



Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

Post 3272

Avon, Connecticut

“ON TARGET”

THE POST'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2011
ISSUE 116

The Post met on Wednesday, **25 May 2011** at the Italian Club with **48 members** in attendance. Our Ladies Auxiliary, as usual, provided another exceptional meal for our troops and all enjoyed another fine evening of good fellowship.

Our next meeting is scheduled for **22 June 2011** at the Italian Club on Old Farms Rd. Please join us for cocktails at 6pm with dinner to follow about 6:30pm. Hope to see many of you there. This will be our last regular meeting until September!

Prior to our meeting, *Commander Roy Walton* introduced **Captain Len Tolisano** from the Governor's Horse Guard who thanked all who petitioned the State to keep this historic unit here in Avon. He also asked the Post to consider contributing to the renovation of the old barn on the Horse Guard Property which is a project being undertaken by the Avon Historical Society.

Commander Walton, also before our meeting, administered the new member oath to *Art Curry, Al Lloyd, Jeff Monroe and Vic Viering*. The members present warmly welcomed these new members.

The Commander opened the meeting at 7:40pm. The *Officer of the Day* led the members in the salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance. *Post Chaplain Bob Gaiette* offered the opening prayer and *Bill Newman* provided the POW/MIA prayer. *Adjutant Aldo Vernesoni* placed copies of the last meeting's minutes on the tables for review and *Quartermaster Don Perreault* likewise provided the financial report. Both reports were approved as presented.

Comrades in distress this month include Mike Battaglino, Mike Busha, Bob Campbell, Tom Chrosniak, Dr. Tim Curran, Bill Gresh, Jo Hinman, Jim Katzung, John Pappalardo, Ed Stepien and Clyde Whirly. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers – and visit them if you are able! We ask that you also let our Chaplain Bob Gaiette (860-673-9324) know if you learn of any other members who are ill or hospitalized. Names underlined are new this month.

Under Committee Reports, *Bill Samol*, Parade Marshall, assured the members that all is ready for another great Memorial Day Parade on Monday, the 30th. He has the Horse Guard, the Marchers, the Antique Cars with Vets, the Fly-over, the Avon High School Band, the Scouts, the Floats, etc ready to go! He also noted that the Picnic will be held after the Parade at the Italian Club as usual. Remember we step off at 11am – so be at the Towpath Annex by 10:30 to line-up. Although Bill anticipated good conditions for the Parade, the Avon Senior Center would be available in case of inclement weather. It was also noted that the Color Guard, Chaplain & Buglers will conduct a service at six cemeteries in Avon on that morning. The group meets by O'Neil Chevrolet at 7:30am.

Bill Newman updated the members on the status of our 2011 Poppy Drive and noted we have deposited to the Relief Fund at the Farmington Savings Bank approximately \$8000 after seven (7) days of distributing poppies. He noted this is an encouraging start but much will depend on the next few days and the Memorial Day Weekend. Bill advised that we have committed to 128 two-hour timeslots and asked that all volunteers (47) insure that they know their times & places. He noted that *Lee Wilson* has provided times & places with assigned volunteers on the Post Website calendar.

Regarding our Annual Golf Fundraiser, *Tim Curran* advised that Blue Fox Run has given us the following days for this year – *20 August, 10 September & 1 October*. Tim needs eight (8) volunteers to man four (4) timeslots – *9-11am, 11-1pm, 1-3pm & 3-5pm*. This is the key fundraiser for our General Fund – so contact Tim & sign up! It is also a fun event as the golfers try to reach the 9th Green and we bet they'll miss.

Post Officers Reinstalled for 2011 – 2012

Our Installation of Officers was conducted under New Business and *Past Commander George England* acted as the Installing Officer. **Roy Walton** was reinstalled as the Post Commander, **Grant Hagedorn** as the Senior Vice Commander and **Philip Schenck** as the Junior Vice Commander. **Bob Galiette** also was reinstalled as the Post Chaplain, **Don Perreault** as the Post Quartermaster, **Aldo Vernesoni** as Post Adjutant, **Bob Hunt** as Post Advocate, **Scott Thomas** as Post Surgeon, **Mike Gould** as Officer of the Day and **Bob Hunt** also as Post Historian. The Post Trustees for the next year include **Bill Newman** (3 years), **Bill Samol** (2 years) and **Dick Petersen** (1 year). Our heartiest congratulations to these Post Officers who now reassume their respective duties and offices for the next 12 months.

Post Activities & Developments

The 2011 Poppy Drive ended on a high note as preliminary figures indicate that the Post raised over \$21,000 (gross) for our Relief Fund during the 10-day period of this year's effort. We are most grateful to those from our community who supported this drive so generously and we deeply appreciate the 48 Post Veterans who volunteered for 130 two-hour timeslots during this period. We thank also those local businesses which allowed us to distribute poppies at their locations – Wal-Mart, Stop N Shop, Shop Rite, Dunkin Donuts, Luke's Donuts & the Avon Convenient Store – for without their commitment these results would be impossible. By any standards, this was an outstanding effort and shows that we live in a community which strongly supports its local veterans.

Due to an untimely thunderstorm, our Memorial Day Parade had to be cancelled the morning of Memorial Day. Many members met at Lee & Terri's house on Mountain View Rd for breakfast as scheduled and then assembled at the Avon Senior Center for our Memorial Day Ceremony. Color Guards from the Avon Police Department, Avon Fire Department and VFW Post opened the ceremony and approximately 40 veterans participated in the service. *Bill Samol*, acting as the Master of Ceremonies, welcomed the public to the program. Rev. James S. Wheeler, Pastor of the First Collinsville Congregational Church, offered the invocation, *Heather St Peter* sang the National Anthem and *Bill Newman* offered the POW/MIA Prayer. Since this year is the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War, *Bill* also read the names of the 25 Union Soldiers from Avon who gave their lives in that war. He also listed the 11 veterans from our Post who passed away since Memorial Day 2010. Taps were then played by 2 members of the Avon High School Band. *Commander Roy Walton* provided the Keynote Address and *Rev. Wheeler* offered the benediction. There was a large public turnout for this memorial service and many felt it was very well-done

Here is the list of our Comrades-In-Arms who passed away since last Memorial Day. They are presented in the order that they taken from us. May they all rest in peace!

DEPARTED POST MEMBERS (11)

(Since Memorial Day 2010)

- 12Jun **Benjamin Pereslugoff** - Navy/WWII/Pacific/Seaman1CI/Past Cmdr/Life Member/50yrs
05Jul **Nat S. Michon** - Army/Korea/MSgt/Infantry/CIB/9mos-frontlines/Life Member
26Jul **Alfonse Lepore** - Army/German Occupation/Sergeant/Motor-Pool/Transfer
31Jul **John J. Higgins, Sr.** - Army/WWII/Pacific/Colonel/Infantry/CIB/BS/35yrsServ/Life Member
27Oct **Charles F. Kilgore** - Army/WWII/Europe/Captain/Ordnance/Outstanding Vet/Life Member
30Oct **Michael J. Dlubac** - Air Force/Korea/SSgt/Admin/1951-54
01Nov **Wayne F. Hosking** - Army/Vietnam/4thID/Captain/MD/Medical Corps
07Dec **Robert D. Harris** – Navy/WWII-Pacific/Submariner/Torpedoman2CI/Life Member
22Jan Harold B. Schaal - Navy/WWII/Europe(D-Day-Omaha B)Coxswain & 1CI Petty Off
06Apr **Anthony Rizzo** - Navy/WWII-Pacific/Seaman 1C/Destroyer Escort (USS Osmus)
08May **Richard O. Bensch** - Army/WWII-Europe/Lieutenant/Ordnance/Life Member

After the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Senior Center, Members the *Color Guard, Chaplain, Buglers and Several Members* of the Post visited the six Avon Cemeteries and presented at each cemetery a wreath, offered prayers and played taps for our dearly departed comrades who rest there – many of whom were members of our Post. This is a service we perform each Memorial Day and is an honored tradition of our Post. We thank all those who participated in this Special Memorial Service.

We are delighted to introduce the following **four (4) new members** who have recently joined our Post. Please welcome them to the Post at your earliest opportunity:

Gene Farrell – served as a Corporal in the U.S. Army from December 1950 to February 1952 with the 78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Armored Division in Baumholden, Germany as part of the Occupation Forces. He is a transfer from Post 10201, Brookfield, CT and is a Life Member of the VFW. Gene lives in Avon and came to us by way of our coffee at Friendly's.

Carl Heinzelman, Jr. - is a Vietnam Veteran who served with the Marines from September 1964 to June 1968. He Joined the Marines in September 1964 and started boot Camp in Jan 65, Ammo School at Quantico, VA and the reported to 1st Marine Division, Ammo Co at Camp Pendelton, CA. Carl arrived in Vietnam May 65 and reported to Force Logistics Command. He was assigned first to the ammo dump at Phu Bai, moved up to Camp Evans (north of Hue) for three months, next to Quang Tri and finally to the ammo dump at Dong Ha. He finished his enlistment with the 10th Marines at Camp Lejuene, NC. Carl lives in Avon and was introduced to the Post by *Bill Newman*.

Gerald Layton – has been on active duty with the U.S. Army in Iraq and has been recently transferred to Afghanistan. He is expected to return home on or about 20Sep11. He lived recently in Litchfield, CT and was introduced to the Post by *Rich Ecke*.

Jeff Monroe – is a Navy Veteran of the Vietnam War who served as a Petty Officer CI 3 on the USS Mullinnix DD-944. He was on active duty from 6Sep66 to 20Aug70 and spent 3 years & 11 months overseas. My first cruise was part of a United Multi Navy Task Force where I went through the Panama Canal, around South America and participated in Naval Movement War games. My ship was deployed to Viet Nam Sept 1968 to Sept. 1969 for gunfire support for Marines and Army combatants. After returning to the US, his ship was assigned to the Mediterrean from Dec.1969 to Aug. 1970. His decorations include the Navy Good Conduct Medal, Nat Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon & the Vietnam Campaign Medal. Jeff lives in Avon and was introduced to us by *Bob Galiette*.

On Saturday, 11 June, *Bill Newman & Don Perreault* attended the Awards Breakfast at the 91st Department of Connecticut State Convention at the Rocky Hill Marriott Hotel. We were both very surprised and pleased to learn that Avon Post 3272 was in fact ranked as the Number 1 Post in Division 5. Accordingly, Commander Roy Walton is the Honor Commander for Division 5 as well as an All-State Commander for 2010 – 2011. The Post has therefore once again been designated as an All-State Post. We sincerely thank everyone who helped make this award possible – especially all those members who worked hard to increase our membership again this year. *Commander Walton* was also awarded a handsome plaque for the largest gain in new members in our Class (D) for 2010 – 2011. Our heartfelt congratulations to Commander Walton and the members of Post 3272 for these outstanding accomplishments and awards.

After several years of being runner-up for poppies in the state, we were this year designated as Number 1 in the State of Connecticut for Poppies (12,000) and received an attractive plaque designating Post 3272 as the Top Post. We are indebted to many members (48) for this award but there are three (3) individuals who made an extraordinary contribution to this highly successful effort – Lee Wilson for running the drive in my absence, his multiple timeslots and his invaluable assistance; Rich Ecke for manning 11 timeslots; and Art Ostheimer for taking 9+ timeslots. These three individuals also collected the most donations for the Post's Relief Fund.

Lastly, our Post Newsletter was once again named the best in Connecticut (4th time) by the Department of Connecticut and was, surprisingly, also awarded a plaque for placing 3rd nationally in the 2011 VFW National Publications Contest. It was, needless to say, a rewarding breakfast for the Post and its members!

To continue the Good News on the Post, we have recently received word from Senator Kevin Witkos' office that the Senate Bill 708 has passed and our request for naming the bridge over the Farmington River on Route 44 "The Corporal Gildo T. Consolini Memorial Bridge" has been approved. The Governor will need to sign the bill and then we will be informed of the date the bridge sign will be installed. As many of you know, this effort began in December 2009 when we asked Senator Wilkos if he would sponsor a bill in this regard and it moved through the many corridors of the Legislature to its approval now. Our only regret is that several WWII Veterans from our Post – *Ray Zacchera (who was with when he was killed in action)*, *Freddy Rotondo*, *John Higgins* and others from the *169th Infantry Regiment, 43rd Infantry Division* did not live to see *Corporal Consolini* honored in this way. We should plan on a ceremony at the time of installation - since the Post is named in his honor and we have been the prime mover for this recognition.

Noteworthy Quotes

*Ike & Personal Accountability**

"In this age of "mistakes were made" and "I can't say with certitude," a reminder of a time when accountability was an essential virtue of leadership arrived with the 67th anniversary of D-Day. The day before the greatest armada ever assembled set sail for the coast of Normandy, Gen. Dwight David Eisenhower walked among the men of the 101st Airborne Division, who were boarding the aircraft that would drop them behind German lines in advance of the landings, where many of them would die. Cheerful, seemingly at ease, he asked their names and hometowns and what they had done for a living before the war. One young paratrooper stopped just as he was boarding his plane, turned around and snapped a salute to the supreme allied commander, who returned it smartly and flashed a smile. Then he turned away and broke down. The odds of success were believed to be no better than the odds of failure. The invasion had been scheduled for June 5th but had to be postponed because of gale-force winds and dense cloud cover. At 4:15 in the morning of the 5th, after receiving a report from his meteorologist that there might be a brief window of bearable weather the following morning, and consulting with his senior commanders – who were divided – Eisenhower paced the floor in silence, chain smoking, for five minutes before lifting his head and ordering, "OK, Let's Go." The heavy burdens of command were plainly evident in his behavior. Eisenhower drank 15 to 20 cups of coffee and smoked four packs a day. He had high blood pressure and migraines. He suffered from insomnia, so he often worked through the night. Ike had a bad temper but he never complained or gave the slightest impression he thought he deserved anyone's sympathy. He disliked flattery and no use for the perquisites of high command. He had been given a mansion for his quarters, and rejected it for a modest two-bedroom house in a London suburb. Only to his wife did he write of his loneliness and doubts. His statement to his troops were broadcast at every embarkation point, ending confidently with an assurance of success: *"I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full victory! And let us beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking."* In his shirt pocket, he carried another statement. He has written it alone, and informed no one of its contents: *"Our landings...have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based on the best information available. The troops, the air, and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt, it is mine alone."* Some hours later, off Omaha Beach, the commander of the invasion force, General Omar Bradley, looked through binoculars at what he believed was an ensuing disaster. Allied bombers had missed the enemy pillboxes and artillery were crewing up the first wave of American soldiers, who sought the only cover they could find – sand mounds created by enemy shells. Then they got up and pushed ahead and scaled the cliffs and destroyed their country's enemies. Eisenhower wouldn't need his statement claiming sole responsibility for a disaster that would have cost him his command and likely meant a return home in disgrace. An aide rescued it from the wastebasket Eisenhower had tossed it in. On June 7th, Ike crossed the English Channel to observe the follow-up landings. He asked the British skipper to bring the ship closer to the beach. The ship ran aground – knocking Eisenhower and several senior officers to the deck. When he returned to his base, Eisenhower wrote the British Sea Lord, taking responsibility for the incident and asking that the skipper not be punished for following his orders. As America begins its quadrennial election of a commander in chief amid war and economic hardship, can we expect to find among the aspirants someone who will hold themselves to such a *strict standard of accountability*. Probably not – times have changed! But we should ask every candidate one question before any other. *Whose fault will it be if you don't keep your word – or if your program does not succeed? If we don't insist on an unqualified answer, then the blame will be ours!"* *"Ike, D-Day and the Age of Accountable Leaders", Mike Salter, Real Clear Politics. 6/7/11*

*Downsizing Defense**

"Defense cuts are coming, that much we know for sure, and the easiest of them have already been made. Defense Secretary Robert Gates acknowledged that over the past two years, "more than 30 programs (weapon systems, etc.) were canceled, capped, or ended that, if pursued to completion, would have cost more than \$300 billion." After a comprehensive review, the Pentagon hopes to find additional savings. Whatever those might be, however, they will not be enough to meet their goal of saving \$400 billion over 10 years. The pressure on the Pentagon's budget is part of a larger effort to cut the overall budget deficit by \$4 trillion over the same time period. *To meet that goal, the Pentagon is already suggesting that military missions and troop levels be reduced.* For a historical perspective, our defense budget hit a postwar high of 14.2% of GDP in 1953 during the Korean War. At the height of Vietnam in 1968, it was 9.5%, and it was 6.8% in 1986 at the height of the Reagan buildup. In 2000, military funding reached the lowest point on 3.0%. Today, 10 years into the Global War on Terror, we are spending 4.7% of GDP on defense. *In the 1980s, the Army had 18 combat divisions. Today they have ten. Many of the Army's weapons have already missed several rounds of modernization. Many of its soldiers are on their fourth or fifth tour of duty in Iraq or Afghanistan. And the Army Reserves have been on repeated deployments overseas since 9/11 as well. The Navy has been reduced*

from 600 ships in the 1980s to fewer than 300 today. They now have fewer ships than at any time since the First World War. In that same time, the number of tactical air wings in the Air Force has fallen from 37 to 20. And their planes are the smallest in number and the oldest in age, ever. The useful life of the tanks, artillery, planes, ships, and missiles that date to the Reagan buildup is ending, and the cost of replacing them is now far greater than it was back then. Going forward, the challenge for Washington is to reach a political consensus that transitions our military capability and alliances, and meets the realities of the decades ahead. As a nation, perhaps the first question we must ask ourselves is what is so critical to our security that we are willing to go to war to defend it? Upon the answer to that question lie answers to how much military strength we need, and at what amount of funding will be needed to achieve it. Once the Afghan War is over, we would hope to see U.S. troop levels reduced in the Middle East. In Korea, the South has twice the people, and many times the economy of the North. Moreover, Pyongyang has no Soviet Union or Maoist China backing them as in the past. We may also have an opportunity to reduce our commitment there. And what is the necessity for a U.S. troop presence in Europe? The Red Army withdrew from Germany and the rest of Central Europe long ago. Our European allies are as wealthy as we are. And while they would rather push their defense responsibilities off on us, perhaps it is time for us to step back from there too. Should we really have U.S. troops stationed in places like Kosovo? Maybe we should let the Europeans handle these places on their own. Some have said we should not partake in any more wars where we must endlessly explain our reasons for being there to the American people. In this time of austerity, perhaps that is right approach. Nevertheless, the old axiom that peace comes through strength has not changed. When a crisis comes, we could be forced to pay in blood and treasure many times over what we save today in downsizing our military. Clearly, we must be smart about downsizing our military and optimizing its strength while undergoing this process. Our decisions today will be consequential to when that day of crisis inevitably comes. In his AEI speech, Gates said: I am determined that we not repeat the mistakes of the past, where the budget targets were met mostly by taking a percentage off the top of everything, the simplest and most politically expedient approach both inside the Pentagon and outside of it. That kind of "salami-slicing" approach preserves overhead and maintains force structure on paper, but results in a hollowing-out of the force from a lack of proper training, maintenance and equipment - and manpower. That's what happened in the 1970s - a disastrous period for our military - and to a lesser extent during the late 1990s. The biggest items in the federal budget are Social Security, Medicare, and Defense. It is unlikely we will reach any long-term bipartisan budget deal without cuts to all three. The President, the Congress, and the American people should openly decide which commitments and capabilities America should maintain, reduce, or abandon. In one of his final acts as Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates has brought this vital issue to the forefront of the public attention." The Strategic Debate We Need To Have, Jeff Lukens, Am Thinker, 6/8/11

The Afghan War Revisited*

"It says something about America's combat fatigue that we're having a debate about the Afghan War utterly detached from events in the Afghan War. It doesn't matter that we've routed the Taliban from key strongholds, disrupted its safe havens in Pakistan, and drastically weakened al-Qaeda. It is taken as a given that we are failing in a pointless misadventure in the graveyard of empires. If the war were as hopeless as advertised, the surge of 30,000 troops Pres. Barack Obama ordered in 2009 would have failed to achieve anything, let alone the successes of the past year. The Taliban are attempting with little success to fight back into their formerly uncontested territory in the south. The *New York Times* reports that in Kandahar province, "Taliban commanders who have ventured back for the new fighting season were detained or chased out of the area within hours of arriving from Pakistan." Throughout the south, "the insurgency is now mostly limited to small groups of local fighters who lay mines or carry out assassinations or suicide bombings in the cities, attacks that are more important psychologically than strategically." To ask our troops to win hard-fought ground at the cost of life and limb, then hand it back to the enemy because White House politicians don't like how the war is polling, would be stupid, feckless, and disgraceful." We're told in ominous tones that the Afghan War is already ten years old. For much of that period, though, we weren't heavily engaged. As late as January 2009, we had 34,000 troops in Afghanistan, a third of today's force. The counterinsurgency campaign only got fully under way the latter half of last year. We seek to reduce the insurgency so that Afghan forces can eventually take on the fight themselves. Together with our allies, we've set a goal of the end of 2014 for the transition to the Afghans — a clear, realistic endpoint for our current role." "Against An Afghan Drawdown", Rich Lowry, National Review, 6/14/11

This is our last Post Newsletter until September when we return ready, rested & renewed – have a pleasant summer. Remember our Post Picnic will be held at the Zacchera Compound at 15 West Ridge Drive (off Route 44) in Avon on 27 July beginning at 6pm! Hope to see you there!

Bill Newman