



# NEW YORK STATE OVERSEAS VETERAN

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## Marlene Roll State Commander



I have but a few days remaining as your Commander and I cannot believe how fast this year has gone by. As every commander before me, I had my list of things I wanted to accomplish. I feel good that I tried my best to be fair and run the Department by the By-Laws that were set up by our members. My main goal was to get us back out into our communities with our VFW projects, and with that help bolster our membership. I had said at the beginning of my year that it is not about me. I am the person taking my turn at steering/guiding the Department. You are the ones that row and get us to our destination.

The more members that row the easier it is to get there. I want to thank all my Chairmen for helping me to lead the membership in our programs. We had a successful year for the Patriots Pen, Voice of Democracy, Teachers Award and Scouting.

Some things we did not accomplish for the 2015-16 year as of May 2:

### Out of 430 Posts...

Election Reports - 314 = 73%

Membership is at 52,272 = 95.28% (down 2,585 from last yr.)

Inspections completed - 314 completed with 83 accepted

Community Service Reports - Fall: 243 (57%) Spring: 127 (30%)

Trustee Reports - 1st- 278 (65%) 2nd- 244 (57%) 3rd- 177 (41%)

Purchased Poppies -181 (42%)

Commander's Special Project - 57 (13%)

By the reports above we did not have all 439 oars in the water this year, and at times I think a few even were dragging their feet in the water just to slow us down.

When you look at the Community Service Reports(CSR) and the Commander's Special Project(CSP), they were one in the same, so these numbers should have been the same. But just the fact that only 370 CSRs were turned in and only 57 CSPs were turned in, makes me feel that we are not interested in being out in the community working our programs. It begs the question: how are we ever going to grow, or even just sustain, if we all don't row together and do the required minimum?

If it is the result of leadership, then we need to look at the people we elect into positions. I have heard over and over again that someone took a position because nobody else would. **I want to thank those who stepped up**, because at least that is taking action.

My focus was Service Officers because that is why we were formed. Post Service Officers

—COMMANDER, continued on page 9

## Dennis Sullivan Sr. Vice Commander



Comrades,

As we wind down our 2015-2016 year, I would like to congratulate all the newly elected officers on the Post, County and District levels. Best wishes to all the

incoming officers. May you all have a successful year. Best wishes to all outgoing officers wishing you all success in your future.

I want to thank you all for the hard work you have put into making your post stronger. Very important is to send in your election

—SR. VICE, continued on page 3

## Michael Burke Jr. Vice Commander



Comrades,

We are just about at the end of our fiscal year and I can say that the Districts, County Councils and Posts that I have visited across the State of New York are thriving.

Your meetings are right on que along with your committee reports and the way the District Commanders run their meetings. Attendance has improved on all levels of the VFW, so let's keeping moving forward and make New York the State to compete with.

—JR. VICE, continued on page 3

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## New York State Overseas Veteran

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**\*\* SUBMISSION & FORMAT:**

Please prepare all articles in Microsoft Word (version 2003 or newer) or plain text. JPG/JPEG is the only picture format accepted and captions are appropriate. E-mail all articles and pictures as attachments with the sender's name, address and phone number in the base of the e-mail. Submissions from other sources must have complete credits such as publication name, address and dates published.

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Inappropriate, demeaning, unduly critical articles and/or statements will not be published. Article length, inaccuracies, composition and other miscellaneous errors and/or mistakes may be edited.

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**\*\* DEADLINE:**

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## Harold "Hal" Burke, Jr. State Adjutant



Comrades,  
On behalf of the Department of New York Headquarters' Staff I would like extend our sincere thanks for your service to our Nation and the opportunity

Officer Training Program will be held in a hotel. The maximum students will be 200. The Cost per Student will be \$30. The Hotel will have rooms available at the rate of \$119 per night. Registration forms will be provided on the WEB Site, in the OSV and in a General Mailing after the State Convention. Districts are still required to hold an OTI for their members.

for us to assist you during this past year.

Now that the Post, County Council and District Elections are finished please make sure to send you elections report in. The sooner we get the election report the sooner we can prepare the Department Directory.

**OTI is Returning to the Department of New York.**

Sr. Vice Commander Dennis Sullivan and State Quartermaster Robert Barnhart have been working together to fund and run an Officers Training Program on August 13, 2016. The details are being finalized. This will be a one-day event.

If there are any upcoming events at your Post, County Council or District that you would like the State Commander or a Department Officer to attend please send your request to Department Headquarters as soon as possible so that we may get it scheduled.

Please remember Cindy, Dale, Gene, Don and I are here to assist you, our membership.

If we can ever be of any assistance please do not hesitate to contact us at 518-463-7427.

Sincerely,  
**Harold "Hal" Burke Jr., PJAG/PSC/PSQM  
State Adjutant**

## William "Doc" Schmitz National Inspector General



**"ON THE MOVE AS A CANDIDATE"**

The campaign for the run for National Jr Vice Commander and Chief is going very well. My new car purchased last June has 40,000 miles on it. I've attended many

run in the same 4 days. The support from the Department of New York has been amazing and I thank you. I wish the incoming officers of our Department on all levels the best of luck and am confident that the membership will work hard for our great organization. It's a pleasure to serve our great VFW and its members; thank you for that opportunity.

C of A's in our Eastern states Conference and still on the move to attend more. I will be the National Representative at the Department of Maryland Convention, then hitting the road attempting to attend the other Department Conventions in Eastern states, eight of which

**William "DOC" Schmitz PSC  
National Surgeon General 2010-2011**

*Candidate for  
National Jr. Vice Commander-in-Chief*

**VFW DEPARTMENT of NEW YORK  
Is Now Accepting Ads for the  
*Overseas Veteran***

Contact CITadmin  
for pricing and additional information.

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## Membership Report

As my term as Membership Chairman draws to a close, I would like to thank Commander Marlene Roll for the appointment. While my term ends with the election and installation of our new Department Commander, our membership year ends June 30, 2016. Posts who had submitted their reports and had their Post inspection completed and approved by May 2nd have until June 30th to improve their membership. Many Posts need less than 10 members for their All-State status. Please review your Post membership report at <http://www.vfwny.com/memstats/>. To the Posts which have attained All-State Status: THANK YOU for your persistence

in completing and submitting reports and required documentation.

As a side note, one of our biggest publicity issues is **WE DO NOT PUBLICIZE** ourselves. Many, many Veterans and the public in general feel they know the VFW and what we do (maintain a Canteen), yet if we just put one publicity article a month in our local newspapers, we can effect a change in their perspective of the VFW.

Thank you,  
**Dan McMahon, Chairman**  
**Membership Committee**  
[dbm021@yahoo.com](mailto:dbm021@yahoo.com)  
 716-622-6911

### Gene Ratigliano Chief of Staff



April 2016

This will be my last message to you in the Overseas Veteran as the Chief of Staff this year. I just wanted to thank all the

Comrades across the Department for all the hospitality I have received this year as I have traveled in and around the Department. We still have a couple of months to go before the State Convention and we begin a new year and I ask you to do all you can to reach out to those unpaid members in your post so that our State Commander Marlene can go out with a bang. I realize how difficult it is to convince some of your past members to renew, and some may be financially strapped to pay their dues; however, it is essential that we get them back into the fold. Bring this

forth in discussion at your monthly meeting and see what the post can do to alleviate the hardship for these veterans. We need to stress the benefits of our organization and the need to continue the programs that have benefited our Comrades over the years. We must think of those coming in behind us and ensure that the benefits future veterans have coming to them are there and do not dissolve because we have a VFW membership that does not have the strength to have our voices heard in Congress where funding for the VA and other support agencies mean so much. It is up to us to ensure our future veterans and their families are protected. Now is the time – tomorrow may be too late.

Best wishes to you all and as we look forward to a wonderful summer with newer and brighter things ahead.

**Gene Ratigliano**  
 Chief of Staff

—*JR. VICE COMMANDER, from page 1*

We still have much more to do and accomplish.

Membership is always going to be at the top of our list because it is and will always be the back bone of this organization. We need more participation on recruiting members across the board. No one person or Post or District or County Council can do it alone. In order to accomplish our goal everyone needs to participate on all levels. Remember, when recruiting push the life membership because this will alleviate tracking down members for annual dues. Remind them that National has set up a twelve month payment plan so they do not have to pay the full amount all at once. This plan has to go thru National and

not Department.

In closing, I would like to say it has been a pleasure working with Commander Roll and Sr. Vice Commander Sullivan visiting posts in District 1 and District 2. Knowing their likes and dislikes and what is on their mind as a post, enables us to be more effective and better Department leaders.

Remember comrades, **NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS** than the VFW.

Yours in Comradeship,  
**Michael Burke**  
**Jr. Vice Commander**  
**Dept. of New York**

—*SR. VICE COMMANDER, from page 1*

reports as soon as possible.

We need to make Department stronger by bringing up the membership numbers. I realize it is a challenge getting young veterans to join with their busy schedules of working and taking care of their families. We need to put our thoughts together and work as a **team** to find ways to keep our young veterans involved. We need to keep the lines of **communication** open to share ideas and better our organization. Then we need **action** to succeed with our goals. It is not a one-person job; it is the responsibility of each one of us to recruit. Just think of the impact of membership if every member brought in one new member. Not only we would double our membership numbers, New York would outshine every other state in the nation. What a proud event making New York #1 would be. Let's make it happen.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Department Convention in June in Binghamton.

Yours in Comradeship,  
**Dennis Sullivan**  
**Sr. Vice Commander**  
**Dept. of New York**



# Red Nose Event held during a break at the District Convention.



*Time for some fun. District 7 Auxiliary and their Red Nose Event held during the District's Convention held at Holley Post 202 on May 1, 2016.*



*State Senior Vice Commander Dennis Sullivan, his wife Teresa Sullivan, and Past District President Karen Scheuneman.*

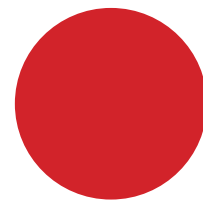


*District 7 Veterans Service Officer Earl Schmidt.*



*Past District 7 President Karen Scheuneman, District 7 Commander Art Scheuneman.*

**A good time was had**



**by all in attendance.**

**B**ill Boyd is a World War II and Korean War Veteran. He retired from the Army after 21 years of service. Bill is a Past County Commander (when District 7 had County Councils), Past District 7 Commander and has held all offices in the M.O.C. Comrade Boyd is the oldest active member that holds an appointment on the District level as V.A.V.S. Chairman.

*Pictured left to right: Dennis Sullivan Department Sr. Vice Commander, Bill Boyd Past District Commander receiving a certificate for Outstanding Service to the VFW at 7th District's Convention held on May 1, 2016, and Art Scheuneman District 7 Commander.*



## District 7 Auxiliary Officers Take Oath of Office



*Pictured left to right: Sharon Woodworth Aux. Post 547, Brenda Koch Aux. Post 6780, Katie Goodell Aux. Post 547, Phylis Allport Aux. Post 1483, Sue Boyce Aux. Post 4635, Marge Buckley Aux. Post 1602, Pat Nolan Aux. Post 4635, Lorena Bennett Aux. Post 8961.*



*Senior Vice President Lorena Bennett Aux. Post 8961 and District 7 2016-17 President Sandi Waldron Aux. Post 547 Taking Oath of Office from Past District 7 President Karen Scheuneman Aux. Post 547.*



*Pictured left to right: Past District 7 President Karen Scheuneman Aux. Post 547 District 7 President Judy Cooper Aux. Post 1602 and 2016-17 year District 7 President Sandi Waldron being instructed on the duties of the Auxiliary President.*



*Congratulations to all of District 7's VFW and Auxiliary Officers and Chairmen. It has been a pleasure serving as District 7's Commander for the past two years.*

## National Legislative Committee members meet with legislators



*Congresswoman Elise Stefanik confers with National Legislative Committee members Gene Ratigliano and David Czarnecki during their visit to Capitol Hill.*



*Commander Marlene Roll, National Legislative Committee Members David Czarnecki, Gene Ratigliano meet with Congressman Chris Collins.*

Congressman Lee Zeldin came to visit us at our new location in Westhampton Beach and to see first-hand the renovations that we have done in our new facility. Equally as important, he came to listen to the concerns of our membership and addressed each and every member individually and thanked us as a group for our service.



*Congressman Lee Zeldin and Commander William Hughes.*



**Standing (L-R) Phil Keith, Kevin Combs, Vince Miller, Congressman Lee Zeldin, Post Commander William Hughes, Tom Quinn, Al Sparrow, John McCaffery. Kneeling (L-R) Bob Stevens, TSgt. Jim Dougherty-Pararescueman, Jim Fogarty and Bob Gatto.**

## VFW Post 1314 Installation of Officers

Columbia County VFW Post 1314 & Columbia County VFW Post 1314 Auxiliary installed their Officers for the 2016-2017 year. The installation took place at their May meeting with Past Post Commander Terry Vogel swearing in the Post Officers, and Post Commander Vince Grimaldi swearing in the Auxiliary Offices. The VFW and Auxiliary meet on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm at the Post located at 544 Union Street. If you are interested in becoming a member, stop in and they will provide you with an application and information about the VFW.



**Pictured Front Row L to R:** Auxiliary President Chelsea Torchia, Sr. Vice Heather Barber, Jr. Vice Cathy Staats, Treasurer Judy Snow, Chaplin, Dorothy Avery and Trustee, Eleanor Sterry. Absent from the picture are Secretary Kelly Pinho, Conductress Nancy O'Day, Patriotic Instructor Beth Doty, Guard & Trustee Deloras Host and Trustee Barbra Falkner.

**Back Row L to R:** Columbia County VFW Post 1314 Adjutant Terry Vogel, Trustee 3 years, Carmen "Turtle" Torchia, Trustee 2 years, Dominic Fiorillo, Post Commander Vince Grimaldi, Trustee 1 year, Ralph Avery, Chaplin, Joe Thornton, and Quartermaster, Randy Staats. Absent from the picture are Sr. Vice Joe Drabick & Jr. Vice Bart Delaney.

Dear Women Veterans,

It is the time of year that we, as members of the Assembly, pause and honor our women who have served in the armed forces. I will be holding my luncheon on June 8, 2016, in the Legislative Office Building in Room 711-A. I will have ample opportunity to hear issues that you have that impact women veterans.

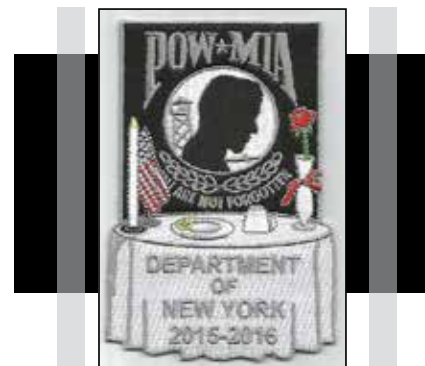
This year, we will be holding the registration at 9:30-10 AM. The program should be concluded by 2:30 PM. At this time, we are still working on the guest speaker for the event. As in past years, we will go to the floor to have you recognized for your service. You will have photos taken on the floor as well. Judy Aldrich will communicate the details as we have them established.

If anyone needs special accommodations, please be sure to let us know in advance. I am looking forward to having this opportunity to honor you and hear of the issues you or others are experiencing.

Please feel free to send me names and either emails or addresses of other women veterans so I may invite them to the luncheon. If you are able to attend and attended in the past, you do not need to fill out the registration form. Simply email Judy Aldrich with your name and any guests who are coming with you. All new attendees fill out the registration form or put the information in an email for Judy. Please fill out the attached registration form and either email to [judy@addierussell.com](mailto:judy@addierussell.com) or fax it back to 315-786-0287. If it is easier for you to call my office, one of my staff will fill the registration form out. You may email Judy Aldrich directly at [judy@addierussell.com](mailto:judy@addierussell.com) with any questions.

Looking forward to seeing you on June 8th at the luncheon,

Assemblywoman Addie J. Russell  
Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Women Veteran Affairs  
116th Assembly District



## Battling to survive, veterans groups reach out to a younger generation

By Brian Mockenhaupt



As a combat veteran, Brittany Bartges tried to join a Veterans of Foreign Wars post after returning from Iraq in 2007, but had no luck. She filled out an application and never heard back. She tried another VFW post, and while the members welcomed her, she didn't feel a fit. "Anytime I walked into a VFW, I felt so out of place," says Bartges, 29, a former Army intelligence analyst. "People assume you're there to pick up your dad or something."

It's not just the growing population of female combat veterans who aren't stepping through VFW doors these days. Their male counterparts from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan aren't joining either, and that's exacerbating a membership crisis for an organization that has fought for veterans benefits since its inception more than a century ago.

Founded by veterans of the Spanish-American War, the VFW was crucial to forming what is now the Department of Veterans Affairs and beloved programs like the GI Bill, which pays for veterans' higher education. The VFW pushed for benefits for Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange, lobbied for reform after the recent scandals at VA hospitals and helps veterans navigate the VA bureaucracy.

Rep. Jeff Miller (R-Fla.), who chairs the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, lauds the work that is done by veterans groups. "The work of improving the lives of veterans while making the Department of Veterans Affairs more efficient and accountable would not be possible without their support," he says.

But now these groups are fighting to survive. The VFW has lost a third of its members over the past 20 years. A thousand posts have closed in the past decade. Of the organization's 1.3 million members, the average age is 67—and with more than 400,000 members age 80 and older, numbers will plummet further over the next decade without an influx of new blood. The American Legion, whose members have served in the military in wartime but not necessarily overseas, hasn't fared well either. Founded in 1919, it has lost nearly a million members from the 3.1 million it had in the 1990s.

Many younger veterans don't realize all the VFW has done to benefit them, says Doug Goodman, 72, commander of Post 1771 in Lafayette, Colo. But that clout is in jeopardy. "It's a game of numbers with Congress," he says. "The more you have, the more they listen."

After World War II, VFW membership ballooned from 200,000 to 1.5 million, and the American Legion swelled from 1 million to 3.3 million. Participation rates are similar today—15 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have joined traditional groups like the

VFW and the American Legion—but the number of people fighting today's wars is far smaller. "We are losing the World War II veterans at a faster rate than we're creating new veterans," says Randi Law of the VFW's national office in Kansas City, Mo.

To stay relevant, the VFW needs a larger percentage of veterans like Bartges to join. She gave the organization another chance in 2012 when she tried out Post 1 in Denver, the nation's oldest VFW chapter, formed in 1899 as the National Society of the Army of the Philippines. Immediately she saw a difference, with several women and younger veterans active in the post's service programs.

Like most chapters, Post 1 had thrived for years, but by the early 2000s membership had dwindled. "We weren't getting enough people at the meetings for a quorum, which is five people," says Michael Mitchel, 48, the post commander. Mired in debt, the chapter began recruiting younger members.

That reflected a national trend in which veterans groups have sought to arrest decline by reaching out to a new generation—with promising, but not yet conclusive, results.

Some VFW chapters, like Post 4534 in Rockledge, Fla., have gone smoke-free, and some have gotten rid of their bars altogether, to focus more on family-friendly activities. Post 3199, in Modesto, Calif., is building a playground, and Post 12153 in Greenwood, Ind., has an exercise room. To promote activities and appeal to younger veterans, many posts have embraced social media.

Denver's Post 1 has been among the most aggressive in changing to survive. In 2014, Post 1 moved into a former gallery in Denver's



**VFW posts are trying new things to attract younger members. Vets can bond at a weekly yoga class at Post 1 in Denver.**

hip arts district. There are photography and acting classes, yoga and tai chi. "We're the hub of the veteran community in Denver," Mitchel says. "If we can't help you, we'll put you on the right spoke." Membership, which had dropped to 800, has climbed to 1,100. And it's not just younger veterans; many new members served in Vietnam, and are giving the VFW a chance for the first time.

But reinvention isn't easy, as Dan Shoemaker learned when he took over Post 4267 in Gunnison, Colo. After being medically retired from the Army due to injuries sustained

in Iraq, he joined the VFW and found quick camaraderie. Within months, a World War II veteran nominated Shoemaker, 36, to lead the post. "We need guys your age to start moving up the ranks," Shoemaker was told.

"I did spaghetti dinners, fish fries, family nights," Shoemaker says. To Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in the area, he pitched the VFW as a relaxed environment where they could have conversations with their brothers and sisters in arms. But just two of 20 young veterans he spoke with joined. The post kept losing money, and closed in 2014.

—**BATTLING TO SURVIVE**, continued on page 12

## Hicksville VFW Holds Voice of Democracy Awards

On Monday evening, February 22, the Hicksville Veterans of Foreign Wars, William M. Gouse Jr. Post 3211 held their annual Voice of Democracy Awards ceremony. Over sixty individuals, including all nine recipients and their families, attended the awards ceremony. Many of our federal, state, and local elected officials were also in attendance including 3rd District U.S. Congressman Steve Israel, NY State Assemblyman Michael Montesano, and NY State Senator Jack Martin's Chief of Staff Paul Ehrlich. Every official presented the recipients with "Certificates of Recognition". During the ceremony, the V.F.W. gave special recognition to Hicksville High School's Superintendent Dr. Carl Bonuso, Hicksville High's Superintendent of Social Studies, Dr. Rose Borda, Hicksville Trinity Lutheran High School Assistant Principal Kathleen Moran, and Trinity Lutheran's Social Studies Chair Katherine Picatagi and thanked them for their school's continued support and participation in the V.F.W.'s Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen programs.

The Hicksville V.F.W. Voice of Democracy Awards recognizes the top three audio essays from both Hicksville High School and

Holy Trinity High School. The Patriot's Pen Essay recognizes the top three written entries from the Hicksville Middle School. Over 40 entries were received this year. All top three winners were then entered in the Nassau County V.F.W. contests. The Voice of Democracy winner from Hicksville High School placed second in the County contest and the Patriot's Pen winner placed tied for fourth in the County contest. Voice of Democracy Chairman Roger Doon and his committee, once again, did a great job in selecting this year's winners.

Thank you.

Yours in comradeship,

**William G. Walden**

**Commander**

**Hicksville Veterans of Foreign Wars**

**William M. Gouse Jr. Post 3211**

**631 374-4473 (cell)**

**631 667-4721 (home)**



***Pictured (front row seated from left to right)*** - Hicksville Schools Superintendent Dr. Carl Bonuso, Hicksville High School Supervisor of Social Studies Dr. Rose Borda, Patriot's Pen Essay winners: Arspreet Singh (3rd place), Noel John (2nd place), Alaha Nasari (1st place), Hicksville High School VOD winners: Steven Ketelsen (3rd place), Asghar Shah (2nd place), Nolan Mingst (1st place), Holy Trinity High School VOD winners: Jennifer LoCasio (3rd place), Michael Nguyen (2nd place), Michael Monahan (1st place), Holy Trinity High School Social Studies Chair Katherine Picatagi, Holy Trinity High School Assistant Principal Kathleen Moran.

***Standing (back row left to right)*** - TOB Councilman Tony Macagnone, VFW member Ron Hayes, VOD Chairman Roger Doon, VFW PPC Robert Obermeyer, VFW Adjutant Tony Sparaco, VFW Post Surgeon Howard Bergeron, Nassau County Leg. Judy Jacobs, VFW Jr. Vice Commander Bob Chiappone, U.S. 3rd District Congressman Steve Israel, VFW Sr. Vice Commander Bill Torres, VFW Commander William Walden, VFW Quartermaster Conrad Steers, Nassau County Legislator Laura Schaefer, NY State Assemblyman Michael Montesano, VFW Trustee Joe Ingino, Nassau County Leg. rose Walker, Congressman Israel's Veterans Staff member Juan Leon, Auxiliary President Dorothy Goldblum, Auxiliary Trustee Barbara Kobler, NY State Senator Jack Martin's Chief of Staff Paul Ehrlich.





## Beaches —by Don Knaus

Summer, Keuka Lake. I'm sitting in the afternoon sun, reading. I left the dock and the dunking of worms at the call, "Lunch..." I had assaulted panfish from the dock last evening and again this morning. I don't usually keep count but, for some reason, during those last two angling sessions, I did. At the expense of a couple of dozen worms, I had tallied 5 perch, 4 smallmouth bass, 3 rock bass, 5 bluegills and 11 pumpkin seed sunfish. All the fish were released back to the water. The pleasure was in the lake, the casting, the hooking and landing.

My hosts, Anne and Bob, are napping and my bride is curled up in a chair, glued to her Kindle. But I want to savor the sun and solitude of the deck. It's a weekday. The churning speed boats and water skis of the lake weekends are docked. The lake is calm, the water smooth and sleek as polished marble. The serenity is broken by a lone boat etching the glossy glass surface. The vessel vanishes and silence settles over the lake. Traces of the boat's presence linger long after it fades from sight and sound. Its wake has dwindled to small, gentle waves brushing the shore with a steady, soothing lap...lap...lap against the gravel beach.

Alone on the deck while others nap, I prop up my feet, relax in the warm rays and read. I love military histories and I'm reading Balkoski's chronicle, *Omaha Beach*, his highly acclaimed 410-page tome about just one troop landing area on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Just one. *USA Today* has touted Balkoski as the top living D-Day historian. The reading is riveting and events of that momentous, massive World War II invasion of Nazi occupied France are detailed almost to the minute. D-Day, code named Operation

Overlord included the largest naval armada, the largest beach invasion force, the largest airborne combat drop in human history. And in his history, Balkoski follows each unit assigned duty on that one bloody beach in chilling detail. Omaha Beach.

The hairs on my legs and arms glisten in the sun. I bask in the beauty of the day and of the tranquil, relaxing waters. It seems strange, almost out of place to be reading of clouds obstructing aerial bombardment, negating any advantage the bombs might have given beach assault teams. A lone fisherman in a small boat trolls down the glass-smooth lake, noting landmarks along the way. On D-Day, high surf swamped struggling tanks and landing craft aimed far off mark at a treacherous shore obscured by fog. The silence, save for the soft lap...lap...lap of the water at shore's edge is sharp contrast to the din of artillery, grenade, mine, and machine gun mixed with the screams and groans of dying young men. Here, the young swim waters for the joy of it. On Omaha, young men swam into devastating enemy fire. I counted my fish just for fun but, 70 years ago, on just this one beachhead, there were nearly 8,000 casualties and almost 1,000 dead boys would never again tan in the sun or catch a fish or swim in a quiet lake.

The men attacking Omaha landed under heavy fire from gun emplacements overlooking the beaches, and the shore was mined and covered with obstacles and barbed wire, making the work of the beach clearing teams difficult and dangerous. Casualties were heaviest at Omaha, with its high cliffs.

That day hits close to home. Anne's father, Bart Davis, hit Bloody Omaha

among the first troops, assigned to blow up German tetrahedrons erected by "The Desert Fox," Irwin Rommel, to puncture, impede and swamp Allied landing craft. Bart was wounded but returned to combat until the German's surrendered. My Uncle Rims tried to land his Sherman tank on Omaha only to have it swamp, forcing the crew to swim ashore amid murderous machine gun and artillery fire. While the largest armada ever assembled disgorged the thousands of troops who forged the greatest amphibious landing on the beaches of Normandy, more than 15,000 other troops were already aground, having jumped behind German lines. My Uncle Tim was with the 82nd Airborne, 6 miles from his drop zone and holed up in a canal surrounded by Germans. Later my father would cross France, Belgium, Holland and Germany to link with Russian troops on the Elbe River.

I note the irony of my reading choice. I hadn't really thought about it, but today is June 6th, the anniversary of that day, that magnificent yet awful day when tens of thousands of boys faced death and destruction. The sea had been rough in the morning but the waters calmed late in the day. The waves of Omaha at dusk brushing the shore with a steady, soothing lap...lap...lap pushing bodies slowly toward the gravel beach.

It is good, I think that we remember... at least some of us...the bravery of scared soldiers sacrificing themselves and their friends on a beach in Normandy so that now, 70 years later, I can relax on a tranquil lake, soak up the sun and sip fine wine. At dusk, after dinner, I will again hit the dock with rod and reel. But it won't be important to count anymore.

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—COMMANDER, from page 1—

are required to go to OTI because it is more than just filling a line on the Election Report. It can be the life blood for a post, but only 110 of 430 posts attended Service Officer Training. **To those 110...Thank you for your dedication!!**

175 Posts (41%) did not attend any OTI. How can we educate and ready anyone to take on leadership positions if we are not willing to train or learn? To the 255 who did go... **Thank you for taking an interest in our organization!!**

The most astounding is actually in membership. We have 52,272 members and the

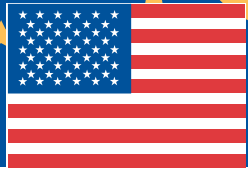
reason we even have that number is based on the 317 who have done all the recruiting!!! While I understand that we have a large group of members who are WWII & Korea who may not be able to actively recruit, if you do the numbers, if only 2,268 members recruited only one new member who could have been 100% so easily. **My hat is off to the 317**, and you know who you are, who have kept new life blood coming in!! **Thank you for your effort and passion, because that is what it takes to successfully recruit.**

Before I end my year I have a couple of

requests...please give your all to the next person in the lead. Not for them, but to help them go where they need to take us for the next year, it's only in our best interest to cooperate.

Elect and appoint people who can make us stronger and if they don't have all the tools to be successful, then stand next to them and help fill in. Nobody should have to row alone with 52, 271 fellow members in the same boat.

**Your Commander,  
Marlene Roll**



# HAPPENINGS AROUND NEW YORK VFW

## Hudson VFW Post 1314

### Hudson Memorial Day Committee

The Hudson Memorial Day Committee met to continue planning for the 2016 Memorial Day Services. The Parade and Service will be held in the City of Hudson on Monday, May 30th starting at 10:15am at 7th Street Park, and parade down Warren Street to Court House Park where services will be held. The guest Speaker will be Matt Murell, Chairman of the Columbia County Board of Supervisors. The Committee will meet again on Sunday, May 1st at 3:00pm, at the Hudson American Legion Post to finalize the parade and service. For information, contact Vince at 518-851-2946 or Terry at 518-567-9584.



*Back Row L to R: Gary Wallace, Hudson American Legion Post 184, Sonny Rogers, Hudson American Legion Post 184, Vince Grimaldi, Columbia County Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1314, Randy Staats, Columbia County Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1314 and John Neary, Columbia County Korean War Veterans.*

### VFW Post 1314 Donation

Columbia County VFW Post 1314 presented a check for \$1000.00 to the Hudson High School Band to purchase band equipment. The gift is made possible through the "VFW Foundation Community Service Grant" program. The Hudson High School Band has participated and provided patriotic music for the Hudson Veterans Day and Hudson Memorial Day Parades and Services for many years. Hudson High School Students have also recited "The Gettysburg Address" & "In Flanders Field" at each Memorial Day Service. Band Director Scott Vorwald and the Band's dedication and patriotism is deeply appreciated by both the Hudson VFW & the Hudson American Legion.

### Honoring Veterans Laid to Rest

Members of Columbia County VFW Post 1314, Hudson American Legion Post 184 and Columbia County VFW Post 1314 Auxiliary, placed over 2100 Flags by the headstones of each Veteran who are laid to rest in the City of Hudson Cemeteries. Each Memorial Day and Veterans Day those who served their Country are honored and not forgotten.



*Pictured L to R: VFW 1314 member Roger O'Neilan & Dominic Fiorillo, Auxiliary Member Judy Snow, VFW 1314 member Randy Staats, Auxiliary member Kelly Pinho, VFW 1314 member Terry Vogel and American Legion Post member Mike Aggrippino.*

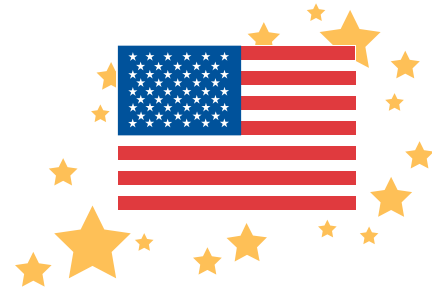


*Pictured L to R: with the Band is Band Director Scott Vorwald, VFW Post 1314 Quartermaster Randy Staats, presenting the check & Post 1314 Commander Vince Grimaldi.*

### VFW Post 4915 Patriotic Wall



(L to R): Ron Bambury, VFW Post 2246, Mike Wainwright, Commander Herkimer VFW Post 4915, District 4 Commander Willie Fletcher, Chief of Staff Gene Ratigliano and Sr. Vice Commander Dennis Sullivan at the Veterans Mural Wall, Herkimer VFW Post 4915, Herkimer, New York.



### VFW Post 5350 in Westhampton Beach

#### March 12—Westhampton Beach Saint Patrick’s Day Parade

VFW Post 5350 had a great turnout of members for this year’s parade and the community gave us rousing applause along the parade route.

William M. Hughes Jr.  
Commander VFW Post 5350



Pictured from left to right are Lynn Jones, Grand Marshall; Arma “Ham” Andon, past Post Commander (97 years young) and Peter Cuthbert, father of Lynn Jones.



The VFW Post 5350 in Westhampton Beach hosted a ceremony for its Patriots Pen and Voice of Democracy Awards on Thursday, January 28. At the event, VFW representatives Bill Hughes and Korey Williams presented the awards to Olivia Marsala, Ryan Gunn, Lily Spellman, Nikki Distefano, Alexis Faith Valerius, Alexis Hardcastle, Ian Hubbard, Riley Gerson and Josephine Perl, who won first place in the district with her essay. Winners who could not attend the ceremony were Sophie Cohen, Kaitlyn Lombardi, Marley Slotkin, Jack Nagliere, Kathleen Kelly, Isabelle Smith and Sofia Gonzalez.





## Vietnam veteran Fletcher to be honored

Published May 1, 2016 at 9:00am

A well-known, local Vietnam veteran will be honored this weekend with an award for his years of service to veterans and the community.

William "Willie" Fletcher, of Rome, is commander of Veterans of Foreign Wars District 4, which is comprised of Oneida, Madison, Herkimer, Lewis, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties.

The commander was recognized at the District 4 Testimonial Dinner held Saturday at the Rome VFW post. The district convention was celebrated Saturday and Sunday.

Fletcher was born in Ferriday, La. in 1947. He attended Sevier High School, graduating in 1965. Following high school, he enlisted with the Air Force.

For basic training, Fletcher was sent to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. Once complete, he was transferred to the Amarillo Air Force Base in Amarillo, Texas. There he trained for his Military Occupational Specialty of Supply and Logistics. Once he completed MOS training, Fletcher spent eight months at Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, D.C., where he received notice he was headed to Vietnam.

In December 1966, Fletcher was briefly in Saigon before arriving at his duty station at Binh Thuy, located about 80 miles south of Saigon near Can Tho. There Fletcher was part of the 1001st Air Force supply unit responsible for managing and transporting military supplies. That included the logistics and transport of everything from canned goods to aircraft parts.

About a year later, Fletcher finished his tour in Vietnam and was stationed at Griffiss Air Force Base. He received his honorable discharge in 1968 and not long after, married wife Elmora Robertson.

Fletcher said when he and his wife first met at the former Rose Hospital located on Cypress Street across from Rome Catholic School, he introduced himself with a few flowers he had borrowed from a nearby vase.

After sharing a meal together that his future wife had prepared, he was surprised to learn that she was not a native Roman. She was originally from the South as well — born in Alabama. From there they built their history together with three children and now three grandchildren.

Shortly after leaving the Air Force in 1968, Fletcher took a job with Revere Copper & Brass. Not taking long to realize he missed military life, Fletcher enlisted in the Army National Guard in 1971. Continuing employment at Revere, Fletcher remained in the National Guard for more than 12 years, where he led a six-man crew responsible for a T.O.W., which was a tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided missile system.

Due to a back injury, Fletcher was forced to leave the guard four years shy of military retirement. Since then and throughout his life in Rome, he has remained actively involved in several community organizations.

Some highlights of Fletcher's community service involve joining the American Legion Smith Post, where he worked his way up to post commander from 1995-99.

He was also an active member of the Rome Veterans of Foreign Wars Post for more than 20 years, later becoming post commander in 2013 and 2014. He is now the VFW District 4 commander, overseeing 42 VFWs within his district.

"Throughout his entire adult life, Mr. Willie Fletcher has served his country and community, serving in Vietnam, and returning home and enlisting in the Army National Guard, and then serving his community then and after," said Reggie Walker, junior vice-commander of the Rome VFW.

Fletcher said the award honoring him as district commander is one he is humbly honored to receive, but one he has worked tirelessly toward.

"It took a lot of hard work. This was not just given to me," the commander said. "I earned it and I earned the respect" over the years.

## —*BATTLING TO SURVIVE, from Page 7*

As VFW posts die off, newer veterans are worse off for it, losing the chance to draw on older veterans' experiences.

Russell Attema served two tours in Vietnam with the Army Rangers. Afterward, he told few people that he had been to war. Only later, when he joined the American Legion in the 1990s, did he realize the benefit of shared experience among veterans. "Same mud, same blood," he says. "There's no way to explain what you're dealing with to someone who hasn't worn the uniform."

Since joining Post 1 six years ago, he's tried to help younger veterans learn from his experiences. "They need to know that things are going to be OK," says Attema, who is 65. "I've had a number of conversations with guys from Iraq and Afghanistan, and I'll be bawling in the corner with them."

"Same mud, same blood," says Vietnam vet Russell Attema, on the bond between vets.

The post's Vietnam veterans are among the most welcoming to younger members. "We didn't get any parades when we came home," says John Holland, 68, a Marine Corps veteran of Vietnam. When he joined the VFW in 1984, he wasn't welcomed by the World War II and Korea vets. "We're not going to see it happen again," Holland says. He takes pride in the post's embrace of female and gay veterans. "If you're eligible to be a member, you're welcome here."

Bartges, who now serves as the post's senior vice commander, found camaraderie with older members: "It gives you a sense of where you've been and where you come from."

Ray Starkey, one of Bartges' friends, is Post 1's oldest member at 94. He joined in 1951. Back then, membership topped 2,000. More recently, he worried that the post would just fade away. But now, as he sits in a chair on a recent evening watching younger members in animated conversations, he smiles and says, "It's getting stronger. We need them."

*Brian Mockenhaupt is a former Army infantryman who served two tours in Iraq.*

**WE SUPPORT OUR TROOPS**





## Application Fee Waived for Veterans

Effective January 1, 2016, the application fee has been waived for veterans.

This collaboration between the Center for Military Education and the Excelsior College Admissions department helps support and encourage veterans to apply in an efficient and streamlined process. Another part of the project includes an Admissions Veterans Duo, where veterans will receive counseling on military/veteran friendly degrees, information on VA education benefits, and resources specifically for veterans.

Veterans in the education partnerships will now be applying to the college free of charge and bypassing the pre-evaluation review.

If you have any questions please contact our Veteran Admission Counselor, 844-843-9299, M-Th 0800-2000, Fri 0800-1800 or [veterans@excelsior.edu](mailto:veterans@excelsior.edu)

If you are interested in getting started with an online degree and learning about the veteran education partnership Department of New York, VFW go to: <http://www.excelsior.edu/web/partners/vfw-new-york>

## Excelsior College Approved for SVA Chapter



Student Veterans of America (SVA) has approved Excelsior's application to host an SVA Chapter.

There are over 1,300 SVA Chapters on college campuses across all 50 states. These student groups provide peer-to-peer networks for veterans, support student success, advocate for student veterans, and provide support with college-to-career transition.

At the national level, SVA serves as an advocate for veteran-related governmental policies (e.g., the GI Bill), provides scholarships, mentoring, networking, and career transition through partnerships. Excelsior's SVA Chapter will be coordinated through the Lt Col Bryant A Murray Veterans Center which will provide new opportunities for expanding the visibility and resources of the Center.

Chapter members will include active members (military, veterans and family members who are Excelsior students), alumni members (Excelsior graduates who are military and veterans) and honorary members (members deemed acceptable by the SVO officers or designated by Excelsior staff).

For more information on EC SVA chapter contact: [SVA@excelsior.edu](mailto:SVA@excelsior.edu)



***Bring  
Our  
Troops  
Home  
Safely!***

## New Degrees at Excelsior College!



The School of Public Service has added an *Associate of Science Degree in Criminal Justice, Bachelor of Science in National Security and a Master Degree in Public Administration.*

All evidence suggests a growing need for a college degree in order for military and veterans to obtain a position or advance your career in criminal justice, protective services and public administration. Organizations increasingly require higher education when considering candidates.

Public service degrees develop skills that have real value in the job market: communication, critical thinking, and creative problem solving. In Excelsior’s online public service degree programs, you’ll improve your ability to:

- Apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.
- Use intellectual and practical skills for teamwork, decision-making, and innovation.
- Utilize concepts and development in science, technology, and global issues.
- Collaborate with others in diverse groups.

If one of these degrees in criminal justice, national security or public administration can help propel your career, learn more today and go to: <http://www.excelsior.edu/programs/public-service>

For more information contact Judy Reed, director of veteran services and outreach at Excelsior College by emailing [jreed@excelsior.edu](mailto:jreed@excelsior.edu)

## Future Students – Discover the Best Career Path for You



Whether choosing or changing a career, you need a clear understanding of yourself and your future educational and career options. When you realize how much time out of your life you spend working, you’ll want to be sure that your career will be interesting, satisfying, and successful.

There are four easy steps:

- Step 1 – Know yourself
- Step 2 – Find programs and degrees that match your interests
- Step 3 – Learn what you can do with your degree choice
- Step 4 – Explore careers that match your interests

To get started in answering these questions about you, go through these guided steps in Excelsior College’s Career Center: <http://career.excelsior.edu/future-students/>

To speak to an Excelsior Admissions Counselor go to: <http://www.excelsior.edu/admissions>

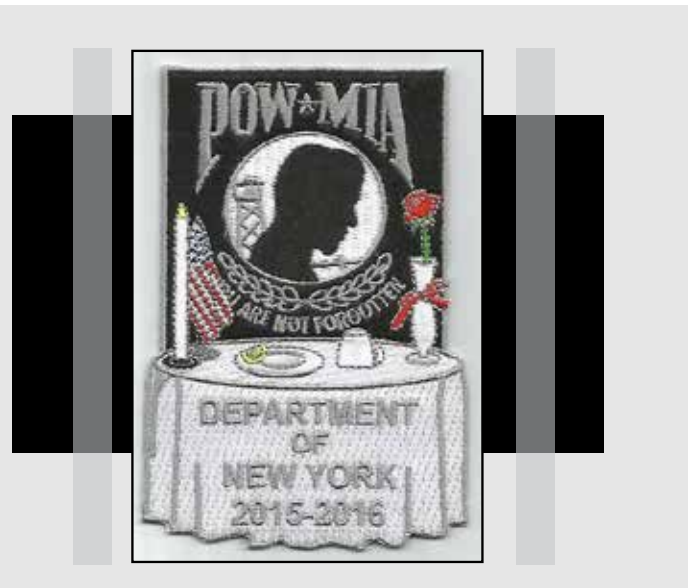
**Veterans can apply for free!**

## 8th Annual Wounded Warrior Fund Raiser

Tom Alvarez, President of John Alvarez & Sons, Vince Grimaldi, Columbia County VFW Post 1314 Commander, Jim Alvarez and Rich “Ozzie” Osborne, Navy Veteran, prepare for the upcoming 8th Annual Classic Auto and Motor Cycle Wounded Warrior Fund Raiser. The event is sponsored by John A. Alvarez & Sons and will be held on Saturday, May 21st at their Display Center located 5 miles south of Hudson on Route 9 from 10:00am to 3:00pm. Car Club Members and Individual Classic Car Owner are welcome to display their classic vehicles. There are no entry fees. Come and enjoy the day with your family and check out these beautifully restored vehicles from the days of yesterday. All proceeds from the sale of refreshments and donations received will be given to the “Wounded Warrior Project” compliments of John A. Alvarez & Sons. For additional information or to make a donation, contact Tom at 518-851-9917.



(L-R: Tom Alvarez, Vince Grimaldi, Rich “Ozzie” Osborne and Jim Alvarez standing behind Toms’ 1967 Ford Mustang.





DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK  
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

## SERVICE OFFICER RAFFLE

SUPPORT THE DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER

***NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS***

**LET'S SHOW THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK CARES**

**The Department of New York Service Officer Raffle is ON!**

**Our Generous Contributors Have Donated**

**over \$4,500.00 in Prize Money**

**TO BE GIVEN AWAY**

**AT THE DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK CONVENTION**

**IN BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK - JUNE 2016**

**IN SUPPORT OF OUR SERVICE OFFICERS**

The Department of NY is once again sponsoring a CASH raffle to benefit our Service Officers. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation to our raffle prize donors this year. Their generosity will enable us to provide over \$4,500 in prizes to 45 lucky prize winners – **but you must have a ticket to win!** There will be two \$200.00 prizes, 41 \$100 prizes, 1 \$50.00 and 1 \$25.00 prize.

Our Department Service Officers continue to do an outstanding job. The efforts of Tom Todaro & Marlene Roll in Buffalo and our new Service Officer Cynthia Blair in Albany have enabled our veterans to be awarded over \$80 million dollars in VA benefits this past year. Let's make sure they are able to continue doing this great work for our veterans.

Each Post Commander and Auxiliary will be mailed two raffle ticket sheets this year. Please help support our fund drive this year by urging your Post to buy at least one if not two sheets. For those wishing to purchase tickets, they are \$5.00 each or 6 for \$25.00. You do not need to be present to win. If your post has run out of tickets, or anyone is interested in selling more tickets, give Department Headquarters a call at (518) 563-7427 and they will be sent out to you. Tickets are available from Department Headquarters as well.

The Service Officer Ad Book Chairman Firth Turner will also be publishing a Service Officer Ad Book which will be given out at the Department Convention in June. Make sure your Post or Auxiliary is represented. An Ad Book order form has been included in the raffle mailing to each Post and Auxiliary. Our Department Service Officers are totally funded by the Department of New York and from the proceeds of our raffle and Ad Book.

Let's make this another successful fund drive this year and continue to embrace our motto, **"VFW - NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS"**. Please make your checks or M.O. payable to Dept of NY VFW and mail your ticket stubs, payment and Ad Book order form to Department of NY VFW, 69 Sand Creek Road, Albany, NY 12205.

Gene Ratigliano  
Service Officer Raffle Chairman



To those who were vigilant so we could rest,  
Who gave everything that we might thrive,  
Who are silent that we may breathe free,

We honor you.



MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 30

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