



Yorktown e-Legion

Yorktown American Legion Post #1009

Issue #68

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Memorial Day Video

In our last issue we explained that our Post planned to coordinate a 'Reverse Memorial Day Parade' in place of our traditional parade. We would make up directions and have them on our website for members of the community to view, or print, and tour the Veterans Memorials and War Monuments across Yorktown. We were excited to be doing something new and unique to remember Memorial Day while this virus overshadowed everything in our community. Unfortunately, with everyone confined so long at home we began to fear that too many people might come out. Too many people coming out for a great cause could cause problems with social distancing and increase COVID-19 risks for everyone, so we switched to plan "B" instead! We videotaped all the memorials across town and narrated the tour with historical information about each monument along the tour. To add a personal touch, we had our Post and SAL members stand out in front of the Post in the opening shot of the video. Post Cmdr. John Giacomini spoke during the clip as 20 Legionnaires and 7 Sons' members stood masked, standing 6' apart for everyone's safety. Our group cheered "See you next year!" on the tape as the tour began to play.

We released the video onto YouTube one week before Memorial Day and it was a wonderful success! Yorktown Supervisor and SAL Squadron member Matt Slater played it during the Town Board's Zoom meeting on our local cable channel that week and even placed it on the Town's website as well. We learned that teachers in the local elementary schools assigned it to their students for a homework assignment and discussed it afterwards. The National American Legion HQ's wrote about our Post's video in their e-Newsletter. If you have not seen the video yet - you can go to our Post website and a link is on the opening page.

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Memorial Day Week

Our Yorktown Post is normally running like crazy during the week of Memorial Day with our Poppy Fundraiser (postponed until the Fall); school visits (cancelled due to schools closed); veterans' grave decoration (see article below) and the Memorial Day Ceremonies and Parade. This year the virus pandemic shut down almost all of these events.

At the last minute NYS permitted small ceremonies to be held for Memorial Day. SAL #1009 member and Town Council member Tom Diana coordinated a ceremony at the Shrub Oak Honor Roll monument at the Hart Library. His family has 5 names listed on this monument and he always makes sure there is a ceremony there. Normally, our Post members miss this ceremony because we are setting up at the other end of town for the parade. This year's ceremony was attended by a large contingent of the Mohegan Lake Fire Department, elected officials, and SAL #1009 members Matt Slater, Tom Diana, Ed Lachterman, Gary Raniolo, Sal Lagonia, Paul Martin, Jay Gussak and Post Legionnaires Al Laughlin, Bob Raphael, and Pat McDonough.

Immediately following this ceremony everyone moved down to Patriot Park behind Yorktown Town Hall where VFW Post #8328 conducted a Memorial Day Ceremony there. Thank you to all who came out to attend this ceremony - Post Legionnaires Rich Calbo, Larry Qualter, Tony Grasso, Bob Raphael, John Giacomini, Carl DiLiberto, Ken Blish, Rocco Salierno, Terrence Deveau, Patrick McDonough and SAL members Jay Gussak, James Calbo, Bill Wienecke, Bill Gerhardt Jr., Sal Lagonia, Tom Diana, Matt Slater, Ed Lachterman, and Gary Raniolo. Thank you everyone for attending!

"Flags In"

In a normal year, our Post provides the U.S. flags to decorate all veteran's graves across Yorktown and local Scouts provide the young legs to install them. The virus sidelined the Scouts this year so our Post and SAL members came together to replace the old, frayed, faded flags with fresh

new ones. 2 years ago one Scout did an Eagle Scout project at Amawalk cemetery where he identified all veterans interred there. He then bought and installed veteran flag holders at all their graves. Last year our Post ran out of flags because of the additional 200+ graves this Scout identified and marked. This year we ordered additional flags and were fully prepared and ready to go.

A great big 'Thank You' goes to our 3rd Vice Cmdr John McQuillan who researches, records, and coordinates this endeavor every year to decorate every veteran's grave in Yorktown. We also wish to thank - Legionnaires John McQuillan, Al Laughlin, Bob Raphael, Tom Brady, Terry Deveau, Carl DiLiberto, and Keri and Pat McDonough; SAL members Paul Martin, James Calbo, Carol and Ed Lachterman, and prospective SAL member David Rocco for seeing Amawalk Cemetery was done. Thank you to Legionnaires John McQuillan, Al Laughlin, Pat McDonough, and SAL members Paul Martin, James Calbo, Tom Diana, and prospective SAL member David Rocco for returning the next day to decorate Shrub Oak's Methodist Church cemetery. A big thank you to The Goss Family - Bill, a Post and Sal member, his wife Kim, his son Bill, a SAL member, and his daughter, Kathleen! They decorated the veterans graves in the 1st Presbyterian Church cemetery as a family! In total our Post decorated over 940 of our fellow veteran's graves for Memorial Day.

It wasn't 'all work and no play' either. John McQuillan is with the Yorktown Historical Society and after the flags were in place, he gave a short tour of interesting points of interest within the cemeteries. At Amawalk he pointed out where two past Post Commanders are laid to rest. In the abandoned Quaker Meeting House cemetery John pointed out the gravestone of a Civil War veteran from the famed 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. This was the all black unit whose story was shown in the blockbuster movie 'Glory'. At the Shrub Oak Methodist Cemetery John recalled the stories of 2 Civil War soldiers interred there. It wasn't only John teaching history either. When John and I stopped over at the 1st Presbyterian Church cemetery as the Goss Family finished up - Kim Goss told of her family's long ties to the area and the relatives she has interred in that cemetery.

John's knowledge about the town's cemeteries is amazing. We discussed arranging a few informal historical tours of the town's cemeteries on nice Summer days. Drop us a note if you might be interested in one of these.

Rendering Honors

Can you imagine how hard it would be to lose a loved one with no chance to say goodbye at a wake or funeral? Our Yorktown Post is one of few American Legion Posts who 'Render Honors' to veterans who pass on. Many only perform this ceremony for their Post members that are lost. Our Post has performed this ceremony 26 times since May 2019, and every family has been touched by this ceremony for their loved one. When the funeral homes shut down due to the virus, some families called our Post directly asking if anything could be done for their veterans. Our Post responded with 2-man honor guards to 2 veteran's burials which limited the health dangers to our Post members. We brought along our bugle to play 'Taps' in case it was needed.

Now that funeral homes are open with new procedures, you are beginning to see emails asking for members to take part once again in this ceremony. For those who have never seen or taken part in this ceremony - let us explain what it is all about. Our members, both Legionnaires and SAL members, meet at the funeral home. Every time we hold a briefing on what will occur just in case anyone is new or has not done it in a while. With the family seated, a line of our masked Post members file down each side of the room to join at the casket. This line of 10-18 Legion members face the family and are spread across the front of the room following safe social distancing protocols. The prayers are read and in unison our members turn and salute this veteran. Our members turn again to face the family. We file past, keeping safe and socially distant, while offering words of comfort to them. We arrive at 6:50 PM and depart at 7:05 PM usually. 15 minutes and we have completed our mission. Any members who linger in the lobby or parking lot are often greeted by persons leaving the wake thanking them for this service. This is a simple ceremony which comforts these mourning families.

Sad News

We regret to inform everyone on the passing of two Post Legionnaires - Anthony Galleno and Joseph Vogliazzo. Anthony passed on March 11th and we only learned about his passing from seeing his name on a funeral home website a few weeks later. Joseph was a 66 year member of the American Legion and passed on April 19th. His daughter, Joanne, called our Post about

something else and didn't realize we didn't know about his passing. She said because of the pandemic there was no wake or funeral service available for Joe. We asked her to let us know if a remembrance event was planned that we could attend.

'Leave No Veteran Unremembered'

Back in the Summer of 2017 our Post was contacted by Robert Burke to help with the clearing and reclaiming of a long abandoned cemetery at the Yorktown/Cortlandt border. It had been abandoned for about 70 years and was the final resting place of 9 Civil War veterans. Several headstones had broken or toppled and become buried under debris. Saplings had grown into full trees, died, and fallen in the decades of neglect. For two hot Summer months our Post Legionnaires joined other community members cutting down dangerous trees, cutting them up, and carrying them out to the road for pickup. We made a big difference in its appearance. Unfortunately, our schedule took us in other directions in the Fall and Winter months.

Bob Burke, the project's coordinator, continued on with the work. He named the project 'Leave No Veteran Unremembered' for the veterans interred there, and did fundraising for improvements to the cemetery. Bob, himself, unearthed buried headstones and restood and restored them. He ordered and installed a beautifully engraved marble bench at the cemetery's entrance and installed a U.S. flag and Army flag to honor the veterans there.

With the COVID-19 shutdown Post Adjutant Pat McDonough began returning to the cemetery to help with this stalled project, spending some time weed-wacking the burial areas and neatening the cemetery. With Bob, they have created cleared pathways with 4x4 landscaping lumber and now await a delivery of gravel to fill these pathways to make a safer walking experience and to make them low-maintenance. We'll keep you updated on this interesting project. Our aim is to try to complete the work this Summer to rescue Bob out from under it.

SAL #1009 News

Our Sons of the American Legion Squadron's 2020 Military Tribute Banner program is off to a roaring start. Our first wave of 16 banners were

put up by the Yorktown Parks and Rec. Department along Commerce St on the Friday before Memorial Day. Following that success, a second wave of 9 banners was received, ordered, and delivered in time for the Rec. Department to have those up before July 4th. To date there are 25 banners proudly displayed in downtown Yorktown with 4 more awaiting production and delivery. We wish to thank James Mortarano and the Yorktown Parks crew, Dominic Monopoli, Bryan O'Keefe, and Rob Alfano for the fantastic and timely manner in which they hung the Military Tribute Banners.

SAL #1009 and our family sponsors are proud to honor our beloved resident veterans with these beautiful banners in downtown Yorktown Heights. Poles are available as well on Main St in Shrub Oak if requested. This is our way of saying "Thank You" to the men and women who have served in our great United States military. Proceeds from the Banner program will support donations to American Legion Post #1009 and other local veteran-related charities. For more information, visit www.militarytributebanners.org and click on current programs/Yorktown,NY, like them on Facebook at 'Sons of the American Legion Squadron #1009', or at their website at www.sal1009ny.org.

July 4th Raffle

Thank you to everyone who took part in our Post's 'Memorial Day 50/50 Raffle' which was delayed and run as a July 4th 50/50 Raffle. We mailed out raffles to 102 Post & SAL members and received 1,200 tickets back from 73 members for a 71% return rate. Our total income in was \$1,035. The raffle expenses (printing, envelopes, postage, labels) were donated by Adjutant Pat McDonough so the prize was \$517.50 each for the winner and the Post.

On Sunday, July 5th Cmdr Giacomini drew the winning ticket belonging to Francine DiBernardo, the daughter of WWII Post Legionnaire Marco DiBernardo. Francine donated \$100 back to the Post! Thank you and Congratulations Francine!

Did you hear about the accident at the Army base?
--- A tank ran over a box of popcorn and killed two
Kernels!

THE AMERICAN LEGION



Thank you!

Since COVID-19 shut down our Post in March our Post's income has been \$ 0 until our July 4th, 50/50 Raffle income of \$517.50. During this time, our Post has paid gas, electric, oil, water, phone, cable, internet, garbage, and insurance bills each month which total \$2,000 a month or more each month. This has been draining our bank accounts. Our Post's Executive Committee has done everything from suspending parts of our Post's insurance policy temporarily, to dropping Optimum service because they would not suspend our TV service fees while we are closed to save our Post money.

Our Post would like to publicly thank those individuals and organizations who stepped up with donations to help our Post at this most difficult time. Thank you to the Yorktown Lions Club who are also suffering from the COVID-19 shutdown as well but still generously donated a check for \$500 to our Post. Thank you to Patricia Larsen, the wife of recently passed Legionnaire Joseph Larsen, who donated \$100 to our Post. Our Post Chaplain Tom Einwich donated \$100 to our financial coffers while looking after our spiritual ones! Thank you, Tom! Finally, thank you to our Sons of the American Legion Squadron who donated \$750 from the proceeds of their Fundraiser Breakfasts this year to our Post to help survive this shutdown.

Our Post survives by fundraising to pay for our projects and programs. We depend on the income from rentals of our Post Hall to maintain and run our Post building. We have had no income since March and our Executive Committee believes that people will not be gathering for parties and events until the Fall at the earliest, so no rental income to help the Post. Our bank accounts will carry us for a limited time before we may be forced to appeal to our membership for donations to help our Post to survive this pandemic shutdown.

Flag Retirement Ceremony

Our annual U.S. Flag Retirement Ceremony had to be postponed from June due to the virus shutdown. The Yorktown Fire Department has agreed to conduct this ceremony with us on Saturday, August 1, 2020 at 9 AM at the YFD Carnival Grounds behind the Commerce St Fire Station. The rain date is 8/08 at 9 AM. We ask all available Post members to try to attend as the Scouts are unable to participate due to COVID-19

concerns. We have more flags every year and this year we have approximately 1,700 flags tucked in every corner of the Post awaiting retirement at this ceremony. Pass the word about it to friends and family in case they would like to attend. This event is open to all.

Re-Opening Our Post

Our Post closed in March. Following NYS's COVID Re-opening Plan we were able to re-open on Friday, July 17th, 2020 for our Friday Happy Hour gatherings. We had 22 people show up to have some food and a couple of drinks while catching up with each other. It wasn't the same old Happy Hour in the Post Bar either. Our Post has adopted new policies to keep our staff, members, and guests safe and healthy. Everyone gathers now in the Main Hall and the tables are 8' apart to allow for social distancing. Masks are required while walking around but people seated can be unmasked. Drinks are available from the table across the front Bar door and food is available at the rear Bar door. Our bathrooms have been updated with 'touchless' hand soap and paper towel dispensers. This way no one has to touch the levers that others have touched. Right now, our Post is only open for Post functions with a limited capacity at 50 persons - not our normal 115. These new policies are to keep our members and guests safe and healthy. With states surging with virus cases now it is hard to predict when we will be able to fully open again. Let's hope soon.

Post #1009 Upcoming Events

Sat Aug 1 Flag Retirement Ceremony at YFD Carnival Grounds - 9 AM

Tue Aug 4 Executive Comm Mtg 7:00 PM

Wed Mar 12 County Legion meeting at Post #1009 - 7:30 PM

Tue Sep 1 Executive Comm Mtg 7:00 PM

Thu Sep 3 SAL #1009 meeting 7:30 PM

Thu Sep 10 Post Monthly meeting - 7:30 PM

Sun Sep 20 SAL Fundraiser Breakfast 9 AM to 11 AM

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