

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

**DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA
GENERAL SESSION
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2018**

FLORIDA HOTEL, ORLANDO, FLORIDA

The General Session of the Department of Florida met at the Florida Hotel, 1500 Sand Lake Road, Orlando, Florida on Saturday, October 27, 2018 with State Commander Danny Anderson opening the meeting according to the Ritual including the Prayer led by State Chaplain Harry Seiler followed by Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL OF OFFICERS: State Adjutant/Quartermaster Gene Perrino conducted the roll call of officers; all officers were present or represented.

State Commander Danny Anderson recognized all Past State Commanders and National Representative Past Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell.

NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE/PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF Tommy Tradewell thanked Florida for making him feel welcome and stated our Commander in Chief BJ Lawrence sends his regards and his thoughts and prayers go out to the people affected by the hurricane. Tommy urged everyone in the VFW to come together and stated no one does more for veterans than the VFW. In Florida last year Sports Clips gave out 57 scholarships totaling \$236,000. The Military Assistance Program for 2017-2018 gave 8 map grants for a total of \$20,000. Unmet Needs received \$536,000 for over 371 veterans in Florida, and over two million nationwide was given to 3,848 vets. Adopt a Unit has adopted 230 units but only 74 remain active. He encourages Posts that have a unit to reach out and reconnect with them. Tommy stated that over \$876,000 has been sent to help with natural disasters. Over 9,000 Veterans were helped last year to total over 10 million dollars. Tommy also spoke of the honor he had to present the last living serviceman from WWI a gold medal from the VFW.

NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBER REPORT: National Council Member Benny Bachand spoke about the opportunity to be able to have some input being on the National Council. A 93 million dollar budget was just passed. Commander-in-Chief BJ Lawrence is being innovative and basically going back to the basics of the VFW. A lot of great things are happening on the National level. Benny spoke briefly about the National Convention coming to Florida in 2019, and encouraged people to volunteer since we are the hosting department. Benny also touched on the new branding of the VFW. In closing Benny spoke of the power of the VFW being in its members, and the commitment and desire to be part of that will get things accomplished in this great organization.

GRAND COMMANDER OF THE MOC Gary Godard was introduced by Commander Anderson. Gary thanked Commander Anderson for making him National aide-de-camp and Past Commander Jack Carney for appointing him National Patriotic Celebration Chairman. Also he has just begun his year for the Military Order of the Cootie Grand Commander for Florida. Gary stated that his Commanders Special Project is to raise money to get a new vehicle for the Veterans Village. Gary stated that without the VFW there would be no Cooties, and he asked for support for the Cooties. Gary urged people to come out and see what they are about, and stressed that they are 100% behind the VFW.

STATE ADJUTANT/QUARTERMASTER Gene Perrino made a motion to accept the 2017-2018 State Convention meeting minutes as posted on the website, motion seconded by State Inspector Don Bult, with no discussion; motion passed. Motion was made by Gene Perrino to accept the 2017-2018 1st Council of Administration minutes as published on the website, motion seconded by Judge Advocate Dan Duffy, with no discussion; motion passed. Gene asked the membership to please look in their white program books when sending donation checks. This book tells you exactly where to send the different checks, and then you can be sure they are going to the correct place. Gene stated there is only 4 days left, and he has 61 posts that still need to submit their audits. Gene also thanked everyone who supported the Rays again this year. We sold 350 tickets and got \$1,750 from that. Gene stated that the Allstate judging has been changed to May 3rd at department, so please mark your calendars.

STATE INSPECTOR Don Bult spoke about the audits on the state website. If it does not work 99% of the time it is because windows did an update and now the file is considered corrupt through windows. Please open it up through Adobe Reader and that fixes the issue. Don touched base on the audits being due in 4 days, and urged Commanders to get the audits in. Audits that are being turned in are looking much better this year. The inspections are due to be done starting December 1st through February 28th 2019. He stressed to be sure your inspectors are verifying things. He stated when there is a motion being made to be sure it is detailed and specific. Please check the clean air act if you are a non-smoking post to be sure that you are compliant.

STATE SERVICE OFFICER Jason Smith spoke about the Blue Water Veterans Act, which a member of our national legislative team along with Kurt Schuh our membership chairman and Dan Duffy have been working hard to get passed. This will open up to our Vietnam Veterans that were over near the blue water in Vietnam. The Blue Water Veterans Act has made it through the House of Representatives and into the Senate. Unfortunately it has stalled there at this point. Jason stated they are hoping after the elections it will gain a little traction again and we will definitely be informed if it passes. Jason also stated that the Service Office is always

available if you have any questions. Feel free to call or email, or even stop by any of their locations. Just keep in mind that they are extremely busy so you may have a wait time if you just stop in.

2017-2018 ALL AMERICAN AWARDS

The following 2017-2018 All American Awards were presented.

District Two:

Post 12010 Bristol – CDR Durwood Stewart

District Seven:

Post 8713 Brooksville – CDR James Batten

District Eleven:

Post 4194 Stuart – CDR Brian Cote

Post 8058 St. Pierce – CDR Mark Denico

District Twelve:

Post 424 Tampa – CDR Jose Vazquez

Post 4321 Tampa – CDR Joseph Dempsey

District Seventeen:

Post 12046 Marianna – CDR Frank Husted

District Eighteen:

Post 5277 Clermont – CDR Kurt Schuh

Post 8207 Longwood – CDR Michael Ward

Post 10139 Chuluota – CDR Adam Zavarino

District Nineteen:

Post 3282 Port Orange – CDR Jose Rosa Jr.

Post 8093 DeBary - CDR Gorman "Larry" Bonds

2017-2018 ALL AMERICAN DISTRICT COMMANDERS

The following 2017-2018 All American Awards were presented.

District 8 – Commander Donald "Don" Pearsall

District 19 – Commander Gorman "Larry" Bonds

District 21 – Commander Stanley Budke

National Special Recognition Award:

District Eight and CDR Donald "Don" Pearsall

Because We Care Award – for \$1,000 2017-2018 donation

District Nineteen:

Post 4250 New Smyrna Beach – CDR Michael Merritt

2017-2018 MEMBERSHIP AWARDS

David G. Snyder Plaque

District Twelve:

Post 10140 Tampa – CDR Bruce Sitki

Emerson Lee Trophy

District Twelve:

Post 10140 Tampa – CDR Bruce Sitki

Gene then opened the floor to anyone that wanted to come forward to make donations to the Commanders Special Project and the Disaster Relief.

STATE CHAPLAIN Harry Seiler stated that the Chaplain reports have not changed and they are still on line. He urged everyone to get them in by December 31st so he could do his report. Then the next one he will need by May 30th, 2019.

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR Kurt Schuh stated there are three posts that have hit 100% already. Kurt read off a list of posts that are 92% or better, and these posts will be part of a raffle ticket drawing. Kurt urged people to get out there and talk to people to get more members. Kurt then thanked everyone for all that they do.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT: Kurt continued with his Legislative Report. There are three Amendments that will have an impact on veterans and veterans issues. Amendment 3 is being recommended as a no vote. This Amendment will limit all gambling in Florida if it passes, meaning they could take away all of the gaming in our organization. Amendment 7 is being recommended as a yes vote. This Amendment covers education benefits for first responders and military surviving spouses. The last one is Amendment 10 which is a being recommended as a yes vote. This Amendment would permanently establish the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs.

COMMANDERS SPECIAL PROJECT REPORT: (VFW Veterans Village Roof Project) Chairman Gene Perrino spoke about raise the roof at the Veterans Village. The cost of the project is \$805,000, which came out of our mutual funds, and the Commander and Auxiliary President picked the same project. Any monies we get will go back into our mutual funds. All donations for this project must be sent to the State Headquarters, and please write in the memo block Commander Special Project.

VETERANS VILLAGE REPORT: President Chester Pyatt thanked the Department of Florida for paying for the roof for the Veterans Village. Chester spoke about Robert Knott the engineer for the roof and stated the roof should be completed in about two weeks. Chester went over a packet that was given to all council members the previous day and stated this was an informational packet. It was put together to educate the membership on the standard operating procedures that take place in the VFW Veterans Village. The Veterans Village is a non-chartered unit. The Department of Florida and the authority for the control and operations of the facility is assigned and granted to the Board of Directors as established in the articles of incorporation of the Department of Florida. Chester stated that the Board of Directors is composed of six elected VFW members and three elected Auxiliary members. The Profit and Loss detail for 2017-2018 was also in the packet as well as the four audits that were done for the year. Chester read a fact sheet about the VFW Veterans Village stating it runs with a yearly unfunded budget. The Village has self-sustained itself for the past ten years with the assistance of the VFW Post, Districts, Auxiliaries, and friends of the Village. Chester also stated that the facility operates with seventeen staffers including the director. The Veterans Village is celebrating its 27th year this year. Chester asked for any questions and thanked everyone.

Director Al Lugo stated that the Village is celebrating its 27th year, and this is his 11th year at the Village. Al then thanked his first State Commander Dave Harris, his first Adjutant/Quartermaster Benny Bachand and his first President Jack McDermott, followed by Dan Duffy and Chester Pyatt. Al also recognized Past-Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell stating that Tommy was the first visitor to the Village. Al thanked State Commander Danny Anderson for all his assistance with getting the roof replaced on the Veterans Village. Al then thanked everyone for all their support and presented a Veterans Village award to Past-Commander-in Chief Tommy Tradewell.

Chester Pyatt then wanted to address also that the engineer on the roof project, Robert Knott has also given donations back to the Village and that is about \$2,000 so far.

HOSPITAL/CLINIC PROGRAM REPORT: State Surgeon Dani Hernandez encouraged everyone to get their flu shots and stated Walgreens was set up out front with them for free. Dani thanked everyone that volunteers at our VA Hospitals. They appreciate everything the VFW does. Dani

spoke about the Service Office and what a nice facility it is. Dani then spoke about the Bay Pines Hospital and her visit there. Dani spoke about the ambassador program, which every VA Hospital has. This program launched in 2017 and volunteers get a red vest and then greet people as they come into the hospital. There is also someone who will take you where you need to go so you don't get lost. One of the big items done at Bay Pines Hospital every year by Gene Leshore is a car show, which brings in a lot of money for the facility. Dani stated they are always looking for volunteers. Dani then went to Tampa and toured that facility and was able to interact with the patients there. Last weekend Dani stated she went to the Lake City Hospital and they have a Fall Festival every year to bring in monies and it is a very fun day. Yesterday Dani stated she met with Terry at the Orlando VA Hospital and was able to tour the new Fisher House. The hospital has 32 beds and can accommodate 54 people. Dani stated the VA reps do an outstanding job. Moving forward, Past Department Commander Dave Harris and Dani are going to work on a policy to give guidelines to VAVS reps to what they can do and what their parameters are and what they can spend their money on. Dani is also going to work on devising an inspection form. Dani urged everyone to please donate to Veteran Service Offices. Dani then spoke about Tricare retiree dental that is ending on December 31st. If you are eligible to enroll in the Federal employee dental and vision plan, go to tricare.com during open enrollment which is November 12th through December 10th.

BECAUSE WE CARE PROGRAM REPORT: Director Dave Harris thanked everyone for their support in the Because We Care Program. Dave spoke of an experience with down and out veterans that in the end because of this program are going to be alright. Donations are what make this great program work and we can make the biggest difference in these veterans' lives.

PAST COMMANDERS CLUB REPORT: Chairman Katie Smailis stated that the Past Commander's Club meeting will be held immediately following the current meeting in the same room. GI Joe Award nominations for 2018-2019 are due to Katie by May 20th. The form is on the website under resources and then go to post forms. Any shirts that were ordered at the School of Instruction are outside at her table.

STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA (SVA) REPORT: Chairman Arden Battle stated that the VFW has always been there to support the SVA's success. Arden encouraged each District with a University or Community College to reach out and establish a connection with them to help, and let them know about all the programs available to them. In doing so, they may decide to become members of the VFW but the main objective is to let them know we are a resource for them. He then thanked everyone for their continued support.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM REPORT: Tony Salvo stated that the VOD, Patriots Pen and Teacher of the year deadline to your Post is October 31st. Tony then went over the dates for District and State level submission. Tony asked if you are mailing anything to him to please send it certified to be sure it gets to him because of the current situation from the hurricane that went through his area.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES REPORT: Chairman Steven Schneider spoke about youth activities and how the posts need to get involved with these kids. A post that has an ROTC needs to be sure to fill out a report and send it in. Steven also stated that \$72,602 to date has been spent on these programs but the reports are not being submitted. Reach out and get involved since these children are our future.

PATRIOTS PEN REPORT: Chairman Ron Chapman stressed there is only four days left to get your reports in on time. Please make sure the paperwork is filled out completely.

HOMELESS VETERANS SUPPORT: Chairman Ron Chapman asked District Commanders to get a hold of their District Homeless Veterans Chairman and have them send what is in their areas for the homeless veterans. Ron is trying to put some type of book together so when someone calls him he will have the information with him to give out.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY: Chairman Glenn Wright stressed all entries are due by end of month. Please send your reports to Glen for monies spent and send essays and flash drives to the Department Headquarters. Glen also stated we are doing a lot of community service due to the hurricanes that came through, so make sure you are reporting all of that also.

State Commander Danny Anderson spoke about the VFW Riders. The Commander asked if you have a Riders Group in a Post or District, that you will consider one function you do as a fundraiser for the Vander Clute Ride. The Commander would like to see Florida flourish this year in the check presentation for this ride. The information about the ride and what it is for will be put on the website.

BUDDY POPPIES: Ray Jarvis stated that we are way down in buddy poppies since Memorial Day. A lot of Posts are not participating. Ray stated the work is being done but you must put the dollars into your reporting system. Ray also stated that there are only 43 Post that have recorded donations out of 155 in the state of Florida.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: State Junior Vice Glen Tilley spoke about the Commander at Post 4351 and how his company does shirts and embroidery, and stated they made an offer to the Department of Florida to do these shirts. This would be set up on the Department Website and all ordering could be done there. Glen stated the cost of the shirts would be \$25 for short sleeve and \$27.50 for long sleeve with sizes ranging from small to 5X. Glen also stated that \$8 of every shirt sold would go to the Department of Florida. Glen then made a motion to do this ongoing fundraiser with the Department. Seconded by State Inspector Don Bult. There was clarification discussion and Council vote, motion passed.

GOOD OF THE ORDER: Pat Love spoke about our candidate for Junior vice Commander and Chief, Amber Putnam, and asked everyone to please support her and help by supporting her fundraiser. Pat stressed to please donate whatever you can to help with this campaign. Pat then thanked everyone for their support.

Junior Vice Commander Glen Tilley then spoke to the Vietnam Veterans in the room and asked them if they remembered how badly they were treated in the VFW when they first came home. Glen spoke about how he is seeing these Vietnam Veterans treating our young Veterans like this now. Glen challenged the Vietnam Veterans to look around their posts and if they see this happening to speak with these individuals and remind them how it felt to them when they came home and this may help them see and understand.

State Commander Anderson then addressed the room to support District 17 with any donations they can make to help them with the hurricane destruction that went through their area.

State Chaplain Harry Seiler then thanked everyone in the room for their support for District 17 hurricane victims and stated the money donated will go to help our member in that area.

CANDIDATES FOR OFFICERS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

State Commander – Tony Purdy
State Sr. Vice Commander – Glen Tilley
State Jr. Vice Commander – Dani Hernandez
State Quartermaster – Gene Perrino
State Judge Advocate – Dan Duffy
State Chaplain – Harry Seiler
State Surgeon – Ron Mills and Kurt Schuh

State Adjutant/Quartermaster Gene Perrino read the upcoming events and announcements at this time

Comments from the District Commanders and State Officers were taken.

There being no further business meeting was adjourned.