunder in Washington,

D.C., Patriot Guard for fallen veterans.

Ed is a member of the Oneida County Department Visitation Committee, and the Committee to Elect Dave Riley Sr. for Department Commander.

He encourages networking and the importance of the Chapters Consolidated Reporting to the department.

A graduate of Rome Free Academy and the Pennsylvania Gunsmith School, Ed is a diesel mechanic for Bliss Environmental in Camden, and is married to Past Department President Deborah Kryczkowski. They share three children and eight grandchildren. Director Morris may be contacted at ALRdirector@nylegion.org.

RIDERS JOIN PARADE FOR 90-YEAR-OLD

American Legion Riders joined with Patriot Guard riders to provide a birthday parade for 90-year-old Korean War veteran Bill Bak that included giving the veteran a ride in a sidecar. The parade ran through the Village of Liverpool with escorts from Onondaga County Sheriff's Department, park rangers, and Liverpool Fire and Police departments.

"His reaction was amazing... I don't think he had a dry eye the whole time and I don't think I did either," Bak's son, Tim, told NewsChannel 9.



Canastota Riders Donate \$500 to Legacy Fund

Canastota American Legion Riders Chapter 140 presented a \$500 check for the Legacy Scholarship Fund to Department Riders Director Ed Morris on October 18, 2020. The chapter is located in Madison County, 6th District. BACK ROW, from left: Road Captain Ken Moore, Vice-Director Wes Tooke, Chapter Director Fred Carey, State Director Ed Morris, Chaplain Joe Larkin, Secretary Don Pederson. FRONT ROW, from left: Doug & Rose Lockwood, Fran & Deanna Pratt, Paul & Debbie Douglas. Photo by Debbie Morris.

AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS

Oneonta Chapter Stages Legacy Run, Promotes Safety

by THE AMERICAN LEGION

Due to the coronavirus, there was a time this year when American Legion Riders Chapter 259, the state's first-ever chapter, considered cancelling what was supposed to be its 18th annual Legacy Run. But as restrictions started to lift in New York, the Oneonta chapter was determined to figure out a way to continue to raise money for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund – it has presented the fund with a \$10,000 donation annually for years – as well as the post's local scholarship program for Otsego County students.

The chapter cancelled three of its five yearly runs but was able to keep its Legacy Run on the schedule, conducting the ride Sept.

12 with 99 motorcycles covering around 100 miles. In preparing to do so, its members created a set of guidelines for conducting such a ride in the time of COVID-19 that it shared with other chapters.

Sons of The American Legion Squadron 259 member Chris Chase, ALR Chapter 259's assistant director and the ALR assistant director for New York's District 5 and 6, put up a blog post on the chapter's website to promote safe practices. He provided a series of tips to keep both participants and volunteers safe that included:

- Temperature checks;
- Limiting gathering size;
- Social distancing;
- Encouraging and providing masks;

- Encouraging online registration;
- Providing sanitizer.

Chase said he was hoping it would help other chapters "pull off their runs."

The guidelines were the ones Chapter 259 followed. Chase said: "We did our best to take everybody's temperature when they got onsite, make sure they had a mask, make sure they registered with a mask and kept their distancing while registering."

Chase said the final numbers from the Legacy Run were still being tallied, but he believes it's around \$3,000 – despite this year's event being scaled back because of the pandemic. In addition to going toward the Legacy Fund and local scholarships, Chase said proceeds from

this year's ride also would go toward local businesses impacted by the pandemic.

"This year, because of COVID, it sat funny with us going around to bug all of our typical sponsors for money," Chase said. "So instead, we're taking some of our own funds and we're donating back to our sponsors. It's just giving back to our sponsors that have supported us every year."

Staging the chapter's Legacy Run in the midst of a pandemic was "to honor the people who have lost their lives from the events of 9/11," Chase said. "We were attacked. We had to go to war over it. And the kids that lost their parents ... we just feel the (Legacy) Fund is a good cause to support."



American Legion Riders gather near Oneonta, posing for a scenic picture. Photo by Chris Chase.

ALTAMONT RIDERS 'OPEN A NEW DOOR' DURING PANDEMIC



Photo by Elizabeth Floyd Mair
Altamont Enterprise & Albany County Post.

Chapter 977 Director Steve Oliver (center) with fellow Legion Riders during a 2017 event.

by *THE AMERICAN LEGION*

In eight years of existence, American Legion Riders from Helderberg Post 977 in Altamont have become known for their support for various veterans causes.

Chapter 977 regularly supports New York's Run for the Fallen, an event that calls attention to and honors the men and women who have died recently in military service to America, as well as Honor Flight, the Victoria Acres Equine Facility, the Vet House transitional housing program in Ballston Spa; a service dog program, Department of Veterans Affairs outreach programs and other causes. The chapter also donates

to The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund and, locally, established five local scholarships for graduating students going into a trade school.

When the coronavirus forced Chapter 977 to cancel its large annual fundraising poker run in August – one that typically draws 140 to 180 participants and in 2019 helped raise around \$10,000 – its Legion Riders weren't going to give up supporting their many causes. So the chapter came up with an alternate plan: a Veterans Memorial Awareness Ride.

The chapter asked fellow motorcyclists, car clubs and

other groups to take part in a self-guided 117-mile ride that featured eight stops at local veterans memorials from Aug. 1 to Sept. 30. The chapter created a downloadable Google map for smartphones, as well as a downloadable PDF with a map and directions. A suggested donation of \$25 per map and \$10 per person helped continue to raise funds.

The idea came about while "sitting around brainstorming, trying to figure out what else we could do," Chapter 977 Director Steve Oliver said. "A bunch of us had been riding around looking at different memorials in the area ... and we

said 'well, let's do a veterans memorial ride.' And then we tried to figure out how."

With the ride taking place over two months, Oliver said participants could "guide themselves and go when they want."

Despite limitations because of the pandemic, Chapter 977 never gave up on the idea of still supporting area veterans through its various donations. "That's who we are. That's what The American Legion is," Oliver said. "That's what we're supposed to be doing. Just because one door got slammed on you, well, I'm a Seabee. We'll cut a hole in the wall and make a new door."

Oratorical Champ Shares Words of 'Pride and Gratitude'

In a written message to Legionnaires, New York's oratorical champion, Victor Gelfuso, says The American Legion's speech contest fostered in him a greater appreciation for the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

"Exercising my rights to freedom of speech and freedom of the press," he writes, "has shown me how much the United States values one of the paramount rights in human life: the freedom of thought and the pursuit of truth."

Victor Gelfuso, the Department of New York's 2020 oratorical champion, could not address the Department Convention this year because it was cancelled due to the pandemic. But it didn't stop him from penning words of "Pride and Gratitude" to share in written form.

He speaks of meeting "so many amazing veterans and their families" – an experience that taught him "the character of the American soldier."

A service-man or -woman "is a citizen who lives a life of service, sacrifice, and conviction in the American cause."

Gelfuso goes on to praise The American Legion's Americanism programs and their impact on America's youth.

"Programs like the Oratorical Contest, Boys' State, and Girls' State are crucial in our time when more and more of our young people do not know the words of

our Constitution and Declaration of Independence, nor the advice and admonitions of our Founding Fathers, nor the duties of American citizenship.

Even the philosophical and theological foundations that America's history was built upon appear to be fading from the minds of our youngest generations of Americans."

He concludes that the Americanism programs "plant the seeds of patriotism in the hearts of our next generations."

ERIE COUNTY LEGIONNAIRE ORDAINED A DEACON

Erie County Assistant Chaplain Michael Johnson was ordained as a transitional deacon on Sept. 19. He is working toward becoming a Catholic priest and hopes to be ordained in May 2021.

Past Erie County Commander Anthony Solina (at left in photo) and County Adjutant James Bojanowski (at right) presented him with



a American Legion Catholic Bible after the ceremony held at St. Joseph's Cathedral in Buffalo, NY.

Deacon Michael Johnson is a member of Depew Post 1528. He served in the U.S. Air Force during the Persian

Gulf conflict. Entering active duty in 1995, he trained and became a communications/computer systems and operations journeyman. He served in South Korea, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Following active duty, he served in the Air Force Reserve from 2000 to 2003 at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station.

BIRTHDAY DRIVE-BY FOR 99-YEAR-OLD VET IN RICHFIELD SPRINGS

In Richfield Springs, American Legion Post 616 coordinated a drive-by celebration past the home of fellow Legionnaire Jimmy

Andrecheck to honor the World War II veteran's 99th birthday on Sept. 27.

Andrecheck is the only World War II veteran still

alive in Post 616.

Andrecheck had recently broken his hip and had been unable to visit the post, so members of the post came

to him in a parade that included the Cedarville Fire Department. Andrecheck lives with his wife of 74 years, Mary.

DRIVE-BY FOR YORKTOWN WWII VET ON 100TH BIRTHDAY

Yorktown Post 1009 organized a drive-by parade to celebrate the 100th birthday of World War II Merchant Marine veteran John Caffrey

of Mohegan Lake, Post Adjutant Patrick McDonough reported.

"Mohegan Lake Fire Department, Westchester

County Police Pipes and Drums, our Yorktown Post #1009 members, and the Westchester County/Katonah Post Legion Riders took

part in the event," he said.

The parade took place Friday, Sept. 18.

LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP CALLED 'LIFE-CHANGING'

MED STUDENT SAYS LEGIONNAIRE MOM IS HER INSPIRATION



Legacy Scholarship recipient Tianna Negron, a medical student at University of Rochester. Photos: The American Legion.

by HENRY HOWARD
The American Legion

Tianna Negron learned about the value of service from her mother, a single parent who served 24 years in the Army.

“My mom is an inspiration for me because of her service in the military and with The American Legion,” Tianna said. “For her 50th birthday, she got money from family and friends and donated it all to charity. Now she volunteers a lot with The American Legion. She is pretty amazing. I hope to pay it forward and fill those shoes.”

Tianna, a fourth-year student at the University of

Rochester (N.Y.) Medical School, is among the recipients of The American Legion Legacy Scholarship for the 2020-21 school year. The scholarship goes to children of veterans on active duty since 9/11 who were either killed while on active duty or have a combined disability rating of 50 percent or greater.

“Truly for me, it would have been impossible to go to medical school without the support of The American Legion Legacy Scholarship,” said Tianna, who has received it three times while at the U of R. “I remember in the hospital as a scribe when I heard about winning the first one. I literally

called my mom and cried. I couldn’t believe that it was real. It would not have been possible without the support of The American Legion.”

After graduation, Tianna wants to work in emergency medicine, aiming to work with homeless populations and addiction medicine.

“If the American Legion Legacy Scholarship didn’t exist, I truly would be looking at the cost of medical school and probably reconsidering my path, which is truly unfortunate given my passion for my future career as a physician. Money has really been a barrier for me going to college and medical school. The American Legion Legacy Scholarship

is life-changing for me.”

The scholarship is playing a key role in helping her fulfill her dreams.

“What really spoke to me was being able to serve my local community as an emergency medical physician,” said Tianna, who went to New York Auxiliary Girls State. “In my future career in emergency medicine, I hope to be able to connect our patients with the resources they need, especially homeless patients and those who are addicted.”

As a med school student during the pandemic, Tianna has served on the front lines. Cases in upstate New York surged during the
Continued on next page.



Legacy Scholarship recipient Tianna Negron gets a hug from her mom, Tamra, who is a member of Chili Post 1830.

Continued from previous page. spring. Tianna helped out by putting respirators together.

“The coronavirus pandemic has reaffirmed for me that emergency medicine is the path I want to take because I have seen what a difference it can make in the lives of others, especially when they are at their sickest.”

There were times when money was tight in the household but Tamara’s outlook and volunteerism never wavered.

“She has always has confidence in me, always encouraged me, telling me I can do whatever I set my mind to,” Tianna said. “I would not be where I am today without her. Her confidence in me helped me have confidence in myself.”

Tamara, who retired as a sergeant first class, is a member of American Legion Post 1830 in Chili, N.Y. “The American Legion

means a lot to me,” she said. “It’s a second family. Whenever I was able to come back home, they always welcomed me back home. It’s a comforting place.”

For the past five years Tamara has worked on the post’s scholarship program for local high school seniors. “I really enjoy working with the scholarship my post gives out,” says the 30-year member of the Legion.

“And The American Legion Legacy Scholarship is great. It has a lot of meaning for me and my daughter. I don’t think we would have been able to get her to where she is going without it. We are so fortunate and very grateful.”

Just as Tamara inspire Tianna, the reverse is true.

“The work that she had to do throughout the years to get to be a fourth-year medical student was amazing. She works so hard. I am glad that the scholarship com-

mittee saw what she had and believed in her.

“Dreams do come true.”

Tamara has no doubt that the investment made in her daughter will strengthen her community.

“I know that Tianna will pay back 10 times over what has been given to her in her community and elsewhere. I am very thankful.”

Already Tianna demonstrates a commitment to service as a member of the Junior Auxiliary where she gives back by making blankets for veterans, sending packages to troops overseas, participating in Flag Day activities, selling poppies and more.

“My mom is and always has been an inspiration to me. Not only did she serve her country, she provided an amazing loving household for me and served as an amazing role for others. She is always asking what other people need. She goes out

of her way to do things for other people.”

As Tianna finishes medical school, she remains full of gratitude.

“Every little bit makes a difference. As everyone comes together to support the community of veterans it means a lot. And I hope to contribute to this as I get older because I’ve been able to see first-hand how life-changing it is. And I would like to just say thank you to everyone who has contributed.”

After graduation in May, Tianna’s journey will take a new step, thanks to the support of her mother, The American Legion Legacy Scholarship and the donors who made it possible.

“It’s been an amazing journey,” she said. “You see some heart-warming and heart-breaking things, especially in the emergency department. It’s been an incredible path for me.”

WWII VET INDUCTED INTO SENATE HALL OF FAME

SENECA NATION HONORS RALPH BOWEN FOR LIFETIME OF SERVICE



Legionnaire Ralph Bowen (center) poses with dignitaries and family after being inducted into the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame during a Seneca Nation celebration of his lifetime of service. From left: R. Michael Suter, American Legion Department of New York; State Assemblyman Joe Giglio; State Senator George Borrello (holding proclamation); Ralph Bowen (in wheelchair); Jacqueline Phelps, representing Congressman Tom Reed; Steve McCord, 8th District Service Officer and director of the Cattaraugus County Veterans Service Agency; Glenda Taylor representing Salamanca Mayor Mike Smith; and Seneca Nation President Rickey Armstrong. NYS Senate Photo by John Eberth.

Seneca Nation member Ralph Elliot Bowen manned a .50-caliber machine gun aboard his B-24 Liberator bomber, fending off German fighter planes during World War II. After the war, Bowen returned to western New York to work as a union laborer and ironworker and to continue his service to community and nation as a member of Iroquois American Legion Post 1587, as a five-term member of the Seneca Nation Tribal Council, as a Seneca Nation marshal, as a judge on the Nation's Peacemakers Court and Surrogate Court, and as pastor of Red House Baptist Church.

The Seneca Nation recognized Bowen's lifetime

of service on Oct. 2 in a ceremony in which Senator George M. Borrello inducted the legionnaire into the New York State Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame.

Bowen, who turned 98 on August 8, is the last surviving World War II veteran from the Seneca Nation's Allegany Territory. Bowen's family and friends attended the ceremony at the Indian nation's Seneca-Allegany Event Center as did dignitaries, including Seneca Nation President Rickey L. Armstrong, Sr., State Assemblyman Joe Giglio, and R. Michael Suter, veterans services coordinator for the American Legion Department of New York.

"Ralph Bowen and his

fellow airmen combated the forces of tyranny that threatened the liberty of people in this country and across the globe," Senator Borrello said. "They took to the air despite the constant threat of enemy fighter planes, being shot down by anti-aircraft guns, challenging weather conditions and vast geographic distances. Acting for the benefit of others in the face of such great danger is the definition of bravery. When he returned home to the Seneca Nation and Western New York, he continued his service to his community. I can't think of anyone more deserving of being inducted into the Veterans' Hall of Fame."

Bowen fought in the European Campaign as an aerial gunner aboard a B-24 Liberator, serving from 1941 through 1945 to liberate France and Europe from Nazi occupation. He was a member of the 15th Air Force's 450th Bombardment Group, 723rd Bombardment Squadron.

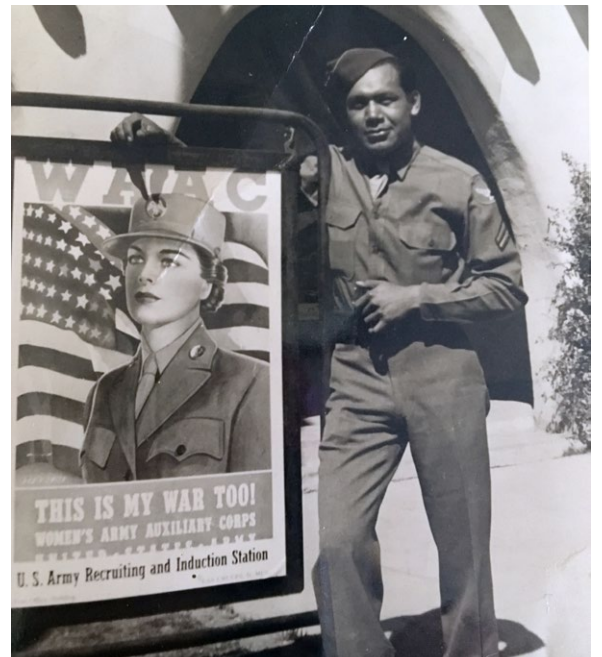
In July 2019, Senator Borrello noted, Bowen was presented with France's highest award, the French Legion of Honor, for his role in liberating France from Nazi occupation. Bowen is the first Seneca and only the second Native American to receive the appointment of Knight in the Order of the Legion of Honor.



Ralph Bowen poses in front of a B-24, like the one he flew in as an aerial gunner. The Collings Foundation B-24J "Witchcraft" was at the Jamestown Airport. Photo above and below right provided by the Bowen family.



Ralph Bowen with son Dennis Bowen and Sen. George Borrello. NYS Senate Photo by John Eberth.



Ralph Bowen in uniform by a recruiting poster during World War II.

Continued on next page.

4,000 Masks for Rensselaer County First Responders

COUNTY ADJUTANT AND WIFE DELIVER MASKS ON BEHALF OF 10 POSTS

When Rensselaer County Adjutant Ed Lupian learned that Department Headquarters in Troy had face masks available for his post, he immediately thought about all the other posts in his county.

So he picked up 4,000 masks.

“(Office Director) Anne Rounds suggested that we donate the masks to the Police or Fire Departments in each of our Posts’ areas,” Ed said. “Most of our posts are still closed because of the Coronavirus and I thought it would take some time to contact all of the post officers and get with them to deliver the masks to their town Police or Fire Departments. I decided to deliver them with the help of my wife, Susan, who is an Auxiliary member of Gerald O’Neil Unit 1683. So we put on our American Legion 100-year anniversary baseball caps and our post jackets and off we went.”

Ed put 400 masks in each of ten Legion bags, along with a letter he drew up for each Post, thanking the first responders for all their hard work.

“I also included a few ‘Why I Should Belong’ pamphlets just in case someone wanted to join the Legion.”

Ed and Susan began their 150-mile two-day trek in their home City of Rensselaer. “We stopped at our local Police Department, and



Ed Lupian delivers hundreds of face masks to Rensselaer Police Department (above) and East Greenbush Police Department (below). Photos by Susan Lupian.



on behalf of Gerald O’Neil Post and Fort Crailo Post, we donated two bags of masks. A local police officer came outside to thank us and to have a picture taken. We found out later that they posted the picture on their Facebook Page.”

Then they delivered a bag of masks to East Greenbush Police Department on behalf of Melvin Roads Post 1231. Following that, it was off to the town of Nassau. On behalf of Nassau Post, they gave masks to the town

clerk to the local Fire.

Next was Town of Berlin on behalf of the Taconic Valley Post, then town of Hoosick Falls on behalf of the Hoosick Post 40 (to the town clerk’s office to have masks delivered to the Police Department). They left masks at the volunteer fire department in Schaghticoke on behalf of the Charles Waldon Post 731, then on to the Troy Police Department on behalf of the S.S. Barrett Post 1881.

The next day they brought

masks to North Greenbush Police Department on behalf of North Greenbush Memorial Post 1489 and finally to the town of Averill Park, “where we dropped off the masks to the town hall to have them delivered to the Averill Park Volunteer Fire Department on behalf of the Sgt. Walter A. Adams Post 1021.”

Ed added: “I want to thank the Department for giving us the opportunity to get our American Legion name out to the public.”

Bronx Post 19 Helps Neighborhood Cleanup

John Fraser Bryan Post 19 in the Bronx teamed up with the Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance (VNNA) to hold a neighborhood cleanup on Oct. 11.

“We met at the Van Nest War Memorial where we were given gloves, rakes, trash bags, and PPE supplied by the New York Parks Department,” reported Post First Vice Commander Tom Tramantano, Sr.

“Working alongside the volunteers from Post 19 were several members of the VNNA and some youth from

the Bronx Muslim Center. After cleaning up and bagging trash at the memorial we headed to an area nearby that is located beneath train tracks and had become overgrown with weeds and used as a dumping grounds for trash. We were met there by a New York City Sanitation supervisor and his team, which included three workers, a truck, and a street sweeper. The group worked hard for several hours cutting weeds, raking, and picking up trash. This was a total group effort to help keep our neighborhood clean.”



The neighborhood cleanup crew included people from Post 19 (above and below), Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance and Bronx Muslim Center. Photos by Bernadette Ferrara, Marion Manfredi and John Pucci.



DRIVE-BY CELEBRATES VET'S 84TH BIRTHDAY



Members of Post 71 pose with Nicholas DeVito after a drive-by birthday celebration for the 84-year-old Army veteran. Behind Nick, from left, are: Dave Sambora, executive committee; Ed Mahoney, 1st vice commander; Bruce Schwerkolt, commander; and John Hyland, chaplain.

Argonne Post 71 of Brewster, NY sponsored a drive-by birthday celebration on Aug. 8 for 84-year-old Army veteran and Legionnaire Nicholas DeVito.

Included in this celebration were

members of the American Legion Post 71, Brewster Fire Department, VFW Post 672, Elks Lodge 2101, New York Legion Riders-Putnam County, Fraternal Order of Police Unit 702, IBEW Local 3 Retirees, Gezers Telephone

Retirees and family.

Following the drive-by, Post 71 members presented Nick with a Certificate of Recognition from National Commander James W. Oxford.

DRIVE-BY PARADE HONORS 100-YEAR-OLD VET IN VAN ETTEN

In Van Etten, N.Y., World War II veteran Robert Stein celebrated his 100th birthday Aug. 24.

His family couldn't throw him a big party but wanted to do something. Word got around to members at American Legion, who suggested

a drive-by parade to honor Stein. American Legion Riders joined other community members, Community Fire and Rescue, New York State Police and others in the parade honoring the U.S. Army veteran.

"Tons of people lined the streets to

show their appreciation for their local hero," Spectrum News reported.

During a ceremony before the parade, Stein received a proclamation from New York State Assemblyman Phil Palmesano on behalf of himself

CLIFTON PARK VETERAN SURPRISED WITH BIRTHDAY PARADE

CLIFTON PARK -- A drive-by parade of about 70 vehicles on Aug. 2 helped celebrate the 95th birthday of World War II veteran and Legionnaire Allan Atwell.

"Allan Atwell is quite well known in southern Saratoga County," the *Saratogian* reported. He is a member of the

Jonesville Volunteer Fire Department, the Clifton Park Elks, and both the VFW and American Legion.

"He is also a veteran of World War II's Battle of the Bulge and a Chevalier in the French Legion of Honor."

National Guard Brigadier General John Andonie, who vehicle led the

parade, told the newspaper:

"Meeting Allan is awe-inspiring."

A native of Breeseport, NY, Atwell returned from the war to eventually settle in Clifton Park where he worked for many years for New York Telephone (now Verizon) and raised a family with his late wife Neva.

CANADA OBSERVES 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF KOREAN ARMISTICE

Canadian members of the American Legion Department of New York took part in the 70th Anniversary Observance of the Korean Armistice on Sunday, Aug. 9. The observance took place at Spencer Smith Park, Burlington, Ontario.

Participating Legionnaires included Canada County Commander Bob Winder, a U.S. Army veteran; Ron Zabroc, a U.S. Navy vet, and Robert Williams, a U.S. Navy vet.

Korean Consul General Chung, Tae-in presented 70-year certificates to several veterans, including Zabroc. Also, Zabroc was awarded a plaque commemorating his service in the Korean War.

“With the borders closed, fellow veterans from the States were there in spirit,” Erie County Adjutant Jim Bojanowski noted.

PHOTO: U.S. Navy vet Ron Zabroc (left), with Canada County Commander and U.S. Army vet Bob Winder at the Canadian Naval Memorial.



NEW YORK'S CANADA COUNTY

Canada used to have its own charter as a department of The American Legion, as part of Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion (FODPAL).

In 1994 some foreign departments were reorganized, with posts in Canada being assigned to the nearest contiguous U.S. departments.

The posts in Ontario, Canada were assigned to the Department of New York, but since New York already had an Ontario County, it was decided to create Canada County, Canada County Commander Bob Winder explains.

“When we were moved over to District Eight and first attended the Department of New York Convention,” Winder adds, “when the roll call came for ‘CANADA’,



everyone in attendance strained their necks in disbelief for most didn't realize that The American Legion existed outside of the United States.”

50-YEAR LEGIONNAIRE HONORED

Past Sag Harbor Commander Served 21 Years in Navy

By STEPHEN J. KOTZ
Southampton Press

Robert Browngardt, who sailed on everything from a destroyer to an aircraft carrier during a 21-year career with the United States Navy before settling in his home port of Sag Harbor, was honored as a 50-year member of the Chelberg-Battle Post 388 of the American Legion on Sept. 22 when he received proclamations from town, county, and state government officials (including NY State Assemblyman Fred Thiele).

Browngardt joined the Legion in 1970 while still on active duty and served two terms as the post commander, from 1981 to 1982 and from 2007 to 2008, after retiring from the Navy and moving back to the family home on Palmer Terrace with his wife Judy and five children.

As a newly minted seaman, Browngardt was assigned to the U.S.S. Kidd, a destroyer based in San Diego. He was a boiler technician, stationed in the ship's fire room, where the ship's power is produced and the temperature can be on the high side. "I liked it, though," he said because it was neat and clean. "It was like the inside of a watch."

Throughout his career, he stuck to his specialty, eventually overseeing the



Robert Browngardt (left and photo at right) is honored for 50 years of service to The American Legion during a ceremony in front of Chelberg & Battle Post 388. Photos by Michael Heller.

boiler room of the U.S.S. Oriskany, an aircraft carrier that generated some 160,000 horsepower.

After four years on the U.S.S. Kidd, Browngardt was transferred to the U.S.S. Shields, another destroyer, where he was promoted to petty officer first class. He was later assigned to the U.S.S. Columbus, a guided missile cruiser that was a step up in size and comfort from a destroyer, but, more importantly, was based in Norfolk, Virginia, allowing him to be closer to home.

He sailed to the Mediterranean on that ship, before an executive officer, noticing that Browngardt had served nine years at sea, arranged for him to be assigned to shore duty as a recruiting officer in Bay Shore. While there, Browngardt passed the warrant officer exam and was rewarded for his

diligence by being sent to Vietnam to serve on the U.S.S. Valley Forge, a World War II era carrier that had been converted into an amphibious assault ship that launched helicopters carrying marines into battle. "It was rough over there," he said. "I saw a lot of wounded Marines."

After nearly two years in Vietnam, Browngardt, who eventually rose to the rank of lieutenant, served on the U.S.S. Puget Sound, a repair ship at the naval station in Annapolis, MD, and on the U.S.S. Oriskany in the Pacific, before winding down his career, serving once again as a recruiting officer on Long Island.

When he left the Navy, Browngardt launched a 26-year career as an operating engineer in the power plant at Brookhaven National Laboratory and eventually

moved back to the home his parents, Arthur and Gladys Browngardt, had purchased in 1926.

He remembers mostly good times about growing up in Sag Harbor, where relatives lived up and down the street. But there were hard times too, he said, perhaps none more difficult than January 7, 1945, when his older brother, Arthur, the pilot of a B-25 light bomber named "The Sag Harbor Express," died when his plane was shot down in the Philippines.

"I remember when my brother was killed, I was swinging on the swings in the backyard with my brother, and an Army guy came up on the wrong side of the house," Browngardt, who was 5 at the time, recalled. "We went into the kitchen, and it was the first time I saw my father cry."

9/11 Memories

Continued from back cover.

Gibby got a phone call the night before that he was being called to Washington D.C. for a Legislative hearing but would be back in time for the dinner.

Queens County Commander Manfred Brandt decided to go on with the tour for Helen Mitras and Sally and Dick Johnston, his aide.

The pickup was uneventful in Richmond County, but as they were crossing the Verrazano Bridge to Brooklyn, the first plane hit one of the World Trade Center towers. At that moment everything changed.

New York City went on lockdown, and all bridges and tunnels were shut down. Future Department Commander Frank Peters, a Staten Island Ferry Boat captain, would spend the next few hours evacuating people from lower Manhattan to the safety of Staten Island. Frank would later be honored for his heroic efforts to evacuate thousands of people and would take the last boatload to safety before the waterways were closed.

Unable to return the traveling party back to their hotel, CC Brandt took them into his home for several days until the bridges were reopened. Communications with Dept. Commander Gibby were nonexistent and it wasn't until several days later I received a call from Gibby that after several cab rides, a train, subway and railroad journeys, he had made it to Malverne, Long Island and wanted me to take him to Helen.

We headed toward the Verrazano Bridge in Brooklyn and traffic was a disaster. Road closures and detours were numerous, but the worst part was the dust in the air and the horrific smell. As we rounded the road near Shore Parkway, you could now see the collapsed towers and the fire. Our approach to the bridge was blocked with heavily armed soldiers and numerous armored vehicles. I will never forget how the 50 cal. machine gun followed my every move as I exited my vehicle as ordered and placed myself against my car. Their dogs sniffed us and one went into my car and sniffed around the outside and the trunk.



Department Adjutant James W. Casey

After a thorough pat down and an ID check, we were permitted to go on our way.

Normally the view from the upper level of the Verrazano Bridge was picture post-card perfect. Not that day. Smoke and flames covered lower Manhattan and helicopters and fighter planes filled the sky. Gibby and I were silent as we drove over and we never spoke of that day again. I dropped him off at the hotel and we exchanged no parting words. He ran toward the entrance and I headed home. My attempt to cross the bridge was a repeat of the first crossing and I was just as nervous as it seemed everyone was on razor's edge. I followed all their commands as any good sailor would. The small community I live in lost 81 people that day and the renaming of our streets in their honor are a constant reminder of our loss. *Never Forget.*



9/11 Memories

By **JAMES W. CASEY**
Adjutant, Department of New York

I attended a small ceremony in Cohoes on Sept. 11 to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the 9-11 attacks. It brought back memories that I don't think will ever leave me.

On the morning of 09-11-01, I was home on Long Island making last minute adjustments for our department commander's visit to Queens County. It was newly elected Department Commander Gibby Mitras's first official visit on his 62-county journey through his year. We had planned a visit to the local VA Hospital at St. Albans and the State Veterans Nursing Home next door. Lunch at a local post and a tour of some war memorials in the area would round out the visit. A dinner and installation of Queens County officers at Antuns Catering Hall would culminate the day.

Well....it didn't quite work out the way we planned.

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