



Department of South Carolina
SENTINEL



Commander – JIM FOX



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

South Carolina



Auxiliary President – LAURA "JO" SWEETSER

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SECOND QUARTER (Apr – Jun) 2023

***It's not the price you pay to become a member.
It's the price you paid to become eligible!***

Your VFW Worldwide Publications Award Winner for the Second Year in a Row

SURVEY QUESTION – Have you read any of the *SENTINEL* over the last year? YES or NO
Do you have any recommendations for changes? Send all responses to 4william6@gmail.com

HAVING PROBLEMS? NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE?...The “VETERANS CRISIS LINE” is open 24/7. Just call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1. It takes an average of 8 seconds for your call to be answered. You are NOT alone!

HOT!! – The three-digit crisis hotline is DIAL 988, then option 1

VA WOMEN VETERAN HELP LINES...1-855-829-6636 or www.womenshealth.va.gov

##The five signs of emotional suffering: PERSONALITY CHANGE, FEELING AGITATED, FEELING WITHDRAWN, POOR SELF-CARE AND FEELING HOPELESS.

If you are frequently in any one of those. PLEASE call one of the helplines listed above !

##Want to stay current with VA & VFW issues? Go to vfwac@vfw.org and sign-up for “Action CORPS Weekly”.

##Want to stay current with what is happening within the VFW in S.C.? Just go to VFWSC.org.

##GET YOUR FLU SHOT !! Why you are at it – Have you gotten a PNEUMONIA or SHINGLES shot. What about the COVID shot? How about the COVID Booster Shot? There are still over 200 people a week dying from COVID, the FLU or COVID like symptoms!

##Are you a veteran of Afghanistan? Or the family member of a veteran who served there? And you/they need some help. Contact 877 – WAR – VETS (877-927-8387). This is a 24/7 helpline.

*****In 2021 there were more than 8,000, military-on-military, sexual assaults reported to DoD. In 2016 DoD and the VA started a more earnest program to track and treat Military Sexual Trauma (MST). Since 2016 about 38% of female and four % of male veterans have reported experiencing MST.**

As of August 2022 there were 26,000 pending MST claims with the VA. The average claim processing time is 136 days. The VA now has 120 claims officers that are specifically trained to handle MST claims.

The VA wants any person who filed an MST claim before August 2018 and you received a denial from the VA, to re-file your claim. The VA is working on a backlog of 9,700 previously denied claims that they are re-opening and re-evaluating with claims officers now trained in MST issues.

Persons wishing to re-file should contact an MST Outreach Coordinator at your local VA Office or online at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/mstcoordinators.asp>

Or you can call a VBA Outreach Coordinator at 800-827-1000
If you have it, you may submit additional evidence with your claim.



VA Sexual Assault and Harassment Report Hotline: Veterans can now call 1.800.MYVA411 (1.800.698.2411, option 9)

to report sexual assault or sexual harassment at VA facilities. The call center is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors are also encouraged to report any incident of sexual harassment or sexual assault as soon as it occurs while still at the VA facility. These incidents can be reported directly to VA police, VA staff, local law enforcement, or by calling the hotline.

VA Waives Copays for American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans

How to receive this benefit

If you're an American Indian or Alaska Native Veteran, please submit the following by mail:

*A copy of any one of these [official tribal documents](#)

*A completed copy of VA Form 10-334. Download VA Form 10-334 by visiting VA's [Find a Form search tool](#).

Please do not mail your original copies. Copies of Veteran documentation can be mailed to:

VHA Tribal Documentation
PO Box 5100
Janesville, WI 53547-5100

Learn more about [copay rates on VA.gov](#) or call 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411) for more information.

NOTE: There are many American Indian Tribes in S.C. If you know someone who might benefit from this change? Please notify them or one of their family members.

RECOGNIZING SOME S.C. PRISONERS of WAR (POW)

Back in April when your new Commander Jim Fox and new Chief-of-Staff Ginger Graham had other titles and positions, they attended a get-together for two S.C. POW's. Commander Fox was so impressed with this outing that he is planning a POW/MIA recognition day event on

September 15th. There are currently 10 former POW'S living in S.C.. Commander Fox is hoping to get them all to attend.

During the organized April visit in Summerville, Commander Fox and Chief-of-Staff Graham met with F-4 back-seaters Dick Vaughan and Rick McDow (Mr. Vaughan, left & Mr. McDow, right).



McDow was in F-4 Phantom II Combat Crew Training from May 1971 to January 1972. His first assignment was as an F-4 Weapons System Officer with the 390th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Da Nang AB, South Vietnam, from January 1972 until he was forced to eject over North Vietnam and was taken as a Prisoner of War on June 27, 1972. After spending 275 days in captivity, Lt McDow was released during Operation Homecoming on March 28, 1973

Dick Vaughan completed Undergraduate Navigator Training and was awarded his navigator wings at Mather AFB, California, in January 1971, followed by Weapon Systems Officer (WSO) training and F-4 Phantom II Combat Crew Training at George AFB, California, from January to September 1971. He served as an F-4D WSO with the 555th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Udorn Royal Thai AFB, Thailand, from October 1971 until he was forced to eject over North Vietnam and was taken as a Prisoner of War on December 18, 1971. After spending 467 days in captivity, Lt Vaughan was released during Operation Homecoming on March 28, 1973.

****Photos and article courtesy of Ginger Graham**

THE END OF AN ERA AT POST 10804 AND THE S.C. VFW



When someone runs for an elected or appointed position at the Post, or any other level. They usually serve in that position, or other positions, for a year or two before moving on to something else. The 2023-2024 elections have come to a close at North Myrtle Beach Post 10804, and for the first time in **19** years DAN FARLEY'S name does not appear next to the elected Quartermaster position. Saying it was time! Dan removed his name from consideration in this year's elections. Dan became a VFW Life Member in 2002 and in 2004 he was

first elected as the Post Quartermaster.

How long has Dan been a Quartermaster? Well, Richard Nixon first asked Dan to run during his U.S. Presidency! (truth)

Cathey says Dan bleeds Red-White-and Blue and loves the VFW and Post 10804. Dan is well known and respected throughout the S.C. VFW. Fact of the matter is, Dan and wife Cathey have been a "Super-Couple" when it comes to the VFW and Auxiliary. Cathey has served at every level of the Auxiliary and has/is serving at the National level. Dan, always at her side!

Thank You DAN & CATHEY!!!



VA HEALTHCARE RECORDS – In case you are not aware. The VA is in the process of putting all of your health care records on a singular electronic file (Electronic Health Records-EHR) where they can be easily accessed by not only the VA but any of your other medical providers. Right now they have five locations operating in the country under this system.

In April, the VA put a halt to further installations because of a "reset" of the system improvement priorities in the current five locations and future locations.

The VA has not said when or if they will continue the installation of this planned VA wide electronic record keeping system.

Print & Electronic News and Social Media – Some interesting facts:

- *1,800** local newspapers shut down between 2004 and 2018
- *50%** of Americans believe most national news outlets intend to mislead, misinform, or persuade the public
- *26%** is the number of Americans who have a favorable opinion of the news media
- *82%** of Americans get their news through digital devices
- *64%** of Americans think Social media is bad for democracy



- *34% of Americans who trust the media to report news fully, accurately and fairly divided
- *10% of Americans still believe the earth is flat.
- *12% of Americans still believe NASA faked the moon landings
- *57% of Americans who believe genetically modified crops were unsafe to eat in 2015. Up from 25% in 2001

RECRUITING – As of mid-March, there are 21 comrades (20 stateside and one overseas) that have recruited more than 100 each, new or reinstated members. Have YOU recruited your first member this year?



Dillon Post 6091 – Showed the way on how a Post should honor a National Day of Service. Post members Jim Chavis, Timmy Hooks, Chris Norris and Commander John Harlow visited three different nursing homes in their area. They met with nine (9) different veterans from all branches of the military. Post 6091 presented each veteran with a “Prayer Shawl” (made by the Union Baptist Church of Latta) and a VFW Certificate of Appreciation. Post 6091

members also talked with each veteran individually and sang (I wish I had a recording of that) the Branch of Service song to each veteran they visited. An amazing way to let our veterans in nursing homes, senior centers, and retirement homes know THEY ARE NOT FORGOTTEN!

The PACT Act and Post 9-11 Veterans

The one-year special health care enrollment period for post-9/11 combat Veterans began October 1, 2022.

You may already know the **PACT Act** expands **health care eligibility** for many Veterans. One group that may be eligible for expanded benefits are **post-9/11 Veterans**. A one-year special health care enrollment period for post-9/11 combat Veterans began on October 1, 2022. Help spread the word before the special enrollment period ends.

Post-9/11 Veterans health care eligibility

If you meet the requirements below, you can enroll in VA health care before October 1, 2023. To be eligible, one of the following must be true:

*You served on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Persian Gulf War, **or**

*You served in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities after November 11, 1998

And both of these must be true:

*You were discharged or released between September 11, 2001, and October 1, 2013, **and**

*You haven't enrolled in VA health care before

Post-9/11 Veterans discharged or released on or after October 1, 2013, are not subject to the special enrollment period but can enroll within 10 years of their separation or discharge date. Review [more eligibility requirements](#) on VA.gov.

We encourage Veterans to apply, no matter their separation date. Your eligibility depends on your service history and other factors.

My HealthVet and your health care

If you're already enrolled in VA health care and have questions about what the PACT Act might mean for you, VA can help. [Sign-in](#) to your [Premium](#) account and send a [Secure Message](#) to ask who you can talk to about the the PACT Act. With My HealthVet, you can also [view and organize](#) your health information, like your providers and closest [VA facility](#).

NOTE: As of the end of April, the VA announced that Veterans and their survivors have filed more than 500,000 claims for toxic exposure-related benefits under the PACT Act since President Biden signed it into law Aug. 10, 2022. To date, VA has awarded more than \$1 billion in earned benefits to Veterans and survivors who filed PACT Act-related claims.

Membership Transfers – Are you doing it by the book (Article I, Section 107, Transfers)

As part of a member transfer acceptance. To assure the perspective transfer member is leaving their old post with no financial or other obligations. Your Post should have available to sign and the perspective new member must make the following written declaration :

I hereby certify that it is my desire to transfer my membership. I further certify that I am not indebted to my former Post, be it through oral or written commitment or otherwise, and that, to the best of my knowledge, no written charges have been preferred against me by my former Post and I understand that any such indebtedness or charge which may be disclosed anytime thereafter will render this transfer null-and-void.

Member should surrender old post ID Card to accepting Quartermaster.

VFW'S NATIONWIDE #STILLSERVING MOVEMENT

Is your Post, District or the State doing good things for veterans and your local community? The VFW wants to know about it so they can show the world that YOU, the veteran, are continuing to do good things while still in uniform, or after the uniform is long-gone. [#StillServing is that avenue](#). Just go to the VFW Website, click on COMMUNITY, drop down to #StillServing and fill in the information and hit send.

ENJOYING CHARLESTON



National Auxiliary President JANE REAPE came to SC to help SC Auxiliary President BETH TUFTS celebrate her homecoming. But before that could happen, they were off to Charleston and a Carriage Ride around the city.



T Sgt Robert C. Fulda Post 3433 of Summerville played host to your Auxiliary President's Homecoming. As you can see, there was a good crowd on hand, the food was good and the Homecoming festivities very entertaining.

DRIVING SAFETY – Are you aware that in 2022, for the FIRST TIME, more people died on South Carolina highways from "Distracted Driver's" than from Drunk Drivers. For the most part,

distracted drivers are person's doing something with their phone, i-pad, computer, or something else that is taking their attention away from driving their vehicle.

Is a phone call or text message worth you dying for, or for you killing someone else?????

RECRUITING – The top 10 SC VFW recruiters as of May 20th are:

CLAYTON JOHNSON –	122	Post 3137
TODD HAVILAND -	104	Post 10420
ED STEFANAK Jr. -	101	State Commander & Post 9539
ELLA CALVERT -	31	State Quartermaster & Post 1107910420
RICHARD SLONIM -	26	Post 445
JAY HART -	22	Post 4262
HARRY BAUSMAN -	17	Post 3034
ROGER KERSEY -	14	Post 10420
CONNEL FARLEY -	13	Post 9539
LAVERNE WILLIAMS	12	Post 4262

CONGRATULATIONS ON A GREAT RECRUITING JOB!!!

CONGRATULATIONS TO Commander STEFANAK Jr. for being VFW Division 4 Top Recruiter in May

SC VFW WINNERS AT THE KANSAS CITY SPREE



Three members from the state were treated to a super extended weekend in Kansas City for being the #1 recruiting Posts and District in their division. TODD HAVILAND, Post 10420 and Bo Stallings, Post 3137 were recognized for having the #1 and #2 Posts in VFW Division 1. Curtis Peterson, Post 10624 & District 1 was recognized for having the #1 District in VFW Division 4. Commander Haviland was also recognized for being a “Century” (100 or more) recruiter.

Besides the VFW paid trip, they were treated to trips to a WWI Museum, Ft Leavenworth (they did let Todd leave), a Buffalo Soldier presentation, a Dinner Theatre, and a couple of social events.

MAYBE – this is something you commanders should strive for, for the upcoming year.

*****IF EVERY COMRADE RECRUITED JUST ONE NEW MEMBER IN 2023-2024, WE COULD DOUBLE THE SIZE OF THE VFW TO OVER 1 and ½ MILLION MEMBERS AND MAKE THE VFW VOICE ON CAPITAL HILL A VOICE TO BE RECOGNIZED AGAIN*****

Memorial Day Weekend 2023 in Myrtle Beach



The traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall was in Myrtle Beach Memorial Day Weekend. Attending the ceremonies and presenting a wreath at The Wall are North Myrtle Beach Post 10804 members Bob Jones, Jr., Bill Lackey (Post 10804 Event Chairperson), Mike Mallory (Commander), Stephen Galchick (Post Jr Vice Commander) and Bill La Monte. Not pictured is Dan Farley (he did not want to get wet) and **101 YEAR OLD WWII Veteran BOB JONES** (we did not want him to get wet).

****DO YOUR MEMBERS KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON****

I once queried a Post Commander on how his membership was getting the word on what was going on at the Post. His response was “if the members want to know what’s going on at the Post, they should attend the meetings”. To me, this was a very poor response. With only 3 to 10% of a Post membership and less than a 4% of a District membership attending a Post or District meeting. HOW do the rest of the members know what is going on?

I know of Post and District Meeting Minutes that are produced right before, and distributed only for the next meeting. So, the only people who see the minutes are those members who were at that last meeting and were part of the minutes. What about the other 90 to 96% of your membership?

Some Post Commanders say their calendar spreads the word. But, does the calendar say anything about the success of your Poppy drive? Does it tell of the success of your Blood Donor drive? Does it tell everyone where your membership stands and what it is going to take to get to your Post membership goals? Does it tell of the food drive your Post held for homeless veterans?. I THINK YOU GET THE POINT.

You have to have minutes from your meeting. Why not get them done within 1 week of the meeting. Then post them on your Post Bulletin Board, Post Bulletin, Website or Facebook page, or Newsletter (if

you have one). Districts should do the same thing and the District Commander should mandate that each Post in their District distribute District meeting minutes within one week of the meeting.

I have always maintained that the #1 reason for loss of membership is ...the lack of COMMUNICATION at all levels of the State VFW. Both, between the newer members and their Posts and the Posts and Districts failing to connect with the majority of their memberships.

SENTINEL Editor

Membership Eligibility – You have a potential new recruit and in checking their potential eligibility, you see their DD 214 states they have the Air Force Expeditionary Service Medal. There are 3 versions of this medal.

If you check page 63 of the Manual of Procedure, a person is only VFW eligible if the ribbon has the GOLD BORDER. If you look up this medal, you will see that only the GOLD BORDER means that person served in a COMBAT ZONE AND received HOSTILE FIRE pay.

SOUTH CAROLINA VFW IN THE NEWS

South Carolina VFW Members are some of the most generous and giving in the country, and we want to showcase all of the good things you are doing in your communities here on this website. In addition, your stories may receive publication in the South Carolina VFW Newsletter and across our social media channels. Send anything you feel has made your community a little brighter — no matter how big or small the event.

Some things include (but are not limited to) feeding the hungry, helping the homeless, mentoring, assisting the elderly, community clean up, fundraising, disaster assistance, troop care packages, repairs, first responder support, etc. You tell us! We know you are already doing magnificent things throughout the State of South Carolina to pay it forward while honoring Veterans.

For all you 'LEFTIES' (left-handed) out there – Did you know you were unique and slightly rare. Throughout recorded time, only about 9% of the world population has been/ is LEFT-HANDED!

Do your part to preserve the legacy of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Sign up a new member this year!

*****By becoming a LEGACY LIFE member. You will live on in the history of your Post and State, be immortalized at National Headquarters and you will feel good about yourself. Check out a LEGACY LIFE MEMBERSHIP today!**



How old do you have to be to be too old for participating in your Post Poppy Program.? Well...according to WWII Coast Guard veteran BOB JONES, 101 is NOT the number. He is seen here (on the right) with fellow Post 10804 members Dan Farley and Bob Jones Jr (a retired Army Colonel) as they did their two hour stint in front of a local Walmart that is an avid supporter of the Post Poppy Program

Does TRICARE Cover Care When Traveling Overseas?

By TRICARE Communications

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – Exploring different countries and cultures is exciting. As you plan your trip, you may have some questions about what coverage TRICARE offers when you travel overseas. It’s important to prepare for your trip with your health care in mind.

“While traveling overseas, the rules for getting care depend on your sponsor status, your health plan, and your location,” said Michael Griffin, program analyst with the TRICARE Overseas Program Office at the Defense Health Agency. “Being prepared to seek health care while traveling is as important as packing the right clothes for your trip. You should know your options for accessing care overseas, as well as what you’ll need to do when you return home.”

The following questions and answers will help you prepare for your trip and learn how to get health care overseas if you need it.

Q: Does TRICARE cover me if I need emergency care?

A: Yes. If you reasonably think you have an [emergency](#), call the emergency number of the country you’re in, or go to the nearest emergency room. The TRICARE Overseas contractor, [International SOS](#), provides 24/7 support if you need urgent or emergency care. [Choose the country](#) where you’re located for a list of contact numbers, including the Medical Assistance number.

If you’re admitted to the hospital overnight, notify the [TRICARE Overseas Program Regional Call Center](#) within 24 hours or on the next business day. After you return home, contact your health care provider, as you may need follow-up care.

Under certain circumstances, TRICARE may cover [air evacuations](#).

Q: What should I do if I get sick on my trip?

A: For medical conditions that aren't emergencies but need professional attention within 24 hours or any other nonemergency care, active duty service members must seek care at military hospitals or clinics when possible. Everyone else should follow their health plan's [rules for getting urgent care overseas](#). If you need to quickly find a provider overseas, use the [provider search tool](#) or call [International SOS](#).

If you need medical advice, the [Military Health System Nurse Advice Line](#) might be an option. It's a free service available outside the United States in any country with a [military hospital or clinic](#).

Remember that whatever type of health care you receive, you may need to pay up front and file a claim with the [overseas claims processor](#) to be reimbursed. Be sure to keep all receipts associated with your care.

Q: Can I refill a prescription overseas?

A: If you must fill prescription while traveling, remember:

- [Military pharmacies](#) are an option if one is close by.

[TRICARE retail network pharmacies](#) are only located in the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. As outlined in the [TRICARE Pharmacy Program Handbook](#), if you go to an [overseas pharmacy](#), be prepared to pay for your prescription up front and [file a pharmacy claim](#) with the overseas contractor for reimbursement on covered drugs.

Q: Do I need to purchase additional travel health insurance?

A: No, but it's a personal decision. If you're considering buying extra health insurance, keep in mind that all private and travel insurance policies pay before TRICARE. If you get care while traveling overseas, you'll need to file your claim for reimbursement with your travel insurance first. Then [submit the claim to TRICARE](#), along with the explanation of benefits from your travel insurance provider for the care you received.

Q: What else should I do before I leave on my trip?

A: TRICARE suggests several items to put on your pre-travel to-do list:

*Before you leave check that your personal and contact information is up to date in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). If your information is incorrect in DEERS, it could affect your TRICARE coverage.

*Get any routine health care needs completed before traveling overseas.

*Refill your prescriptions before traveling. If you tell your doctor about your upcoming travel, they can authorize up to a 90-day supply. Pack your prescriptions in your carry-on bag so you'll have them with you if your luggage is delayed or lost.

*Depending on where you're traveling, check with your doctor to ensure you're up to date with all necessary [vaccinations](#). Call well ahead of time so you can schedule an appointment and get vaccinated prior to your departure.

*Download the [TRICARE Contact Wallet Card](#). It lists the numbers to use if you need health care services or support when traveling.

A WORD from Your State Chaplain – WILTON FOWLER



Comrades we have lost some very precious comrades and Auxiliary members this past year and I have attended many of their going home services and tried to bring comfort to these family members and friends.

Death is something we all will face unless Jesus comes back before our time to go.

Sickness touches almost every home and every post and district within our Department at some time or another, do I have an answer to death and sickness, NO I'm sorry I do not I only know that God said he would never leave us nor forsake us, he would go with us every step of the way.

Comrades our Department has gone through some trying times this year, yes we have seen some great things membership is up programs are at their peak, and all should be well, but it is not. We have lost our comradery, we will always have differences but we should be able to overcome them if we will only judge ourselves and not others so much.

Jesus said let him that has no sin cast the first stone and those gathered around him bowed their head and walked away shameful. Comrades let's not wait until we stand before a coffin draped with the colors of our country to realize how much we really mean to one another, United we Stand Divided we Fall and no one does more for Veterans than You "The Veterans of Foreign Wars" does for each other

Comrades I wish to thank every Commander every Chaplain every member of each post and it's auxiliary this year for keeping me as Chaplain in the loop of things happening within your area this year and if reelected I will do my very best to be the State Chaplain this Department deserves and I will do my best to hold myself to a higher standard as your spiritual brother in Christ.

May God bless each of you and your families in this coming year 2023-2024

YOUR State Chaplain Wilton Fowler 864-414-1753 wlf61542@aol.com

SOME STATE MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

As of June 17, 2023 According to National Records

The Top 5 Posts in Membership Numbers

1 - 3137 Isle of Palms	1165 members
2 – 4262 Columbia	811 members
3 – 10420 Murrells Inlet	782 members
4 – 3433 Summerville	621 members
5 – 10804 North Myrtle Beach	458 members

*There are 19 Posts with less than 50 members

*****There are 1,583 SC VFW members listed as “At-Large” (no post affiliation). EVERY Post should be working on this list to try and improve membership at their posts.**

Strapped for Cash – And you’re thinking of using one of those on-line money loan apps to get a quick \$100, or more? Of the top 15 of those in the country.

- *Most want access to your checking account so they have a means to get their money back
- *Most charge up to 28% interest (not annually, but at the time you attempt to pay off the loan). The range here being between 6 and 28% with 15% being the average.
- *Most want you to join a membership which charges an annual fee.
- *Most ask for a ‘tip’ for using their services (15% or more)
- *Most can charge you up to **500%** annual interest rate if you don’t pay off the loan in a timely manner

So, just how important is it to have that immediate \$100 or more???????????? Just think what this would cost you if you went after \$,000 or more.

SHALL

As defined by Webster means; WILL HAVE TO, or MUST. To express a COMMAND or EXHORTATION.

Used in REGULATIONS and DIRECTIVES to express what is MANDATORY.

YOUR Manual of Procedure, National and State By Laws are full of instances where the word SHALL is used.

Unfortunately; there are Districts and Posts within our state and I would imagine every state and territory that a VFW exists, that do not comply with many of the ‘shall’s’ in these documents.
EXAMPLE: State by Laws ARTICLE IV, Section 1 states that Posts and Districts have to attend State Conferences and Conventions. To be legally represented, that means that at least the Commander, Sr or Jr Vice must attend for the Post /District to get credit for attending and to be able to vote. Sending your Adjutant, Quartermaster, Trustee or anyone not listed above. Means your post is not legally represented and not eligible to vote on any issue or election AND does not get credit on the State Report Card

Your State By Laws

*Article IV, Sec 1 states that at least one Commander, Sr Vice, Jr Vice SHALL attend the Department Conference and Convention. Only these positions have the authority to vote during a Department Convention or Conference.

You can’t send your Quartermaster or a member to give your post credit for attending, or for participating in the voting process.

BOTTOM LINE – SHALL means it is NOT optional and compliance is expected.

Are you still writing checks to pay bills or send someone money? The U.S. Department of the Treasury Financial Crimes Enforcement- Network wants you to stop writing and start going paperless. Here's why:

*Check fraud has doubled in the last year to over 680,000 cases reported.

*In 2021 the US Postal service received over 300,000 cases of reported check theft in the mail. In 2022 it rose to just short of 400,000 cases.

*Check thieves also use your check info to make fake Identification, open credit lines and in some cases even start a small business.

If you have to write checks the Treasury Dept. recommends using a "Security Pen" who's thick/adhesive ink makes it almost impossible to wash-off or erase. **The Uni-Ball 207 Series pen is recommended.**

***Also, DO NOT put your Phone Number or Social Security number on a check.**

***The post office recommends only putting checks in a Post office Mailbox, NOT your home mailbox**

Thefts through paperless check sending are almost non-existent. Your bank can show you how to do this.

A LITTLE 4th of JULY TRIVIA

Answers on the last page

***How many people signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4th?**

***On what day was the Declaration signed by most people (trick question?)**

***When did Independence Day become a national holiday?**

***Is anything written on the back of the Declaration of Independence?**

***Where is the Declaration of Independence document today?**

***Where was George Washington when the Declaration of Independence was written?**

***In what year were fireworks first used in an official 4th of July celebration?**

***How many Presidents have died on July 4th?**

***What happened on July 4th 1960?**

***What was Paul Revere's occupation?**

For all you Patriot Riders, Rolling Thunder and all other veteran affiliated motorcycle clubs. This one's for you:

****Do you know that Harley Davidson Motorcycles has been affiliated with the military since 1916?** During WW II Harley Davidson trained over 1000,000 soldiers how to operate and repair their motorcycles. This included service in harsh field conditions with limited tools. In all, Harley Davidson provided over 70,000 motorcycles by wars end.

During the Mexican Border Campaign of 1916, General Pershing used 24 motorcycles with sidecar gun carriages that could carry 6,000 rounds of ammunition.

On November 12th 1918 the 1st American to step foot on German soil after the Armistice was signed, was an Army Corporal riding a Harley Davidson Motorcycle.

Another Fact: Are you aware that there are over 30 replicas of "Lady Liberty" (our Statue of Liberty) in various countries throughout the world?

Military Strength by State: SC ranks #10 in the number of Active-Duty troops stationed in a state (around 37,500). California is #1 with about 157,700.

Our newest Command, US Space Force is also our smallest Command with about 8,400 active-duty personnel. In 2023 they will add 532 enlisted and 42 officers to those numbers.

The above courtesy of American Legion Magazine

+2023 ANNUAL DEPARTMENT CONVENTION 22-25 June 2023

- **CONGRATULATIONS TO COMMANDER ED STEFANAK, Jr FOR EARNING THE “TRIPLE CROWN AWARD” and**
- **AUXILIARY PRESIDENT BETH TUFTS FOR EARNING THE “CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE” AWARD !! 😊 and**
- **CATHEY FARLEY BEING ELECTED TO NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR NC & SC**

A special welcome to VFW National Representatives, National Chief of Staff - CYNTHIA ARCHULETA and VFW Auxiliary National President - JANE REAPE



COMMANDER ED STEFANAK'S, Jr. HOMECOMING



Commander Stefanak, jr. had his Homecoming at the Convention in order to make it more accessible to comrades around the state. As you can see, a good time was had by all attendees. Commander Stefanak, Jr. was also presented a Quilt of Valor during the Homecoming

Some of my Notes From The Friday Council of Administration and Saturday Business Meetings (unofficial)

Council of Administration Meeting

- *One District did not attend the CofA
- *There are 6 Districts at 100%+ membership
- **There are 6 Districts that have made All State and All American this year
- *54 of 66 Posts in the state have made 100%, or more, membership

Saturday Business Meeting

- *By-Laws Chairman, PSC Rodney Burne read the Convention Rules
- *Finances and Budget for the state are in good shape

- *Several Posts are not eligible to vote in an election because they did not pay their Delegate Fees
- *Veteran & Military Support Chairman reported 1,411 instances veteran support of, and \$129,900 provided to veterans in need
- *Adopt a Unit – It was reported that 14 Posts adopted 18 military units, BUT only 7 Posts actually held an event with their adopted unit. The VMSP Chairman is hoping to get to 20 adopted units.
- *The State Inspector reported that in his travels. The biggest misunderstanding that Post and Districts have is in how to Incorporate.
- *COOTIES – The National Grand reported that 10,000 worldwide COOTIES contributed \$4.2 MILLION in aid to hospitalized veterans
- * The new National Legislative Chairman for SC VFW is RENEE MACDONALD
- *YOUR State is at 104+% membership, at this writing, SC was tied for 3^d place in the nation.
- *The Membership Trophy went from District 8 to District 7
- * YOUR VSO processed 64 veteran claims for Apr-Jun.
- *State By Laws changes:
 ARTICLE IX, Section 3 was amended to include a 48 hour Council Member notice on any called for vote happening between Council meetings
 ARTICLE XII, Section 11 was amended to require a budget line item for any infusion of cash due to a savings type fund liquidation
 ARTICLE IV was added to not allow the use of any savings, investments type monies to balance a budget short-fall.
 Two other proposed amendments failed.

*****DWIGHT HORA was endorsed by the state to be the SC candidate for the 2026-2027 National Jr. Vice Commander in Chief election.**

*****Commander Stefanak, Jr presented “Commander’s Coins” to all of his staff and Committee Chairperson’s**

DEPARTMENT & AUXILIARY 2023 AWARDEES

DEPARTMENT

Outstanding Post Commander – Christine Rogers, Post 11079

Post of the Year – Eli W. Williamson, Post 6091

Outstanding Post Chaplain – Eddie Thomas, Post 3096

All State Team 2022-2023

**Rear Admiral J.J. Raby, Post 445
 John M. Dangerfield, Post 9509**

**Walter N. Brownell, Post 3137
 Goose Creek, Post 10256**

Glenn L. Jeffers, Post 10624
 Gandy Griffin, Post 4262
 Lake Murray, Post 6740
 Lexington, Post 8738
 Golden Strip Memorial, Post 1845
 Captain John P. Monahan, Post 12136
 Georgetown Memorial, Post 6444
 North Myrtle Beach, Post 10804
 Spartansburg, Post 9539

Colleton County, Post 12102
 Chester D. Townsend, Post 6561
 Lake Wateree, Post 8346
 Robert R. Larson, Post 11079
 Captain Charles F. Gandy, Jr., Post 6734
 Eli W. Williamson, Post 6091
 Murrells Inlet, Post 10420
 Wild Cat, Post 3447
 Adams-Hamilton, Post 6932

All State Districts 2022-2023

District 1 District 2 District 4 District 7 District 8



Lifetime Achievement Award Earners: Dallas Landrum, James Taylor, Bill King, Wilton Fowler

SOME VFW AWARD WINNERS





Community Service Post of the Year

AUXILIARY

Outstanding Auxiliary Presidents by Group

Group 1 – TAMMY SAIN, Auxiliary 12207, District 4

Group 2 – STACIE BANISTER, Auxiliary 1845, District 4

Group 3 – ELINOR FIBEL, Auxiliary 8738, District 2

Group 4 – GEORGE PAGE, Auxiliary 3137, District 1

Outstanding Members

KARLA MEEKINS-STOLZ – Outstanding **Auxiliary Chairman** from 10804 North Myrtle Beach

SUZANNE TAYLOR – Outstanding **Auxiliary President** from 12136 IndianLand

LISA LEVANGIE-COLON – Outstanding **Auxiliary Secretary** from 8346 Lake Wateree

JANET DESJARDINS – Outstanding **Auxiliary Treasurer** from 12136 IndianLand

FRANKLIN STRICKLAND – Outstanding **District President** from 10804 North Myrtle Beach

KATHY McPHERSON – Outstanding **Hospital Volunteer** from 12136 IndianLand

BARBARA SHULER – Outstanding **Veterans & Family Support Chairman** from 2779 Orangeburg

ROMONA BRANDON – Outstanding **Legislative Program Chairman**

ANDY MACHEMER – Outstanding **Auxiliary Member** from 6740 Leesville





RESPECT



HONORING A GOLD STAR MOTHER



THE COMMANDER PRESENTING HIS CHAMPIONSHIP BELT TO LEXI



AROUND THE CONVENTION







STATE COMMANDER JIM FOX INAUGURATION



DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT LAURA JO SWEETSIR INAUGURATION



YOUR NEWLY ELECTED/APPOINTED OFFICERS

VFW

Commander - **Jim Fox**
 Sr Vice Cdr - **Janet Chisolm-Richard.**
 Jr Vice Cdr - **Todd Haviland**
 QM - **Dennis Hamilton**
 Adjutant - **John Penman**
 State Chaplain - **Wilton Fowler**
 Chief of Staff - **Ginger Graham**
 State Surgeon - **Gene Bryant**
 State Inspector – **Jeff Henry**
 State Judge Advocate - **Betty Hilliard**

AUXILIARY

President – **Laura Jo Sweetsir**
 Sr Vice Pres – **DonnaMarie King**
 Jr Vice Pres – **Marietta Hill**
 Secretary – **Lisa Levangie-Colon**
 Treasurer – **Jane Fox**
 Chaplain – **Barbara Schuler**
 Conductress – **Sarahbeth Earnest**
 Guard – **Chamarlyn Canzater**
 Chief-of-Staff - **Joanne Sullivan**

D1 - **Curtis Peterson**
D2 - **Charles Holloway**
D4 - **Mike Sudik**
D5 - **James Taylor**
D6 – **Richard Parker**
D7 - **Ed Valentin**
D9 - **Kurt Knouse**
Natl Council of Admin **Ted Tufts**
Natl and State Legislative **Renee MacDonald**
Natl and State VMS **Darren Wiseman**
Community Service **Nick Camera**
VFW VSO **John Johnson**
VFW Claims Consultant **Nicole Johnson**
Teacher/Award **Chris Norris**
PP/VOD **Charles Holloway**
Membership CPT **Reedy Hopkins**
Membership Co-CPT **Mary Azbell**
Budget and Finance **Robert Suzansky**
Buddy Poppy???
Webmaster **Ted Tufts**
Honor Guard CPT **John Bacon**
National Home **Todd Haviland**
State Newsletter Editor **Bill La Monte**

The elections are over:

The bad thing is that there were **23 Posts NOT eligible** to vote at the Sunday elections and an additional **20 Posts**, eligible to participate, but **DID NOT** attend the convention. This left 23 posts to decide on who would be your state leadership in 2023-2024.

Let’s hope the state does a lot better with Post attendance at the Mid-Winter Conference and State Convention this coming year.

The 2023 State Convention is over. There were close to 260 registered VFW & Auxiliary members.

“MOVING FORWARD”



My goals for the 2023-2024 year – JIM FOX, COMMANDER

- 1.** Bring on a 2nd VSO part time to help with the huge workload of the DSO office.
- 2.** Have a successful POW/MIA event at the Citadel honoring in state former POW'S celebrating the 50 year anniversary of the release of these heroes from Hanoi Hilton.

3.In conjunction with the POW event raising much needed funds for our DSO office our goal is 50k plus in sponsorship money. Already well on our way to achieving that goal with lots more door knocking to do.

4.Continue the great community service our posts and districts do and strive to have them report there hours so we can continue to grow in this area.

5.Achieve 102% plus in membership from the posts right up to the Dept. Each post must recruit or reinstate a min of 5 new members to qualify for All State honors. Increase our total membership to 15,500 plus for 2023-2024.



Meet your new Auxiliary President – LAURA JO SWEETSIR – I

was born in Memphis, TN and raised in Holly Springs, MS and Memphis. I graduated from Bible College with a degree in Elementary Education. I married Robert Sweetsir in 1985 and we have two children and two grand-children. We moved to SC in 1998.

I earned my Auxiliary eligibility through my husband Bob, who served on the Aircraft Carrier Enterprise during the evacuation of Saigon. I joined the VFW Auxiliary at Post 9273 in 2004 and later joined the Post 8131 Auxiliary. I have held most all offices up through Post Auxiliary President. The same now goes for the Department Level, now having achieved the greatest honor of becoming your Department Auxiliary President. UNTIL NOW, I would have to say my greatest Auxiliary Achievement was earning

the National Most Outstanding Mentor recognition during the 2021-2022 year. I am all for training people to take my job. I am all for training all members on the importance of following the Manual of Procedure, Rituals and By-Laws. Mentoring and training will assure that new members and new officers are prepared to follow the right path in the VFW Auxiliary.

I want to make sure MY Year is known for everyone working together as a team to accomplish our goal of being much more involved then in the past. I believe we have become somewhat complacent during this COVID Pandemic. It is time to come together in meetings, in volunteering and in serving our veterans and their families. Especially those in need.

My Special Project is to work with Commander Jim Fox to increase the funding for our State Veteran Service Office in order to get a paid part-time Administrative Assistant to take a lot of the paper-work burden off of our VSO Officer and his VFW Claims Consultant assistant. The more those two can concentrate on helping veterans, the more, more veterans can be helped in SC.

MY theme is **“Hunting for Lost Treasures”**. It is my belief that all inactive members, are lost members. I want to help them find their way home. Who knows what valuable skills and experience they can bring back to the table. This will involve actively seeking out those who have not renewed their memberships over the last few years. To do this, I want to set up a “phone-tree” system with each Post Auxiliary and ask them to reach out to every member on their roster. If they are current on dues, but not active? Ask them why? If it is something as simple as needing a ride to a meeting, make that happen. If they have become disenchanted? See what it might take to bring them back to being involved and attending meetings. If no longer a member? Ask why and what it might take to bring them back (tell them of the

good things the Auxiliary is currently doing and what's in the immediate future). I don't want to forget the Life Members on that roster who are no longer involved. We have to see why they left and if there is a chance to get them back.

I am thrilled that you chose me to lead you this year. It is going to be an exciting and productive year for every member of the SC VFW Auxiliary as we go forth and do what we do best. Helping our Posts and Districts and taking care of our veterans.

Sincerely
Laura Jo Sweetsir

My Parting Message

Triple Crown Commander Ed Stefanak Jr.



SC-Mania has come to an end. At the beginning of this year the energy in the department ran wild and it showed up in all our numbers. Community service was higher this year than it has ever been and of course membership was legendary. As I write this last letter, we are 105.03%. I'd like to thank the 7 Districts (D1, D2, D4, D5, D6, D7, and D8) who achieved 100% membership. I'd also like to thank the 57 posts out of 66 that reached 100% membership.

No crazy ideas went into this Legendary year. All I asked at the beginning is that you did your community service, distribute poppies, do membership drives and run a good solid, concise meeting at the district and post level.

I also asked that you celebrate all the VFW Commemorative dates and take care of the veterans in your respective areas. The things that we are

supposed to do.

As the youngest State Commander in this department, I was met with many challenges. Each challenge was unique in their own ways. I had to make decisions that were ignored and put aside for years. I'd like to thank my core 3, State Adjutant Kevin Joy, State QM Ella Calvert, and our Administrative Assistant Gene Bryant for all their hard work and dedication to the mission to make these challenges easy to figure out. I'd also like to thank my line officers for carrying out their duties diligently. Especially our State Inspector Eddie Williams who I had working on weekends and holidays, but he got a steak dinner out of it.

Because of all your hard work, I was able to earn the Triple Crown. For those of you who don't know what that means, I earned All-American at the Post level (2010-2011/2019-2020) the District level (2019-2020) and of course at the Department this year. I'm the 4th State Commander in this department to achieve this. We also have the highest membership percentage that this Department has ever enjoyed, we set the bar high this year. Job well done.

Finally, a new challenge is ahead of me. I was hired by National as the new Eligibility Coordinator in the Membership Department. I am humbled to serve in this position, and I will represent South Carolina honorably. I am going to always be part of our great department and I will be seeing you all at our conferences and conventions. I

wish our New Commander Jim Fox and his administration the very best this year.
Congratulations Jim and Good Luck!

TREE OF VALOR DISPLAY

Lori & Lexi were with us, and as usual, Lori and her small group of volunteers did a wonderful job in setting up the Christmas trees that honor all veterans. Lexi had a good time meeting veterans and giving out Girl Scout cookies.



Picture 2 is a stark reminder of
commits suicide. Picture 5 is a SC VFW Vietnam Veterans Tree and it has a picture of a SC veteran,
from every county in SC, who did not return from Vietnam

the absence when a veteran

4th of July Trivia ANSWERS

2 - John Hancock, President of the Congress and Charles Thompson, Secretary of the Congress

August 2, 1776

1938

Original Declaration of Independence dated July 4, 1776. It is written upside down
National Archives, BUT the original draft written by Thomas Jefferson was lost

NOTE: 200 printed copies were produced by John Dunlap and only 27 are currently accounted for
New York with his troops. He received his copy of the Declaration on July 9th

1777

3

50th star added to flag

Silversmith

If I took anyone's picture during the weekend or during the various awards ceremonies? If your picture is shown above and you want an electronic copy. Let me know where you see yourself or where I might have taken your picture and I will try to get an electronic copy to you. For those that received the Commander's Coin on Friday at the CofA. Tell me who you are and I'll send you an electronic picture. 4william6@gmail.com

Lot's of Posts plan on doing good things this upcoming year. Send me what you did (especially in the community, or for veterans) and I will put it in the next scheduled edition of the SENTINEL. The SENTINEL is produced once a quarter (Jul -Sep, Oct - Dec, etc).

**Bill La Monte
Writer/Editor
4william6@gmail.com**

Webmaster Ted Tufts was conducting a survey to see who knew what about the SENTINEL

Of 61 respondents prior to end of June:

- **15 Comrades and 16 Auxiliary did not know of the SENTINEL, did not know where to find it
- **25 Comrades and 22 Auxiliary said they had seen at least one edition of the SENTINEL
- **One Comrade said it was too long
- **One Comrade said too many pictures and too many details. Just show the websites where people can find the information you print in the SENTINEL