



# The Hezzie Gazette

Official Newsletter of Hezzie Griffis American Legion Post 30

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**March 2025**



## Commander's Comments

### A Busy Spring Ahead at Post 30

While the typical South Carolina winter temperatures may have kept some members from attending our February meeting, it didn't slow us down. We started the year strong and are now diving into a busy spring with exciting events planned for March and April.

### March Events

Our March meeting will kick off with a special visit from Jelani Edwards of the South Carolina Department of Veterans Affairs (SCDVA). He'll host a workshop to explore the Palmetto Pathfinder Program and its support for veterans and transitioning servicemembers. We've invited soldiers from the South Carolina Army National Guard 122nd Engineer Battalion, along with members of Post 154, Post 222, and VFW Post 6932, to join us.

We're also looking to schedule a day in March to visit the veteran patients at Edgefield Post Acute Rehabilitation and Nursing Home. The veterans always love having us there, and the staff makes it a smooth visit.

### April Events

April is Children and Youth Month for The American Legion, and we have several events planned to celebrate young people while connecting with veterans and the community. We'll start with a fundraiser at the Merriwether Spring Fling on Sunday, April 6, from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM at Patriots Smokehouse, 2006 Martintown Road. We'll be selling rifle raffle tickets, handing out free popcorn for kids, chatting with folks in

the community, and talking with veterans about the benefits of becoming an American Legion member.

We're also reaching out to the five elementary schools in the county to schedule visits where we'll read to students and give each child an American Legion comic book, coloring book, and crayons, all packaged in a blue Post 30 cloth bag. Both of these events are great ways to support local schools, spread awareness about the Legion, and connect with families.

In addition, we're coordinating with the Strom Thurmond ROTC to schedule a flag disposal ceremony in April, offering a respectful and dignified way to properly retire a worn United States flag.

For more details and ways to get involved, be sure to check out the "On the Horizon" section.

-- Winston Boddie, Post 30 Commander

## From the Adjutant's Desk

As of this Newsletter, 91.38% of our membership have paid their 2025 Dues.

Dues 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.

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

## Paris in Springtime Births The American Legion



*American Expeditionary Force representatives at the 1919 Paris caucus leading to creation of The American Legion. (Legion photo)*

On March 19, 2025, The American Legion celebrates its 106th birthday, founded by war-weary American Expeditionary Forces in Paris, France in 1919 as they awaited repatriation following WWI. Legion Americanism, national influence and accomplishment would become preeminent among U. S. military veteran organizations in the following century. Best accounts of Legion beginnings can be found in the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper published in France 1918 to 1919, and the centennial article *It All Began in Paris A Century Ago* by Legion writer Jeff Stoffer.

By March 15, 1919, a caucus of U.S. Army officer and enlisted delegates representing 35 Army divisions and a small contingent of marines, convened a three-day session in Paris. Among distinguished contributors were LTC Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., son of a former U.S. president, and participant, legendary Medal of Honor recipient Army Sergeant Alvin York. The U.S. Navy, busy redeploying soldiers stateside, was not at first represented until late on the last day, when a lone sailor drifted in. Asked whom he represented. "Hell" he reportedly replied, "I don't represent anybody. I thought there was a show going on here." Apparently, anyone who happened to wander by could sit down and take part.

It was reportedly bit of a madhouse. Amid the chaos, the assembly adopted a constitution, appointed an executive committee and four standing committees to establish a fledgling American Legion. Finally, the hat was passed to collect 4,000 francs to cover caucus expenses. Today, 106 years later, the Legion is over a million and-a-half strong, with more than 21,000 members in South Carolina alone. And it all started in Paris, France, for God and country.

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

## Meet the Post 30 Teacher of the Year Sarah Kirkendohl

We are excited to introduce Sarah Kirkendohl, the 2025 Teacher of the Year for American Legion Post 30. Sarah's journey into teaching started in her mother's third-grade classroom at North Augusta Elementary. From a young age, Sarah was immersed in the world of education, learning the ropes by helping hang bulletin boards, laminate materials for teachers, and stay late to help with school activities. Her parents, both passionate lifelong learners, instilled in her the importance of education, reading, and continuous self-improvement.



Sarah's path to teaching was not linear. After earning a Business Management degree from the College of Charleston and minoring in dance, she spent time working in the business world. However, teaching remained her true calling, and she went on to earn a master's degree in early childhood education from Augusta University. Sarah's career as an educator began in kindergarten, where she taught for eight years before transitioning to second grade. She finds joy in inspiring her students and seeing them grow, both academically and personally.

In addition to her work in the classroom, Sarah has been an active member of her community, serving as a leader in various organizations, including the North Augusta Mother's Club and Grace United Methodist Church. Her contributions to local initiatives like Real Men Read, which connects community leaders with students, and providing resources to underprivileged students have made her an invaluable asset to the community. Sarah's passion for education, coupled with her dedication to making a difference, truly exemplifies the spirit of an outstanding teacher.

## Legionnaire of the Quarter

Howell N. "Sam" Watson, Jr.



Sam Watson, 85, a 28-year American Legion member is being honored by the post as Legionnaire of the Quarter for January - March 2025. He had been the commander of Post 30 in 2001. At that time, Post 30 had 107 members. The Mullins, South Carolina native and 1961 Citadel graduate completed 23 years in the Air Force and retired in 1983 as a lieutenant colonel. His military career took him all over the world to major Air Force assignments with the Tactical Air Command, 7th Air Force, Air Force headquarters, and European and Pacific commands. He served in-country during the Vietnam War receiving the Bronze Star medal that added to a slew of meritorious service and commendation awards throughout his career. Upon leaving the service, he became a vice president of Science Applications International Corporation, a Fortune 500 information technology company in Virginia.

Sam and wife Mary have been residents of Edgefield for the past 30 years. Here, he has championed community service as Edgefield Lions Club president, in various Masonic lodge posts, a Wardlaw school teacher and board member, and a Piedmont Technical College board member. He was Edgefield County's 2015 Citizen of the Year, among Who's Who in American Teachers, and is an active member of the Edgefield Methodist Church.

Today, Sam lives a more modest life farming pine trees for pulp and wood products. Post 30 members congratulate you, Sam, on a distinguished military career and many contributions to your post and community.

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

## Chaplain's Corner

### Lesson of the Potato

The older I get the more I enjoy working the soil to plant and harvest vegetables. Last year my wife and I planted potatoes in a large plastic container. With most all other vegetables, we look for strong green growth above the ground to indicate the plants are doing well and almost ready to harvest the vegetables. What you see "showing out" is an indicator of plant health. Potato plants are different, though.

I was surprised to learn that we had to wait to see the green growth above the soil turn brown and start to look "dead." The turning to brown meant the potatoes were ready to be harvested. It was fun to run my hands through the soil and remove so many healthy potatoes!

It is easy to judge a plant by the exterior growth and appearance. But that does not tell the whole true story. Same goes for people. Just because we see a person has grown old, it might be easy to think of them as less valuable than younger folks. But how we miss out on the true value of those older folks and the wisdom and resilience they provide!

This is why we ALWAYS have a place for Veterans of all ages in our American Legion. The older Veteran has much to offer in wisdom and lessons in resiliency and in navigating the VA system. Don't think your "time has passed" and that you have little to offer to others in your American Legion. Bring a friend and fellow Veteran to an upcoming meeting. Let's see that hidden growth that others may easily overlook.

-- William Beaver, Post 30 Chaplain

### ATTENTION TRICARE BENEFICIARIES Act Now to Secure Your Health Records

On April 1, 2025, the TRICARE Online Patient Portal (TOL PP) will be decommissioned. To ensure uninterrupted access to your health information, please log in to your TOL PP account and download or print your historical health records before the portal is closed.

The MHS GENESIS Patient Portal has replaced TOL PP and allows you to access your electronic health records 24/7.

#### Why is this important?

Your TOL PP health records won't transfer to MHS GENESIS once TOL PP is decommissioned.

For more information visit [TRICARE Online Patient Portal Decommissioning](#).



## We Are Not Invisible – The Face of Women Veterans

Here are some insightful facts about women veterans nationally, in South Carolina, and among American Legion membership, drawn from information compiled by the National Association for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NAVAS), the U. S. Veterans Administration (VA), Department of Labor (DOL), and The American Legion (TAL):



- “There are nearly two million living women veterans in the United States. Women currently make up approximately 10% of the overall veteran population. Veterans make up 14% of the men in America, but among all women in America, only 1.5% are veterans.” (DOL: July 2024)
- There are about 46,000 female veterans in South Carolina representing about 12% and will continue to grow by 1% yearly for the next three years. (NAVAS)
- In order to find one woman veteran, you may have to meet 69 women. (TAL)
- The median age of women veterans is 51 years, compared to men 65 years, a 14-year difference. (TAL)
- The American Legion membership is now 1.3 million nationally not differentiated by gender. There were 3.12 million members just 14 years ago. However, the Legion counts more than 5,000 female veterans in its Auxiliary. (TAL)
- In 2017, a woman Army veteran, Denise Rohan of Wisconsin, became the first American Legion National Commander. (TAL)

- Currently, there are four all-women veteran American Legion posts out of over 14,000: two in Wisconsin, one in Ohio, and one on the Oglala Sioux Indian Reservation in South Dakota. This is down from ten that existed in Ohio following WWII. (TAL)
- American Legion Post 30 in Edgefield, South Carolina, is fortunate to have three very visible women members: our Post Adjutant Jane Doolittle, Post Historian Suzy Spurgeon, and Micki Pennington. Thank you, ladies.  
--J. W. "Pete" Peterson, correspondent at large

## Life Between the Pages of the Hezzie Gazette

An Invitation to Tell Your Story



Over the past few months, you have seen several changes to the post newsletter which have drawn quite a few favorable comments. The newsletter has quietly morphed into more of a six-page news magazine, becoming more humanistic, with improved readability if not journalism, and lots of feature stories on topical and historical issues accompanied by increased amounts of photos and artwork. Hopefully, you have been better informed, educated, and entertained, with a little levity thrown in to get you to smile a bit.

You might say, "We print all the news that fits," a humorous play on the New York Times' motto, "All The News That's Fit To Print." But remember this, we always have space for you, our readers, so you may share appropriate service-related stories for the enjoyment of your comrades in arms. And, our editors are ready to work with you to give it that pizzazz that will make you proud. So please send your ideas, photos, or whatever to [www.alpost30sc.org](http://www.alpost30sc.org) for possible inclusion in one of the best American Legion post newsletters around. Looking forward to seeing you in print.

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

# A Salute to Our Vietnam War Veterans

March 29 is National Vietnam War Veterans Day. It's a time to pay special tribute to those who served during the Vietnam War era, to those 58,000 whose names are memorialized on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., and those who never received the recognition they deserved when they returned to America from war.

The Vietnam War was the nation's longest and costliest conflict of the so-called Cold War, fought from about 1961 through the fall of Saigon in April 1975. It had no conventional front lines. What began as a small U.S. program to train the South Vietnamese army in 1961 grew into a massive military effort to combat communist insurgents like Viet Cong, North Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians. Over the course of the war, U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard assisted South Vietnamese forces, located and destroyed North Vietnamese troops and supply routes, conducted ground operations, patrolled rivers and canals, and mined North Vietnamese ports. Combat and combat support missions also operated from Thailand, Philippines, B-52 bombers flew from Guam, and Naval forces deployed to the South China Sea and Gulf of Tonkin. The combat and combat support areas were extremely large, as depicted on the map below.



According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, from 1964 to 1973 more than 3.4 million Americans were deployed to Southeast Asia, with approximately 2.7 million of them serving in the Republic of Vietnam. We invite all Post 30 Vietnam War era members to receive a special Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin like the one below for their service by contacting Jane Doolittle at 803-480-1061 or by providing your name and mailing address to: [whs.pentagon.wso.mbx.vnwar50th-cpp-events-application@mail.mil](mailto:whs.pentagon.wso.mbx.vnwar50th-cpp-events-application@mail.mil). Thank you for your service and God bless.

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



## Get Involved with the Unit 30 Auxiliary



Unit 30 Auxiliary is a proud part of The American Legion family, supporting veterans, their families, and our community.

We meet on the third Thursday of each month, sharing supper with Post 30 before holding our meeting (paused June–August). Membership is open to spouses of Legionnaires or family members of veterans.

To join, contact Fay Vaughan Bradley at [fayvaughan@gmail.com](mailto:fayvaughan@gmail.com) or Annie Mae Ellis at 803-480-1338. We'd love to have you with us.

## Donation Helps Sponsor Memberships

We recently received an anonymous generous \$180 donation to sponsor dues for three Legionnaires. We appreciate this support in keeping our Post strong and active.



## On the Horizon



**Palmetto Pathfinder Workshop:** The workshop will take place during our March meeting on March 20. As usual, dinner will be served at 6:00 PM, followed by the workshop at 6:30 PM. Feel free to invite any veterans you know, but please remember that everyone must RSVP by calling Jane Doolittle at 803-480-1061 or scanning the QR code below to register on Facebook. For more information about the Palmetto Pathfinder Program, scan the QR code below to visit the program's homepage.



*Workshop RSVP*



*Pathfinder Homepage*

**Merriwether Spring Fling Market:** We're scheduled to have a booth at the Merriwether Spring Fling Market on April 6, from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Yes, it's on a Sunday, so you might have to play hooky from church to join us. We'll be raising money to help fund our youth and community outreach programs while focusing on membership growth by connecting with veterans in the community. We're looking for people to help staff the booth. If you're interested, please contact Winston Boddie at 803-761-2508 or at wboddie013@proton.me. Any help, even for just one hour, would be appreciated.

**National Commander Visits SC:** American Legion National Commander James LaCoursiere, Jr., (La coursey air) is scheduled to visit SC March 2-5, 2025 and will host a meeting on March 5, 0900-1100, at Post 6, 200 Pickens St., Columbia. Commander LaCoursiere is an Air Force veteran and a 27-year member of Post 91 in Moosup, Connecticut. He served as National Vice Commander 2008-2009 and is the "father" of Connecticut's American Legion Riders.

**Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC):** The Department is hosting a VEAC March 20-22, 2025 at SCNG Armory, 1328 Old Dairy Rd, Columbia. The VEAC provides direct access to VA personnel for assistance with disability claims, pensions, health care enrollment, widow benefits, employment benefits, and more.

## 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.

#### March 13, 2025

Executive Committee Meeting at 1800

#### March 20, 2025

Monthly Meeting, dinner at 1800, meeting at 1830, Palmetto Pathfinder Workshop, Menu is spaghetti, garlic bread, pea salad, and dessert.

#### April 6, 2025

Merriwether Spring Fling Market, 1100 – 1500, Patriots Smokehouse, 2006 Martintown Road.

#### April 10, 2025

Executive Committee Meeting at 1800

#### April 17, 2025

Monthly Meeting, dinner at 1800, meeting at 1830

#### May 3, 2025

Legion Night Baseball at Segra Park, Columbia, Time TBD

#### May 8, 2025

Executive Committee Meeting at 1800

#### May 15, 2025

Monthly Meeting, dinner at 1800, meeting at 1830.

#### May 15-18, 2025

SC Department Convention, Doubletree by Hilton, 2100 Bush River Rd, Columbia

