



The Hezzie Gazette

Official Newsletter of Hezzie Griffis American Legion Post 30

314 Penn Street, PO Box 30, Edgefield, SC 29824

alpost30sc@gmail.com

www.alpost30sc.org

www.facebook.com/ALPost30SC

May 2025



Commander's Comments

Post 30 Makes an Impact in Our Community

April was a busy month for Post 30. On April 6, Adjutant Jane Doolittle, Treasurer Doug Timmerman, District 17 Commander Jerome Childs, and I set up a booth at the Merriwether Market. We had a great time interacting with the vendors, Unit 30 Auxiliary, and patrons. While we sold a few rifle raffle tickets, the highlight of the day was welcoming two new members, Keith Kennedy and Eugene Parker. Please join me in welcoming Keith and his wife Bethany and Eugene and his wife Pat to the Post 30 family.



On April 12, I attended Horry Post 111's Centennial Celebration and Homecoming for Department Commander Bruce Donegan in Conway, SC. It was a great event to celebrate Post 111's 100th anniversary and to recognize Commander Donegan for his successful year. Congressman Russell Fry presented Post 111 with a flag flown over the Capitol in honor of their milestone and thanked all SC Legionnaires for their service. Post 30 also presented Commander Donegan with three framed photos from his visit during the 2024 Edgefield Christmas Parade.

On April 18, Adjutant Doolittle and I joined members from Posts 154 and 222 in Johnston and VFW Post 6932 for Operation Basket Brigade at Edgefield Post Acute. We delivered 15 goody baskets, donated by Annie Bush of Johnston, to veteran patients and staff.



Finally, we supported Children and Youth Month by reading to students at four Edgefield County elementary schools. On April 21, Adjutant Doolittle read to a 1st grade class at W.E. Parker, and on April 23, I read to a 2nd grade class at Merriwether Elementary. On April 25, Chaplain Beaver and Dr. Bruce Mears held a show-and-tell for the 1st grade students at Johnston Elementary and Wardlaw Academy. A full-length story and more photos are coming soon.



-- Winston Boddie, Post 30 Commander

John W. "Pete" Peterson, Sr. Legionnaire of the Quarter



Pete's military career began with enlistment in the Air Force Reserve as a one-stripe airman third class while attending the University of Miami. He retired as a lieutenant colonel command pilot and instructor 26 years later with over 5,300 flight hours, a Distinguished Flying Cross, nine Air Medals, combat tour in Vietnam, and the same number of landings as takeoffs. He also survived staff jobs at a major Air Force command headquarters, executive officer at wing and group levels, and director of a seven-state public affairs program. His assignments permitted attainment of graduate degrees at Southern Illinois and Auburn Universities, and study at the University of Oklahoma. He is a graduate of the Air War College, Class of '77.

He next became research and planning manager for the Arizona Department of Public Safety, graduating from the police academy as a reserve Arizona State Trooper. When not directing a professional civilian administrative staff, Trooper Pete might have been found "meeting and greeting" motorists and truckers on Arizona highways. A best of two worlds.

Retiring again, he and wife of 27 years Sandy directed a very large full-time senior adult ministry for five years at their community church. He has been a champion of foster children in Arizona, serving 14 years on a board reviewing their care, four years as state chairman. The Arizona Supreme Court further appointed him as a commissioner for the review of judicial performance.

Pete began writing essays on Americanism in the sixth grade. Subsequent writings have included Congressional testimony. He contributes a lot of time researching, finding photos and artwork, and writing articles for the Hezzie Gazette as "correspondent at large." "I love to creatively focus attention to items of interest to Post 30 members," he says. "And, adding a little subtle humor helps make the stories come alive," he adds.

American Legion Post 30 Newsletter

From the Adjutant's Desk

We have fantastic news!! Not only has our Post reached the 100% mark for 2025 paid dues, but we have exceeded our goal by two members and are at 103.45%!!! Outstanding job, everyone!!

The American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis, IN starts accepting dues on July 1st for the upcoming membership year. Dues renewal notices are mailed out by the American Legion National Headquarters in July, October, January, March and May. In short, beginning on July 1, 2025, I can start accepting your dues for membership year 2026. You do not have to wait to receive your dues renewal notice in the mail.

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.

The service of America's Veterans never truly ends.

-- Jane Doolittle, Post 30 Adjutant

In Memory of Hezzie Griffis



On this Memorial Day, let us pause to remember PVT Hezzie Franklin Griffis, for whom Post 30 is named, who died 107 years ago serving in World War I in France.

Hezzie died on October 30, 1918, in a French hospital. Nearly three years later, his body was exhumed, returned to Edgefield, and proudly escorted by members of Post 30 for reburial at Berea Baptist Church.

Inscription on his tombstone:

Hero of the World War
It was hard to give thee up,
But Thy will, O God, be done.

My Most Memorable Memorial Day

Around Memorial Day 22 years ago I visited Flanders, Belgium to pay respects to my uncle Thomas McCann, a WWI British soldier who is buried there. His military life was much like that of Post 30 namesake Hezzie Griffis. Both were soldiers of equivalent rank, in their early twenties, allies in the same conflict, and both mortally wounded in France, each suffering loss of a leg.



Thomas enlisted in the British army at age 18. He shipped to France in 1914 as a gunner with the Royal Garrison Artillery. His 75-man unit manned heavy, large caliber guns and powerful howitzer cannons. They were positioned in trenches along the Western Front near Ypres [ee-pruh, often called "Wipers" by soldiers], Belgium. Gunner Tommy and his comrades were digging often flooded trenches, interrupted by constant shelling, machine gun fire and seeping water. A German "whizz bang" struck their trench. A "whizz bang" was an inbound shell traveling faster than the speed of sound and you would hear the "whizz" noise before the cannon's "bang". Tommy was mortally wounded and evacuated to a medical unit where he died on September 22, 1915. He was buried at the Lijssenthoek [Li-sen-thock] military cemetery near Poperinge, in western Belgium. I felt moved to make the once-in-a-lifetime trip.



Arriving in Poperinge by train from Brussels 85 miles away and riding a rented bicycle through fields of poppies was the only way to visit his Lijssenthoek gravesite. Soldiers who died were buried there in long trenches as evidenced by tombstone edges just inches from one another. Lijssenthoek was a somber, beautiful yet fitting place for Uncle Tommy, a soldier of war, to spend eternity. I couldn't have experienced a better Memorial Day.

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

Post 30 Officers for 2026

We proudly announce the officers that were elected to lead Post 30 in 2026. We plan to hold an induction ceremony during our June 2025 meeting.

Commander	Winston Boddie
Vice Commander	Charles Ashley
Adjutant	Jane Doolittle
Treasurer	Doug Timmerman
Chaplain	William Beaver
Sergeant-at-Arms	Bruce Everitt
Trustee	Alan Perano
Trustee	Roger Ellis
Trustee	Luther Burden

Thank you to our 2025 officers for their service, and we look forward to an impactful 2026.

American Legion Grassroots Action Center

Your Voice Matters

Did you know you can help The American Legion Legislative Division advocate to Congress on veterans' issues right from home? It's easy, automated, and takes just a couple of minutes. The American Legion Grassroots Action Center is a user-friendly online platform that keeps you updated on key legislation and lets you contact lawmakers to push for veteran friendly policies. Getting started is simple: visit <https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/home>, to sign up for alerts, and send messages to your representatives.

Right now, the Legislative Division is lobbying for the GI Bill Parity Act. If passed, this bill will let National Guard and Reserve servicemembers earn Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits when activated under state orders, not just federal missions. There are others as well but with this one hits close to home since so many of our member are current or former National Guard servicemembers. Sign up, stay informed, and share with fellow Legionnaires to amplify our impact.

Chaplain's Corner

WARFIGHTER ADVANCE REPORT

Thank you for the continued opportunity to be your Chaplain for Post 30. I love serving the post, the community and the Legion.

Last month I attended a week-long event for Veterans called Warfighter Advance. Warfighter Advance is a program for Veterans that has been in existence for 10 years. It is a life-changing educational, team building, and resilience program for Veterans of all ages, all eras, and all US military branches. The program is totally FREE, to include air fare if the attendee needs it!

Warfighter Advance takes place three times each spring and three times each fall and is located at a rustic camp in eastern Maryland near Baltimore. All meals, lodging, and program materials are provided. Participants even get a free fleece jacket, two polo shirts, and two t-shirts with their names embroidered. The focus of the week is on learning to cope with past military experiences and not accept labels such as "depression," "anxiety" or PTSD. The program is created by Dr. Mary Vieten, a retired Navy Clinical Psychologist. Her extensive research and practice show that these feelings are normal reactions to abnormal experiences in one's military career. They teach healthy ways of re-entering civilian life such as outdoor activity, healthy eating and sleeping, meditation, and exercise.

If you or some Veteran you know might be interested, and you have week to spare, visit the website www.warfighteradvance.org to learn more and to sign up for the week of your choice. Let them know on the form that Chaplain Beaver referred you.

-- William Beaver, Post 30 Chaplain

District 17 Meeting Update

At the recent District 17 meeting, Jerome Childs was reelected as District 17 Commander. However, Jerome is currently running for The SC Department 4th Vice Commander. If elected, District 17 will need to appoint a new Commander to fill the vacancy.

Paul Springs, Marketing Director for Heartfelt Home Care briefed attendees on their VA funded personalized in-home care for qualifying veterans. Offering 12 to 28 hours of weekly care, their skilled caregivers support non-medical tasks to help veterans maintain comfort and independence at home. For additional information contact Paul at 803-606-5594 (cell), 803-331-3391 (office) or visit <https://heartfelthomecaresc.com>.

Falling Dominoes Leading to Victory in Europe Day

"The V for Victory sign is the symbol of the unconquerable will of the occupied territories, and a portent of the fate awaiting the Nazi tyranny." -- Winston Churchill

May 8 marks the 80th anniversary of the end of the second world war in Europe. It was a time of great jubilation. Spontaneous celebrations erupted around the world. It was also President Harry S. Truman's 61st birthday as he announced by radio of Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender. Looking back, there were many falling dominoes, so to speak, in a series of events that led to the crumbling of the Third Reich.



The invasion of Poland in 1939 was doomed for eventual failure. Many dominoes tumbled. By April 1945, Allied defenders had captured 1,500,000 German prisoners of war (POWs) on the Western Front. Some 120,000 combatants were taken prisoner in Italy. Another 800,000 plus surrendered on the Eastern Front. And on May 2nd, nearly 1,000,000 soldiers in Italy and Austria surrendered. Another 1,000,000 German land, sea and air force members in Northwest Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands surrendered on May 4th. Camps were established for hundreds of thousands of "Disarmed Enemy Forces," avoiding the legalese "POW" of the 1929 Geneva Convention outlining treatment of former combatants. German troops also withdrew from Finland. The Axis leadership was decimated too. Benito Mussolini was executed by Italian partisans. Germany's Joseph Goebbels and Adolph Hitler both committed suicide. And up to 10,000 Nazi war criminals and fascists fled Europe. More dominoes down!

Ending the war was not like turning off a light switch. Although two unconditional surrender documents had been signed by May 8, 1945, not all German commanders obeyed orders from their high command to surrender. Some surrenders wouldn't take place in parts of Poland, Greece, France, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia until later in May, and in the Netherlands on June 11.

--J. W. Peterson, correspondent at large

National Military Appreciation Month Bursts at the Seams

May is perhaps the busiest month of the year for significant United States military observances, but we'll help navigate you through. National Military Appreciation Month was established by Congress back in 1999 to honor and thank U.S. service members. May was picked as it already included Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, and Military Spouse Appreciation Day. They complement National Veterans and Military Families Month in November, and April's Month of the Military Child. Here's May's readily identifiable observances for 2025:

- May 1st Silver Star Banner Day, a non-federal recognition of those awarded the Silver Star
- May 8th Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day) 1945
- May 9th Military Spouse Appreciation Day
- May 13th Children of Fallen Patriots Day, established in 2014 by a non-profit to honor children who lost a parent who served in the military
- May 17th Armed Forces Day, thanking members from all U.S. military services comes during Armed Forces Week, May 12 through May 17
- May 26th Memorial Day

Armed Forces Day and Memorial Day are two of the three major military holidays, and with Veterans Day on Nov. 11 give Americans an opportunity to thank current service members, veterans, and honor those who have paid the ultimate price in service to the nation. As the holidays draw near, we distinguish that Armed Forces Day gives gratitude to those currently serving and who have served, Veterans Day to those who have hung up their uniform, and Memorial Day to honor the fallen.



Hope this journey has been helpful. Thank you for your service and God bless.

--J. W. "Pete" Peterson, correspondent at large
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On the Horizon



Community Cadence: Join us on Saturday, May 3 at 7:30 AM for the inaugural Community Cadence Walk at Edgefield Walking Trail. Kicking off the first of our monthly gatherings, veterans and the community will step together for a morning of connection. Meet at the Piedmont Tech parking lot and hit the trail to run, walk, or jog at your own pace. No push-ups, no formations, just great conversation and fresh air. Step up, lace up, and let's keep the cadence (or at least stay on the trail).

Rifle Raffle Update: As of now, we've only sold 31 tickets, raising \$310, well behind last year's total of 114 tickets sold. The deadline to turn in tickets is May 23, 2025. We need your help to push us over the total from last year. Let us know if you want to purchase or sell any. Also, if you have tickets please make sure you get them to us by May 23 so we can get them processed and sent to department headquarters.

Augusta Veterans Expo: The VA is hosting a Benefits and Hiring Fair in Augusta on May 14, 2025 at the W.T. Johnson Center 1610 Hunter St. Augusta from 8:30AM to 4:00 PM. It is an in-person benefits and hiring fair similar to the Veterans Experience Action Center events held in South Carolina. Atlanta Regional VA Office claims processors will hold a claims clinic to assist veterans and their families, but you need to pre-schedule an appointment. There will be a benefits fair, mobile vet center, immunization clinic, hiring fair, and several workshops scheduled throughout the day. For more information and to pre-schedule a claims clinic appointment visit the following website:

<https://discover.va.gov/transition-events/event/augusta/#SoE>

May Meeting Note: Our annual Post 30 Memorial Ceremony is postponed until June due to Thurmond Burnett's family being unavailable in May. However we will include the recognition for Sarah Kirkendahl, our 2024-2025 Teacher of the Year. Sarah and her family were unable to attend our April meeting due to a scheduling conflict.

Fort Jackson 2025 Retiree Appreciation Expo: Fort Jackson is hosting a 2025 Retiree Appreciation Day Expo on May 3, 2025, from 9:00AM to 12:00PM at the Robert B. Solomon Center, 6510 Strom Thurmond Blvd, Fort Jackson, SC. At 10:00AM, Ms. Althea Harry, Veteran's Readiness & Employment (VRE) Officer from the Veterans Affairs Regional Office, Columbia will be the guest speaker. They will offer ID card services (no appointments needed) at 5450 Strom Thurmond Building and have exhibitors and onsite assistance with VA disability claims filing, veteran and widows' benefits, health and dental screenings, educational services, and more. All retirees, veterans, spouses, and family members are invited.

Edgefield County Memorial Day Ceremony: Mark your calendars for the annual Edgefield Memorial Day Ceremony on Monday May 26, 2025 at the Edgefield Veterans Memorial Part at 10:00AM. This event is an opportunity for the community to come together to honor the sacrifices of our nation's heroes. The guest speaker will be retired Army Sergeant Major Larry Anderson from the Tuskegee Airmen Association. Chaplain Beaver will be the MC and Adjutant Doolittle will present the POW/MIA remembrance table.

May Birthdays at Post 30

Join us in wishing a Happy Birthday to the following members:

Roderick Williams, Brendal Pennington, Johnny Feltham, Jimmie Gilley, and Jake Smith

Here's to a year filled with joy, laughter, and good memories.

Get Involved with Unit 30 Auxiliary

Unit 30 Auxiliary, a vital part of The American Legion family, is dedicated to serving veterans, their families, and the Edgefield community. We gather on the third Thursday of each month, enjoying a meal with Post 30 before our meeting (no meetings June through August). Membership is open to spouses of Legionnaires or relatives of veterans from any military branch. Want to get involved? Reach out to Fay Vaughan Bradley at fayvaughan@gmail.com or Annie Mae Ellis at 803-480-1338. Your support can make a real difference for our veterans and community.

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.

May 8, 2025

Executive Committee Meeting at 1800

May 15, 2025

Monthly Meeting, dinner at 1800, meeting at 1830, Menu will be Gilbert's Famous Meatloaf, mashed potatoes, green beans, rolls and Fay's Strawberries in the Clouds for dessert.

May 15-18, 2025

SC Department Convention

May 26, 2025

Edgefield County Memorial Day Ceremony, 10:00 AM, Edgefield Veterans' Memorial Park

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

June 21-27, 2025

Nathan M. Wolfe Law Cadet Academy

My Trip to the Beach

D-Day sometimes elicits strong feelings among Americans. Here's one such story, albeit unverified.

An elderly gentleman arrived in Paris by plane. He took a few minutes to locate his passport. "You have been to France, monsieur?" the customs officer asked. The American admitted that he had. "Then you should know enough to have your passport ready." The man replied, "The last time I was here, I didn't have to show it". "Impossible, Americans always have to show your passports on arrival in France," said the customs officer. The American gave him a long hard look then quietly explained, "Well, when I came ashore at Omaha Beach to help liberate this country, I couldn't find a single Frenchman to show a passport to." You could have heard a pin drop!