



Post 1758 Newsletter

March 2025

Est. 1949

Special Notice: If you are a veteran in emotional crisis and need help RIGHT NOW, call

988 and press "1"

or this toll-free number

1-800-273-8255

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

Next Meeting: April 8, 2025 at the East Fishkill Community Center

**"When you have a dream,
you've got to grab it and never
let go." —Carol Burnett**

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Upcoming Activities

Wednesday, March 19th – 6:00 PM County Monthly meeting Post 37 Poughkeepsie -**Post Everlasting honoring those we've lost in 2024.**

Tuesday, April 8th – 7:00 PM Post Monthly meeting at the East Fishkill Community Center

Tuesday, May 13th – 7:00 PM Post Monthly meeting at the East Fishkill Community Center - **Elections**

Saturday, May 17th – 10:00 AM Flags on cemeteries (Breakfast 8:30 at the Falls Diner, Myers Corners Road)

Monday, May 19th - 7:00AM Memorial Day Service at John Jay

Saturday, May 24th – 8:00 AM Poppy/Coin Drops

Monday, May 26th – 9:30 AM Memorial Day Parade East Fishkill Community Center

Wednesday, May 28th – 6:00 PM MOH Charlie Johnson Awards Ceremony Arlington High School

DUES

86% of our post members have already renewed for 2025....thank you to those that have renewed. Now let's get the other 14%!!!!

Good of the Legion:

Tim Bila's name was drawn for the Pot O' Gold at our March 11th meeting. Tim was not in attendance and the pot is now \$481.00.



Don't forget to check out our Post web site at al-ny1758.org where you will find a wealth of information.

Some pages are for members only and can be viewed only by signing on to the site. If you need a logon id and password please contact post historian Bill Kriebel at Historian@al-ny1758.org or by calling 845-226-6895.

Hudson Valley
Hospice

★ ★ ★

JOIN US FOR A

WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS EVENT

★ **SATURDAY, MARCH 29 @2PM** ★

HENRY A. WALLACE CENTER: 4079 ALBANY POST ROAD, HYDE PARK

On Tuesday morning, Feb. 18, John Jay High School held an assembly of senior students and administrators of schools in the southern portion of the Wappingers Central School District. Several veterans organizations (including Post 1758) were on hand to commemorate the POW/MIA flag and to distribute flags donated by the veteran groups to the principals of the various schools. A vice commander of the Wappingers VFW post gave a short history of the flag and explained why it's important that the flag be prominently displayed.

In the afternoon, a reprise of the ceremony was held at Roy C. Ketcham High School for schools in the northern portion of the district. Our post was assigned five seats on the stages at both events. Those seats were filled by Commander Jim Reynolds, Bill Meyer, Jeff Miedowski, Bill Kriebel and Lance Ashworth.



Operation Buddy Check

Saturday, February 22, 2025

10:00am – 2:00pm

Report of Results

On Saturday, February 22, 2025, members of AL Post 1758 (Manny Bacon), Hopewell Junction, NY, participated in a “Buddy Check” operation directed at those Post NY-001 members who reside in Hopewell Junction and its surrounding towns. Participants in the operation included: Ashworth, Beck, Bellantone, Burns, Dauerer, Hines, Kriebel, Meyer, Morrison, Oberhauser, Reynolds, Sokol, and Wuytack.

While the primary aim of the operation was to assess the health, welfare, and needs of local veterans, the secondary aim was to encourage NY-001 members to join Post 1758. In preparation, organizers prepared a “leave-behind” door hang bag containing printed materials about the post’s activities and instructions on how to transfer to the same. The following recaps the results of the Buddy Check operation:

Post NY-001 members (living in Hopewell Jct, etc)

Determined to be deceased:	3
Contact made directly:	12
Contact made with member of household:	4
<u>No contact made; info bag left at door:</u>	<u>8</u>
Total Members Intended for contact:	27

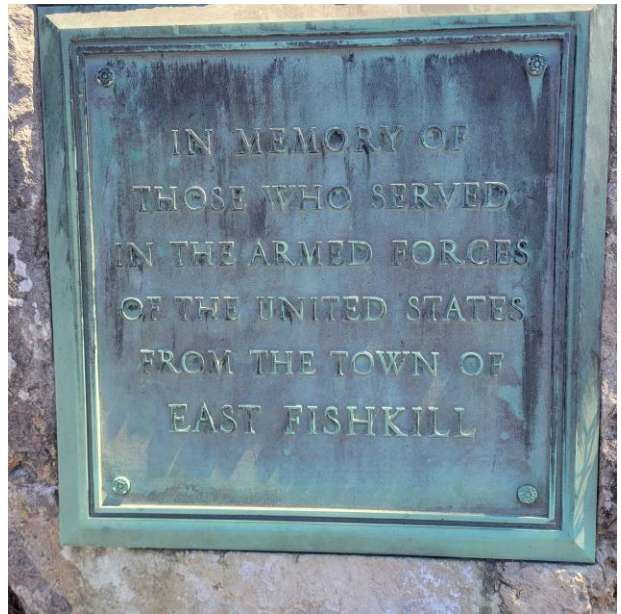
Welcome

We welcome 3 new members to our post.

- **Bob Schiaffino** is an Army veteran and new to the American Legion.
- **Joe Gentile** is an Army veteran transferring from NY Post 0001.
- **Charles Rokes** is also an Army veteran transferring in from NY Post 0001.

Boy’s State

Looks like we will be sending two boys to Boy’s State this year. One from our post and one from the Hyde Park Post who doesn’t have the funds available to cover both boys they have. The cost is \$500 per boy.



The town of East Fishkill contacted our post seeking information on the existing monument at the corner of Rte. 82 and Beekman Road. Apparently, the New York State Department of Transportation is preparing for the roundabout at Beekman and 82 and the monument will need to be moved. For some reason (it's the government) NYS wants to know when the current monument was installed. The town did not have any records and thought the post might be able to help. John Call and I went to the storage locker and retrieved our old post minutes books. We split the books, John taking some and I the others. John hit paydirt in the minutes from 1953. In March of 1953 it was reported that "New York Trap Rock Corporation has donated an 8 ton stone for the monument and that Mr. Michaels from New York State would be coming to town in the near future to donate the land to the community with a clear title."

At the June 1953 meeting "The memorial is nearly complete with only some trees to be planted and the lawn to be seeded."

The good news in all this investigation is that I guess New York State will have to relocate the memorial to make way for the roundabout. Hopefully a spot in the new Veterans Park will be ready when the state gets ready to move it.....the roundabout is scheduled for 2026

Sick Call

Please keep all those who are ill or suffering in your thoughts and prayers. Lately we've had several members who have had surgeries or illnesses among them Joe Paterno, James Lynch and Bob Spinillio (WWII Bob).

Don Burns received this update from Santo Abbate "I had spine surgery on Tuesday soon I will start therapy for the next 5 months I don't know when I will be getting back home right now I can't travel thank you for all the prayers bless you all and hope to see you soon ciao"

Let's wish them all a speedy recovery.

My father in law, Thomas Wilson, jumped into Normandy on D-Day with the 501st Parachute Regiment, 101st Airborne (Screaming Eagles). He, like Gerhard L. Bolland below was the last man (#13) on his plane. Dropped in the wrong area Tom was captured the following day and spent 11 months in a German POW Camp. His experience jumping on D Day must have been similar to Bolland's described below. JDR

Lt. Col. Gerhard L. Bolland was a proud Norwegian American from the farming town of Madison, Minnesota. He started his military career in 1926 in the Minnesota National Guard and was eventually accepted into West Point.

As a lieutenant colonel, Bolland served as the regiment executive officer of the 507th Parachute Infantry from May 28, 1944, to Nov. 24 of that year. He would jump behind enemy lines on D-Day from the 82nd Airborne Division's lead aircraft along with Brig. Gen. James M. Gavin, known as "The Jumping General," and fought in Normandy continuously for 33 days.

Bolland retired from active service in 1951 due to a disability and, with Norway on his mind, penned his memoirs in 1966.

The following account of his D-Day experience alongside the 82nd Airborne is excerpted from the book derived from those memoirs, "Among the Firsts: Lieutenant Colonel Gerhard L. Bolland's Unconventional War."

On our way to the drop zone, most of the paratroopers did a lot of smoking, some squirmed quite a bit, checking and re-checking their equipment. Others sang quietly to themselves. Each man dealt with the high tension and jittery nerves in his own way. Although many paratroopers jumped into Normandy with their Garand rifles disassembled and stored in a padded case, known as a Griswald bag, my own regiment, the 507th, did not.

Instead, we jumped with the rifle assembled and slung over our shoulders with the belly band of the parachute over it, securing it in place. Also, in addition to the bayonet and trench knife, a backup switchblade was carried into battle, partially inserted into the placket pocket of the M2 jump jacket. There was an assortment of these knives the soldier could choose from. I selected a 7-1/4" Presto M2 with textured grips. All in all, the average paratrooper was loaded down with about 85 pounds of equipment.

About 20 minutes before we were to hit the drop zone, the plane's door was removed. The cool air that billowed in felt good. Our first glimpse of France was filled with flak flashes and tracer lines streaking across the darkened sky. Seven-and-a-half minutes before we were to drop, the red light flashed on and we stood up and hooked up.

Jumping With the General

This was General James M. Gavin's standard operational procedure. As soon as we crossed into enemy territory, he had his men ready to jump. That way, if our plane was hit by enemy fire, we could bale out at a rapid pace.

Since I was in the back of the plane, I started the sound off for equipment check. "Nineteen OK," then slapped the next man in front of me on the shoulder, "Eighteen OK," and so forth. Bullets were hitting the plane at this point and I'm sure each man wondered whether he would get hit even before he reached the ground?

Suddenly, we entered a dense cloudbank that was so thick you could not see the wing tips of the plane. The aircraft were flying in close formation, so this became a dangerous situation. Gavin thought it may have been a smoke cloud put up by the Germans. One always attributes anything unexpected in combat to the cleverness and guile of the enemy.

In an instant, the command was given by the jumpmaster, "Go!" followed by Gavin yelling "Let's Go!" as he jumped out the door. The men bailed out rapidly. Into the night sky, jumping straight down Hitler's chimney. Because of the pilot's apprehension with the density of flak around us, and the sight of burning planes going down, he was flying at a much higher speed and the initial prop blast shock was much more violent.

Actually, exiting the plane was quite dangerous since each paratrooper was weighed down quite heavily with equipment. We carried a loaded M-1 rifle, 156 more rounds of ammunition, a pistol with three loaded clips, an entrenching shovel, a knife, a water canteen, a first aid packet, four grenades, reserve rations, maps, and a raincoat. There was little time to worry about the dangers of the undertaking, however.

Hitting Water

The red, green and white pencil lines of tracer bullets were visible everywhere. The Germans were throwing everything at us. Search light beams crisscrossed the sky looking for flak targets. Burning planes lit the countryside. The Germans were trying to kill us as we floated to the ground.

You could hear the bullets whizzing by. I pulled down on the front risers of my 'chute to collapse it a bit, also called a 'chute slip, a common practice we were taught in paratrooper school. This allowed me to drop at a greater rate of speed. I held this until I feared I was getting too close to the ground. Easing back on the risers, I slowed my descent to a normal rate. In the dark it is hard to estimate how close you actually are to the ground. I unfastened my reserve 'chute and let it drop since the main chute had deployed successfully and it was no longer needed.

Within about five seconds after that, splash! I hit water and went completely under. After the initial shock, the struggle to reach the surface took every ounce of strength I had because of the sheer weight of my equipment. The wind and the current pulled the collapsed 'chute and dragged me forward, face down. The water was too deep to stand.

Still in a state of shock, I instantly recognized the seriousness of my situation. I struggled to get out of my 'chute right away by grabbing my M3 trench knife and cutting away the harness. That was a mistake. Desperation started to set in. My lungs felt like they were going to burst.

Saved by a Voice

I felt myself becoming light-headed and was to the point of going unconscious. I had a few quick words with the Lord and, despite what atheists may claim, I heard, in a very audible voice, "Roll over onto your back." As soon as I did, the 'chute that was drowning me by dragging me face down, was now planing me. along the top of the water, keeping my head up so I could breathe. My heart was pounding, but I was alive!

Half gasping and half choking, I coughed up some of the water that had gotten into my lungs. Once I realized my head would remain above water, I slowly began to retain [sic] my composure. I paddled and

kicked my way towards the shoreline until I could feel my feet touch. Once able to stand, on very shaky legs no less, I dragged my soaked and tired, but very grateful, body to the river's edge and unlatched my 'chute.

Sitting there alone catching my breath, I could hear the artillery and gunshots going off all around me. For the first time in my life I offered a sincere prayer of thanks to the Lord for sparing my life. At one point, a piece of shrapnel hit the ground and rolled within arm's reach. "Well," I thought, "that would make for a nice little souvenir to remember my first night into battle." "Ouch!" The shrapnel lasted only about a millisecond in my hand. Today's lesson learned. Shrapnel fresh from an explosion is still very hot!

Flooded by the Germans

I removed my equipment and began to get out as much water as I could to lessen the weight. I poured out my boots and squeezed as much water as I could out of the clothing. When I got to my mess kit, there was a minnow swimming around inside the container.

I learned afterwards I had landed in the Merderet River. ... To make matters worse, portions of land surrounding the river had been flooded by the Germans to hinder airborne operations. Much of the surrounding area had been hidden from aerial reconnaissance because of high grass. It was disguised as solid ground. What should have been a smaller shallow river was now much deeper and turned into a thousand-yard-wide lake. Many other paratroopers were not so lucky. They drowned under the weight of their equipment when they hit the flooded waters in the dark...

As is well known, the 507th was spread out over a greater area than any other parachute infantry regiment, from Cherbourg to Carentan, over 60 square miles by some estimates.

Much as other units had suffered from disorganization and dislocation, we paratroopers of the 82nd dealt with our problems and proceeded to accomplish our missions to the best of our abilities. The feeling was the Germans had their chance while the paratroopers were on their way down. Now it was the Americans' turn...

The Nazis were not Supermen

When the 82nd Airborne Division finally pulled out of the front lines to return to England, 16 of its 21 regimental and battalion commanders had been killed, captured or wounded. The Allied paratroopers landing in the dead of night did not have the advantage of a gigantic supporting cast just enumerated, nor the thousands of ships and aircraft spewing fire. They were on their own; small groups of courageous men, armed with little more than their rifles, dropping directly onto German defenses.

In Normandy, I had the privilege of serving under the proud banners of the 82nd Airborne Division. It gave richly of its strength and fought hard against the enemy. We fought for 33 days straight without let up or reinforcements.

In fact, from D-Day until D+33, it had ground up two German divisions which were never to fight as units again. The price was high. I can still see the morning report figures of those that remained and were present for duty from my own regiment, the 507th [Parachute Infantry Regiment] PIR. We dropped into Normandy 15 percent over strength (more than 2,500 men). Only 733 remained the day we went out.

Severe losses like these have paralyzed many divisions, but throughout the Normandy campaign, the 82nd never lost combat effectiveness. The division's infantry companies did most of the bleeding during desperate night actions and bloody slogs through hedgerows.

Their dead lay strewn from Sainte-Mere-Eglise to Amfreville to La Haye-du-Puits. Their deeds and bravery captured the hearts of Americans as their D-Day assault, at the time, was one of the nation's greatest successes. General Gavin had long been known to High Command, but now the press took to him and he became a public figure.

The 507th was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for its assault crossing the Merderet River, holding positions on the west side and stymieing large German forces. We knew the fighting forces of the Third Reich were not the supermen they thought they were. They could be beaten.

