



# The Hezzie Gazette

Official Newsletter of Hezzie Griffis American Legion Post 30

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June 2025



## Commander's Comments

### Department Convention Highlights and a First for Edgefield County

Chaplain William Beaver, Historian Suzy Spurgeon, and I had the pleasure to represent Post 30 at the South Carolina Department Convention on May 16 and 17. The agenda for the spring convention was to elect department officers for 2026, vote on changes to the department constitution and bylaws, and recognize community members and posts for their achievements over the past year. It is also a great place to network with other legionnaires and posts and hear how they are interacting with their communities and what they are doing to grow their membership.



(l to r) W. Beaver, S. Spurgeon, W. Boddie

The voting on amendments to the constitution and bylaws was straightforward, with all but one amendment passing. However, the election for the 2026 department officers took an unexpected turn.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## A Day at the Beach

"Boys," the chaplain said, "There's not much hope for you. Your officers predict 148 out of 150 of you will be killed. You'll be first to clear the water of mines and



*G.I. Returns to Normandy, June 6, 2024*

barbed wire for others to follow. You're looking right down the barrel of death. If you ain't right with God, get right now." Twenty-six-year-old U.S. Army Sergeant James "JL" Doolittle of Edgefield said later, "I'll always be grateful for that chaplain for telling us the truth."

Before dawn on June 6th, 1944, Sgt. Doolittle and fellow commandos crowded into small, narrow boats little larger than an automobile parking spot, each holding around 36 soldiers. There were about 4,000 of these plywood front-ramp landing crafts that would deliver 156,000 Allied troops to a 50-mile stretch of five beaches with iconic code names like Omaha, Utah, Gold, Juno and Sword, near Normandy, France. Many soldiers would not make it to shore. When these so-called Higgins boats dropped their ramps to disembark, they were often in waist to neck-high water as German bullets popped around them. Some soldiers cried,

others were seasick and throwing up. Soldiers who couldn't swim drowned, others floundered under 90 pounds of gear and ammunition, their bodies floating in the water. By noontime, some landings were delayed by a beachmaster who reported, "Don't send the troops yet. There's no place to land. There are too many dead guys in the water. Too many dead guys on the beach and too much destruction."

Sgt. Doolittle got to the beach before then. He led his unit off the landing craft when the sergeant who was in charge broke down and couldn't function. Doolittle's life jacket and uniform were torn to shreds by German bullets. But he survived to lead his men up the cliffs to annihilate enemy strongholds that had rained death and destruction upon his comrades in arms. That night, Sgt. Doolittle was able to get some rest in an enemy foxhole. A couple of days later, he came upon a crashed Army troop glider aircraft. The pilot was hanging upside down in the mangled craft. He recognized the pilot who was also from Edgefield. It was Strom Thurmond, an Edgefield County judge who at 41 years of age had taken leave to fight in the war. Coming to, he said, "Jimmy is that you?" "Yeah, I'm here," said Doolittle.

Sgt. Doolittle had survived a front row seat to the largest amphibious assault in history, despite being wounded four times. Twenty-five hundred of his countrymen did not. Only two others in his unit made it through the war. "For some reason unknown to me," Doolittle said, "the good Lord allowed me to come home to Edgefield. I don't consider myself a hero. None of us did. We just did our job the best we could for our country." Doolittle passed on in 2020 at 102 years of age.

--J. W. "Pete" Peterson, correspondent at large



*Ft Eisenhower Youth ChalleNGe Academy posting the colors during the Edgefield County Memorial Day Ceremony on May 26, 2025.*

*Photo by Diane Peterson.*

## Meet Post Adjutant Jane Doolittle

Jane Doolittle enlisted in the Air Force at age 20. She became part of the Air Force Security Service at Misawa Air Base, Japan. She was a Morse Systems Operator, slang-termed "Ditty Bopper", who listened to and transcribed Morse code transmissions.



*Photo by Diane Peterson*

Upon discharge in 1978 she relocated to Edgefield with husband, the late Bill Doolittle, to raise Bill's two young sons and begin a 40-year career in healthcare finance. Upon retirement, she served as Edgefield County Veterans Service Officer, assisting veterans and families, "my most rewarding job ever," she says.

She has been a Post 30 member since 1998. Then, the post was comprised mostly of World War II veterans. All we did was eat and socialize once a month, she says. The post became more community oriented in subsequent years. She became the first woman Post 30 commander in 2015 and 2016. There were about 63-66 members then. As she became post adjutant in 2017, Post 30 took the lead to establish the Veterans Memorial Park that opened to the community in 2020.

This is Jane's ninth year as post adjutant. She is the administrator for records keeping, membership matters, and timely dues payment, plus. Jane is the glue that holds Post 30 together. A people person, she goes far and above to ensure that members are cared for. She also maintains a special relationship with folks she served with in the Air Force. She is further an active member of Maximum Recovery in Southeast Asia, dedicated to the search for American service members left behind after the Vietnam War. "Yes, I am a proud veteran," she says. "The service of America's veterans never truly ends."

--J. W. "Pete" Peterson, correspondent at large



## From the Adjutant's Desk

Over the past year, we have proudly welcomed 14 new members to our thriving Post. Let's continue this exciting momentum and keep the energy alive!

And just like that, it is time for us to pay our 2026 Membership Dues.

Our membership expires on Dec. 31 of the paid year shown on our membership card. It can be confusing because our annual dues are supposed to be paid by January 1 each year, so National Headquarters starts accepting dues for the upcoming year on July 1.

Our annual dues are \$60.00 and can be paid in several convenient ways:

- In Person: Bring cash or check to our monthly meeting.
- By Mail: Send a check made payable to American Legion Post 30 to: American Legion Post 30 P.O. Box 30 Edgefield, SC 29824
- Online: Visit [Mylegion.org](http://Mylegion.org) to pay your dues electronically. \*\*\*Please note: Take advantage of the online multi-year membership option to lock in our current Dues rate for the next 3 years and avoid any potential dues increases.

We do not have to wait to receive our dues renewal notice in the mail. Beginning on July 1, 2025, I can start accepting your dues payment for membership year 2026.

Our Post 30 goal is for our entire membership to have their 2026 Dues paid by Veterans Day, November 11, 2025. I am confident we will reach this goal.

If you have any questions about membership or know someone interested in joining, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. My phone number is: 803-480-1061.

-- Jane Doolittle, Post 30 Adjutant

## Unit 30 Auxiliary Takes Summer Break

The Unit 30 Auxiliary will take a break from its regular meetings until September. During this time, we invite all auxiliary members to join Post 30's monthly meetings in June, July, and August to stay connected, share ideas, and help contribute to our community efforts. For any questions or additional information, please contact Unit 30 President Fay Vaughan Bradley at [fayvaughan@gmail.com](mailto:fayvaughan@gmail.com) or Annie Mae Ellis at 803-480-1338.

## Taxis to Hell

Robert F. Sargent, a United States Coast Guard (USCG) chief petty officer photographer's mate, was on a USCG Higgins landing craft heading toward the shores of Normandy, France, at dawn on June 6, 1944. With him were soldiers from the US Army 1st Infantry Division, cold and soaked from the choppy waters. Smoke hung over everything. From afar, the beach looked lifeless and deserted. Then he saw the enemy-placed obstacles, a tangled mess of timbers, barbed wire, and hidden mines. A hail of German bullets pelted the water like a mud puddle in a hailstorm. "It seemed impossible that we would make it without being riddled," he later told a USCG Combat Correspondent. He captured this scene with his famous photo "Taxis to Hell – and back -- Into the Jaws of Death," one of the most widely reproduced pictures (colorized) from the Normandy landings, the foundation for Allied defeat of Germany in WWII.



Sargent stayed on the boat, which returned to the USS Samuel Chase to bring even more troops to shore. He carried his film in a metal milk can to keep it safe. He took many photographs that day that eventually would find their way to war museum archives world over. He firmly demonstrated the old adage that "one picture is worth a thousand words." The Summit, New Jersey veteran died in 2012 at age 89.

--J. W. "Pete" Peterson, correspondent at large

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## Chaplain's Corner

### Who Will Go for Us?

In April, Bruce Mears and I enjoyed being part of the team that entered our local elementary schools and spoke to 2nd graders in Johnston and 1st Graders at Wardlaw. Why was this necessary?

I believe what our Post 30 does to support students such as reading days and sending students to Boys and Girls State is critical. We are not at war as a nation right now, and our national defense is an all-Volunteer force. But a quick glance at the news shows us tyrants and dictators and terrorists are still active across the globe. It's not "if" but "when" we will be called upon to defend an attack on our nation and our interests. President Ronald Reagan once said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a sermon on "Cheap Grace," which described the great sacrifice the Lord paid so we could have eternal life. Freedom, like grace, is very costly. If we as Veterans get too caught up in our retirement recreation and entertainment that we say, "I did my time," and check out, who will go for us when the balloon goes up and we are at war again? Who will teach the youth today what it means to be a free American? Who will inspire the children of our community to listen to Liberty's call when the enemy comes calling?

All of us have a continued mission – to inspire the children and youth to answer our nation's call to service and to tell our kids the truth about war. I believe the Lord still calls people to defend freedom. Get involved more in your American Legion and support our efforts to inspire the next generation. The world's tyrants lurk, waiting for an opening to attack the USA. A strong Legion of Veterans teaching our children keeps us prepared.

-- William Beaver, Post 30 Chaplain

### June Birthdays at Post 30

Let's wish a Happy Birthday to the following members:

Michael Bowers, Daniel Coates, George Ivey, Micki Pennington, Pete Peterson, and Glenn Yarborough.

## Happy Flag Day!

Here's to the biggest holiday, established as Flag Day on June 14, 1916, that you maybe didn't know you were supposed to celebrate. While mail delivery will continue and you definitely won't be getting the day off from work, its commemoration speaks of America. "The Star-Spangled Banner" would originate that same year, but it would be 1931 before being designated the national anthem, and adoption of the Pledge of Allegiance would follow in 1942, amended in 1954 to include the words "Under God".



While many of us learned that Betsy Ross, a seamstress from Philadelphia, was designer of the flag, this legend has been discredited. According to many sources, President George Washington visited Betsy in Philadelphia and brought with him a flag design that contained 13 red and white stripes and 13 six-pointed stars set in a circle. Apparently, the only thing Betsy suggested was to use five-pointed stars rather than six-pointed ones. While many credit Betsy with sewing the first US flag out of wool bunting, historians cannot confirm that she actually did. Sorry Betsy to burst your legacy bubble.

Others credit Francis Hopkinson, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, with the design of the original flag. Hopkinson himself felt that he did and should be compensated for it by Congress. But Congress held that many were responsible for the design, and he was never paid. Whomever really designed the flag, it is known that on June 14, 1777, the design with the stars and stripes became America's official flag with this declaration by Congress: "The flag of the United States will be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white [and]...the union [canton] be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

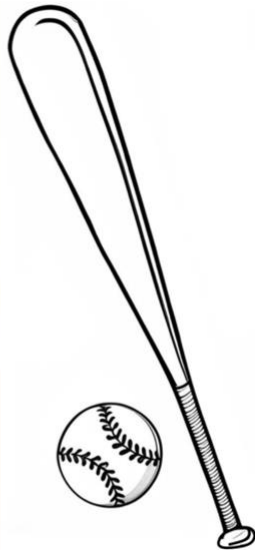
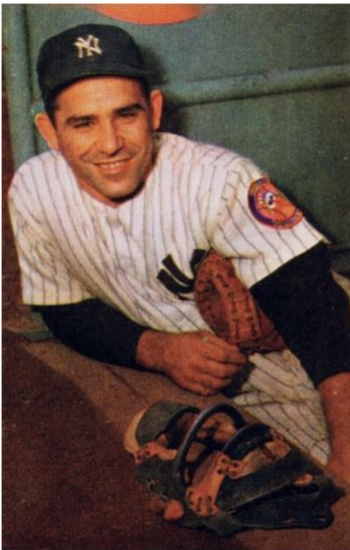
--J. W. "Pete" Peterson, correspondent at large



## American as Apple Pie

Let me tell you about a U.S. Navy veteran who was also closely related to baseball, big time! He was born 100 years ago in an Italian community of St. Louis as Lawrence (later Lorenzo) Pietro Berra, better known as "Yogi" Berra. He quit school for a while to support his family. During his teen years, he played American Legion baseball for the Fred W. Stockholm Post 245 in St. Louis. Legion baseball came about in 1925 to teach sportsmanship and citizenship through loyalty, respect for rules, fair play, courage and physical fitness. This year celebrates its centennial.

After high school in 1943, he joined the Navy serving as a machine gunner's mate aboard the USS Bayfield, providing fire support during the 1944 Normandy Utah Beach landings in France. He was awarded a distinguished unit citation, two battle stars, and the European Theater of Operations ribbon. He was wounded in the hand by German fire and was nominated for the Purple Heart, but he reportedly never applied.



Berra made his major league baseball (MLB) debut at age 21 in 1946 with the New York Yankees. He was a power hitter and strong defensive catcher. He retired in 1963 after 18 MLB seasons. He was admitted to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1972. His Yankees number "8" was retired forever. Berra said that he would not have left St. Louis had it not been for The American Legion baseball opportunity. Yogi Berra had also made an enormous impact on American culture through his paradoxical witty sayings like, "No one goes there anymore, it's too crowded" and "It ain't over 'til it's over." He died in 2015 at age 90. We honor his service to his country and American baseball.

--J. W. "Pete" Peterson, correspondent at large  
*American Legion Post 30 Newsletter*

## Rain Unites Edgefield During County Memorial Day Ceremony

A rainstorm on May 26, 2025, forced the Edgefield County Memorial Day ceremony to move indoors to the South Carolina Army National Guard Armory, creating an intimate and powerful sense of community.



*Guest speaker Larry Anderson, U.S. Army Sergeant Major (Retired) from the Spann Watson Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen. Photo by Diane Peterson*

The room was packed with energy as veterans, families, and supporters filled every seat. Local dignitaries, including the mayors of Edgefield, Johnston, and Trenton, area clergy from several churches, and state and county council representatives, joined together to honor our fallen heroes.



*Chaplain Beaver opens the ceremony. Photo by Diane Peterson.*

## On the Horizon



**Community Cadence:** Join us for Post 30's Community Cadence Walk on Saturday, June 7, at 7:30 AM at the Edgefield Walking Trail. We'll meet at the Slade Lake parking lot. Despite a hail storm the night before, our May walk had a good turnout. But we can do better. Lace up your shoes and join us for another exciting morning on the walking trail.

**2025 Palmetto Boys State Invitation:** All South Carolina American Legion members are invited to **American Legion Night on Sunday, June 8, 2025**, celebrating the launch of the **2025 Palmetto Boys State encampment**.

- **Reception:** 6:00 PM at Ross Anderson Student Center (910 E Calhoun St, Anderson, SC).
- **Ceremony:** 7:30 PM at Henderson Auditorium, Anderson University.
- **Perks:** VIP seating and shuttle service provided.
- **RSVP by:** Monday, June 2, 2025
- **RSVP Link:** <https://tinyurl.com/PBSReception25>

**Final Rifle Raffle Update:** Thanks to everyone who purchased or helped us sell tickets for this year's fundraiser. We sold 60 tickets, bringing in \$600 for the Post. Good luck to everyone. Let's hope Post 30 has a winner this year!

**June Meeting Agenda:** Our June 19 monthly meeting has a full agenda. We're holding our annual Memorial Ceremony where we'll honor Thurmond Burnett and induct our 2026 officers. We will also have guest speaker Clyde Smith, U.S. Army Major (Retired) who will share a speech titled "A Bodyguard of Lies", which covers a specific aspect of D-Day. To honor Edgefield's D-Day history, we'll have copies of the book written about JL Doolittle's D-Day experience available for a \$5 donation. We look forward to seeing everyone there.

## (Commander's Comments, cont'd from p1)

When votes for the Vice Commander positions were counted, the 2025 3rd Vice Commander did not receive enough votes to advance to the 2nd Vice Commander role, as required by the organization's succession rules. This led to a runoff election, with new nominations for the 2nd Vice Commander position coming from the convention floor. After the runoff votes were tallied, the department elected its new leadership for 2026. In a favorable turn of events that no one saw coming, District 17 Commander Jerome Childs, who was freshly elected to 4th Vice Commander, was automatically advanced to 3rd Vice Commander, due to the outcome of the runoff. This marks the first time a legionnaire from Edgefield County has been elevated to the department leadership team.

Our newly elected 2026 South Carolina Department leadership team includes Commander James Rabon, 1st Vice Commander Jack Lonergan, 2nd Vice Commander Patricia Dandy, and 3rd Vice Commander Jerome Childs. The 4th Vice Commander will be appointed by the department executive committee at a later date.

-- Winston Boddie, Post 30 Commander

## Calendar of Events

### NOTE IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING

You must call Jane Doolittle (803-480-1061) or email the post no later than the Monday prior to our scheduled meeting so we can have an accurate headcount for dinner.

#### June 8-14, 2025

Palmetto Boys State, Anderson University; and Palmetto Girls State, Presbyterian College

#### June 12, 2025

Executive Committee Meeting at 1800

#### June 19, 2025

Monthly Meeting, dinner at 1800, meeting at 1830. Menu is BBQ sandwiches and baked beans with Tanya's Going Bananas Pudding for dessert.

#### June 21-27, 2025

Nathan M. Wolfe Law Cadet Academy

#### July 10, 2025

Executive Committee Meeting at 1800

#### July 17, 2025

Monthly Meeting, dinner at 1800, meeting at 1830