



Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

Post 3272

Avon, Connecticut

“On Target”

(Our Newsletter’s 10th Anniversary year)

December 2009

LETTER #98

The Post met on Wednesday, **28 October 2009** at the Italian Club with 42 members in attendance. The *Ladies Auxiliary* prepared an exceptional meal with plenty of second helpings for our troops and their guests.

Our ***next meeting*** will be held on **Wednesday, 16 December 2009** at the Italian Club. Cocktails begin at 1800 hours and our **Annual Christmas Party** at 1830 hours. The Santa Band from Avon High School will provide Christmas Music. So, join our **Post Family** for a special evening of great friends, great pizza and great music!

Commander Bill Newman opened the meeting at 1945 hours. The *Officer of the Day Mike Gould* led the members in the Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance. *Bob Galiette* offered the VFW Prayer and *Fred Hudon* provided the POW/MIA Prayer. The Commander asked for a moment of silence in memory of Larry DeFeo and Sanford Lindy who passed away respectively on 2 and 5 November 2009. The minutes of the last meeting were made available at each table by *Adjutant Aldo Vernesoni* and the financial report was distributed likewise by *Quartermaster Don Perreault*. Both were approved as written by the member present.

Under new member applications, the Commander introduced the following new members who were present:

Mike Fyler, a Marine Corps Veteran from Farmington who served as a Lance Corporal from May 1962 to Sep 1967 and participated in the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. Mike was awarded the Good Conduct Medal, Marine Expeditionary Medal, National Defense Service Medal and Expert Rifleman.

John Kostrisak, an Army Veteran of WWII who served in the European Theater and participated in 5 campaigns. John, who lives in Avon, was a former member of our Post and is being reinstated. His awards include the Distinguished Service Cross (Valor at Anzio – see page 5), the Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster, American Campaign, European Campaign with 5 battle stars and WWII Victory Medal.

Kevin Potts, a Navy Veteran of the Gulf War, served as a Lieutenant Commander and Seahawk Helicopter Pilot and was on active duty from 1988 to 1996. Kevin also spent 11 years in the Navy Reserve retiring with 20 years service in 2008. His decorations include the Navy Commendation Medal, Navy Achievement Medal with oak leaf cluster, National Defense Service Medal, Southwest Asia Service Medal, Kuwait Liberation Medal (Saudi Arabia), Kuwait Lib Medal (Kuwait) and Naval Aviator Wings. He lives in Avon with his family and has two children in the Avon Public School System (Pine Grove). He was not able to attend this Post meeting.

Rebecca Wareing, an Army Veteran who served in Bosnia, enlisted in MA Army National Guard in 1996 and was assigned as a Broadcast Journalist. After basic training and graduating from the Defense Information School, she was called to active duty in 1998 in support of Operation Joint Guard and assigned to Headquarters, US Army Europe where she produced TV stories for the Armed Forces Network. Recalled to active duty in 2000 she helped her unit prepare for deployment to Bosnia, was assigned to Camp McGovern in Brcko for 7 months and worked closely with the 2/3 Armored Cavalry Regiment. Rebecca was transferred stateside to assist National Guardsmen as they transitioned to active duty, helped send the 1st troops to Afghanistan and assisted families during deployments. She completed her active duty in 2002 and National Guard service in 2004. Her decorations include the Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster, Achievement Medal, Expeditionary Medal, Reserve Medal w/ "M" device, NCO Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, Sharpshooter Badge (Rifle) and Marksman Badge (Pistol).

Comrades in Distress this month include *Bob August, Mike Busha, Bill Coffey* Mike Dlubac, Josephine Hinman, Bill Huebner, Jim Katzung, Ben Pereslugoff, Harold Schaal and Ed Stepian*. Please remember to keep them in your thoughts and prayers - and visit them if you are able. We ask that you also let our Chaplain Tom Chrosniak (675-9196) know if you learn of any other Post members who are ill or hospitalized.

The *Service Officer Bill Coffey* advised that 16 billion of US Savings Bonds was not been cashed in and are not accumulating any additional interest according to an article in an AARP Bulletin. It's best to contact the government on cashing in savings bonds go to: www.savingsbonds.gov. Bill also noted that only 1 of 4 young men age 17 to 25 qualify for military service today based on a recent study – due to obesity, drug addiction, incarceration and/or lack of education.

Under Committee Reports, *Bill Newman* advised that as Chairman of the Membership Committee he has developed New Member Kits for anyone who has a new member prospect. The kit includes a short history of our Post, a letter that outlines some reasons for joining the VFW, an application form and a self-addressed envelope.

Regarding communications, Commander Newman distributed flyers at all tables which announce an upcoming program at the Avon Senior Center on 22 November regarding the Old Farms Convalescent Hospital for Blinded WWII Veterans which was operated by the U. S. Army from 1944-47 in Avon. This program which is open to the public is being sponsored by our Post and the Avon Historical Society. He encouraged the members to attend and bring their spouses.

Bill also noted communication we received from Governor Rell's Office regarding "Operation Home for the Holidays" which is a special fund-raising effort to bring 700 Connecticut soldiers preparing for deployment at out-of-state bases home for the holidays. He suggested we donate to this effort through our Relief Fund. A motion was made to contribute \$500.00 to this Operation, seconded and approved by the members present.

Under New Business, the Commander advised that in 2010 we will be celebrating the 65th Anniversary of our Post and we will begin planning for a celebration and dinner similar to the one we had in 2005 at our 60th Anniversary. It was also noted that we have been asked to "Ring the Bell" for the Salvation Army at Wal-Mart's again this year. The date for us this year will be Saturday, 12 December from 10am to 8pm and Bill passed around a sign-up sheet.

Regarding the Good of the Order, the Commander requested that we prepay for up to 10 members who have not yet paid their annual dues. Those who are unable or on active duty we pay for from the Relief Fund and those who will pay we borrow funds from our General Fund. A motion to pay the dues for 10 members (\$150.00) was made, seconded and approved.

Post Activities & Developments

On Monday, 9 November 2009, *Mort Katz* participated in the unveiling and dedication of the *Korean War Memorial sculpture* at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. He represented the Connecticut Yankee All-Airborne Chapter of the 82nd Airborne Division Association, which had been invited to the unveiling. Over three hundred veterans and representatives of veterans' organizations were in attendance at the dedication of this long-overdue tribute to those who served in Korea. The sculpture is on exhibit in the passageway from the State Capitol to the Legislative Office Building.

In the *19 November issue of The Valley Press*, there was an interesting and informative article about the 65th Anniversary of the Old Farms Convalescent Hospital and the Veterans Day program that our Color Guard and Veterans participated in at Old Farms School. Photos included with the article showed blinded veterans on the campus at that time, the Veterans Day assembly, the organizing committee (*including Terri Wilson, Alice & Wendy Zacchera and Barbara Zuras*) and *Alice and Ray Zacchera together* at Old Farms circa 1945.

For the 22 November program at the Avon Senior Center which celebrated the 65th Anniversary of the Old Farms Convalescent Hospital, *Tom Miller, the Executive Director of the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)* travelled from Washington to attend. Tom, a Vietnam Veteran who was blinded by a mine explosion after only a month in-country, served as a Marine Lieutenant and Platoon Leader with the 1st Marine Division in DaNang. He noted that 13% of all wounded evacuees from Iraq and Afghanistan have suffered serious eye injury and this is the highest percentage for any war in American history. The BVA was founded in 1945 at Old Farms Convalescent Hospital and celebrated its 64th Anniversary at its National Convention in Portland, OR in August 2009. There are, according to Tom, 165,000 blind or visually-impaired American Veterans today. We were delighted to have Tom join us on this occasion and we thank him not only for his service but also for all he has done these many years to assist our blinded veterans through his leadership positions in the BVA.

On 2 December four members of the Post – *Tom Chrosniak, Brian O'Donnell, Bill Newman and Bill Samol* - visited the *Rocky Hill Veterans Home* and distributed 80 Christmas gifts to veterans who are residents of the domicile and health care facility. We handed out toilet kits donated by Gillette and added \$10.00 to each kit courtesy of our Post. The veterans were very appreciative and all of us were happy to provide some Christmas cheer to these men at this time of year.

On behalf of the Post, *Commander Newman* on 3 December presented an *engraved Plaque honoring Major Craig R. Nobert*, an MIA from the Vietnam War, to his brother, Dr. Gary Nobert, at the Council Meeting at the Town Hall. Dr. Nobert then presented the plaque to the Chairman of the Town Council John Carlson. Major Nobert's plane was shot down over North Vietnam on 20 July 1966 and he is still officially considered as missing-in-action. His home of record was Avon and this past summer he was remembered with a full military honors ceremony and grave marker at Arlington National Cemetery. Our Post elected to honor his service and sacrifice with a plaque and we asked the Town of Avon to place it in the Town Hall in his memory. The Town was pleased to honor him in this manner and the public now has a permanent reminder of his extraordinary service to his country. We especially thank *Phil Schenck* for his assistance and support for this project. *Bob Galiette, Adam Lazinsk and Bill Samol* of our Post also attended this presentation ceremony.

We are pleased to report that we have received two new member applications from the following veterans and ask you to welcome them to our Post at your earliest opportunity:

Daniel J. McHale, a Vietnam Veteran, served as a enlisted Army Diver in 1970-71. Dan spent over 35 years in the U. S. Army and CT Army National Guard retiring as a Brigadier General. Among his many decorations are the Legion of Merit, Vietnam Service Medal, Expeditionary Medal (Panama), and Global War on Terrorism Medal. He was inducted this November into the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame – Class of 2009. Dan currently serves as Connecticut's DOD Transitional Assistance Advisor providing outreach, advocacy and benefits assistance to all generations of veterans and active duty service members and their families. He lives in Avon.

Everett M. Bennett, a Vietnam Veteran, served in 1968-69 with the U. S. Air Force 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing in Bien Hoa as a Sergeant and Aircraft Mechanic on fuel cells and systems for F-100's, A-37's, C-47's and C-123's. He was wounded in the 1969 TET Attack and served on active duty from 1966 to 1970. Everett joined the VFW while in Vietnam, became a member of the Hartford Police Post 2849 when he returned home and served as its Post Commander in 1976. He also served as District 3 Post Inspector and Employment Officer – as well as Veterans Employment Representative for Connecticut for 14 years. He recently retired from the Post Office after 31 years and has lived in Avon since 1972.

We have selected the winners for our Voice of Democracy and Patriot Pen Essay Contests for 2009-2010 from the Avon High School, Middle School and Thompson Brook. On 7 January 2010 at 7pm at the Avon Middle School, the Post will conduct an Awards Ceremony for the following winners:

Olivia Mayo – Junior, Avon High School
Taylor Walton – Junior, Avon High School
Abigail Inglis – 8th Grade, Avon Middle School
Kyle Jackson – 8th Grade, Avon Middle School
Cameron Nelson – 8th Grade, Avon Middle School
Erin Gorman – 6th Grade, Thompson Brook

As many of you know, we are still looking for another vendor to supply us with Post Jackets. Terri Wilson, Lee's Wife, has suggested a local vendor – Budget Printers/Bristol Lettering in Hartford as one who will provide a 3-season jacket for \$75.00 including the large embroidery on the back. Name and extra line on right front would be an extra \$5.25 and for the left front they would need the digitization file for the Maltese Cross Emblem to quote the price for it. They would also add a flag on the top sleeve for \$5.00 and any other patches we would supply for \$4.50 each. Based on our search so far this is a reasonable price and we would like your feedback. If some of you are interested at these prices, please let us know.

The Quartermaster Don Perreault can also order the VFW Overseas Cap (Olive Green) for \$33.75 which includes the Maltese Cross Emblem, Post number and State name. It is a part of our official uniform and worn at our meetings, ceremonies, parades, etc. We encourage all members to purchase the Overseas Cap!

The December issue of Avon Life included an article on our visit on Veterans Day to the Avon High School and the program developed by Mike Infantino, the faculty and the students. It also noted Bob Hunt's address, Dan St. Denis' Iraq service, Taps for our departed members and photos of our veterans and Color Guard.

John Kostrisak was a member of our Post many years ago and has renewed his membership this year. We developed his Military Service History with the help of his step-brother, *Joe Hatala* who also joined our Post earlier this year. John's military history is now a part of the Post Collection at the Avon Public Library and we are honored to have him again as a member of our Post. Sergeant Kostrisak participated in 5 campaigns during WWII, was wounded twice in separate actions and received the Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster. John was awarded the *Distinguished Service Cross* for his actions in Italy in 1944 which is described below. We thought you would find the basis for his DSC interesting:

CITATION

For Award Of The

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

John A. Kostrisak, 31342922, Sergeant (then Private First Class) Company "E", 30th Infantry Regiment, for extraordinary heroism in action. At 0800 hours on 18 February 1944, near Padiglione, Italy, during a task force thrust against the exposed flanks of an enemy salient which had penetrated deep into the perimeter of the Anzio Beachhead, Sergeant Kostrisak braved the intense fire of an enemy stronghold in order to destroy an enemy machine gun. When his company was halted on bare, level ground by intense fire from an enemy-held position, Sergeant Kostrisak took his rifle and grenade launcher and rushed one hundred and twenty-five yards toward the defiladed enemy. Dropping to one knee, he fired three grenades into the machine gun nest, silencing the gun and wounding the two-man crew. This single-handed assault stunned the supporting enemy rifle elements who promptly surrendered. The advance was resumed, but the company was again stopped, under similar conditions, by a far larger enemy force consisting of a heavy machine gun and numerous riflemen. While the remainder of his squad hugged the ground in an unsuccessful effort to escape the lethal hostile fire, Sergeant Kostrisak, unmindful of the bullets which barely missed him, rose to a kneeling position and fired rifle grenades into the defiladed strongpoint. After he had killed four Germans and knocked out the heavy machine gun, two dozen enemy infantrymen surrendered. At about noon, when his company advanced towards a fringe of woods, it was subjected to a heavy concentration and direct fire from the 77 millimeter gun and machine gun of a Mark IV Tank. Although his Company Commander was killed and others fell dead and wounded around him, Sergeant Kostrisak rushed forward three hundred yards in a one-man assault on the tank. Scoring two direct hits on the armored vehicle, he forced it to limp into the woods where the crew abandoned it. Displaying an audacity and scorn of danger seldom surpassed, Sergeant Kostrisak had made three single-handed assaults on strong enemy positions; he had defeated each of these forces, killing four, wounding at least two, and causing the capture of thirty of the enemy; he had prevented his company, which suffered ninety-three casualties that day, from being completely decimated, and had three times enabled it to resume its advance on its objective. Entered military service from Collinsville, Connecticut.

Noteworthy Quotes

The Defense Squeeze & The Welfare State

"The overlooked culprit here is the rise of the modern welfare state. Since World War II and especially from the 1960s, Europe has built elaborate domestic income-maintenance programs, with government-run health care, pensions and jobless benefits. These are hugely expensive, requiring high taxes and government spending that is a huge proportion of GDP. One consequence has been slower growth in Europe, relative to the U.S. and China, with less tax revenue to spend on everything. Another result is that welfare spending has crowded out defense spending. The political imperative of health care and pensions always trumps defense spending, save perhaps in a hot war. Europe may never again be able to muster public support for a defense buildup of the kind the U.S. undertook to end the Cold War in the 1980s, or even the smaller surge after 9/11... But we doubt the American people fully understand what such a gilded entitlement cage means for our national vitality, or for our ability to defend U.S. interests at home and abroad. Add the stimulus, ObamaCare, a new entitlement for college and other Democratic plans, and the defense squeeze will only tighten. Higher taxes and borrowing may allow guns and butter to co-exist for a while. *But over time, the welfare state will defeat the Pentagon here, as it has in Europe.*" "The Warfare State & Military Power", Editorial, WSJ, 12/4/09

Checks on Our Western Way of War

"There have been two developments over the last 20 years that have placed the West in a new cycle. The first is the rapid electronic dissemination of knowledge and the second is that non-Western nations now have leverage through large quantities of strategic materials that Western societies need, such as natural gas, oil, uranium and bauxite. So the West's enemies now have instant access to knowledge and tremendous capital. In addition to these developments, there are five traditional checks on the Western way of war that are intensified today. One of these checks is the Western tendency to limit the ferocity of war through rules and regulations. The second check is the fact that there is no monolithic West. The U.S. and its allies can't even agree on sanctions against Iran. The third check is "parasitism" in that it is very difficult to invent and fabricate weapons but it is very easy to use them. A fourth check is the ever-present anti-war movement in the West, stemming from the fact that Westerners are free to dissent. This is in part because they do not feel they are in any real danger. Finally and most seriously, there is "asymmetry". Western culture creates citizens who are affluent, leisured, free, and protected...Our society values the lives of our young men much more than Afghan societies value the lives of theirs. And it is very difficult to sustain a protracted war with asymmetrical losses under those conditions. My point here is that all of the usual checks on the tradition of Western warfare are magnified in our time. And I will end with this distributing thought: We who created the Western way of war are very reluctant to retort to it due to post-modern cynicism, while those who didn't create it are very eager to apply it due to pre-modern zealotry. And that's a very lethal combination!" "The Future of Western War", Victor Davis Hanson, Imprimis (Hillsdale College), November 2009

Warriors In Transition

"For soldiers and those who care for soldiers, military service is something to live for. It is a source of meaning and long-lasting significance. It is not uncommon for those who leave the military to talk about missing the camaraderie; the basis of this camaraderie is unity around a single purpose. Soldiers are drawn to this unity of purpose, and they suffer when it is gone...The most common theme in the research on resilience is the necessity of a core sense of meaning in the person's life. No one anticipated that so many soldiers would be resistant to transitioning out of the Department of Defense's healthcare system and into the VA's – that so many would opt to stay on active duty for as long as they could. In this current conflict, the number of service members who have died of wounds has been the lowest ever recorded. Nearly 95 % of battle-wounded soldiers survive...Across the nation, in an initiative begun at Walter Reed, "Warrior Transition Units" staffed by specially trained combat-veteran officers and non-commissioned now have command and control of the warriors in transition. As a result of these initiatives, the two-thirds of patients admitted to Warrior Transition units across the nation return to duty represent the equivalent of two complete combat brigades every year. Their recovery is an enormous boost to an already overtaxed Army by keeping the most skilled and experienced soldiers in the military. And it allows those whose lives have become defined by service to continue to serve...It is possible that the United States has entered an era when a national draft is impractical: too few Americans between the age of 18 and 24 are physically or emotionally able to serve in the active-duty military. Perhaps, soldiering in the 21st century is too complex a skill set to be casually learned by the unwilling through relatively brief basic and advanced training." "To Stay A Soldier", Chuck Callahan, Parameters, Autumn 2009

A Very Merry Christmas and a Happy & Healthy New Year to All! _____ **Bill Newman**