



North Albany Post 1610 American Legion

35 North First Street, Albany, NY 12204
Office: 518-465-4800/Bar: 518-465-1402
Website: nap1610@yahoo.com

December 2021/
January 2022



A Message from the Commander

November for the most part was a blur of activity. The month began with the post (thank you, John Town) opening its doors before dawn on the Tuesday the 2nd so the poll workers could set up their stations for a long 6:00 a.m. 'til well after 9:00 p.m. election day – all after Dan Aikens had prepped the hall for their use.

Then there was the monster first annual Hometown Hero Awards Banquet held on Friday evening the 5th (displacing the weekly dart league event – sorry). Anyone who has met recently acquired post member John Mullen knows him to be an intense guy. Well it was John, along with his fellow members from the Reverend Francis A. Kelley (a WWI DSC recipient priest from Cohoes) Society across the river – Mark Bodnar, Tom Mullins, and Dave Barnum, who orchestrated this blockbuster event which featured Vietnam veteran and longtime TU columnist Terry Brown (“Duty Calls”) as the program’s prime honoree. Also honored was the post’s late, great Anthony Schmitz, wherein the post received a framed picture of Tony with his wife Mary, taken at the Century House sometime after Tony was awarded the French Legion of Honour Chevalier, presented at West Point in honor of his WWII military service helping liberate France. Also presented to the post was a framed copy of the citation accompanying that medal. Mary and members of the Schmitz family were present at the dinner.

Also honored was Vietnam veteran and post chaplain Chuck Lossi, who served aboard the USS Arlington, a commo relay “spy” ship off the coast of North Vietnam in 1967 that was fired on by shore artillery batteries “every night” while collecting enemy communications. Chuck was a petty officer third class. Secured aboard the Arlington were a number of 55-gallon drums. The crew did not know what they contained or what their purpose was, only that a few drums would be periodically transferred to swift boats. On one occasion, a couple drums broke free and broke open, contaminating members of the crew, including Chuck, with Agent Orange. As the Arlington was considered by the VA part of the “Blue Water Navy,” any disability claims attributed to Agent Orange exposure were, until just recently, uniformly denied. At the dinner, Chuck gave a very emotional speech on the subject. He’s looking for a good service officer.

We come to find out that John Mullen is the reigning expert in researching a veteran’s military history, determining – and procuring – every last service medal, ribbon, decoration, and award that is that veteran’s due. He’s a master at arranging them appropriately for presentation in a “shadowbox” for purposes of display. This is what he did for Albany County’s first Hometown Hero, retired Army first sergeant Terry Brown, and with forty-two medals and ribbons to work with, this was a challenge.

(Continued on page 3)

Honoree and Marine Corps vet Kenneth Wells, suited up to remind folks of the Toys for Tots drive, with Hometown Heroes prime mover John Mullen (photo by Gene LoParco).



Hometown Hero honoree and Vietnam vet Terry Brown, left, shown with his brother, post member Jim Brown, also a Vietnam vet (photo by Gene LoParco).



Mary Schmitz, honoree Tony's widow, second from right, and the Schmitz family at the Hometown Heroes dinner. Third from right is daughter and Auxiliary member Kathy Schmitz-Morfe (photo by Gene LoParco).



Major Dave Erickson, right, with the AHS SGT Henry Johnson Bn JROTC color guard and Keyorrie Wilson, third from left, a JROTC alumna and the evening's vocalist who sang the national anthem (photo by Gene LoParco).



Albany Veterans Day Parade 2021: Front (L to R) Pam Tracy and Judy Benner. Back (L to R) Stacy Liuzzi and Gretchen Riley.

Chaplain's News

Sick Call:

- Patrick Ryan
- Tom Curran
- Carole Egan
- Pat Boyd
- Joann Delisle

Prayers are asked for Marc Delisle, Joann Delisle's son.

If you know of anyone who is sick or has passed, please contact our Chaplains Charles Lossi at 518-438-6336 or Peggy Hovish (518-785-3485 or phovish@nycap.rr.com) or Kathy Schmitz-Morfe (518-495-2955 or ksmorfe@gmail.com).



Crusin' for Tots Spaghetti Dinner helpers (L to R): Stacy Liuzzi, Judy Benner, and Charlene Robbins (from Gold Star Mothers).

(Continued from page 1)

Terry tells a good story. During his remarks, he asked the rhetorical question: Just what is a “hero” really? And then proceeded to tell us about a quiet, modest man employed as a custodian at the United States Air Force Academy. He was a presence that the cadets might notice, maybe even nod to, as they rushed by with their busy schedules, day after day, month after month, year after year. Until one cadet who had taken the trouble to learn his name, sometime later while studying a particular aspect of military history, read of the heroic exploits of a GI that had the same name as the custodian. When approached by the cadet, the custodian sheepishly acknowledged that it was he and that it “. . . just happened on a single day a long time ago.” My retelling does not do Terry Brown’s story justice.

Jackie Jones and her family kitchen team’s turkey dinner with all the trimmings was simply superb. I don’t think a better meal ever came out of that kitchen. Very special thanks to Jackie’s husband and chef, Lormenzo, mother (and our district’s county legislator) Hon. Wanda Willingham, aunt Mattie Douglas, Tammie McLaughlin, and Marcus Willingham. Jackie also procured donations for all the provisions, and we are grateful to BJ’s Wholesale Club, Hannaford, ShopRite, Sam’s Club, and Capital Roots for their support.

I extend a heartfelt thank you to Auxiliary members Judy Benner, Gretchen Riley, Sheila Savage, and Stacy Liuzzi who donated several Monday evenings to help plan how to manage the event and helped set up for the meal, took admission money and sold raffle tickets, helped serve the meal and beverages, supervised cadets, bussed tables, and helped with final clean up and taking down/putting away Jackie Jones’ stunning decorations.

MAJ Dave Erickson’s Albany High School SGT Henry Johnson Bn JROTC cadets, including the color guard, JROTC alumna and national anthem vocalist Keyorrie Wilson, the dishwashers assisting John Town and John

Sacca, and those who were beverage servers all added a certain panache to the festivities.

Mark Bodnar was a masterful Master of Ceremonies. DJ Dave Addario set up under difficult circumstances with good humor and provided us with a toe-tapping playlist. Where was the dance floor? You knew you were in for an enjoyable evening when George Riley greeted you at the entrance to a busy post parking lot and found space for your Bentley. In addition, Jeff Hunt and Mary Dowling were there behind the bar to make sure you didn’t go thirsty – or just needed someone to talk to.

To all of you who volunteered your service, before, during, and after this memorable evening, thank you. It was you who helped make it a success.

Of course, this Hometown Heroes banquet would not have come to pass had it not been for the inspiration and relentless drive of John Mullen, who doggedly pursued all aspects of the event, selecting the honorees, envisioning and procuring the awards (shadow boxes, federal, state and other medals, crystal obelisk), securing raffle prizes, designing, preparing, and soliciting paid ads for the banquet’s journal and bringing in two thirds of the event’s attendees, all revenue-producing elements of the event, which handsomely benefitted the post. All we can say is thank you, John.

* * * * *

Be advised we are down to two very part time bartenders. The post is now closed Monday thru Thursday, except for Legion/Auxiliary meetings and House-chair scheduled events.

There will be no January newsletter. This is the December/January issue.

**Lawrence Wiest
Commander**

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Auxiliary News

As some of you do not make our meetings, I want to let you know how the Unit's funds are being used to help veterans and their families. Donations have been made to: VA food pantry, American Vet Dogs, Patriot Flight, Auxiliary Emergency Fund, National Veterans Creative Arts Program, Wreaths Across America and Warriors Family Assistance Program. We have discussed some other ways to help veterans such as the Christopher House in Troy which will be helping female veterans.

As we get closer to December, please remember to participate in our Toys 4 Tots drive. Boxes are at the Post to accept new, unwrapped toys. Let's make sure that all children have a new toy this Christmas!

Thank you to all that came to the Crusin' for Tots Spaghetti Dinner and Chinese Auction. They were able to increase their donation to Toys 4 Tots to \$5,000 this year with your help. Many went home with great prizes from the auction.

Let's not forget our veterans this holiday season. Your friends, neighbors and family should

not be alone during this festive time. Always reach out and make sure they are doing well.

The Auxiliary December meeting will include Albany County officers at our Holiday Covered Dish Dinner. All Auxiliary members are invited.

Remember to pay your dues. We have 62 members who have paid their dues and our quota is 76! Please check your member ID card to see if it says 2022 on it. If not, your dues are needed!

We need more members. Do you have a sister, granddaughter, husband/ wife or a friend who is eligible under a husband, wife, brother, father or grandfather? Ask them to join so we can continue to serve our veterans and community.

I hope all have a wonderful holiday season. Stay healthy. I have been your President for several years now and hope everyone can join us at our meetings in 2022 (January 4 is our next meeting).

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Judy Benner, President

Sons News

The 2021 Veterans Memorial Mass and Breakfast brought out 65 attendees for the breakfast and a healthy attendance at Mass at Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Albany High School Henry Johnson Battalion Color Guard presented the Colors for Mass and all seven members attended the breakfast courtesy of Commander Wiest. Major Dave Erickson did an outstanding job training the Color Guard, as usual.

The five deceased Honorees were:

John "Jack" Mosher

Clarence "Gordon" Hayes

Jim Duncan

Joseph G. Ferraiolo, Past Commander

Francis "Pat" Dolan, Past Commander

The Sons master chefs Jeff Hunt and Mark Scully assisted by Mike Yanni, Don Riley and John Townsend prepared a wonderful meal of french toast, hash brown potatoes, bacon, sausage, rolls, orange juice and coffee, still at \$5.00 due to the generous donation by Tim Mulligan, Eddie Shea and an anonymous donor. Service of the delightful meal was led by Christina Curran Drew and her hearty volunteers: Lisa Warner, Eileen McCabe, Fran Egan, Cathy Morlock, Marissa McNichols, Patrick McCabe and Dave Musco. Brian Early handled the door and greeting. Mary was assisted at the bar by Patrick and a great time was had by all.

Including donations, \$405.00 was deposited in the Sons account and a check for that amount will be given to the Commander.

The Sons were also represented carrying flags for the Veterans Parade for the Please Remember Me Group.

Mike Conners, Acting SAL Commander