PROCEEDINGS OF THE 97TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

[SUMMARY OF MINUTES]

Louisville, Kentucky ::: August 17-23, 1996

U.S. CODE, TITLE 44, SECTION 1332

NATIONAL ENCAMPMENTS OF VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS; PROCEEDINGS PRINTED ANNUALLY FOR CONGRESS

The proceedings of the national encampments of the United Spanish War Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the American Legion, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Veterans of World War I of the United States, Incorporated, the Disabled American Veterans, and the AMVETS (American Veterans of World War II), respectively, shall be printed annually, with accompanying illustrations, as separate House documents of the session of the Congress to which they may be submitted.

[Approved October 2, 1968.]

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
December, 1996

Honorable Newt Gingrich,
The Speaker U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: In conformance with the provisions of Public Law No. 620, 90th Congress, approved October 22, 1968, I am transmitting to you herewith the proceedings of the 97th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in Louisville, Kentucky, August 17-23, 1996, which is submitted for printing as a House document.

Sincerely,

LARRY W. RIVERS
Adjutant General

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COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

(Including societies that amalgamated to form Veterans of Foreign Wars)

The Veterans of Foreign Service and the Army of the Philippines amalgamated at Denver, CO, August 1913, forming the Veterans of Foreign Wars as it is today. However, the birth of the order dates from September 29, 1899, when the first national officers were elected and the eligibility clause adopted. The original chapter was granted October 11, 1899.

* indicates deceased

American Veterans of Foreign Service

1899-1900	James C. Putnam*	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1900-1901	Maj. Will S. White*	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1901-1902	Maj. Will S. White*	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1902-1903	James Romanis*	Elected at Washington Courthouse, Ohio.
1903-1904	James Romanis*	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1904-1905	James Romanis*	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1905-1906	George Metzger*	Elected at Altoona, Pennsylvania.
1906-1907	Charles H. Devereaux*	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1907-1908	David T. Nevin*	Elected at James Exposition Grounds, Virginia.
1908-1909	J. Alfred Judge*	Elected at Lebanon, Pennsylvania.
1909-1910	J. Alfred Judge*	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1910-1911	Robert J, Woodside*	Elected at Jersey City, New Jersey.
1911-1912	Robert J, Woodside*	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1912-1913	Robert J, Woodside*	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

American Veterans of Foreign Service
(Eastern Branch)

1903-1904	Capt. Robert S. Hansburg *	Elected at Altoona, Pennsylvania.
1904-1905	H.O. Kelly *	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

(The above two organizations amalgamated September 1905, at Altoona, Pennsylvania.)

Army of the Philippines

1900-1901	Gen. Francis V. Greene *	Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1901-1902	Gen. Irving Hale *	Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.
1902-1903	Gen. Irvin Hale *	Elected at Council Bluffs, lowa.
1903-1904	Gen. Charles King *	Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1904-1905	Gen. Wilder S. Metcalf *	Elected at St. Louis, Missouri.
1905-1906	Col. Alfred S. Frost *	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1906-1907	Gen. Arthur MacArthur *	Elected at Des Moines, lowa.
1907-1908	Capt. H.A. Crow *	Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1908-1909	Maj. P.J.H. Farrell *	Elected at Galesburg, Illinois.
1909-1910	Col. Charles L. Jewett *	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1910-1911	A.H. Anderson *.	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1911-1912	F. Warner Karling *	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1912-1913	F. Warner Karling *	Elected at Lincoln, Nebraska.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

1913-1914	Rice W. Means*	Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1914-1915	Thomas Crago *	Elected at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.
1915-1916	Gus Hartung*	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1916-1917	Albert Rabin*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1917-1918	William Ralston*	Elected at New York, New York.
1918-1919	F. Warner Karling*	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1919-1920	F. Warner Karling*	Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1920-1921	Robert G. Woodside*	Elected at Washington, D.C.
1921-1922	Robert G. Woodside*	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1922-1923	Tillinghast Huston*	Elected at Seattle, Washington.
1923-1924	Gen. Lloyd M. Brett*	Elected at Norfolk, Virginia.
1924-1925	John H. Dunn*	Elected at Atlantic City, New Jersey.
1925-1926	Fred Stover*	Elected at Tulsa, Oklahoma.
1926-1927	Theodore Stitt*	Elected at El Paso, Texas.
1927-1928	Frank T. Strayer*	Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1928-1929	Eugene P. Carver*	Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1929-1930	Kezekiah N. Duff*	Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1930-1931	Paul C. Wolman*	Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1931-1932	Darold D. DeCoe*	Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1932-1933	Adm. Robert E. Coontz*	Elected at Sacramento, California.
1933-1934	James E. Van Zandt*	Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1934-1935	James E. Van Zandt*	Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.
1935-1936	James E. Van Zandt*	Elected at New Olreans, Louisiana
1936-1937	Bernard W. Kearny*	Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1937-1938	Scott P. Squyres*	Elected at Buffalo, New York.
1938-1939	Eugene I. Van Antwerp*	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1939-1940	Otis N. Brown*	Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1940-1941	Joseph C. Menendez*	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1941-1942	Max Singer*	Elected at Philidelphia, Pennsylvania.
1942-1943	Robert T. Merrill	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1943-1944	Carl S. Schoeninger*	Elected at New York, New York.
1944-1945	Jean A. Brunner*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1945-1946	Joseph M. Stack*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1946-1947	Louis E. Starr*	Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1947-1948	Ray H. Brannaman*	Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1948-1949	Lyall T. Beggs *	Elected at St. Louis, Missouri..
1949-1950	Clyde A. Lewis	Elected at Miami, Florida.
1950-1951	Charles C. Ralls*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1951-1952	Frank C. Hilton	Elected at New York, New York.
1952-1953	James W. Cothran*	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1953-1954	Wayne E. Richards*	Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1954-1955	Merton B. Tice*	Elected at Philidelphia, Pennsylvania.
1955-1956	Timothy J. Murphy*	Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1956-1957	Cooper T. Holt	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1957-1958	Richard L. Roudebush*	Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1958-1959	John W. Mahan	Elected at New York, New York.
1959-1960	Louis G. Feldmann*	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1960-1961	T.C. Connell	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1961-1962	Robert E. Hansen	Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.

1962-1963	Byron B. Gentry*	.Elkected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1963-1964	Joseph J Lombardo*	.Elected at Seattle, Washinton.
1964-1965	John A Jenkins*	.Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1965-1966	Andy Borg*	.Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1966-1967	Leslie M. Fry*	.Elected at New York, New York.
1967-1968	Joseph A. Scerra	.Elected at New Olreans, Louisiana.
1968-1969	Richard W. Homan	.Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1969-1970	Raymond A. Gallagher	. . .Elected at Philidelphia, Pennsylvania.
1970-1971	Herbert R. Rainwater*	.Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1971-1972	Joseph L. Vicites*	.Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1972-1973	Patrick E. Carr	.Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1973-1974	Ray R. Soden	.Elected at New Olreans, Louisiana.
1974-1975	John J. Stang	.El;ected at Chicago, Illinois.
1975-1976	Thomas C. Walker	.Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1976-1977	R.D. Smith Jr.	.Elected at New York, New York.
1977-1978	Dr. John Wasylik	.Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1978-1979	Eric Sandstrom	.Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1979-1980	Howard E. Vander Clute Jr.	. .Elected at New Olreans, Louisiana.
1980-1981	T.C. Selman*	.Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1980-1981	Arthur Fellwock	.Succeeded T.C. Selman, Oct. 21, 1980.
1980-1981	Arthur Fellwock	.Elected at Philidelphia, Pennsylvania.
1982-1983	James A. Currieo	.Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1983-1984	Clifford C. Olson	.Elected at New Olreans, Louisiana.
1984-1985	Billy Ray Cameron	.Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1985-1986	John S. Staum	.Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1986-1987	Norman G. Staab	.Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1987-1988	Earl L. Stock*	.Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1988-1989	Larry W. Rivers	.Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1989-1990	Walter G. Hogan	.Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
1990-1991	James L. Kimery	.Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1991-1992	Robert E. Wallace	.Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1992-1993	John M. Carney	.Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1993-1994	George R. Cramer	.Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1994-1995	Allen F. “Gunner” Kent	.Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
1995-1996	Paul A. Spera	.Elected at Phoenix, Arizona.

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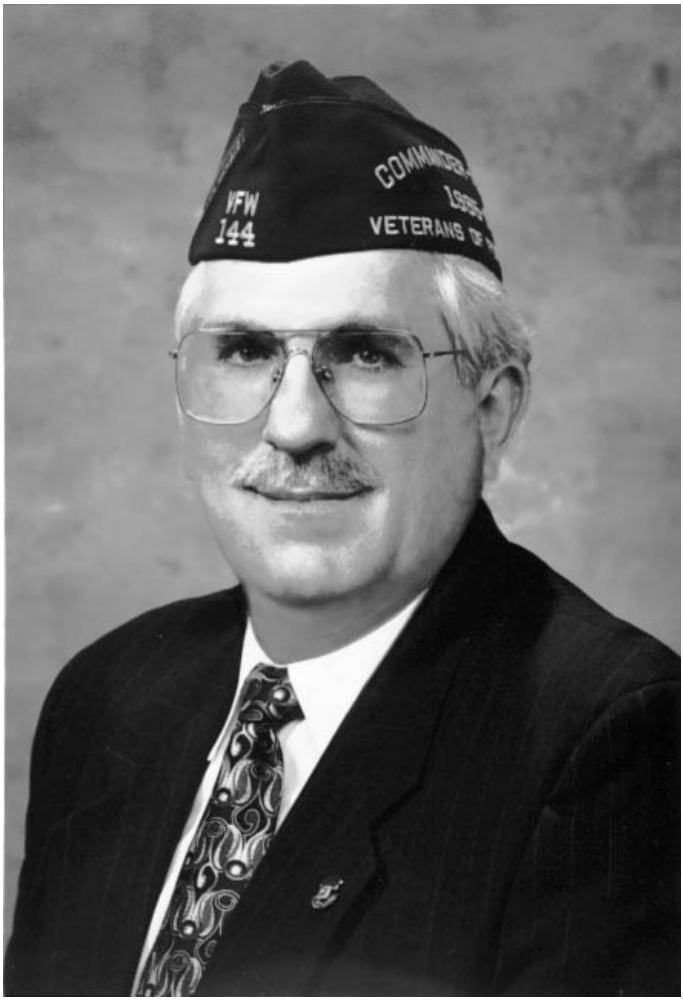
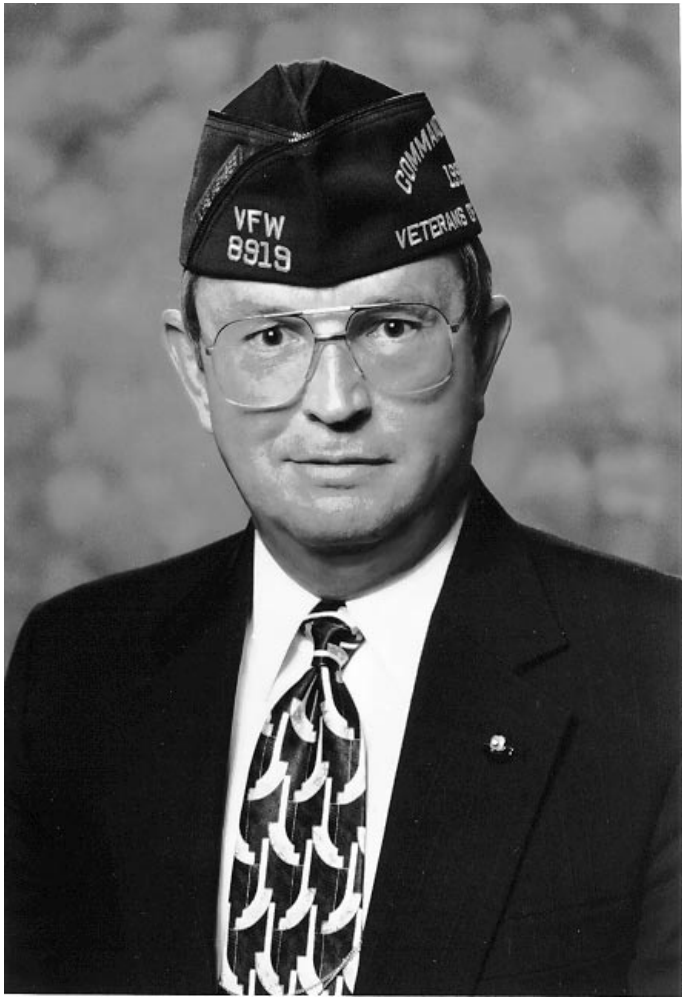


Paul A. Spera
Commander-in-Chief
1995-96



James E. Nier
Commander-in-Chief
1996-97

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Director, VFW Properties . . . . . .Billy R. Weissend
Director, Voice of Democracy,
Youth Activities & Safety . . . . . .Gordon R. Thorson
National Service Officer &
Director, National Veterans Service . . . . . .Frederico Juarbe, Jr.
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DISTRICT 16 (CE, PAC, AK, HI) . . . . . .Dannie Cooper
DISTRICT 17 (UT, NV, OR) . . . . . .Gary L. Clark
DISTRICT 19 (LA, MS) . . . . . .J. Hollis Smith
DISTRICT A (Pennsylvania) . . . . . .Americo D. DiLoretto
DISTRICT B (Illinois) . . . . . .Russell R. Rieke, Sr.
DISTRICT C (New York) . . . . . .Ralph U. DeMarco
DISTRICT D (Ohio) . . . . . .George W. Marks
DISTRICT E (Minnesota) . . . . . .Gordon W. Kirk
DISTRICT F (Michigan) . . . . . .Wayne A. Buck
DISTRICT G (California) . . . . . .Raymond C. Sisk
DISTRICT H (Texas) . . . . . .Ferrell E. Warden
DISTRICT I (New Jersey) . . . . . .George J. Lisicki
DISTRICT J (Florida) . . . . . .Eugene R. Manfrey
Past Commander-in-Chief . . . . . .Paul A. Spera

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE 97TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY AUGUST 18-23, 1996

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE

SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 1996

(The Memorial Service of the 97th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held at the Commonwealth Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Paul A. Spera, presiding. The Gold Star Parents, Gold Star Wives, National Officers and Past National Chaplains were escorted by the Department of Kentucky Ladies Auxiliary.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Sergeants-at-Arms, you will prepare the room for the advancement and posting of the Colors.

ADVANCE OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the VFW National Honor Guard advanced the Colors, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.)

INVOCATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: Will you, please, stand for the Invocation by our National Chaplain.

VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN LYLE N. KELL: Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, as we meet here for this solemn occasion today, we believe that it is very adequate remembering the lives of thousands upon thousands of men and women that have given so that we can have the freedom that we have.

We praise you, God, for giving us these freedoms. We praise you for letting us live, but we come with tears in our heart for those families that have lost loved ones and thankful for those men and women that gave their lives for our country.

We ask your blessings on this solemn occasion. Touch each of our hearts in a very special way as only you, God, can do. We will praise you forever more. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Invocation was given by the Reverend Lyle Kell. Please remain standing and join me now in the Star Spangled Banner.

(Whereupon, the National Anthem was played at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We will now have a selection from

the Master's Men Chorale.

(Whereupon, the Master's Men Chorale sang the "Battle Hymn of the Republic.")

IN MEMORIAM

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrades, Ladies of the Auxiliary and Friends: We have met at this time to commemorate our comrades of the United States Armed Forces who have answered the last call. The VFW Ritual provides that the audience shall refrain from applauding. The Chief of Staff will see that there are no disturbances during this ceremony.

NATIONAL CHIEF OF JOHN SMART: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your order will be obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I request that the National Chaplain preside.

(National Chaplain Lyle N. Kell presided during the Memorial Services performed by the National Officers in accordance with the Ritual.)

(At the conclusion of the Memorial Service, the Master's Men Chorale led the assembly in singing "America.")

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: It is my honor at this time to introduce our Memorial Address speaker. Rear Admiral A. Bryon Holderby is the Deputy Chief of Chaplains of the United States Navy.

Chaplain Holderby received his Master of Divinity degree in 1963 from the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina. Following his ordination in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

Chaplain Holderby received his Master of Counseling degree from the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, Florida. Chaplain Holderby was commissioned into the Naval Reserve in 1967. Beginning his active naval duty ministry in that same year, he has served in various overseas and state side assignments, to include his present assignment of the Deputy Chief of Chaplains since 1994.

His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, three Navy Commendation Medals, the Navy Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal and Meritorious Unit Citation and the Vietnam Service Medal. Chaplain Holderby is married to the former Barbara Clark Thiel. They have two daughters and five grandchildren.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in giving a warm welcome to Chaplain Holderby.

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

REAR ADMIRAL HOLDERBY: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is good that you are here, that we can be here together to honor American

men and women who fought in defense of freedom of our land around the world.

I am a little overwhelmed by the sacredness of this moment, if you will, as you and I recall all that has been given for the sake of a peaceful world.

My office in Washington, D.C. overlooks Arlington National Cemetery where the bodies of men and women just like you and me lie. We can't help but think of the fact that they had the same concerns, the same hopes and disappointments and triumphs, tears and laughter and loves that we all have. Somewhere in that cemetery there may lie a person who could have discovered the cure for cancer or found a way to stop wars forever. But instead they lie silently in that sacred soil as our memories. Some of us may live today because they died. It is only fitting that we honor them.

Let us not, however, fail to honor one another. That we live while others died was not our decision, it was God's. God calls us sometimes to a playground and sometimes to a battleground, and we have done our best with God's help to respond. Not a single one of you feel that you have in any way done less. You were there.

Let us remember, too, to honor those who wore no uniform, stepped on no battlefield, but whose pain and fear and sacrifice were every bit as great, our families, our loved ones. Finally, this morning, let us honor America, the great experiment, the dream of the oppressed, the beacon of hope for all people around the world.

The words we speak here today, the feelings, the memories are all very real. There is a tendency in our world today not to trust words too much. It is said that Lyndon Johnson, in the course of his campaign, told some small farmers that he understood their problem because he was a rancher himself.

One of the farmers said, "Well, how big is your place?"

"Oh, it's big," said Johnson in his Texas drawl. "It is really big. I can get in my car in the morning and the sun is up and I can drive all day long and at sundown I am just getting to the other side of my property."

"Yeah," relied one of the farmers, "I know how that is. I had a car like that once myself." Our words, our memories, our feelings are real.

Certainly, it is true that our world is not perfect. Some even despair that it's close to being broken. The question is occasionally asked, "Is this society what we fought to preserve?" The answer seems to be yes and no. We didn't fight to preserve what is wrong in our society, but there is so much good in it and maybe, just maybe, you and I have been spared, been left on this earth to build on the good and try and change that which isn't good.

In a Calvin and Hobbes' cartoon, Calvin says, "You could step in the road tomorrow and, wham, you get hit by a cement truck. That's why my motto is 'Live for the Moment.' What's your motto?" Hobbes answered: "Look down the road."

I think that is part of what we are here to do today. To not only pay tribute to the men and women who have served our country well, but to look down the road. To agree on ways we can keep faith with those that fought

before us and with each other by making a difference in our society today, not just for ourselves, but for a world that looks to us still as a place where justice and human worth are valued and protected.

Last year the Chief of Chaplains, Don Muchow, was in Warsaw, Poland, at a gathering of church and military leaders of the NATO countries and former Soviet bloc nations. During that meeting, he was sitting next to a Polish Army General that said to him, "My wife and I were married by a priest in the woods, and our children were baptized in the forest. The Soviets may have occupied our land," he said, "but they never took over our hearts."

But even more telling were the words of the former Director of the Soviet KGB who in a meeting in Washington said to our Chiefs of Chaplains of the three services, "I need you to help us establish a Chaplain Corps. I have soldiers who can't tell the truth or keep a promise. I have soldiers who have no moral compass."

All around the world people look to this country for hope. This country that you have fought to preserve, this country whose good you now fight to uphold. Not a perfect place, seemingly beset with crime and self-interest, our weapons are these.

To be people of integrity, Stephen Carter of Harvard University defines integrity this way: "First," he writes, "you must decide between right and wrong. Then you must live by that decision even at personal cost, and finally you must proclaim that the basis for what you are doing is your commitment to do what you know to be right."

In short, we must do what we say we are. Then our words can be trusted and carry weight. The second effective weapon in this fight for the right is to accept responsibility for each other. "God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters." We are our brother's and our sister's keeper. There will be no joy for any of us in this world, until there is joy for all of us. Racism, sexism, anything that makes one group superior to another has no place in our land.

An Army Chaplain speaking at the cemetery on the Island of Iwo Jima 50 years ago caught the vision perfectly. He said: "Beneath this soil lie people who loved America; rich and poor, white and black, Hispanic, native American, Catholics, Jews, Protestants and others. Deep in the soil where they lie, there is no discrimination or quotas, no hatred, just the purest democracy. Anyone among us, the living, who fails to see that, can betray their sacrifice. Any one of us who lifts a hand in hate against another, or thinks one's self superior to another makes of this day a mockery."

I think, perhaps, the final weapon needed for a strong America is civility. The acknowledgement that everyone has worth and should be so treated. In a very powerful book entitled "Achilles in Vietnam", the author, a psychiatrist named Jonathan Shay, who works with Vietnam Veterans, makes this observation: "The ancient Greeks, warlike as they were, did not dishonor the enemy. We, in our country, have tended to do so. And the price to be paid for that is often disaster."

During World War II, the Japanese considered Americans too soft to

endure the strain of extended submarine duty and so didn't pay too much attention to their anti-submarine capability and it cost them dearly in lost shipping. On our side, we considered the Japanese physically and mentally inferior, too nearsighted to fly planes effectively and too dumb to design good ones, so the Japanese Zeros destroyed out fleet in Hawaii and our Air Force in the Philippines.

But the price to individuals can be terribly high, too, as the high rate of post-traumatic stress endured by Vietnam Veterans has demonstrated for the past twenty-some years. The doctor through years of treatment of tortured men has concluded that the first step in recovery is to restore honor to the enemy.

"For," he says, "a veteran's self-respect never fully recovers so long as he is unable to see the enemy as worthy." And in like manner, citizens cannot enjoy real self-respect so long as they are unable to respect their neighbors. So these weapons, integrity, a sense of responsibility for each other and civility can have real impact on the pain in our society. But as powerful as they are, they will fail if used simply to restore a sense of calm and lack of conflict.

We are a powerful, compassionate, caring nation, truly a beacon of hope for the world. But a nation struggling to be even more, to be what we set out to be, a land of opportunity, of restraint, a peaceful country with liberty and justice for all.

To be this, to be all that we can be as the slogan goes, we must understand ourselves as having been put here for that purpose. Not born accidentally in this country but placed here by God to help the world by serving the world.

You, my friends, have been leading the way. I commend you. Today as we honor the dead and thank the living and the families for their courage and commitment and sacrifice, what better way to do it than to commit ourselves to the growth and health of our nation under God, the hope of the world.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for letting me share these moments with you.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN KELL: We have not been left hopeless, but wonderfully hopeful. That is my word to you.

(Whereupon, the Master's Men Chorale sang "America the Beautiful.")

INTRODUCTION OF WILLIAM D. CHESTER, JR.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: At this time I would like to introduce the State Chaplain of the Chapel of Four Chaplains, William D. Chester, Jr.

PRESENTATION OF THE CHAPEL OF FOUR CHAPLAINS LEGION OF HONOR BRONZE MEDALLION

CHAPLAIN WILLIAM CHESTER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief, for

allowing us to be a part of your program. As State Chaplain for the American Legion of Kentucky, memorial services always seem to do something for us. It is good that we always remember those who guide and help us.

I come to you today representing the Chapel of Four Chaplains, an organization founded in honor of the four chaplains who on February 3, 1943, were on a troop ship, the Dorchester, off the coast of Greenland. Their boat was torpedoed and immediately pandemonium broke out.

There were not enough life jackets to take care of those on deck and it was not enough of anything to take care of them, but these four chaplains, namely, one Catholic, two Protestants and one Jew, they had their life jackets on but they took their life jackets off and gave them to four G.I.'s.

When the ship went down, the story goes that these four chaplains were singing, standing arm in arm praying to the God that had meant so much to each and every one of us.

To recognize the many acts of volunteerism, brotherhood and sacrifice among Americans of every age, every station of life, the chaplains have established its Legion of Honor program. The bronze medallion, which I will present to your Commander-in-Chief in just a second, is an award given by the Chapel in recognition of exceptional service on the part of an individual which contributes to the well-being of others at the national and world level, and the spirit of interfaith cooperation.

The Commander-in-Chief and the National Chaplain will come forward. I have several presentations to make to him. The plaque reads, "The Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion is presented to Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief of the VFW 1995-'96, by the Chapel of Four Chaplains, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, in recognition of outstanding service to all people regardless of race or faith. This award symbolizes for all Americans and for all time the unity of this nation founded upon the fatherhood of one God."

It is signed by the Chief Chaplain of the Chapel of Four Chaplains. It is my distinct pleasure to present this to the Commander-in-Chief, and also with it goes the medallion, which I am pleased to put around his neck. I don't know whether I should give him a French kiss or not. (Laughter) You can't do that with the glasses on.

It is a distinct honor for us to be here with you today and God bless you and I hope you have a successful Convention.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Now, the Master's Men Chorale will sing "God Bless America."

(Whereupon, the Master's Men Chorale sang "God Bless America.")

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We will now have the Benediction by Rabbi Shmuel Mann from the Keneseth Israel Synagogue.

BENEDICTION

RABBI SHMUEL MANN: The Memorial Service in the Jewish tradition opens with these verses from the holy scriptures. "Lord, are we human that you have regard for us, mere mortals that you take account of us. You have made us lower than the angels. We are like the breath, our days are like the free shadow.

"Teach us to number our days that we maintain a heart of wisdom. We are strong and upright for the future of the man in peace. The Lord redeems the life and the sermon, and those who trust in shall not feel forsaken."

Although these words apply to all human beings, a greater degree of poignancy in the sense of meaningfulness seems to attack these verses when we recite them as we memorialize our fallen soldiers with our servicemen and women who were the martyr in the cause of freedom.

It is tragic and hopeful that human lives are like fleeting shadows to begin to be cut down in their prime defending against the savage and tyranny of those who would seek to launch assaults on the freedom and independence of peace loving people.

We human beings, who were created and intended by God to be only a little less than the angels have proven time and again we are much less than divine and gravitate more to the reality of savagery. It is the most bitter irony that the human beings, the most divine, intellectually and morally capable of animal kingdom should sink to the level in most respects exceedingly combative warlike species, using our intellect to perfect massive and ingenuous methods of human self-destruction.

So today as we solemnly and reverently remember our fallen heroes and comrades, let us pray that almighty God will inspire all peoples to learn the lesson of past wars, that it is by remembering that each and every human being is created in the image of God and that God is every man's pedigree, God is either fair of all or of no man, the image of God is either in every person or in no man.

Therefore, no one has the right to attack the freedom or independence of another. Each and every person has the inalienable rights to liberty and peace. Knowing to the human capacities for overzealousness, greed and egocentrisms, we must forever remember that in critical times men and women can save their lives only by risking them.

Often our best and bravest must go to war, wage the fight on the battlefield to preserve the peace and peace-loving people. Almighty God, teach us to learn peace and may no one learn war anymore. The sword may conquer for a while, but the spirit conquers forever.

It is only the spirit of humanness in our daily dealings with our neighbors and the spirit of brotherhood among peoples, the air of civility among religions and governments to set the stage for what we call the days of universal peace. Nations shall not lift up swords against nations, nor shall they learn war anymore.

The evolution of humankind, though tragically marked by frequent, brutal, hardened reactions does move irresistibly in the direction of universal security and freedom. Each and every one of us has the enormous

responsibility and sacred duty to be involved in this inexorable process.

With each mitzvah, each good deed, each observance of the commandment, noble attention and kind word, we all contribute toward this goal. May the memory of our slain heroes remain forever etched in our consciences as we recall the unanswered cries for salvation of our martyred soldiers and victims of tyranny.

We must pledge ourselves never to be silent in the face of tyranny or justice. We must transform grief into compassion, we must give evidence of our memory paths through acts of kindness and courage. Thus, while our actions serve as monuments to the spirit of those who perished, the Lord, remember their martyred children as we pledge to remember them.

I conclude with the two last stanzas of a poem entitled "Weep Not For Them", composed by a father of one of the four chaplains representing the three faiths, Catholic, Jewish and Protestant, which I only found out very recently, being a Canadian and learning of the story of the four chaplains who gave their lives so others might live.

"Weep not for them, nor for their cause, our sons who faltered not.

"Weep only for ourselves who failed, who vowed the vow for God.

"Weep for ourselves, but vow again pledge in our children's blood to keep the faith, to win the peace, to make the world a brotherhood."

Today, friends, as every day, we offer our thanksgiving to Thee, O Lord, for your steadfast love and guidance in our pursuit of justice, in furtherance of liberty and peace. May the souls of our comrades be bound up in the bonds of eternal life and may you soon spread for all of us and the entire world your tabernacle of peace. For this we pray and thank you. Amen.

RETIRING OF COLORS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will retire the colors.

(Whereupon, the Retiring of the Colors was performed by the VFW National Honor Guard.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS GEORGE SARVER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the closing ceremonies have been performed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Please join me in thanking for their beautiful performance this morning, The Master's Men Chorale. I want to thank all of those who participated in this morning's Memorial Service, and I have a very special thank you to each and every one of you within this hall today to help us memorialize those of our comrades who have gone on before us. Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, the meeting was recessed at 10:15 o'clock a.m.)

JOINT OPENING SESSION

MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 1996

(The Joint Opening Session of the 97th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the 83rd National Convention of the Ladies Auxiliary was called to order on Monday, August 19, 1996, at 9:00 o'clock a.m., in the Commonwealth Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, by Comrade W. J. Cannon, Chairman of the VFW 97th National Convention Committee.)

COMRADE W. J. CANNON: Comrades and sisters, let me have your attention, please. Comrades and sisters, I am W. J. Cannon, Chairman for this, the 97th VFW National Convention. I welcome you on behalf of myself and all who are working so hard to make this our most successful Convention ever.

We sincerely hope the time you spend with us this week will reinvigorate your pride in our nation, renew your commitment to America's veterans and bring new excitement to your work as a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Please rise as we officially open this Convention with the Advancing of the Colors.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the room to advance and post the colors.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS GEORGE SARVER: Yes, sir.

ADVANCEMENT OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the National Honor Guard advanced the colors at this time and the Pledge of Allegiance was given.)

INVOCATION

COMRADE CANNON: And now for this morning's Invocation, the National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the Reverend Lyle N. Kell.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Kell gave the Invocation.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Comrade Chairman, the Opening Ceremonies have been performed.

COMRADE CANNON: We will dim the lights and ask that you all sit back and relax as we present a video of the "Call to Duty" year.

(Whereupon, a video presentation entitled "Call to Duty" was presented at this time.)

INTRODUCTION - THE HONORABLE JERRY E. ABRAMSON, MAYOR, CITY OF LOUISVILLE

COMRADE CANNON: This is the first time that the VFW National Convention has been in Louisville, Kentucky, for a long, long time. It was 62 years ago in 1934, the 35th National Convention met here.

Even in 1934, Louisville was a major southern metropolis, growing and

prospering. A center of commerce, industry, agriculture and education. It continues to be that today, and much of the current progress of this city is due to the work of one individual.

Elected to the office of Mayor in 1985, he continues to fill that position today as he serves his third four-year term. The administration of Mayor Jerry E. Abramson has been dedicated to urban redevelopment, industrial progress, improved housing, better education, protecting the environment, city- wide recycling, job-training and cultural programs to improve the quality of life here in this beautiful city beside the Ohio River.

Today Louisville stands as a shining example of what a city could be and can be if it has the right kind of leadership.

Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm VFW welcome to His Honor the Mayor, Jerry E. Abramson, Mayor of our Host City, Louisville, Kentucky.

GREETINGS - THE HONORABLE JERRY ABRAMSON

MAYOR ABRAMSON: Thank you very much, and good morning. I know there are folks out there. I just can't see you. I do hear you. Good morning. All right. I want to welcome you to Louisville. Now, where are you? Right, you are in Louisville. You are not in "Louieville," you are not in "Louisville," you are in Louisville. Have you got it? We were named after King Louis, XVI, and we call ourselves Louisville.

It is really great to have you here. I bring you greetings on behalf of all the citizens. I also have the good fortune of having a father who served proudly for four years during World War II, a mother that was a WAC in the United States Army, serving proudly for four years in World War II, and I had the good fortune of spending two years in the Army during the Vietnam era.

I will tell you what was great about having a mother in the United States Army is that in the eighth grade, when I went to junior high, and that was when everyone was wearing army jackets as eighth graders, my army jacket fit because I wore my mother's.

It is wonderful to have you with us. We hope you have a great time. We know you will. I saw a few of you out at the Kentucky State Fair over the weekend, so some of you had gotten in early. That will be going on throughout the rest of the week.

For those fellows who were baseball enthusiasts, you are here about two weeks late. Right down the road, two blocks from here, is the Louisville Slugger Museum. The largest baseball bat in the world is resting up against the six-story building. You can't miss it on Main Street.

If you had been here a couple of weeks ago, you would have had the opportunity to see Ted Williams, Stan Musial,Harmon Killebrew, Ralph Kiner, and our own Louisvillian, Pee Wee Reese. It was a great opportunity for us to dedicate the Louisville Slugger Museum.

If you have a chance in between all of these wonderful speeches you are going to hear throughout the next couple of days, if you have a chance

to mosey down Main Street, we hope you will take the time to see the Louisville Slugger Museum.

We welcome you to our city. If you have a chance to go out two miles to the Churchill Downs Museum. Although they are not running horse races this time of the year, you will really get a feel of what it is like to be here on the first Saturday in May.

It is again an honor for us to have you here. It has taken a long time for you to come back, 1934. Since 1934, we have had World War II, we have had the Korean conflict, we have had the Vietnam conflict, we have had the Gulf War, and we have ended the Cold War, and that has happened since you have been here last.

It is wonderful to have you back in our community. We have dedicated today to you, dedicated it as your day, Veterans of Foreign Wars 97th Convention Week in Louisville. We have proclaimed it your day to let all the people know and take notice that you are here, what you and others have done for the greatness of this nation, to welcome you, to host you. We thank you for selecting our city and remember it is "Louisville". Have a wonderful time.

INTRODUCTION - THE HONORABLE STEPHEN L. HENRY, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF KENTUCKY

COMRADE CANNON: For all of you non-believers, I have been telling you it was "Louisville". We have a lot of folks standing on the right side over here, and I wish somebody would direct them over to my left because there are plenty of seats. There are plenty of seats. There is no reason why anybody in the auditorium should be standing.

The next introduction is a pleasure for me, too, because I share something in common with this gentleman, because it happens to be one of my hometown boys. Anyway, we will get around to that.

The name Kentucky is Indian for "land of tomorrow." There are some who will argue with that and say that it was Indian for "happy hunting grounds." I guess it depends on which Indian you are. Anyway, our next guest has contributed to that name.

He was born in Kentucky, raised in Kentucky and educated in Kentucky. He carries on the proud tradition of those who came West over 200 years ago and brought forth from the wilderness a great state.

His parents bestowed on him a simple yet very powerful philosophy: "The harder you work, the further you go in life." In everything he has done, he has fulfilled that commitment. Early influences started him on politics on the one hand and medicine on the other.

In both cases, not only did he find personal satisfaction but the State of Kentucky has benefitted as well.

As an intern on the staff of the late and great United States

Representative William Natcher, he observed American government at one of its most trying moments, the 1974 Watergate Hearings. What he learned there has remained with him to this day.

Not long after his stint in Washington, he became an intern of another kind, a medical intern, as he trained in the field of orthopedic medicine and soon became a world renowned expert in that field.

Today he is practicing his second interest, that of political leadership and, as with medicine, he is one of the leaders in his field. Educator, community activist, small business owner, and public servant, he brings to the position of Lieutenant Governor a unique insight.

Now, would you please join me in giving a very warm VFW welcome to Dr. Stephen L. Henry, the Lieutenant Governor of the great Commonwealth of Kentucky.

GREETINGS - THE HONORABLE STEPHEN L. HENRY, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF KENTUCKY

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR HENRY: Good morning. I honestly and sincerely want to say I cannot think of a better group to welcome to Kentucky than our veterans. Thank you for being here this morning. I noticed as coming in, and I have to tell you this little story. Somebody said we get the politicians to come.

Let me tell you this story from Eastern Kentucky. There is a old story back in the hills that says any time a baby is born, the angel will come down from the heavens and kiss the baby. Sometimes the baby will reach up for the angel and the angel will kiss the hand. That baby will become a great writer.

Occasionally, the angel will come down and kiss the baby on the lips, and that baby will become a great speaker. Occasionally, the baby is sleeping on its stomach and its back end is a little bit up in the air, and the angel will accidentally kiss the bottom, and that ones becomes a politician. The reason I tell you this, the Mayor and I are public servants, not politicians. We want to point that out to you.

I hope you have a chance to see Kentucky. We feel avid about our state as you do about the American Flag. Kentucky is a great commonwealth. I hope you have a chance this week to see the State Fair and go see Kentucky and all of its regions brought to Louisville for this great event for us, and at the same time get out and around the surrounding areas, the Kentucky horse farm in many Kentucky parks. This is the best horse park in the country.

Let me say that it is a pleasure for me to be here. My history as a physician I think has gone back to the military. I have never had the privilege of serving in the military, but early in my days in the medical school we were doing research on war-type injuries and the Navy called us one day, and right after the Panama invasion where the Navy Seals got caught in the ambush, in hot stone, and asked us to take our research, and since that time

I have been heavily involved with the Department of Navy.

Even as Lieutenant Governor we continue, and I am still a consultant. Every day just about, on the weekend especially, I have the opportunity to continue to volunteer at the Veterans Administration Hospital as an attending physician, and I have to say this with real honesty, I have had the real privilege, I think, of making the difference in many Vietnam veterans, Korean and even World War II lives by some of the techniques that have been developed here at the University of Louisville with my colleagues in improving the quality of life for those who had necrotic infections. It has been an honor for me to be involved.

Let me say it has been an honor as well to have participated in Normandy Invasion ceremonies two years ago. It was very impressive. If you have never been to Normandy, it is a very impressive situation to walk on Omaha Beach and Utah Beach.

It is something that you should do if you ever have the opportunity. Let me say to you that Governor Patton wanted to be here this morning. I talked him out of it so I could be here. Let me say that we here in the State of Kentucky bring veterans affairs directly into the Governor's Office for a chance to make sure the veterans of this state have an opportunity to get their voices heard with regard to nursing homes, veterans affairs, and in regard to those issues.

Agent Orange in our state, I know it is a federal issue, but our state is trying to deal with those issues on a state basis. Again, let me say I wanted to come here and thank you for one thing, thank you for the freedom that my generation has today and thank you for the freedom that we have to live out our dreams. Have a good time in Kentucky. Thank you and God bless you.

PRESENTATION OF AMERICAN FLAG SETS

COMRADE CANNON: It is my pleasure to introduce Gwendolyne Brown, the Ladies Auxiliary National Patriotic Instructor, for the purpose of a presentation.

NATIONAL PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR GWENDOLYNE BROWN: Thank you. Good morning. National Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera, National President Helen Lenehan, Guests, Comrades and Sisters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the Ladies Auxiliary:

It is an honor and pleasure at this 97th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars to present a flag to the Honorable Stephen Henry, Lieutenant Governor of the Bluegrass State of Kentucky, and to the Honorable Jerry E. Abramson, Mayor of Louisville, Kentucky.

The blue, white and red colors of the flag are often interpreted as expressing the very character of our nation. The red stripes tend to represent the courage, heroism and sacrifices of the more than 44 million men and women who have fought for our country and its freedom since the Revolutionary War.

The Continental Congress in 1777 declared that the white stars in a field of blue shall represent the new constellation. George Washington described the white flag as symbolizing our desire for liberty. It is said that the white stripes speak for the purity of our high ideals. The blue has been likened to the strength and the unity of our states.

The Lieutenant Governor is a native of Kentucky. Dr. Henry is an attending physician, and get this, at the Veterans Hospital. He is a practicing orthopedic surgeon. Dr. Henry is currently a consultant for the Department of Navy. He is also writing a chapter for the Armed Services Medical War Manual.

Dr. Henry was recognized by General Norman Schwarzkopf as a civilian with the Persian Gulf. Dr. Henry, please come forward. On behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary and the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the National President, I would like to present to you this American Flag. We hope you will display this flag proudly and we hope you will continue to help our veterans in the VA Hospital.

Now, for our Mayor. Mayor Abramson also is a native of Louisville, Kentucky, and has served as Mayor since 1986. He is married to Madelyn M. Abramson, and they have one son, Sydney. During his watch, Louisville has been ranked in the top ten places to live.

Out of 343 metropolitan areas, it has been named number one of five super, solid metro areas. One of the 15 fastest growing urban economies, named one of the best big city job markets for college graduates, ranked in the nation's top 24 in real estate markets, and designated as an all-American city.

It received the Innovation in Government Award for the Mayor's City Work Program which trains front-line city employees in participatory and team problem-solving. Mayor Abramson has been working with the homeless, and this year he received the Public Sector Award from the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

Mayor Abramson, we are proud of your accomplishments and we are delighted to convene our Convention in your city. On behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the National President, I would like to present you with this American Flag.

We hope you will fly this proudly and be reminded of the many men that gave their lives so we may enjoy our freedom of today. May you also be reminded of the veterans and their families in your city and their need of help and support of your program such as with the homeless.

MAYOR ABRAMSON: Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA

COMRADE CANNON: As we open our 97th VFW National Convention, it is my very pleasant task to present our Commander-in-Chief with his official Convention badge and the gavel for this year's Convention.

We anticipate this will be one of the most successful Conventions in

recent VFW history. This anticipation comes as the result of the successes which have been part and parcel of this gentleman during his 30 years of service to the America's veterans and the VFW.

That 30 years was highlighted this year as he and the rest of the "Call to Duty" team led the VFW to new heights of commitment and dedication.

As I present his official Convention badge and the gavel for this 97th VFW National Convention, please rise and welcome a man who will always exemplify what it means to answer the "Call to Duty," the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Paul A. Spera.

REMARKS - COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much. I have a script in front of me, and the script says that this is where I make remarks, and they have even written some of them for me. What are the chances that I am going to read them? Actually, there are some things in here that need to be said.

First, let me welcome each and every one of you to the 97th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I expect this to be a very successful Convention, and I expect it to be successful because you are here, the delegates to this Convention.

I have over the last 12 months traveled around the world. I have had the opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with those brave American troops in the DMZ in Korea, who live every day, every moment in the shadow of death, never knowing when they will be called upon to defend freedom.

I had a special opportunity to join at that time with the Department of Defense group that went to Bosnia to visit with the young men and women who today stand shoulder to shoulder with America's allies. On your behalf, I brought them a message, a message of support, a message of caring, and a message of love from the more than two million American veterans who belong to our organization and who went before them and know what their lives are like.

If I have a high point of my year as Commander-in-Chief, it was standing at a place called Camp Bedrock in Tuzla in Bosnia. Camp Bedrock is a full field hospital plus an engineer battalion. It has that name for a very special reason. The humor of our people in the military service never changes.

Camp Bedrock is located overlooking a rock quarry. For those of you who are Flintstone fans, you know where they got the name Bedrock. Standing there and handing to 1,000 of those troops in Bosnia a pre-paid $20 phone card, putting it in the hands of those individuals and saying to them the VFW wants you to use this to call someone at home to let them know that you are all right.

We have gotten letters and I got comments from them. I will just share

with you one comment. I was sitting in the mess hall and I was sitting across from this young man, and I gave him the phone card and I gave him that message. He looked at me and said, "Sir, Sunday is my anniversary. I am going to call my wife and tell her that the VFW and I wish her a happy anniversary."

So as we face the business of this Convention, let me thank the National President and all of her officers and all of the Ladies Auxiliary, the National Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie, his membership and their Auxiliary, all of my National Officers, and all of you, my comrades and friends, for a great year.

I will leave you with one message. We will discuss many important subjects. You will hear a lot from many people about changes in the future of our organization. You will hear from many different people their view of what the VFW should be like in the future.

Your "Call to Duty" this week is to listen, to decide and to tell us what your view of the VFW is for the future, because it is your view that counts.

At this time I would like to turn the microphone over to our Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, John Moon, for the purpose of introducing the National Program Award winners and the 1995-1996 All American Team.

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS TO 1995-'96 ALL AMERICAN COMMANDERS AND NATIONAL PROGRAM WINNERS

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: It is now time for us to recognize the All American Commanders for 1995-'96. Much of our success during this past year is due to their hard work and leadership. We will also take this opportunity to honor those individuals who excelled in other programs sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary. These presentations are being made here at our Joint Opening Session to allow all of you the opportunity to give them the recognition they deserve.

I would like to ask the National President of our great Ladies Auxiliary, Helen Lenehan, to join Commander-in-Chief Spera at center stage so they can jointly present awards to the national award program winners.

I would also like to ask Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier to assist in the presentation of awards to our All American Commanders.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome into the hall, the 1995-'96 program winners and the 1995-'96 team of All American Commanders.

The first award to be presented is for the National Americanism Record Book Program. The first place winner among Posts is Post 9693, Bay Village, Ohio.

The next awards to be presented are the winners in the National Community Activities Record Book Contest.

First place in Division 1 is Post 4633 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Hampden, Maine.

First place in Division 2 is Post 3343 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Clyde,

Ohio.

First place in Division 3 is Post 9808 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Mechanicsville, Virginia.

First place in Division 4 is Post 5225 and its Ladies Auxiliary, West Memphis, Arkansas.

Let's give these winners, as well as the rest of the Posts and Auxiliary that entered record books in the 1996 National Community Activities Record Book Contest, a big hand.

(Applause)

The next awards we are going to present are to the National Loyalty Day winners.

First place winner is Post 4452 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Cannon Falls, Minnesota.

The first place winner among districts goes to District 3 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Department of Virginia.

The first place winner in County Council competition goes to Lancaster County Council and its Ladies Auxiliary, Department of Pennsylvania.

The Department of Texas and its Ladies Auxiliary were judged first place winners in state competition.

The next awards to be presented are for National Youth Activities Program. The first place winner among Posts and Auxiliaries goes to Post 2135, Peoria, Arizona, and its Ladies Auxiliary.

District 14, Department of Maryland and its Ladies Auxiliary, is the first place Youth Activities winner among districts.

The winner in State Competition for Outstanding Youth Programs is the Department of Minnesota and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Before we conclude the programs awards, I would like to provide you with information about our Community Service Programs for 1995-'96.

Nationally, the number of completed projects was over 984,000; the number of volunteer hours donated was over 13.6 million, and the total amount of monies spent or donated exceeded $53.9 million, all totals exceeded last year's records. This is truly a record of achievement that the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary can be extremely proud.

This concludes the Program Awards. Please give all our volunteers a big hand for the work they do to make our organization successful. Truly they lived up to this year's slogan "Call to Duty."

I am sure that many of the Commanders I am about to introduce set their sights on becoming an All American Commander when they assumed office a year ago. Through perseverance and effort, they achieved their goal. Today, they are here to receive their just award, the coveted red, white and blue cap that clearly distinguishes them as an All American Commander.

Now, 171 Commanders will now be called by Order of Parade in this order, Post, District, Department and County Council, based on the June 30th national membership standings.

The first awards are going to the Commanders of the number one

Department in the nation.

From the Department of Pacific Areas:
Roy Banning - Post 10216
Edward Donalds - Post 9985
Earl Hanson - Post 9555
John Welsh - Post 8180
Kenneth Schaefer - Post 2485
Frank Sass - District 3
Paul Morgenthal - District 7
Joseph Carsley - Department Commander
The Department of Idaho is represented by:
Walter Jackson - Post 9446
Farrell Calinsky - Post 10444
Thomas Monson - Post 63
Charlie Griggs - District 5, and the District Captain of the 1995-'96 Team of All Americans.
Theodore Kelley - Department Commander from Idaho.
From the Department of Central America:
David Waites - Post 6565
Ruth Thomas - Department Commander of Central America.
Representing the Department of Europe:
Eric Rasmussen - Post 11281
Richard Reed - Post 10810
Larry Grubbs - Post 11058
Dean White - Post 27
Billy Barber - Post 10436
Richard Maryland - District 5
Lester LaGrow - District 1
Patrick Buckman - Department Commander of Europe.
The Department of Hawaii is represented by:
Francis Roddin - Department Commander
Representing the Department of Delaware:
Harry Troutman - Post 6984
George Ritchie - Post 7234
William Wailes - Post 475
Edwin Moran - District 4
Leroy Rench - Department Commander of Delaware.
From the Department of South Carolina:
Dudley Crenshaw - Post 5730
Ernest Russell - Post 8738
William McGregor - Post 5996
Richard Bell - Post 4262
Jack Hills - Post 10420
Bill Lark, Department Commander and the Department Captain of the 1995-'96 Team of All Americans.
From the Department of Georgia:

Ben Clay - Post 1100
Jack Parker - Post 5408
Hubert Swecker - Post 665, deceased
William Curran - Post 649
Alan Hall - District 5
James Wood - Department Commander of Georgia.
From the Department of Mississippi:
Wade Harris - Post 9108
Travis Harlow - Post 5395
Cecil Harwell - Post 4057
Claude Legendre - Post 3373
James Bailey - Post 4490
Noel Giuffrida - Post 6473
Leonard Slade - District 3
Bobby Alexander - District 12
Bobby Miller - Department Commander of Mississippi.
Representing the Department of Virginia:
Tommy Hines - Post 7166
Robert Hemphill - Post 7327
Orville Teter - Post 3103
Victor Weaver - Post 9808
William Dean - Post 392
John Dodge - Post 1503
John Peters - Department Commander of Virginia.
From the Department of Rhode Island:
Kevin Gilchrist - Post 183
From the Department of Arizona:
Vincent Rigo - Post 2135
Frank Page - Post 9399
R. Bennett Smith - Post 549
Kenneth Thomas - District 9
James Montgomery - Department Commander
Representing the Department of Colorado:
James Seis - Post 4061
Warren Wellensiek - District 10
Harland Smith - Department Commander
From the Department of Alaska:
Danny Worden - Post 5562
The Department of Florida has 16 proud All Americans. They are:

Robert Westbrook - Post 9212
Fred Fischer - Post 7122
Kenneth Harshey - Post 9853
Russell Haller - Post 8002
Michael White - Post 10068
George Hewell - Post 8681

Jean Rader - Post 4781
William Chalone - Post 3233
Eugene Flick - Post 1590
Robert Murray - Post 7721
August Scumaci - Post 10209
Louise Peters - Post 10167
Oliver Beale - Post 8696
Ralph Benedict - Post 10097
John Clark - District 6
Robert Wood - Department Commander from the great State of Florida.

The Department of Missouri is represented by:
Charles Clifton - Post 1738
Donald Sutton - Post 11041
Donald Hentges - Post 35
Jimmy Cook - Post 57
James DeClue - Post 3777
Antonio Borjas - Post 2866
Edward Mueller - Post 3838
Jerry Turk - District 8
The Department of Maine is represented by:
Alan Winter - Post 9150
From the Department of New Mexico:
Dennis Pate - Post 3280
From the Department of South Dakota:
James Marrs - Post 1273
Representing the Department of Washington:
Allen Mattausch - Post 11326
Gary Hulsey - Post 1949
Robert Nelson - Post 2995
David Cook - Post 7824
Joesph Willaford - District 11
From the Department of North Carolina:
Calvin Anderson - Post 9850
Perry Graves - Post 8844
John Bullis - Post 2615
Donald Rhodes - Post 5206
Gene Kent - Post 891
Representing the Department of Ohio:
Robert Snyder - Post 1623
Larry Bender - Post 788.

I am proud to recognize the Department of Ohio, my own Department:

Francis Aleksandrowicz - Post 9693
Robert Cain - Post 3863
William Cansler - Post 3283

James Hardin - Post 8437
Henry Drexler - Post 3288
David Boda - Post 2947
Donald Paxton - District 3
Steven Mardis - District 6
Larry Peters - Montgomery County Council.
Representing the Department of Oregon:
Robert Zuck - Post 2468
Eugene Richards - Post 3965
Representing the Department of Minnesota:
Clint Bucher - Post 5919
Donald Sater - Post 8510
From the Department of Pennsylvania:
William Fissel - Post 2506
From the Department of New Jersey:
Joseph Bennett, a double winner, Post 262 and District 8
Joseph Fortunato - Post 453
Edward Damiano - Post 6805
Donnie Wine - Post 6590
From the Department of Illinois:
Tiger Miller - Post 1059
John Murray - Post 1596
Representing the Department of North Dakota:
William Eslinger - Post 1326
Representing the Department of California:
Joseph McCormick - Post 1717
Melvin Birden - Post 8679
Regis Weaver - Post 1934
Giovanni Martinelli - Post 1746
Kenneth Robbins - Post 85
Roger Hagen - Post 4647
Ordean Larson - District 4
From the Department of Indiana:
Donald Harris - Post 972
Mark Acker - Post 1114
Representing the Department of New York:
Jeffrey Addison - Post 1418
From the Department of Alabama:
Jerry Cole - Post 5846
James Green - Post 4388
Harold Dean - Post 4572
Aubrey McClure - Post 6073
Jimmy Manley - Post 4765
Clyde Maddox - Post 5658
Nick Campanotta - Pot 668
Travis Whaley - Post 924

Gregory Usrey - Post 2702
Clyde Henley - District 8
From the Department of Nebraska:
James Klug - Post 2503
Representing the Department of Massachusetts:
Walter Portrait - Post 6712
From the Department of Kentucky:
Jerry Powell - Post 1170
From the Department of Texas with 14 All Americans:
James Shane - Post 2451
Lupe Olvera, III - Post 2035
Richard Crissman - Post 812
Wilton Waldrop - Post 6378
Robert Trejo - Post 8552
Donald Johnston - Post 2059
Danny Henry - Post 4372 and District 25
Harry Schuhmann - Post 8790
Daniel Medrano - Post 9186
Benjamin Chappell - Post 9191
Miguel Mares - Post 8919
Carl Smith - District 10
Buddi Harlan - District 16
From the Department of Oklahoma:
William Rodriguez - Post 1857 and Post Captain of the 1995-'96 Team of All Americans
Representing the Department of Maryland:
Douglas Peters - Post 8065
Representing the Department of Arkansas:
Samuel Eden - Post 8525
Gary Marshall - Post 4554
Aurbury Secrest - Post 9095
Harrison Casto - Post 5225. Accepting posthumously for Commander Casto is Mrs. Casto.

Here they are, this year's team of All American Commanders. Will you please stand and be recognized as an All American group. Let's give them a big round of applause.

(Applause)

The last Departments we want to recognize are first place winners in the various membership divisions and the first three Departments in the order of parade. Divisions:

Division One - Department of Ohio
Division Two - Department of Florida
Division Three - Department of Missouri
Division Four - Department of Virginia
Division Five - Department of Iowa
Division Six - Department of Georgia

Division Seven - Department of South Carolina
Division Eight - Department of Maine
Division Nine - Department of Idaho
Division Ten - Department of Pacific Areas
Division Eleven - Department of Europe
Order of Parade:
First Place - Department of Pacific Areas
Second Place - Department of Idaho
Third Place - Department of Central America

Comrades and sisters, this concludes the presentation of awards. I want to thank each one of you for attending and honoring the recipients of this year's awards.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE JESSE BROWN, SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Ladies and gentlemen, it is a special pleasure to introduce to you our next speaker.

Sworn in on January 22nd, 1993, by President Clinton as Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Jesse Brown immediately brought new spirit and direction to the second largest cabinet department.

Mr. Brown, a combat decorated Vietnam veteran, was formerly Executive Director of the Disabled American Veterans. Throughout his career he has worked with and for veterans. His life has been one truly dedicated to veterans' issues and concerns.

He began his employment with DAV in 1967 in Chicago, moving to the DAV headquarters in Washington, D.C., in 1973.

There, he assumed a variety of positions with increasing responsibility, including Supervisor of the National Appeals Office and Deputy National Service Director.

He was appointed DAV Executive Director in 1988 and was responsible for overseeing DAV's National Service, Legislation, Employment, Volunteer Services and Communications Programs.

Jesse Brown has served as Chairman of the Vietnam Civic Committee, and was a member of the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals and the Chicago Mayor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped.

Last year at our National Convention in Phoenix, Jesse Brown received the VFW prestigious Americanism Award for his outstanding contributions.

Ladies and gentlemen, comrades, sisters and friends, please welcome a fellow VFW member and a true advocate for veterans, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, The Honorable Jesse Brown.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ADDRESS BY SECRETARY JESSE BROWN

SECRETARY BROWN: Thank you very much, Commander, for that very kind and warm introduction. I am delighted to be here. My good friend, Adjutant General Rivers, in Washington, D.C., they used to call him that Louisiana lawyer.

Distinguished Guests, my Fellow Veterans, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to trespass upon your time for a few seconds to ask you to say a proud silent prayer for the servicemen and the Secret Service technician who died in the plane crash in Wyoming. May God bless their souls.

I am really delighted to be here to see so many of my friends, and I am also extremely happy to see that Congressman Sonny Montgomery is here today. No one in our lifetime has done more for veterans and their families than the Chairman. As he retires, I hope the whole country will know what VFW members have known for a long time, that Sonny Montgomery is an American hero and to us he will always be known as "Mr. Veteran". He may leave Congress, but he will never, never leave our hearts.

As you know, some of those politicians in Washington, D.C., did not want me to leave there. They are mad at me because I have been running around the country speaking out on the unfair cuts to veterans programs, and they didn't want me at this Convention either. So they cut my travel by 75 percent.

They were going to do it again in 1997, but I want you to know that thanks to the efforts of the VFW members my travel monies were restored in the 1997 budget. Thank you so very, very much for that. I will pledge to you that I will not be shackled in Washington, D.C.

I will continue to speak out for veterans and their families. I am so happy to be out of Washington, D.C. It is like a soap opera there. Those new politicians came to Washington and took my travel money, and they thought they were the Bold and the Beautiful, and they are trying to turn this country into Another World.

But in the eyes of America, they look more like the Young and the Restless. Because we know that if they have their way all of my children could be thrown out of the General Hospital. We just spend our lives in the field in our Days of Our Lives and I am here to tell you that this country sees the Guiding Light, and if they do not change their ways by November they will have One Life to Live.

You have got to promise me not to tell them that I said that. They will take the other 25 percent. That is really funny. Unfortunately, it is true. They have turned the civilities of politicians to an atmosphere of hostility. That is why we in the veterans community must remain focused on the men and women who have borne the battle.

The Olympic Games are over and we are still celebrating. Our young people did well. They worked hard to earn medals of gold, silver and bronze. That hard work was driven by their desire to do their very best. That is what brings out the best in all of us is the desire to do our very best.

When the record books are closed, all athletes want to know that they did their best. These past three and one- half years seem like a marathon to

me. I have run the best race I have known how and that has not been easy. I have put my heart and soul into what I believe is right for veterans and their families.

When I became your Secretary for Veterans Affairs, I had a vision for change. The first step was to create an atmosphere where putting veterans first was our number one priority. Putting veterans first became more than a slogan, it became our mission.

The system is not perfect; no system is. The race is not over. We are still running hard. But veterans know that the VA is more responsive to their needs than four years ago, and there is no secret that the veterans organizations, great organizations like the VFW, felt that they were outsiders.

When I accepted this job, that was one of the first things I changed. Today the veterans and the VA are partners. We make decisions together. During this administration, veterans have had great access to the VA and the White House, and it is making a difference.

In 1993, we inherited huge backlogs of claims, and they were getting worse. We turned that around with the help of the VFW. The time is now getting better. The veteran we are serving is getting older and their needs are changing, and we are changing the way they deliver health care.

We are creating more places for veterans to receive medical attention. We have reorganized our hospitals, clinics and nursing homes into 22 integrated networks and we are shifting our focus from inpatient to outpatient care. We have taken advantage of the economy scales in many areas of the pharmaceutical and medical supplies, and we sent Congress a plan for national eligibility reform.

We need to get away from those old laws that prevent the VA from providing full, comprehensive health care to our veterans. For the first time, the President has just proposed legislation that will allow veterans to use their Medicare entitlement to receive care at VA Hospitals.

There will be a pilot project at eight locations and it will be a great start, and we are excited by their initiative, and I hope Congress will pass it. Our progress has not come easy. The past two years have been very difficult. We have survived the challenge and the compensation to veterans and two government shutdowns, which delayed compensations and pension papers.

We have some very dedicated employees that are here with us today. These are the people from our hospitals in this area and also from the Regional Office who in many cases worked without pay during the shutdowns. I am going to ask you to allow them to stand and let us give them a round of applause. (Applause)

We have made advances in such areas as improving health care, Agent Orange or Post-traumatic Stress Disorders, Persian Gulf illnesses, improving services for our women veterans, POWs, helping homeless veterans and burying our veterans with dignity. These are examples of what we can do if we work together.

Yet, I do not believe that we can let our guard down. Threat to veterans'

benefits will not go away. That is why we must keep our priorities focused. This great organization speaks out strongly on matters of national defense, and that is so appropriate.

We always want a strong defense and we need adequate resources to preserve the peace, but we must never forget our responsibilities for our veterans when they return home suffering from all kinds of diseases and traumatic injuries. There are some who would like to forget.

There are those that want veterans to share in the pain of shrinking the cost of government. We must say to them loud and clear, "Don't talk to veterans about sharing pain. We know pain very well." In World War II, 111,000 were killed and there were over 700,000 that were wounded. During Korea, 54,000 dead, 100,000 wounded, and in Vietnam 58,000 were killed and over 300,000 of us returned home wounded. Those brave warriors who died in Saudi Arabia, victims of a cowardly act.

Now, that is pain, pain mingled with the wounded cries and the silence of the dead. That, my friend, is why we will never, ever give up the fight, because we in the veterans community honor our dead by responding to the needs of the living.

We know from our own experience that for the living, the cost of war continues. For instance, during the Vietnam war lots of veterans were exposed to Agent Orange. We already have determined that several of these diseases are associated with Agent Orange.

We now are writing regulations that will add two more. They are prostate cancer and peripheral neuropathy. We urge Vietnam veterans suffering from these diseases to contact the VA or their VFW National Service Officer. The VA, for the first time since its history, has proposed legislation to provide a remedy for children of Vietnam veterans who suffer from spina bifida.

That is what the VA is about. It should be about change, change in response to the needs of our veterans and their families. We cannot support and should not support the unreasonable changes that have been considered in Washington, D.C., changes like taxes, compensation and pension, termination compensation for veterans rated 10 and 20-percent disabled, means testing service-connected disability compensation and redefining service-connections.

Some of these politicians have come before you and told you that we did not ask for those things, but my reply to them is they should not have been looking it up in the first place.

What stopped those attacks on our benefits from becoming law? This organization, the VFW, the veterans and their families and our friends in Congress, friends like the great Sonny Montgomery. What about our future? The President has promised to make sure that the nation honors its commitments to veterans.

He promised to negotiate the budget for veterans every year and he has done that. This year President Clinton recommended a billion dollar increase in his spending for the VA, but Congress cut it by $915 million.

We needed that money for our hospitals.

Now, the President has put in his budget for 1997, and it includes $1.3 billion increase over what Congress approved for 1996. This is a good budget, and I hope Congress is kind to us this year. That may not be the case. Under our latest proposal, we have already cut the VA medical construction budget by $71 billion

This would mean that we could not build the hospitals we need in California and Florida. These are the only two hospitals that I really want to build, and I would really like to have those primarily because if we don't have them, access, reasonable access to over 700,000 veterans will continue to exist, and that is not right.

Of course, it would prevent us from moving forward with our plan to upgrade VA Hospitals that are 42 to 100 years old, and on the benefit side they have taken away $26 million, and this will greatly reduce our ability to improve the quality and timeliness of service to veterans and their families.

As you can see, the race is clearly not over. We need to get back to the three R's, and I am not talking about reading, writing and arithmetic, I am talking about recognizing, respecting and remembering the needs of America's veterans.

Military service should not be rewarded with a bitter taste, a bitter taste served in a cup of champions, and our veterans are champions for democracy and champions for freedom.That is why your work is so important and it must continue. You must continue to carry the torch for all generations to come.

You must push on to the next rung. We cannot fail our veterans now because we have a special bond with them.That is a bond forged in our company's experience by pain and move forward by courage and determination.

I would like to leave you with a true story that in my view eloquently describes this courage and determination. A few years ago, a 17-year-old, Michael Stone, was competing as a pole vaulter in a National Junior Olympics. The competition was fierce. In the finals another pole vaulter had cleared the vault one foot higher than Michael had ever done.

Michael tried anyway and he cleared the bar. It was raised two more inches and excitement built as both athletes cleared the bar again. Then they moved the bar up two more inches, one inch below the national record, and the crowd went wild when both of the athletes cleared the bar.

Finally, the bar was set at seventeen feet, six and one-half inches. This height would set a new national record. The other jumper went first; Michael could not watch. The sound from the crowd told the story; the other gentleman did not make it.

Michael lined up for his final triumph. His heart was beating, the height was unbelievable, 18 and one-half inches higher than the previous record, and there was complete silence in the stand, much like there is in this great audience.

He sprinted down and vaulted into the air and the crowd went wild, and he knew he had made it. The new champion did not look up to see if the bar was still standing, he didn't look out in the bleachers to see that his mother and father were crying for, you see, Michael Stone is totally blind.

That is a moving story. It means something to us, a tremendous story because Michael had courage and determination. For veterans, the competition is not over. We cannot see all of the obstacles, but like him veterans have courage and determination to keep the promises to those who ran the good race before us and keep that promise, we shall. Thank you and may God bless each and every one of you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I was very proud to be able to present a special award to those employees of the Veterans Administration, because back in the time that the Secretary referred to, back in the midst of that budget debate, back when both sides of the aisle had held American veterans hostage, the bright shining light, as it always has been with the VA employees who day after day went to work, day after day, whether they were paid or not. Thank you for that. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT AND CITATION

TO LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT HELEN LENEHAN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: From Americanism to cancer research, from Buddy Poppy to the Voice of Democracy, the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars is a vital part of every success we achieve. That is why it is a great honor to welcome our next guest, Helen Lenehan, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary.

Helen was elected President of the Ladies Auxiliary at their 82nd National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, August, 1995. Her theme, "Climbing to Greater Heights", has been an inspiration and a challenge to the 759,000 members of the Auxiliary.

Through their programs and in their support of VFW programs, the Ladies Auxiliary serves America's veterans, their families and our communities. In their cancer aid and research program, they set another milestone. This was the eighth consecutive year that donations topped the $3 million mark. Just think about that for a moment, over $3 million for the eighth consecutive year. That took a lot of dedication and hard work.

So, too, did their work in their "Get Out the Vote" campaign. You know, free elections are what all of us served in the military to defend and protect. But it isn't enough just to defend and protect them in the heat of battle. To really preserve that freedom, you have to continue the fight in peace time and that requires a lot of work.

Letters, phone calls and visits with our elected officials are the ammunition we need to continue our fight for freedom and democracy, and the Ladies Auxiliary set some new records in that battle as well.

In everything they do they show a respect for our history and a willingness to meet the challenges of the future. Not only did they celebrate the 109th birthday of the Statue of Liberty this year, they also made a substantial contribution to having her story placed on the Worldwide Web so that it will be accessible to everyone with a computer.

Now, that is certainly a shining example of being aware of the times and being relevant to the times, and it is that which makes the Ladies Auxiliary so successful in everything they do.

The 1995-'96 year has indeed been one of record setting success for the Ladies Auxiliary under the outstanding leadership of Helen Lenehan.

Now, please join me in honoring the Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW by presenting the VFW Gold Medal of Merit and Citation to their National President and my friends, Helen Lenehan of that great Centennial State, Colorado.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Gold Medal of Merit and this Citation awarded to Helen Lenehan, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, 1995-'96.

"In special recognition of her untiring dedication to our country and in sincere appreciation for her enthusiastic leadership as evidenced by the exceptional contributions of the Ladies Auxiliary to the programs and purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and by their deeds fulfillment of the commitment of the Ladies Auxiliary as they continue 'Climbing to Greater Heights'.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 19th day of August, 1996." That has proudly been signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General. Congratulations.

RESPONSE - LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT HELEN LENEHAN

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT LENEHAN: To Commander-in-Chief Spera, National VFW and Auxiliary Officers, Comrades, Sisters and Guests:

I am so deeply honored to receive this prestigious award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thank you so very, very much. This past year has been a very rewarding year for me. I thank you for the opportunity to serve and the privilege of representing the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in events around the world.

The 758,891 members of the Ladies Auxiliary have always been very proud of our partnership with the VFW and its past year has been no exception. We appreciate participating together in making a different stay by providing volunteer services to help our homeless veterans in our community and throughout our country.

I want to say a special thank you to Commander-in-Chief and each VFW member here today for joining in my special project and for answering the "Call to Duty" so that our homeless veterans might have a better

world and a chance to climb to greater heights.

By continuing our work together, hopefully we can make these veterans get back into the mainstream of society again. There is still so much to do. The members of the Ladies Auxiliary are ready and willing to do what we can to get the job done.

Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera, it was such a great pleasure to serve with you, and in behalf of all the members of the Ladies Auxiliary, I do wish you a very successful National Convention. Thank you, Paul, so very, very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Why don't you stay here for just a moment and we will do this together. This is where the video was supposed to be presented. When I issued the new program to provide free long distance service to our servicemen overseas in hospitals and veterans at the Washington Conference, the overwhelming reaction was that that is a great idea.

That program is now called "Operation Uplink" and in truth none of us had any idea how great it would become. As I speak this morning, troops in Bosnia and hospitalized veterans across the U.S. are carrying this little card in their pocket. Each time they use it, their appreciation for the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary grows deeper.

In time, we hope Operation Uplink will place a pre-paid long distance card in the hands of every man and woman serving in uniform overseas and every needed hospitalized veteran in every VA Hospital coast to coast. When that occurs, I have no doubt that the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary will have made more lasting friends than we can now imagine.

I am also pleased to report that both Jim Nier and John Moon share my enthusiasm for this project. They have indicated their commitment to take Operation Uplink as far as it can go. As with every successful effort, we are always indebted to the lovely ladies of our Auxiliary.

To express her enthusiasm for Operation Uplink, please welcome our Ladies Auxiliary President, Helen Lenehan.

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT LENEHAN: Thank you, Paul. I, too, am delighted with the early success of Operation Uplink. This exciting effort has already captured the hearts of our nation's Auxiliary. Many of us have spent countless hours living in hospitals and we understand what a phone call to a spouse or a family member means during hospitalization for an illness or injury.

As President of the Ladies Auxiliary, I have visited the troops overseas and I can testify as to their dire needs for contact with their loved ones at home. I share Paul's commitment to Operation Uplink, and I know that Eileen Tanner shares that commitment. In fact, she has made it her special project for next year.

I believe that together for years to come, the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary, we will see Operation Uplink grow to become a permanent part of our two great organizations. I know you agree, Eileen. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much, Helen, and thank you, Eileen, Jim Nier and John Moon for your commitment to the future of that program.

I am going to take a special moment of personal privilege to say a special thank you. We announced this at the Washington Conference and on Wednesday, when they returned home, I am very pleased and very proud to say that Post 697 in Whitman, Massachusetts, sent the first check for $1,000 on that night for this program.

I am really proud of the VFW Posts. Operation Uplink is a solid working relationship with a long distance company. I believe that we have found one which shares our concerns for the troops and the veterans. That long distance carrier is MCI, and Mr. Robert Washburn is here today representing MCI.

Bob will be available at the Operation Uplink booth, so please drop by and ask him any questions that you may have. I strongly urge each of you to contribute generously to Operation Uplink. Drop by the booth here at the Convention and find out more about this outstanding effort.

The program is designed to provide $20 worth of long distance conversation for every dollar we raise. I firmly believe that Operation Uplink will be the most significant effort the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary have ever directed in the active duty military.

Having seen that firsthand, I will tell you at the close of this Convention I will forward to Quartermaster General a personal check for $1,000 as my contribution to Operation Uplink.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE SONNY MONTGOMERY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrades, Sisters and Friends, it is my pleasure and privilege to present the Veterans of Foreign Wars Commander-in-Chief's Special Award to a most distinguished member of the United States House of Representatives, Sonny Montgomery.

A Life Member of Veterans of Foreign Wars' Post 79 in Meridian, Mississippi, and the recipient of our most prestigious VFW Congressional Award, Sonny Montgomery will have served 30 years in Congress when he retires at the end of the 104th Congress.

A key member of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and the Committee on National Security, Sonny Montgomery has kept vigil over the benefits and services for our military men and women, our veterans and their families.

Congressman G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery has served the Congress and the American people with distinction. He has given a lifetime of service, over 40 years, to our country in uniform, to his State Legislature and to our nation in Washington, D.C.

He is a veteran of World War II and Korea. He has been decorated with the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star for Valor, among many other awards. He did not stop with active duty service but continued to serve in

the National Guard and the Reserves, rising to the rank of Brigadier General.

Among Sonny's many accomplishments, his biggest achievement was the creation of the new G.I. Bill passed in 1985 and improved in 1988. It is fitting that it is now called the Montgomery G.I. Bill which associates his efforts with one of the greatest bills ever passed by Congress.

An active leader in seeking improved programs and support for America's veterans as well as ensuring that our nation remains militarily strong, Sonny Montgomery is a great statesman, a great leader and a great American.

I am honored, as your Commander-in-Chief, to present this Commander-in-Chief's Special Award. Comrades, please welcome a distinguished member of our organization from the great State of Mississippi, the Honorable G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery.

"Commander-in-Chief's Special Award presented to G. V. 'Sonny' Montgomery.

"In commemoration of a distinguished career devoted to the service of America's veterans and the preservation of our patriotic values and freedom through a strong national defense.

"Presented August 19, 1996, Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief."

Congratulations, Sonny, and on behalf of all American veterans, thank you and God bless you for all you have done for us.

RESPONSE - THE HONORABLE G. V. "SONNY" MONTGOMERY

COMRADE SONNY MONTGOMERY: Thank you very much, Commander, for that very fine introduction, and thank you for the special award and presentation. I am very deeply honored, and it is wonderful to be back with my comrades. To you, Commander-in-Chief Spera and to President Helen Lenehan, I guess that I got that correct, of the Ladies Auxiliary, congratulations.

I am familiar with Operation Uplink in the Jackson VA Hospital. I had the privilege of answering some of the phone calls that might have been from Secretary Brown when we have the toll phones that are in our VA Hospitals in those different rooms. It is a wonderful program.

To my fellow veterans and to Secretary Brown, it is really kind of unfair to follow you and President Helen. You did such a wonderful job. He was talking about Congressman, Secretary Brown was. I want to tell you a little story on him. On September 12th, I will be honored in a big banquet, and I personally invited the Secretary to come to this banquet.

He said, "Mr. Chairman, I can't come because you cut my budget 75 percent." I said, "Jesse, it is only eight blocks away from your office. It is not in Mississippi." Is that true, Jesse?

VA SECRETARY BROWN: Yes.

COMRADE SONNY MONTGOMERY: It is wonderful to be with you and to have been Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee for 15 won-

derful years, and that is as the ranking member. Congressman Bob Stump of Arizona is the Chairman now. He and I work well together.

The bottom lines for both of us is what is best for veterans. I understand that you-all will present an award to my former Chief Attorney of the Veterans Affairs Committee, Max Flemming, later. What a wonderful job he did for veterans and helping me. Max, if you are out there, hold up your hand. I can't see you anyway, but hold it up.

In 1899, most of you know, 13 American soldiers who had fought in the Spanish American War were disturbed that this country had apparently forgotten them. They met in the back of a tailor shop in Columbus, Ohio, and they decided to establish a club for veterans who had served overseas.

They pledged to help one another, to work together for the benefit of the country and for the men who had fought to preserve it. The organization established by these veterans was the forerunner, I am told, of the national organization which we now know as the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Since its very beginning, our organization, and it is mine, too, has been based on the principles of comradeship, patriotism and service, and I am very proud to have been mentioned by your National Commander to be a Life Member of Post 79, Meridian, Mississippi. You fellows are out there somewhere. Let me hear from you. I know all of you.

Each year I have been invited to either make a major address in my Post in Meridian on the 4th of July, or talk on Veterans Day. I want to thank the National Air Guard for getting me here on time today. General Finestein, wave your hand.

I know that I am among friends. When you come to Washington to make your annual legislative presentation, you are certainly among friends there. All of us really on the Veterans Affairs Committee have chosen to serve on this Committee because we do care about veterans, and with the advice, support and assistance of the VFW I feel we have accomplished, in my opinion, a great deal.

I want to mention about your annual dinner that you have in Washington where you honor members of Congress and where the Voice of Democracy young people speak. That is a wonderful event. That has more members of Congress attending your annual dinner up there than any other event.

Members don't go to many events at night. You start it at 7:00 o'clock at night and you are over at 9:15. So keep it up. I congratulate you. I salute your Chief Sergeant-at-Arms George Sarver for the job he has done and for your different Sergeants-at-Arms that you have in Washington and all here today.

I want to take a moment here to express special thanks to the VFW Adjutant General Larry Rivers and Rosemary Mazer of the Ladies Auxiliary for your generous support of the college scholarship program which has been established in my name.

I will never forget the kindness of the VFW. It has meant a lot to me.

Throughout the years, the Veterans of Foreign Wars have worked closely with us, and I believe we have had a great team. You don't get everything you want. Your Washington staff is excellent as well as your headquarters staff in Kansas City.

These staffs work hard to fight and protect the veterans' benefits. They couldn't do it without all of you in this audience today. During the past 15 years, we have achieved success on matters of importance that have been mentioned by Secretary Brown.

We have created a Department of Veterans Affairs. This is really true. Now, the Secretary goes in the front door to the White House and not the back door. We have a Department of Veterans Affairs, and I am talking about Jesse Brown. We have established a U.S. Corps of Veterans Appeals to provide judicial review of VA decisions.

With the VFW's help, we did, in fact, the G.I. Bill in 1984. I am proud to say that over two million members of the armed forces have enrolled in this program. In the face of Gramm-Rudman and other deficit reduction efforts, we have protected essential veterans' programs.

Since 1987, the number of veterans who use the health-care system has increased by 12 percent. I believe I can safely say that most of the VA Hospitals in your hometowns have been renovated or had structure improvements.

I agree with Secretary Brown. We didn't put enough money in there for VA construction to keep these hospitals up and build new ones. I hope in the future that it can have proper funding. I know that all of us listen to your World War II buddies. You are like me.

We are proud of our military service and we want to know that the national cemeteries will be available when we need them. Don't get me wrong, I am not getting ready to take a bus load to heaven just yet. There are some applauders out there.

We added nine new cemeteries to the system, but we need to keep the pressure on for additional expansion. We also need to remind state officials in the state legislatures of the federal assistance available for them to build state veterans cemeteries.

We have addressed counseling problems that have been going on, Agent Orange, Persian Gulf Syndrome, health issues related to radiation exposure, and homeless veterans. We work very hard to find ways to help the homeless veterans. That is a tough issue.

We must continue our efforts to come up with new ideas that will help get our comrades off the streets. We have a good chance to enact legislation that has been mentioned by the Secretary, supported by the VFW that would broaden and simplify eligibility for VA health care, making it easier to get treatment in our outpatient clinics.

Also President Clinton announced his support for a test program under which the VA would be reimbursed by Medicare for the cost of treating some Medicare eligible veterans. I hope we can get this program passed.

I want to add that Jesse Brown has been a fine Secretary of Veterans

Affairs. He speaks up for the veterans and tells it like it is. He is a dedicated advocate whose honesty and support for veterans had angered some in Congress and he has angered some in the White House. Jesse is a courageous man, who sincerely cares about all of you. I am proud to call him my friend. Thank you, Jesse.

To be successful in the future, the organization must continue to work hard, to remain visible in your communities and speak out on behalf of veterans and make a point of visiting your members of Congress whenever he or she is in town. It is great when your Washington staff and national officers meet with them, but nothing makes more of an impression on members of Congress than meeting face-to-face with a VFW member who can vote for that Congressman or can vote against that Congressman.

We veterans, and I want to make this a strong point in my remarks today, have done our part to reduce the budget deficit. We have cut everything we can cut in veterans programs. We have cut enough, and I say very strongly here today no more cuts in veterans' programs. We have had enough.

I really think some of my colleagues have problems understanding that we veterans earned these benefits through our service. All of you marched off to war. Some of you came back seriously wounded, some did not come back. So we are not asking for anything.

The government has an obligation to take care of its veterans. I was given eight minutes. I did ad lib some, but I am on my last two pages. Having served our wonderful nation in one capacity or another since World War II, I have seen a well-deserved expansion of veterans' programs.

I am proud of the many things that we have accomplished together. I will never forget all of you who have helped in the fight to achieve our goals. This is the last time I will have the honor of addressing this fine organization as a member of Congress.

This has been a great ride for me, especially because I have been privileged to work on behalf of the veterans and on behalf of a strong national defense. Please, VFW, keep a strong national defense. For 30 years I have met with servicemen and women the world over, from Europe to the Pacific, from Korea to Vietnam, from Bosnia and the Persian Gulf.

I am always impressed with these young men and women. They inspire me to continue my efforts to maintain a strong national defense and to provide these young Americans with the tools they need to face the challenges when they come home. I have shared these concerns with the VFW and you have always been supportive of what is needed for these young people.

Well, that is about it for me. It is time for me to move on. Now, I limp a little, I don't stand as straight as I used to, but when the American and VFW flags come by I can stand straight and give a statue salute. God bless you and God bless America.

INTRODUCTION - DEAN HOKE, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER OF THE MILITARY CHANNEL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: In 1997, American audiences will begin enjoying a national cable channel dedicated to telling the story of America's men and women in uniform. This channel is currently broadcasting overseas in the Pacific and has been well received by the public everywhere.

The Military Channel broadcasts military history and weapons technology documentaries, combat footage, war films and a variety of military and veteran-related programming. They are currently broadcasting the VFW's commercials in the Pacific Areas and have been kind enough to bring their mini-theater to the Convention for your entertainment.

Here to tell you a little about their future plans is the Chief Operating Officer for the Military Channel, Dean E. Hoke.

REMARKS - DEAN HOKE, CEO, THE MILITARY CHANNEL

MR. DEAN HOKE: Good morning to all of you. Let me also welcome you to Louisville, Kentucky. The Military Channel is located, by the way, the corporate headquarters are here. We appreciate the opportunity to present you with this new exciting network, in which we anticipate launching on cable channels throughout the United States by mid-year 1997.

We have been asked by the VFW to tell you more about the Military Channel and its future plans. The Military Channel will provide military news information, commemorative and veterans' programs to cable viewers on a full-time basis. The Channel's vision is education with informed entertainment to enlighten its audience.

The channel is independent of any government organization and that independence makes The Military Channel a unique voice in the discussion of military topics. The Military Channel provides a wide variety of documentaries and military history, such as Dateline World War II, which is a 52-part series about the Second World War.

Also there will be up close and personal look at our armed forces and modern military technology. Our news and public affairs coverage will give the viewers the in-depth analysis of the important news and issues that impact upon national security.

The Military Channel also will produce programs for you as veterans who have served the country proudly, and these programs will focus on benefits and services available to all the veterans. Now, during the next few days you will have the opportunity to come and see us by visiting The Military Channel at our theater, which is located on the second floor.

As a matter of fact, beginning in about 20 minutes, we will begin airing a series of programs such as Dateline World War II, the Future Power Tools of the Trade, and it will give you a chance to see what this channel is going to be all about. More importantly, you also will get a chance to be involved in a television show.

As a matter of fact, to see a bit of a sneak preview of the series, we are

working on a series called "War Stories." So often in the passage of time, the events of history become lost. Books can tell us about times and tell us about dates, names and places and what occurred, and how it fits into the larger historical picture, but what it often fails to convey is the human elements of those events.

The sight and sounds and motion that make an event real are frequently lost in translation of the words, photos and film. The Military Channel hears all these war stories, and sought to remedy this by taking those who not only witnessed history but helped make it.

"War Stories" provide them an opportunity to tell their stories from their point of view. "War Stories" attaches many names and faces that might otherwise may be just so many words on a page.

Now, during the Convention, The Military Channel will be interviewing a number of VFW members about their war experiences, and yet we are still looking for a few good men and women to participate. If you would like to be involved in "War Stories", if you would like to tell us your story, here is your chance.

Today at 12:30 we are going to be sitting down with anyone who would like to talk to us about their war experiences, and this will be in Room 213 at The Military Channel theater. So remember at 12:30 today, if you are interested in talking to The Military Channel about our series "War Stories" and tell us about your experiences, please come on up. We very much would like to talk to you.

Now, this series will air on many TCI cable systems in the next few months and also will be a part of our regular network line-up when we have our project in 1997. If you want to become a television star, today is your chance. When you have a few minutes, please stop by the theater and get a sneak peek of the entire program line-up of the channel.

I wish to thank the VFW for allowing The Military Channel to be a part of this year's Convention. We look forward to meeting many of you during the next few days. I want to thank you for coming to our town. We are greatly pleased.

One last thing I would like to bring up just because I heard a little bit about this Operation Uplink. The Military Channel is just like any other company. In a sense, we have a number of employees that work for us, but we also have Retired Major General John Laughlin, who has served his time in Bosnia for the last six months.

I remember John calling me one day and telling me about this program and how wonderful he thought it was and what a great opportunity it was for him to be able to call his wife. Believe me, I talked to his wife and she was equally proud and excited to be able to talk to John during that time because she was concerned about him and to find out what was going on in Bosnia, it is not her idea of fun.

I want to thank the VFW for being involved in such an important program and what one of our employees thought was a great idea. On behalf of The Military Channel, Commander-in-Chief, thank you for everything

you have done.

INTRODUCTION OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL LU CHAO, VACRS VICE CHAIRMAN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: For years the Veterans of Foreign Wars has enjoyed a warm relationship with the Vocational Assistance Commission in the Republic of China on Taiwan. They have truly been our friends. The Veterans of Foreign Wars has consistently pledged its support through resolutions for our friends in the Republic of China on Taiwan.

The citizens of the Republic of China on Taiwan are proud of their success and economic achievement.

Certainly, that success, in large part, can be attributed to the employment and development programs that the Republic conducts for its veterans.

The tremendous care, support and vitality of its veterans programs have been an inspiration and model for the VFW. We wish to thank our friends with VACRS for their long and beneficial friendship.

Joining us today to reaffirm our pledge of brotherhood and comradeship is the Vice-Chairman of VACRS, Lieutenant General Yu Chao.

Comrades, please welcome the Vice-Chairman of the Vocational Assistance Commission for Retired Servicemen.

RESPONSE - LIEUTENANT GENERAL YU CHAO

LIEUTENANT GENERAL YU CHAO: Commander-in-Chief, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great honor to have this opportunity to represent the Chairman of the Vocational Assistance Commission for Retired Servicemen of the Republic of China. I take great pleasure in addressing your National Convention and all the friends we have in the VFW.

Your organization is composed of American veterans who have taken part in foreign wars. The VFW, as America's oldest veterans' organization, has made significant contributions to the United States, both in veterans' programs and in the security of the nation.

The VFW has consistently taken courageous stands for a strong national defense, even at times when such a position was unpopular with the news media and other influential organizations. You have always advocated dynamic alliances with America's traditional friends in the Far East.

We, at VACRS, are particularly pleased that you have consistently supported the Republic of China in both political and military affairs. The Republic of China wishes to maintain friendly relations with the United States, in the spirit of freedom and democracy.

Accordingly, we wish to make our contribution to regional security, in coordination with the relevant authorities of the United States. We, therefore, hope that the VFW will continue to support our country with your res-

olutions, just as you have done in the past.

In closing, I give you my best regards for a most successful Convention, and my hopes that the VFW and VACRS will constantly strive to enhance our relationship for the mutual benefit for all veterans in our countries, especially with the war so far behind us. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Spera, and ladies and gentlemen in the audience. Thank you very much.

MR. CHARLES KAN: On behalf of the President of my country, Lee Teng-Hui, my boss, Lieutenant Yu Chao, I would like to present this Medal of the Order of Cloud and Banner to Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera. I would like to read it at this time.

"Mr. Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, has distinguished himself by his outstanding contributions to the promotion of friendly relations between the peoples of the United States of America and the Republic of China and to the enhancement of ties and cooperation between the veterans of our two countries.

"In appreciation of his meritorious service, Commander-in-Chief Spera is presented the Order of the Cloud and Banner with Cravat by the Republic of China, in accordance with Article XI of the Armed Forces Decoration Regulation. It has been signed by Dr. Teng-Hui, President, Lien Chan, Premier, and General Son Chen, Minister of National Defense."

There is more. In behalf of my boss, General Yu Chao of the Vocational Assistance Commission for Servicemen in my country, I would like to present a plaque in appreciation of Commander-in-Chief's contributions to enhancing the friendship between our two nations. Once again, I would like to read the inscription. I am getting old. I need my glasses.

"Presented to Mr. Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, in appreciation of his outstanding contributions to the enactment of friendship and cooperation between the Veterans of Foreign Wars and VACRS."

This has been signed by the Chairman of the Vocational Assistance Commission for Retired Servicemen in Taiwan, August 19, 1996.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much for the high honor you have paid me and to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

INTRODUCTION - DAVID CHRISTIANSEN, FOUNDER OF FLAGS OF FREEDOM FOUNDATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Our next guest is the founder and current President of the Flags of Freedom Foundation in Wapakoneta, Ohio.

Flags of Freedom, located on Interstate 75 in Wapakoneta, next to the Neil Armstrong Air & Space Museum, will soon be our nation's largest tribute to the American Flag and our national heritage. VFW Posts across the country have supported this grand effort from the beginning nearly four years ago.

Here to give us an update on the project is Flags of Freedom

Foundation Founder and President David P. Christiansen.

REMARKS - MR. DAVID CHRISTIANSEN

MR. CHRISTIANSEN: Commander-in-Chief, Special Guests and Members: I want to thank the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America for the privilege of addressing the 97th National Convention today. I would like to also thank the VFW for its enforcement of Flags of Freedom Foundation in the Freedom Flag process.

We are delighted to be associated with the VFW and it is a great honor to be here today. I do not say honor literally, and I do not say it simply as a matter of courtesy. I say it because I stand here before a unique group of Americans, a group of Americans that when called upon by his country to answer that call without any question.

We asked you to perform your duties. You performed them with dignity and respect. When told you go to into battle, you went without expectation of any fanfare or any special recognition. It is in this room today that I can see a few good men and women that aimed high, moved full speed ahead and were all they could be.

So it is indeed a great honor to stand here before you today, and I want to personally thank each and every one of you for the service you have given to your country for it is because of you that I am able to stand here today and talk to you.

Even though you have already given more of yourself than most people will ever dream of, I would like to ask you to serve your country just one more time. This time it is in a very different capacity. As individual citizens, concerned about the education of your children and your children's children, you can do this by supporting the Flags of Freedom Foundation and the Freedom Field Project.

To tell you more about the Freedom Field Project, I would like to introduce to you an extremely good friend of mine, a former Marine, a Vietnam veteran, one of your own VFW members, and Vice-President of the Flags of Freedom Foundation. Please welcome Larry McClain.

COMRADE LARRY McCLAIN: Thank you, David. Dave Christiansen established the Flags of Freedom Foundation for one purpose, and one purpose only. That was to create a wonderful kind of educational park and monument to the American Flag.

You might say why do we need another monument for you who fought the country and fought for the flag. We feel the flag and money men in and of itself. Dave is concerned, and I am concerned and you are concerned that we see an increasing disrespect, use and even desecration of our beloved flag.

Recently, I found myself being in the minority standing with my hand on my heart singing the Star Spangled Banner. It seems that in some high schools people don't even sing anymore. I heard of a museum that opened recently where in order to enter the museum you had to first walk across

the flag of the United States.

Recently, in Phoenix, Arizona, they had a display of the American Flag stuffed in a toilet, and these people hide by the name of artists. You have all heard the story about the desecration of the American Flag and flag burnings, and these people hide behind the name of free speech.

Not only is the flag being desecrated but also our American history. The Federal Department of Education has tried to introduce revised history books which would exclude, if they had their way, such things as Paul Revere, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, the Gettysburg Address, Thomas Edison, Einstein, the Wright brothers, General Eisenhower, Neil Armstrong, the flag raising on Iwo Jima, General MacArthur, stories of IUS battles, and the list goes on and on.

The Flags of Freedom Field Foundation will not be only a tribute to our flag but an educational park for future generations to preserve the true history of the United States. Ladies and gentlemen, good or bad, right or wrong, our history is our history.

We should be proud of our successes and learn from our mistakes, and create a better America for all of us. You don't rewrite history just to make a few people feel good about themselves. At Freedom Field we want to show younger generations that freedom is not free, there is a tremendous price to be paid.

It is an ongoing struggle that needs to be protected. Even though Freedom Field will be a park for all Americans, a large portion is dedicated to the veterans. I want those who visit the park to realize that the thousands and thousands of brave young men and women who died and then paid the sacrifice for their country, gave up all their tomorrows so we can enjoy our todays.

Freedom Field will never forget those who went before us. Flags of Freedom Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(3)(c) organization and we are having donations from all over this country. Since we are not accepting any tax monies or federal grants to construct or operate Freedom Field, we are counting on individual donations from Americans all over the nation.

This is where I need your help as fellow veterans. Each VFW Post nationwide should have received information under VFW cover describing Freedom Field and how your Post as well as each individual can become involved with our project. Anyone, veterans or non-veterans, can donate.

Anyone who donates $50 or more towards the construction of Freedom Field will be recognized with an imprinted brick bearing your name, hometown and state, or a memorial brick, which will be placed in Freedom Wall throughout the park.

When people leave Freedom Field, we want them to have a renewed sense of patriotism and profound respect for the flag of the United States. Stop by our booth this week and see the model of the proposed park and we will try to answer any questions that you might have.

Remember, Freedom Field will not just be another park, but a monument to observe the history, the freedom and the glory of the flag and the

country that we love so dearly.

Thank you and God bless you.

INTRODUCTION OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL KAP-JIN CHOI, KOREAN VETERANS ASSOCIATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: During the Korean War, we stood shoulder-to-shoulder with our comrades in Korea on freedom's front line. Together, we shared the hardships and agonies of a war that took a terrible toll not only in lives but the very fiber of a nation. During the difficult days of the Vietnam War our allies from the Republic of Korea joined us in fulfilling our commitment in Vietnam.

Today, Korea, through the sheer dynamics and energy of its people has emerged as an economic power basin in that region of the world, an achievement made possible by the sacrifices of gallant veterans, Americans and Koreans. We take great pride in that special relationship we share with the Korean Veterans Association. We know the courage and dedication of those veterans but most of all we know their friendship.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce our comrade-in-arms, Lieutenant General Kap-Jin Choi, Vice President of the Korean Veterans Association.

Comrades, please join me in giving General Choi a warm VFW welcome.

REMARKS - LIEUTENANT GENERAL KAP-JIN CHOI

LIEUTENANT GENERAL CHOI: Commander-in-Chief Spera, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great honor for me to be invited to attend the 97th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I extend a warm greeting from the members of the Korean Veterans Association. Her Air Force was real. The crisis in North Korea comprised the nation in June 25, 1950.

The United States not only saved our country but also later provided us with a monumental amount of aid. We asked for your assistance. The freedom the Department of Korea and we appreciate the freedom we enjoy. On behalf of the people of the Republic of Korea, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Fifty years later, the United States sends Korea 320,000 troops to fight against our common enemy in the Vietnam War. Later we were given back our homes, showing us a strong prayer of U.S. military partnership. This special relationship was further developed as we enter the 21st Century.

That is ensuring reconciliation and peace. Korea has never abandoned its initial duty to Seoul, Korea. Seoul, Korea, is implementing the nuclear agreement. They signed with the U.S. They also put it in your Executive Bylaw in South Korea. There are four South Korea relationships. We are unable to escape from it.

As you are well aware, North Korea is currently facing serious shortages and economic loss. They may feel that perhaps there is Communism coming this year. This situation increases the possibility that North Korea might wage another war is of great concern to us.

Please be aware of the situation and give us your support in our effort to maintain peace. We in Korea are happy that the historical War Veterans Memorial was dedicated on July 27th of last year in Washington, D.C. About 600 Korean War Veterans from our Association attended the dedication ceremonies.

The memorial served as a reminder and a lasting friendship and keeper of our two countries. Dear friends, we of the Korean Veterans Association appreciate the strong support for the security of Korea. We are proud of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and we have great pride in our friendship.

In closing, I sincerely hope your Convention will be successful, and at this time on behalf of the five million members of the Korean Veterans Association, I would like to take this opportunity to present a Plaque of Appreciation to Commander-in-Chief Spera who had promoted friendly relations between the two organizations. Thank you very much.

INTRODUCTION - MOC SUPREME COMMANDER GARY STRAUSS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: A national gathering of the Veterans of Foreign Wars would not be complete without a visit from the Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie.

Elected Supreme Commander at the 76th Supreme Scratch in 1995, Gary Strauss is a member of Prairie Dogs Pup Tent 44, Grand of Texas. He joined the VFW while stationed in Japan and with the United States Air Force. While in service, he served two tours of duty in Vietnam. Today Gary belongs to VFW Post 4477, Dallas, Texas.

An active and dedicated member who has served the VFW and the Military Order of the Cootie in elective and appointed positions, Gary Strauss deserves a warm VFW welcome to this National Convention.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie, Gary Strauss.

REMARKS - MOC SUPREME COMMANDER GARY STRAUSS

MOC SUPREME COMMANDER STRAUSS: Commander-in-Chief, Distinguished Guests at the podium, and to all the Distinguished Guests out in the audience:

It is a pleasure that I represent 33,555 members of this great organization and for those members this year they have donated over $8 million worth of dollar credits for the VA and medical system hospitals. One other thing I would like to tell you, we did have some problems at the beginning of the year, but our budget looks like we will be $40,000 in the black. Commander-in-Chief, thank you for this opportunity at this time.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much. I want to thank each and every one of you for your patience this morning. I know this has been a long session. We have heard from some very important individuals. I thank you for attending this Joint Opening Session.

I know we are going to have a great Convention. Please remember tomorrow morning we will begin our session at 8:30, not 9:00 a.m. That is 8:30 tomorrow morning. I have a note here that we have an individual that was with us this morning. He may still be in the audience.

He is from VFW Post 8551. He is a 94-year-old World War I veteran and his name is George A. Clark. I want to welcome him to our Convention. Thank you for being here. Thank you all for being here.

We will now have our Closing Ceremonies. Reverend Lyle Kell will deliver the Benediction.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Reverend Lyle N. Kell gave the Closing Prayer.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Sergeant-at-Arms, we will salute the colors, please.

(Whereupon, the Salute to the Colors was given at this time.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Closing Ceremonies have been performed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I now declare this Joint Opening Session closed. Thank you all for your patience.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 11:50 o'clock a.m.)

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS BANQUET
AUGUST 19, 1996

(The Distinguished Guests Banquet of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in the Commonwealth Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, was called to order at 7:00 o'clock p.m., by W. J. Cannon, Chairman, Board of Directors, VFW 97th National Convention.)

COMRADE CANNON: Comrades, ladies and gentlemen, please give your attention. Will the audience please rise and remain standing until after the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

I will now call on the National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Reverend Lyle N. Kell.

(Whereupon, the Invocation was given by National Chaplain Lyle N. Kell.)

COMRADE CANNON: Comrades, Sisters and Gentlemen, please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our country.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was had at this time.)

INTRODUCTION OF MASTER OF CEREMONIES

COMRADE CANNON: Welcome to the 97th National Convention Distinguished Guests Banquet. You see them before you, of course, but we

in the VFW consider all of you distinguished. I consider it a pleasure to have the special privilege this evening of introducing a distinguished member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars who will serve as your Master of Ceremonies for the remainder of this evening.

Jim Nier was elected Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, at the VFW's 96th National Convention in Phoenix. Jim is the third Texan to be elected to this high office.

Following a distinguished military career, which included service in Vietnam and Korea, Jim served as an Assistant Director of Personnel, and later a mathematics instructor at El Paso Community College.

In January, 1987, he was appointed as Director of the Veterans Assistance Office for El Paso County, a county with over 54,000 veterans.

A Life Member of VFW Post 8919 in El Paso, Jim has held numerous VFW offices at the Post, District, Department and National levels. He earned All-American honors as a District Commander in 1987 and as State Commander of Texas in 1990.

I am most pleased to introduce to you the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Jim Nier from the great Lone Star state of Texas.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you, W. J., for that very kind introduction.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished and honored guests, I am proud to serve as your Master of Ceremonies this evening. I know we have a very special program, but before we begin that program we would like to serve dinner. For your dining pleasure we have a musical group with us called the "New Odyssey."

Whatever your musical interests are, this group will cover them from Beethoven to be-bop; from the 40's to thee 80's, they can play it all. Now, with four band members playing 30 different instruments, let's enjoy this very popular group, "New Odyssey."

(Whereupon, the dinner was served at this time.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention, please. Will everyone please be seated so we can introduce our distinguished guests. It is now my honor to introduce our head table guests.

(Whereupon, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Nier introduced the distinguished guests at this time.)

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL A. SPERA

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I am privileged this evening to introduce to this very special audience the National Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Since its beginning, the VFW has drawn together dedicated men and women who share the same concern and love for America and its veterans. With a long and proud history of accomplishments, the VFW has always

been in the forefront of every constructive program to set forth, expand and protect the rights and privileges of America's veterans.

Whether its efforts are for a strong national defense or concern for the nation's veterans, the VFW must have inspired leaders who will guide us wisely. We have been most fortunate to have a man of this stature to guide us this year.

Throughout his 30 years of active involvement with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Paul Spera has been a man on the move, helping his fellow veterans and his community. In keeping with his motto "Call to Duty," he has worked hard to address the concerns, the resolves and the mandates of the VFW.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to introduce to you a man dedicated to working for America's veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, our Commander-in-Chief, Paul Spera, from the great state of Massachusetts.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you, Jim, for that very generous and warm introduction. My remarks tonight will be very brief. You see standing before you a very proud man who for the last twelve months has had the wonderful privilege of leading the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Leading this great organization is very gratifying.

I have seen the results of the work and services of over two million VFW members and the 750,000 members of the Ladies Auxiliary. In every city and town I visited, I saw positive proof that the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary are a dynamic force serving our nation's communities and our nation's veterans.

This year has been a pivotal year as the VFW works to ensure that veterans' programs receive proper funding. It has been a year of challenge as we work to maintain the integrity of the VA and seek eligibility reform in the VA health-care system.

In responding to our "Call to Duty" theme, we have supported our armed forces in the need to maintain a strong national defense as congressional budget cutters seek to save money at the expense of our servicemen and comrades.

We have visited our men and women maintaining the fragile peace accord in Bosnia. How proud I was to bring your message of support and those wonderful VFW telephone calling cards as a visible sign of your support.

The VFW will continue to lead the way in what we believe to be the best means of achieving our goal of the fullest possible accounting.

We take our role seriously and will continue, as we have throughout the past 22 years, to monitor progress and results in working with Vietnam and the other governments of the region. To do less would be a disservice to our members, to those missing and their families and a disservice to what the VFW stands for.

Your efforts and support of every program that we have undertaken in the past year, whether it be in community and youth activities, Voice of

Democracy, or Buddy Poppy, have proven that working together, we can be successful.

Yes, it has been a very special year for me because I was proud to be with and serve with the finest men and women of our nation, its veterans.

Now, before my personal mission as your National Commander-in-Chief draws to an end, I wish to say on behalf of Joanne and myself, thank you very much for your hard work, support and for answering the "Call to Duty."

PRESENTATION OF VFW HALL OF FAME AWARD, GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION TO BILLY RAY CYRUS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We are honored this evening to present our VFW Hall of Fame Award to a gentleman whose first album, "Some Gave All," became the biggest selling debut album in history, racking up sales of ten million albums and earning five Grammy nominations.

Today, everybody knows Billy Ray Cyrus. His song "Some Gave All" is a tribute to all of America's veterans.

Despite his apparent sudden rise to fame, Billy Ray Cyrus, one of America's best-loved performers, was anything but an overnight sensation. His success came only after a decade of dedication to his craft, and his refusal to give up when door after door in Nashville was slammed in his face.

His music tells the story of our everyday lives. For example, his third album "Storm in the Heartland" provides a stirring account of the suffering a midwestern farmer endures when the Mississippi River floods.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in a warm VFW welcome for a great entertainer and a great American, Billy Ray Cyrus.

"The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Hall of Fame Award, Gold Medal and Citation presented to Billy Ray Cyrus

"In special recognition of his outstanding career as a country singer and in sincere appreciation for his support of America's veterans as evidenced by his moving song 'Some Gave All' and his participation in the ceremonies dedicated to Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

"In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 19th day of August, 1996." This has been approved by the National Council of Administration and signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General.

Billy Ray, on behalf of everyone here congratulations and thank you very much.

RESPONSE - MR. BILLY RAY CYRUS

MR. CYRUS: This is great. Thank you all very much for allowing me to be a part of this evening. I can't really accept this without a special

thanks to the guy that changed my life a whole lot, a Vietnam Veteran who wrote Achy Breaky Heart, Mr. Don Von Tress, who is out there. Thank you very much, Don.

I would like to say to my dad over here, thanks for teaching me to work hard and believe in my dreams and to have a purpose in life. When I bought a guitar, I felt like my purpose was to make music. I always believed some day my music could touch people's lives.

To stand here today and being inducted into your VFW Hall of Fame for the song "Some Gave All" proves that a person can have a dream and believe in themselves and everyone has a purpose. Today with this medal hanging around my neck and this plaque in my hand, I feel like part of my purpose was I felt like people listened to the words and understand it.

The members of the VFW, you are the true heroes of America and you people represent the song "Some Gave All" much, much more than I do. Mr. Westmoreland, I just want you to know it has been an honor for me this evening, and all of you many, many great veterans I will take to my grave, "All gave some, but some gave all." That is you guys. I love all of you men and women. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Billy Ray, can we impose upon you to go over to the bandstand and sing that song for us.

(Whereupon, Billy Ray Cyrus sang "Some Gave All" at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I nearly forgot to do this. Along with the Hall of Fame Award, Billy Ray, there is an honorarium of $1,500.

MR. CYRUS: For what?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: You can do with it as you wish.

MR. CYRUS: Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Once again, what means the most to me is this medallion hanging around my neck and the plaque that my dad holds. Thank you very much for recognizing the song "Some Gave All." I love you all, I love America and I am proud of every single one of you. Thank you very much.

PRESENTATION OF THE DWIGHT DAVID EISENHOWER DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO GENERAL WILLIAM C. WESTMORELAND

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Head Table Guests, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are most honored this evening to present the Veterans of Foreign Wars' prestigious Dwight David Eisenhower Award to a member who is not only a great soldier and a great American but a Life Member of this great veterans organization, General William C. Westmoreland.

General Westmoreland's long and dedicated service to the cause of national security and world peace included distinguished service in World War II, to include North Africa, Tunisia, Sicily and the Normandy Invasion, service in the Korean War as Commander of the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team, and in Vietnam when the U.S. involvement grew from a few

thousand advisors to more than 500,000 American troops.

From 1968 to 1972, a period of political turmoil and strife within the nation, General Westmoreland served as the Army Chief of Staff and supervised the Army's disengagement from Vietnam as well as directing the transition from the draft to an all-volunteer force.

General Westmoreland's untiring efforts to improve service life, professionalism within the service, job attractiveness and public understanding and appreciation for the role of our military in our society helped to mold our military force as we know it today.

The Noted British author Lieutenant General Sir John W. Hackett once wrote, "What a society gets in its armed services is exactly what it asks for, no more and no less. What it asks for tends to be a reflection of what it is."

A visionary, General Westmoreland developed the foundation for today's military force by advocating and articulating the selfless deeds and contributions of our military men and women, and America's veterans to world peace. General Westmoreland can proudly look at today's professional and capable military force and see a reflection of his efforts.

Please join me in giving a very warm VFW reception to a friend and the recipient of the 1996 VFW Dwight David Eisenhower Award, General William C. Westmoreland.

"The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Dwight David Eisenhower Distinguished Service Medal and this citation presented to General William C. Westmoreland, United States Army, Retired

"In grateful recognition of his many years of dedication and distinguished service to the cause of national security and world peace through World War II, Korea and Vietnam, a pivotal period in history, and in special appreciation for his untiring efforts as an advocate for the selfless deeds and contributions by our military men and women.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our name and official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 19th day of August, 1996." This has been approved by the National Council of Administration, signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General.

General Westmoreland, thank you very much for all your service and congratulations.

RESPONSE AND PRINCIPAL ADDRESS - GENERAL WILLIAM C. WESTMORELAND

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Billy Ray, you are a hard act to follow. I am very grateful and very moved by this award that I have received, to be granted by an organization with whom I have been acquainted with for many years.

Fellow veterans and ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased and honored to be here in Louisville and to address my fellow veterans and comrades in arms. Indeed, to receive the Eisenhower Award is a unique pleasure. It so

happens that General and former President Eisenhower was a personal friend.

When he was President, I was a Major General commanding the 101st Airborne Division in Ft. Campbell, in the State of Kentucky. Some of you may be aware of the Ft. Campbell Reservation. Ninety percent of it is in Tennessee, but ten percent of it is in Kentucky.

One of your Senators saw fit to ensure that that was the case. Every time I would say, "Senator Kefauver of Tennessee," he would say, "General, I want you to jack up that post office and move it across the line." One day, many years ago, I received a call from the President of the United States who wanted to see me.

At that time I was commanding Ft. Campbell and the101st Airborne Division. So I took a plane and flew to Washington. I went to the Pentagon and the Pentagon shuttled me to the White House where I reported to the President. After an informal discussion, the President told me that he was sending me to be superintendent at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

Among other things, he said, "I want you to do something about that damn football team." The Navy had won the last four or five contests. Needless to say, I did what he suggested. I fired the coach, recruited the Coach of the Year. The football program was turned around.

But having reminisced in that regard, I now wish to talk about more serious matters. You know, the world today is a far different picture than one observed throughout the Twentieth Century. That century is now coming to a close, and we see a world that seems to be devoid of major with imperialistic and ruthless dictators backed by a fanatical population.

We have seen the uncertain Europe for about 45 years, and now peaceful except for the problem with the Serbs. We see a demoralized Russia and the rest of Asia a nervous center and a Third World struggling to play the role. The Communist fever of Lenin and Stalin and now what seems to have paved the way.

Apparently, there are today no imperialistic strong men on the world stage. Even Khadafy of Libya and King Hussein of Iraq seem subdued. At last, we have to vote for the realization of a real safe for democracy. To understand the importance of what we see today requires reflection on the Twentieth Century.

It has been a century in which a drastic transition has taken place, where life on our planet earth has undergone great change. Now, what has brought about that situation that we see today which gives us the prospect of a normal, peaceful world?

It has been the confrontation, political, economic and military, by our nation to aggression and the imperialistic conduct of some nations. Decisions were made by our elected political authorities, but the telling actions were by agencies of our government, in the main our military, our Army, our Navy, our Air Force, our Marine Corps and our Coast Guard.

No one else could have done what transpired. Who really did the job,

who did the fighting? It was our veterans. It was a man who answered the call of this country, the man who supported the American ideals of human freedom and liberty for all; a man who put his life on the line and in many case gave it for defense with the right of national determination.

It was a man who tried to improve the lot of those threatened; a man who persisted in dedicating himself to his assigned task, despite criticism and the ridicule by some of his peers as they enjoyed the safety of his homeland and the rights of our citizens.

That man can look any man in the eye and say I served my country for the cause of freedom in this time honored tradition. Ladies and gentlemen, that man is you. In time America will fully appreciate you and what you did, and today here in this state, in this wonderful town, we recognize, and I am honored to be a party to that recognition and those who played the essential role in bringing about the freedom that we enjoy, a freedom that has been contagious throughout civilization on our door.

The words that, in my opinion, describe that man, that man being the American fighting man, the words of Roger Hammerstein best describe it in his opera entitled "Stout Hearted Men."

"Give me some men who are stout-hearted men, who will fight for the right they adore.

"Start me with ten who are stout-hearted men and I will soon give you ten thousand more.

"O! Shoulder to shoulder and bolder and bolder, they grow as they go to the fore.

"Then there is nothing in the world that can block, halt or mar a plan when stout-hearted men can stick together man to man."

Stout-hearted men, you veterans, you are those men and I salute you.

Let me emphasize that you really did the job.

Today here in Louisville, you give his all and his support of country has stood for through the years, which has been and still is a worthy cause, and we recognize it this evening. So, I am honored to be a part of this organization. The VFW, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has set the example for the young men and the citizens of our country. You have been a stalwart, you have led the way. As a citizen and as a soldier, I express my thanks and my appreciation. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you, General Westmoreland. We are fortunate, indeed, that you have taken time to be with us this evening. We are honored to have you with us and your remarks are greatly appreciated.

General Westmoreland has requested that the honorarium that accompanies the VFW Dwight D. Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award be given to the Westmoreland Scholar Foundation, an educational foundation dedicated to fostering reconciliation between the American and Vietnamese people. Thank you very much for that, General.

I will now return the program to our emcee for the evening, Senior Vice

Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: As our Distinguished Guests Banquet for the 97th VFW National Convention comes to an end, I would like to thank you for attending. I would also like to thank the "New Odyssey" musical group for the wonderful entertainment they provided. I know we are going to remember you.

I would like to congratulate our distinguished guests for their achievements and for what they have done for us as individuals and as a nation.

I do have a few announcements to make. The business session will begin tomorrow morning at 8:30. That is a change from 9:00 o'clock. We also will ask that you please and remain and enjoy the musical group "New Odyssey" who will stay and perform for you for about an hour and one-half.

At this time if everyone will please rise, I will ask Reverend Kell to give us the Benediction.

BENEDICTION - NATIONAL CHAPLAIN KELL

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN KELL: I think that it is very proper to stop and bow our heads in honor and remembrance of those veterans who just died in a plane crash while transporting some of President Clinton's belongings in a military plane. Shall we have this as a moment of silence.

Since I will not be around this way anymore, I will never be your Chaplain again, I would like to say thank you for being able to serve you. I have written a poem that I would like to quote to you. It is dedicated to you as veterans. It is called "Above and Beyond the Call."

"Few there be in the scheme of life who will chart a dangerous path, stay on that road although the load is fraught with a fearful path.

"Above and beyond what is called their life second of the goal. The die is cast, the decision is past to the esteem cry of their soul.

"Our dear vets, such people as you, your reward is freedom for all. The USA is proud to say, you gave, you fought, you died above and beyond the call."

God bless you. Let us pray.

Lord, as we depart from this good time of fellowship, we humbly ask that you bless by your mighty power those things we have done here this evening that these works will be multiplied many times for the benefit of all veterans and their respective families.

Now, may the grace of our wonderful God be with us and may our works here tonight be an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to you. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Ladies and gentlemen, this concludes our program. Have a good evening. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting was recessed at 9:10 o'clock p.m.)

FIRST BUSINESS SESSION
TUESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 20, 1996

(The First Business Session of the 97th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was called to order in the Commonwealth Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, at 8:30 o'clock a.m., by Commander-in-Chief Spera.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I will now call this meeting to order. Sergeants-at-Arms, you will prepare the room for the Salute to the Colors.

(National Sergeant-at-Arms George Sarver led the Convention in the Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance, and National Chaplain Reverend Lyle N. Kell, gave the Opening Prayer from the Ritual.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Commander-in-Chief, the Opening Ceremonies have been performed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: At this time we would like a Report of the Credentials Committee.

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE RICHARD TROMBLA (Post 1174 - Kansas): Richard Trombla, Department of Kansas, Post 1174, Chairman of the Credentials Committee. This is a temporary report at this time. Delegate strength, 11,695; Department Commanders, 36; National Officers, 28; Past Commanders-in-Chief, 26; Members-at-Large, 1. That is a total of 11,786.

Commander-in-Chief, this is a temporary report of this Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you. At this time I would like to call to the microphone the Chairman of the Convention Rules Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Clifford G. Olson.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON CONVENTION RULES

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CLIFFORD OLSON: Good morning, Comrades. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I want to thank you for the appointment as Chairman of the Committee on Convention Rules. I also would like to take this opportunity to introduce my Co-Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Kimery, from the great state of New Mexico.

The Report of the Committee on Convention Rules is to the 97th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in Louisville, Kentucky.

Your Committee on Convention Rules met Monday afternoon, August 19th, and agreed on the following recommendations which I respectfully submit for your consideration:

1. With exceptions noted below, Demeter's Manual will be recognized as the parliamentary authority for this Convention.

2. When a delegate desires to make a motion or address the Convention, he shall rise, address the Chair as "Comrade Commander-in-Chief," and after being recognized, shall state his name, Post number and Department, before proceeding.

3. Debate shall be limited to ten minutes for each speaker.

4. A delegate shall be permitted to speak but twice on any one subject, or any pending resolution, except by consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the Convention present; provided, that chairmen of Convention committees may speak as frequently as necessary in connection with reports of their committees; and in the event of controversy, the presiding officer shall not entertain any motion which will curtail further debate without affording the maker of the motion or a member of the particular group presenting the resolution an opportunity for final rebuttal.

5. All resolutions offered by individual delegates must bear the endorsement of the Department Commander or Department Adjutant and must be submitted to the office of the Adjutant General for numbering and referral to committees no later than 9:00 a.m., August 22, 1996, and must be accompanied by a written explanation as to why the resolution was not presented to the Department Commander for consideration.

6. All resolutions offered on the floor at the Convention, or otherwise, shall be in writing and shall automatically, and without reading, be referred to the Adjutant General for assignment to the proper committee.

7. Committee chairmen, in reporting on resolutions referred to their committee, shall first read those resolutions on which favorable action is recommended. Specific resolutions shall be set aside for individual action at the request of any delegate, the others being voted upon collectively. After action has been taken on all such resolutions, the chairman shall read the number and title of those resolutions which the committee has disapproved. A resolution disapproved by the committee shall be automatically rejected unless a motion is made and seconded that it be approved, in which case it shall be brought up for debate and Convention action.

8. This Convention will not consider any resolution dealing with race, creed or religion, or endorse anyone for public office. This Convention will not consider any resolution calling for the expenditure or appropriation of organization funds.

9. This Convention will not consider any resolution endorsing legislation sponsored by any other veterans organization, or requesting us to join with any other organization in sponsoring legislation not expressly proposed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

10. No person not a duly accredited delegate or member of the National Convention shall participate in debate, directly or indirectly, in a viva voce vote on any subject before the Convention.

11. Unit rule of voting shall not be allowed in this Convention.

12. On roll calls, the Chairman or acting Chairman of each

delegation shall poll his delegation on the floor and shall announce the vote of his delegation.

13. Delegates may arrive at a vote in any manner they see fit, but shall announce it in terms of full units and not in terms of a fractional part of a vote.

14. When the report of the chairman of the delegation is not acceptable to all members of the delegation and a poll of the Department delegates is demanded by ten delegates of said Department, the Adjutant General shall poll the delegates, without discussion of question.

15. Voting shall be by acclamation, except when a roll call be demanded by ten delegates representing Posts in ten separate Departments.

16. Nominating speeches for the National Officers shall be limited to five minutes each. Not more than two seconding speeches shall be made for any candidate and such speeches shall not exceed two minutes each. Nominations and election of National Officers will be held according to the National Constitution and By-Laws and Manual of Procedure, Article VI, Section 609.

17. Delegates and persons recognized by the Chair shall be entitled to a respectful hearing and the Chair shall have the authority to clear the gallery or the floor or have the Sergeant-at-Arms escort from the floor any person or persons who may create any disturbances which interfere with the orderly procedure of the Convention.

18. Consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the Convention present is necessary for suspension of the rules of this Convention.

The Committee urges adoption of these Convention Rules referred to by Clifford J. Olson, Chairman of the Convention Committee.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES KIMERY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, James L. Kimery, VFW Post 9254, Albuquerque, New Mexico. I move adoption of the rules as presented to the delegation.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I have a motion on the floor to adopt the rules. Do I have a second to that motion?

COMRADE GLEN GARDNER (Post 3359 - Texas): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to adopt the Convention Rules. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

Let me just take one moment to expand just a bit on what Past Commander-in-Chief Cliff Olson said. Today we will have the Republican nominee for President. Tomorrow we will have the Democratic Vice-President, and on Thursday we will have the Reform Party Candidate for President, Ross Perot.

Each of those days we will have an individual who is coming before our Convention to speak to us on the issues. I would hope that no matter

what your political persuasion is, no matter how passionately you feel about politics, that if you feel you must have anything negative to say that you will say it outside this room, and that anyone who comes to this microphone will receive nothing but the utmost respect and dignity. I am sure that as delegates to this Convention that is exactly what you will give them all.

INTRODUCTION - LIEUTENANT GENERAL PRABANDH ITDHIKUL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: For the past half century, Thailand has been one of our most steadfast allies in Southeast Asia.

Standing side by side with our United Nations forces during the Korean War and enduring the hardships of the Vietnam War, the veterans of Thailand understand the bond of comradeship that is forged on the field of battle.

The War Veterans Organization of Thailand, which includes one of the most modern health-care systems in the region, has provided, on a humanitarian need, medical treatment to VFW members living in Thailand. An act of care and kindness which we, as fellow veterans, acknowledge and greatly appreciate.

As Commander-in-Chief, and having visited Thailand, I with to thank the War Veterans Organization of Thailand for their hospitality and generosity.

With us today and representing the Director General of the War Veterans Organization of Thailand is the Advisor and Chief of the Office of the Director General, Lieutenant General Prabandh Itdhikul.

Please join me in a warm VFW welcome for our special guest from Thailand.

RESPONSE - LIEUTENANT GENERAL PRABANDH ITDHIKUL,
WAR VETERANS ORGANIZATION OF THAILAND

LIEUTENANT GENERAL ITDHIKUL: Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera, all members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the War Veterans Organization of Thailand, may I extend greetings to all American veterans and distinguished guests who are here for the 97th National Convention. Please allow me to express my deep appreciation to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and especially Commander-in-Chief Paul A. Spera for inviting General Euamsak Chulacharitta, the Director General, to the National Convention, and he kindly assigned me as his representative for the second time.

My party and I have received a very warm welcome, both at the Louisville airport and while we are staying here, which has instantly made me feel at home.

Americans and Thais have enjoyed a friendly relationship for many decades. Our economic, political and cultural cooperation have steadily expanded and deepened. In the area of military, our two countries also

share a common commitment. That is to work actively for peace and security of people as a whole under a rule of liberty, justice and democracy.

From the same standing point, the United States and Thailand have always been an ally in time of war. Since World War I, Thailand joined the allied by sending volunteer military into war. The consequences of this made all the allied enjoyed mutual interests in many ways and at the same time had strengthened international relationship among nations.

Ladies and gentlemen, in World War II, in 1941, Thailand still adhered in the righteousness and justice. Our policy at that time was to protect our sovereign, and we had received full support and encouragement from the United States. It was considered that Thailand become a member of the United Nations in 1946 by the assistance of the United States of America. This would tie our friendship from then on. My fellow veterans, even though we are far in distance, we are close in our spirit.

Distinguished guests, with the invasion of South Korea in 1950 by the Communists North Korea, the United States, as principal participant, immediately came to the aid of South Korea and requested members of the United Nations to join in the war, including Thailand.

Americans and Royal Thai military had again fought side by side and helped make a heroic performance at the battle of T-Bone, Pork Chop Hill and many other operational areas. My dear friends, this was not the last time that we had joined an experience together.

During the Vietnam War in 1965, the Royal Thai Army volunteer forces had fought closely with the United States soldiers in the operation area in Bienhoa Binhson Phuc Tho. The II Field Forces of the United States and the Royal Thai Army volunteer forces were most admired by the Vietnamese. My brother in arms, "We will never walk alone."

In the Gulf War, although Thailand did not directly enter the war but gave assistance by sending a Thai medical team that joined the operation, and we also sent officials to work with the United Nations Special Commission to observe in Iraq.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, nowadays there still are armed conflicts in some region of the world as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, terrorism in Northern Ireland and other countries because of an inconsistent interest and idea. The conflict caused damage not only to lives, property, morale and spirit of innocent people, but also to soldiers who sacrificed their lives for these brutal, destructive and lack of humanity. Today we bow to those soldiers and we pay tribute to the great deeds of all soldiers who were given the longest, most difficult and bloodiest path to peace.

My fellow veterans, this year Thailand is celebrating the 50th anniversary of His Majesty the King's ascension to the throne. All Thai appreciate it that President Bill Clinton has sent a letter of congratulations to His Majesty. President Bill Clinton also mentioned the relationship of the United States and Thailand in his letter.

I quote from the letter. "Our bilateral relations go back more than 160 years. During World War II, brave members of the free Thai movement

joined with Americans to restore freedom to Thailand. Today, Thai and Americans work together to promote peace, freedom and prosperity in Southeast Asia bilaterally and through our cooperation in multilateral fora."

The text I quote has expressed the good relationship and best wishes between the United States and Thailand. I do hope that our friendship will further strengthen for many years to come.

Last, but not least, may I wish each and every one of you good health and happiness and a great success at the 97th National Convention.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much, General Itdhikul.

Please be patient with us for a couple of minutes. I know we are running ahead of schedule. The Rules Committee announced, and we have said this time and time again, there is only one cap that is allowed on the floor of the National Convention. You either wear a VFW cap, as I am wearing now, or you don't wear a cap. There are no baseball caps, no funny caps, no straw hats, nothing but your official VFW cap, please. I will make that announcement now.

PRESENTATION OF VFW NEWS MEDIA AWARD, GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The VFW News Media Award is presented for outstanding contributions to the field of journalism. This year's recipient is Al Santoli, a contributing editor for Parade magazine, America's largest circulated publication.

An Army Infantry veteran who served with the United States 25th Infantry Division in Vietnam, Al Santoli is a best-selling author of four histories: "Everything We Had" which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, and American book award, and named to the American Library Association's "All-Time Best Books" list.

His book, "To Bear Any Burden," was the first history of the war and its aftermath to give equal voice to Americans and Southeast Asians. Another of his books, "New Americans, Immigrants and Refugees in the U.S. Today," has become a standard text in numerous colleges and other learning institutions.

His fourth book, "Leading the Way," documents how senior American military commanders in Operation Desert Storm learned the responsibility and accountability of leadership as young servicemen during the Vietnam War.

He has worked as a consultant to the refugee project of the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights. He has made numerous testimonies before Congress regarding democracy in Southeast Asia, refugee protection and human rights issues.

Al Santoli is a Special Assistant to Congressman Robert K. Dornan, Chairman of the Military Personnel Subcommittee. Currently, he is on the Board of Advisors of the Center for Security Policy in Washington, D.C. He

is also on the Board of Directors of "No Greater Love," a non-profit organization that supports families of United States military and civilians killed, taken prisoner or missing in service to the United States.

I am pleased to present the VFW News Media Award to a great journalist and fellow veteran, Al Santoli.

"News Media Award, Gold Medal and Citation, awarded to Al Santoli.

"In special recognition of his distinguished career as an author and journalist whose forthright reporting and analysis of the cause and effects of the Vietnam War and its impact on today's military and the plight of a Amerasian children have contributed significantly to providing the American people with a better understanding of a difficult period in American history, and in sincere appreciation of his venerable service as a Sergeant in the United States Army's 25th Infantry Division in Vietnam where he received a Bronze Star for Valor and three Purple Hearts.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 20th day of August, 1996." This has been signed by me as Commander-in-Chief, and by Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - MR. AL SANTOLI

MR. SANTOLI: Thank you very much. Commander-in-Chief Spera and Fellow Veterans, it is an honor to be here with you as fellow veterans and also to be recognized for the work that I have done regarding history, military history, which is about us, which is about the citizen soldiers, some of whom are in a couple of years to do their duties and some have spent 20 years or more in service to their country.

The bond that holds us is an ancient one. It is a willingness to sacrifice for those who would put their lives on the line for their country. In the spirit of what I tried to do with journalism, it is not so much reminisce on the past, but to use the lesson of the past to prepare for the future.

A few thoughts I would like to share today are regarding what our children and our grandchildren will face and the responsibilities that we have in preparing the defense of their liberties and instilling in them the value of freedom that most of us in this room know how precious it is because of the friends that we have lost in the service of upholding that freedom.

Often it has been in circumstances in parts of the world that seemed to have very little in common with the United States. However, I think that one thing we have all learned is that freedom is something that you cannot take for granted, and the threat to freedom anywhere in the world is a threat to freedom here in our own country.

Again, that has to be done with judiciousness, both with civilian and military leadership. The experience that we have in the wars that we have fought and the military actions we have undergone, I think puts us in a position to help prepare the next generation.

One of the greatest concerns I think that I have seen and one of the rea-

sons why I have taken a little bit of time off from writing commercially or voluntarily to work in the Congress is because of the emergency of China as a major power and a major threat, not only to our freedom but to world freedom.

Right now China is undergoing the greatest military build up in the world. It is not only its nuclear capabilities but its tactical capabilities in terms of the airplanes they are getting developed and manufactured by the Russians that will give them the ability to project air power anywhere within their region, which is the most viable trade partner of the United States.

They are undergoing a great build up of strategic capabilities of nuclear missile productions by land, by sea, by submarines. During this coming election year, I think one of the most important issues that we will have is missile defense, which is not going to be cheap.

It is going to take sacrifice in order to build. It is essential given China in its terribly serious strategic missile build up and the way of shipping those missiles around the world to Iran and some of the other belligerent Middle East countries, its partnership with North Korea, that we develop a regional missile defense as well as a national missile defense.

Another area that will be terribly important, is that we have learned from mistakes the Japanese made in World War II. Right now China very quietly and very robotically is building up its links of transport communication by rail, by road and by sea.

It is taking over the port of Hong Kong, which is a power projection in the South China Seas. It is building rails that connected its Western provinces with Laos into Burma, giving it access to the Indian Ocean on the coast of Burma. Right now China basically controls Burma, which very few people realize.

China is also making deals with the Russians and the Central European nations to rebuild the silt road which would give the power projection ability to land into the area in the Middle East to be able to impact into the Persian Gulf sometime in the future if it chooses to do so.

Last year I was very shocked to see that China was publicizing it was doing high desert exercises which got very little press coverage here, but got big coverage in China. My feeling is that the Chinese are very pragmatic and they would not be doing high desert exercise unless sometime in the future they intend to project their forces.

For the next generation, we have a very serious threat on the horizon, which is China, that we cannot take for granted. We need to encourage our politicians to be thinking about, our present day military planners to be thinking about, and our economic planners.

We cannot afford to maintain a $20 billion or $30 billion trade deficit with China, which is used to do this massive military build up with our money, whether it were the toys that you buy at any K-Mart or Penney's. You can hardly find a toy made in the United States.

Sweaters, shoes, we have given away our capability to the Chinese and they are using the economic resources, and they are benefitting from it, in

order to do their military build up. We have to find a way of turning that around. With the resources that we can gain from re-establishing a stronger, viable U.S. economic and job base, those resources should be put into our own missile defense system as opposed to helping China develop their strategic defense, which is happening right now.

Those are a few thoughts I would like to share with you because of the concern of our children and grandchildren. We are right now in Congressman Dornan's office, as Chairman of Military Personnel, we are working very diligently on trying to get as full accounting as possible of prisoners of war and missing in action.

You are invited to contact us at any time for us to give you updates of the work that we are doing and the challenges that we see in getting a full accounting, not only from Vietnam and Korea, but also from the Russians and Chinese as well.

I once again thank you from the bottom of my heart for the award that I have been presented today. It means a lot today because it comes from fellow Americans. Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPECIAL AWARD TO MR. MACK FLEMING

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: It is my great honor this morning to present the VFW Commander-in-Chief's Special Award to a man who has worked diligently on behalf of all of our nation's veterans. Mack Fleming, who recently retired after serving 26 years on Capitol Hill, was instrumental in the enactment of far-reaching veterans' legislation.

During Mack's 21 years as staff counsel and staff director to the House Veterans Affairs Committee, he worked in a bipartisan manner to improve medical care, compensation, and other benefits to our nation's deserving veterans. He earned the respect of members of Congress and staff because of his professionalism, knowledge and ability.

Our VFW Washington staff has worked closely with Mack Fleming over many years. A man of integrity, capability and character, his ability to work with all sides on the issues, to ensure that all views were heard, and to build consensus where possible, resulted in the enactment of far-reaching veterans' legislation.

Under his guidance, the measure elevating the VA to cabinet status was signed into law. The new G.I. Bill, which profoundly improved the ability of the armed forces to recruit smart, capable young men and women was nurtured into reality by Mack Fleming.

Perhaps his greatest effort resulted in providing an entitlement to inpatient health care for service-connected and low-income veterans.

Please join me in welcoming a fellow veteran — he served with the 2nd Armored Division in Europe — and a man who has devoted his life's work to helping veterans, Mack Fleming.

"The Commander-in-Chief's Special Award presented to Mack Gerald

Fleming.

"In recognition of his outstanding contributions in meeting the needs of America's veterans during nearly three decades of extraordinary service in the United States House of Representatives as Chief Counsel and/or Staff Director of the Committee on Veterans Affairs.

"August 20, 1996, Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief."

Mack, thank you very much for all that you have done for American veterans.

RESPONSE - MR. MACK FLEMING

MR. FLEMING: Well, I would certainly like to thank Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera for this honor. It is one thing to receive awards while you are a Staff Director and Chief Counsel of the Committee, it is something else to get the award after you have been gone for 15 months.

I now reside in South Carolina. I have a boat, a rod and reel, and I am doing some of the things I wanted to do for so many years. Let me say what a great pleasure it has been working with the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I take great pride in the work we accomplished on Capitol Hill, the body of law that our veteran is the envy of the world.

It is because we have worked together for the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the other veterans organizations to put that body of law together to maintain the hospital system that we have and the benefits and services that were provided to our nation's veterans.

I remember well when my brother returned from World War II. He was on a troop ship to Japan when they dropped the bomb. He served the patriotic forces of the 92nd. I worked with Congressman William Jennings, one of seven boys who served in his family in World War II.

I had the privilege of working with Ray Roberts of Texas, and Mr. Derrick of South Carolina, and for 15 years Chairman of the Committee, Sonny Montgomery of Mississippi. I must tell you when I was sitting in the audience yesterday, when he was talking about leaving the Congress, I can't imagine veterans being without the leadership of Sonny Montgomery, because he has been a true leader on veterans' issues for many, many years. You will miss him.

Although there are other capable people in the Congress, I don't think anyone has the commitment to veterans That he did.

Finally, let me say that I have had the opportunity to serve with 21 great Commanders-in-Chief of this organization and, most of all, we have worked so closely with your staff and officers in your Washington office. I mean people like Howard Vander Clute, Larry Rivers, Clifford T. Holt. I grew up with the best of them. I want to thank all of them for helping me the way they did in understanding and getting accomplished the things that I think would benefit veterans.

Finally, I would say I want to give special recognition to a personal friend of mine, Cooper T. Holt of Tennessee. When I arrived in Washington,

he took me under his wing, and I must say, and I will confess to all the delegates here, what I learned about veterans organizations, most of it came from Cooper T. Holt. I value his friendship and I will always value his friendship as long as I live.

I thank all of you members of the VFW for the support you have given me during my 21 years with the Committee. I deeply appreciate this recognition. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BRIGADIER GENERAL WILMA VAUGHT, USAF (RET.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Ladies and gentlemen, in 1986, Congress authorized the construction of a memorial in Washington, D.C., that would be a lasting tribute to the women who have served or are serving in our nation's armed forces. Last year, the ground-breaking for that memorial took place at the gates of Arlington National Cemetery.

When one considers that almost two million women have served the U.S. military throughout our history, from the American Revolution through Operation Desert Storm, it is most fitting that such a memorial receive the backing and support of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

This morning we are pleased to have with us the distinguished President of the Women in Military Service for America Foundation, Retired Air Force Brigadier General Wilma Vaught.

Prior to her retirement from active duty, General Vaught served as the senior woman military representative to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services from 1982 to 1985.

Please join me in a very warm welcome for a fellow VFW member and President of the Women's Memorial, Brigadier General Wilma Vaught.

REMARKS - BRIGADIER GENERAL WILMA VAUGHT

BRIGADIER GENERAL VAUGHT: Chief Spera, what I just want to say, I am one of your newest Life Members, too. In 1987, we started our fund-raising efforts for this memorial to honor all of America's servicewomen, the veterans who serve today and the ones who are going to serve in our wars.

That year we raised $10,000 that included a donation of $25 from one VFW Post. You were with us from the very beginning. We have raised the $18 million needed to build the memorial, and about half that cost goes for repairing and restoring the existing stone and iron structures at our site at the main gate at the Arlington National Cemetery.

These were greatly deteriorated from water and neglect over the 60 years they have been there. The exciting news now is that construction started this past March. We are on schedule. This week the contractor will start pouring concrete for the floor of the Education Center.

Paul, as you entered into office, you promised to help us and you did. We received over $38,000 in 1995 as a result of the letter you wrote to the

Departments and the Posts. We are indeed grateful to you and every Post that has helped. We have a total now from the VFW of about $87,000, and I hope to see this grow to $125,000 before the dedication — I am passing it over to you — so the VFW name will go up on the wall in one of the exhibit outposts alongside that of the VFW Auxiliary, which has already donated over $120,000. That is your challenge.

Almost a thousand individual Posts have donated and many have addressed their servicewomen. As we look forward to completion and dedication of the memorial on October 18, 1997, we are working to raise the money needed to equip and furnish the Education Center, build exhibit cases, prepare the exhibits, buy the computer equipment for displaying the registration information of the thousands of women who have been registered, many by VFW Posts and Auxiliaries, and get the audio-visual equipment.

I have been really impressed since we have been here as the number of you that have come to our exhibit down on the lower level and said you have registered every woman veteran in your Post. I am counting on you to continue donating so we can complete this great memorial in every aspect, and open it October 18, 1997, debt free. Your help can make a tremendous difference.

Paul, we hope you are going to be there with us on October 18, 1997. We invite each of you to visit our exhibit downstairs and see the pictures of our progress and construction, and see what the memorial will look like when it is completed.

Also I will try to sell you one of our commemorative silver dollars, if we can, right here. Paul Spera has one. Jim, I am on your case. You will have one. So, thank you, and I just can't thank you enough. Each of you has an open invitation to be with us on October 18, 1997, when we dedicate this memorial. I thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I have no doubt that with the energy that you bring to this that this will be a success and you will have all this money. I bought that coin on Veterans Day two years ago. She haunted me in the East room of the White House and wouldn't let me out until I paid her thirty-five bucks. You better watch out. She will do it to you, too, Jim.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: At this time I would like to bring to the microphone and the podium, the Chairman of the Committee on National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual, Past Commander-in-Chief Howard E. Vander Clute, Jr.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF VANDER CLUTE: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I want to, first, express my thanks to you, perhaps duty in a sense, for appointing me as Chairman of this Committee. I want to thank my Vice-Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief Art Fellwock of

Indiana. Most of all, I want to thank the 112 members of this Committee that met yesterday and assisted us so ably in resolving the issues that were before us.

We hope this morning that the members and delegates assembled will agree with the decisions that they have made. I want to assure you they were thoughtful. I want to assure you, too, that the debate was lively. I want to assure you that before we all left that room we knew exactly what the issue was, and we were satisfied amongst us, the majority of us, perhaps almost in unanimity, that we had made a decision that was in the best interest of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Let me begin by telling you this, if I may, that the Committee, before it began its debate, advised all the members that many of the By-Laws that had been submitted had not been submitted in proper form and had been returned. The reasons were obvious, and I agree, as do the members, that they should have been returned.

I want you to know that those that were returned, approximately 95 percent address a problem that is on all of your minds, probably the most sensitive and the most passionate issue internally that will come before this Convention, and that is the raise in the Life Membership dues which are to occur September 1.

Let me tell you that this debate centered around, I suspect, that single issue. I will read the titles of the Proposed By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual of changes that the Committee recommends for adoption. Concluding that list, I will move for the adoption of those that the Committee recommends. If you then wish to set aside any of those, it will be proper to address the Chair and ask that they be set aside.

The following will be recommended for adoption:
B-4, Suspension and Revocation of Charter.
B-7, Vacancies and Removal of Elected Officers.
B-8, also Vacancies and Removal of Elected Officers.
B-9, Delegates, County Council, District Department and National Conventions.
B-10, Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.
B-11 also concerns Officers, Elected and Appointed.
B-12 also concerns Officers, Powers and Duties.
B-13, again Officers Powers and Duties.
B-14, Inspection.
B-15, Eligibility. This one is the one that applies to the Ladies Auxiliary.
B-23, Life Members.
B-24, District dues.

Then in the Manual of Procedure, M-1, Delegates - County Council, District, Department and National Conventions.

M-2, Inspection.

M-3, Formation, Control, and Disbandment of Auxiliaries.

Under the section that relates to our Ritual, the Committee approved all four Resolutions, R-1, R-2, R-3 and R-4.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I recommend adoption as recommended by the Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I have motion to adopt. Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GLEN GARDNER (Post 3359 - Texas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Glen Gardner, a delegate from Post 3359, Garland, Texas. I ask that B-23 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: B-23 is set aside. Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE WAYNE BUCK (Post 1888 - Michigan): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I ask that B-15 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: B-15 will be set aside. Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Europe): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Dean White, Post 27, Department of Europe, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: What motion are you seconding?

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Europe): The motion from the Chair for the adoption.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Hold on just a second. We have got a second for the motion to accept. Are there any others that anyone wants to set aside? I have B-15 and B-23 as the only two that have been asked to be set aside. The motion has been made and seconded to adopt the recommendations of the Committee.

On the question, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The By-Law changes are adopted except B-15 and B-23.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF VANDER CLUTE: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief, and thank you, comrades. We have B-15 before us. It has been set aside. You already have a motion to adopt, so I suspect that we can just continue with the debate for consideration.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: They are set aside.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF VANDER CLUTE: We have a motion to approve and it has been seconded. You have asked it be set aside and now is the time to debate it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE WAYNE BUCK (Post 1888 - Michigan): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Wayne Buck, National COA from the State of Michigan. I would like to have the —

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Excuse me. Just so everybody understands, when you come to the microphone you need to stand plainly and clearly your name and your Post number for the record, and your

Department.

COMRADE WAYNE BUCK (Post 1888 - Michigan): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Wayne Buck, Post 1888, from the State of Michigan. I would like to have that last sentence that was deleted in B-15 read to the delegation.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF VANDER CLUTE: The last sentence that is to be deleted reads as follows: "Women eligible for membership in the Ladies Auxiliary must be citizens of the United States and not less than 16 years of age."

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE WAYNE BUCK (Post 1888 - Michigan): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I stand before you as a delegate to this Convention and as a delegate from Michigan asking you to reject this Amendment B-15 and disregard that, such that you are taking in place of what is there already. I would like to say that you leave in that you have to be a U.S. citizen to belong to the Auxiliary. Thank you.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF VANDER CLUTE: Let me tell you the thought process that went into this, if I may, so there is no misunderstanding. You might not agree precisely on what you have just said. The Ladies Auxiliary is not our organization.

It belongs, as I think we will all admit, to the Ladies Auxiliary. This is to facilitate the fact that the Ladies Auxiliary may debate this issue themselves. As long as citizenship is a requirement in this By-Law, they cannot debate it on their floor.

Let them decide whether they want to accept into their membership the hard working wives of our members overseas who would like to be members of the Auxiliary, and let them then decide whether this is in their best interest. That was the thought process of the members of the Committee.

(Whereupon, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Nier assumed the Chair.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL A. SPERA (Post 144 - Massachusetts): I am Paul Spera, a delegate from Post 144 in Massachusetts. I come to the microphone to say to you that this resolution was entered at the request of those individuals in the Department of Europe, the Pacific Areas, and Central America.

For a number of years they have been trying to get this issue resolved. They have wives who are non-citizens, and I have visited each of those Departments and I have seen firsthand the type of work that these wives do. They are not able to be members of the Ladies Auxiliary.

Basically, all they are asking for this year is a fair chance. The Ladies Auxiliary will be debating the same kind of resolution on their floor. Every time this issue has come up, someone comes to the microphone on our floor and states that we should not be involved in this, that this is an issue

that the ladies should take care of.

Then someone comes to the floor at the ladies meeting and says we should not be considering this because this is an issue that the men have to take care of, because this is in their By-Laws. Now, the ladies will decide the issues for themselves at this Convention.

All I am asking us to do is to step out of their way and let them make the decision. That is all that this resolution does. It gives them the opportunity. The wives I have spoken to, each of these foreign departments have said to me if the ladies decide that they do not wish to change that citizenship requirement, they can live with that.

They will still work beside their husbands for the benefit of the VFW. All they are asking for is a fair chance. If we step out of the way with this resolution, the ladies can decide for themselves. I think that is what they should do. Thank you.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE GEORGE RINKOWSKI (Post 5530 - Ohio): I am Father Rinkowski, Post 5530, Toledo, Ohio. I am interested in this for another reason than the one just proposed. You see, in the history of the world, the degradation of women has always been to put them down and this does this.

I go back to year 3500 B.C. That is when it first started. The wars were fought in order to capture women and children. They continued all through until Hitler did the same thing and that was pointed out the reason for the war. Everything was designed in regard to putting women down.

In the history of the world, there is no country that ever rated its women in accordance with their dignity as women until we, the United States of America, did that. They were given the right to vote a few years ago. It continued from there until the present time.

Now, their dignity is such that they have special dignity with value and purpose, value that its present worth and purpose and future worth, and this degrades them to a position where they are second rated citizens and they have to say they would prefer to have men in the ladies organization and suddenly the idea of nobility, they are something as women and they are not worth something that women related to men but they are women related to themselves.

They are a special person and they are not to be compared to men in any way, and men are not to be rated with them as the accepted policy in voting equality in work and equality in return, but not equality related to the person. This is proposed and we don't oppose it.

We are agreeing with them that they are reduced to a secondary position. We should continue to rate them for what they are and a position related to their quality and superior in relation to their purpose. We do not state the purpose of men and women the same, and that is a violation and denial of human nature.

We should say that we as the organization, members of the Veterans of

Foreign Wars, reject it and point that out to them. Now, we changed the word "ladies" to say VFW and very fine women, you would be closer to the truth if you did this now. But when you say that men can be in the ladies organization by changing that one little thing, putting VFW there, that is contrary to the nature of women.

We are attacking women's femininity and we are denying this between mothers and sisters and husbands. We are denying all of that, but we agree with this. I think that we as a men's organization should recognize that they are special, that they get special treatment, that they are women.

They are not men. They are for real and we should be the ones who propose that more than anybody else in the whole world. We are the only country that recognizes them for their dignity as women, and this is a denial of that dignity. We should absolutely say something about it and not just pass it off and say let them do it themselves.

This may have been proposed by somebody else. I don't think that came out of their own mind. I say we should definitely put it on record that we repudiate this concept. Women are women and they are special, made special in the eyes of God, are these women are doing —

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Comrade, I will ask you to get back on the subject. There are others that need to speak

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JOHN LEWIS (Post 15006 - Colorado): The last year and the year before, since we have opened up our membership to the Korean War veterans or the Korean veterans that have served over there, I have recruited a good many people, especially around Ft. Carson, Colorado.

They circulate these people back and forth, and a lot of these people have brought Korean wives back. If we are going to open up our organization to people and we expect them to belong to the VFW, I don't think we should stand in the road having their wives to belong to the VFW Auxiliary.

I move the question.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: That does require a second. Do I hear a second?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GLEN GARDNER (Post 3359 - Texas): I second the motion.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: It is not debatable. The motion before us is to close debate. I will call for the question. Those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; those opposed by the same sign. The "ayes" have it. Now, we must vote on the motion to adopt B-15. Those in favor of adopting B-15 will signify by saying "aye"; those opposed by the same sign. The "ayes" have it.

(Whereupon, Commander-in-Chief Spera assumed the Chair at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The next one that was set aside was B-23.

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GLEN GARDNER (Post 3359 - Texas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I stand in opposition to B-23. B-23 has to do with the Life Memberships in this organization. A decision was made by the Trustees of this Life Membership Fund to do something that would soundly affect the future of this organization.

It raises the fees by not following the guidelines or the Departments of this organization. There is also a problem with B-23 in the fact the way it is written we are not mandated to have any kind of pay-out. It says $3.50, but it goes below that and they could increase that or decrease that as they see necessary.

The Life Membership pay-out to the Departments and Posts could go as low as nothing if this Committee felt that was what could happen with the actuaries. I would ask that we defeat B-23, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE EUGENE MANFREY (Post 6827 - Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Eugene Manfrey, Post 6827, St. Petersburg, Florida, and a member of the National Council of Administration. I also rise for the purpose of defeating this particular resolution, based on the fact that the resolution was proposed by the Life Membership Committee.

As Chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee for the State of Florida, if we pass this resolution we will continue to lose money on our Life Memberships. We have over 43,000 members in the State of Florida. We get $6.25 for a new and reinstated member, and we get $5 for a Life Member.

By defeating this motion would help us to make up that deficit of $73,000 that we lose. In the State of Florida, we have had to adjust our budget by $58,000 because of the loss of revenue. Many of the Posts, and I understand this, that the Posts say they can't rely on this money from their membership.

I disagree with them. I think that most of the Departments, most of the Posts do recognize this. Now, it raises, as far as the proposal by the Committee, everybody is talking about the 81-year-old. I understand what they are talking about.

By the same token, if this guy is 81 years old, he had 60 years to become a Life Member of this organization if he belonged that long. The members of those particular Posts that had those 81-year-olds, I don't see them clamoring to become Life Members, I think that those Posts should buy Life Memberships for their 81-year-olds. I speak in opposition.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE HOWARD VANDER CLUTE (Post 6467 - New Jersey): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Howard Vander Clute, Post 6467, Department of New Jersey, and Chairman of the Committee on By- Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual. I have chosen to speak from here because I think it is more appropriate.

I am in favor of B-23 being adopted because I recognize the passion of the issue. Everyone appears to be opposed to the new fees that are now being levied on September 1st, or planned to be levied on September 1, 1996. Although there is not a perfect By-Law change proposed, amongst all of those that we have accepted, this By-Law change is the only one of all that had been proposed that will return the fee to that we now pay.

That seems to be what the members want, or at least indicated to me yesterday at the meeting. Now, I recognize there are imperfections and I recognize the fact that the Quartermaster General and the members of the Board of Trustees of the Life Membership Fund have reduced that pay out.

Let me say that is not likely to happen with the remarks of our Quartermaster General yesterday. He indicated to us that he could pay out $5 this coming year in 1996-'97 for all the Life Members that we have. So what this will do is return it to the old price after September 1st when this becomes effective.

Number two, the Quartermaster General has indicated he will pay the $5.

Number three, if I may rebut my good friend's argument, no Post in this world needs the additional two dollars to meet their bills. If they can't pay their bills with the $5 they receive back from the Life Members now, they have mortgages, light bills, electric bills, all the things that the Association themselves with running a Post, the two dollars more per Life Member means nothing.

But two dollars more on 500,000 or one million means a great deal to the National Organization. They are the biggest benefactor when this occurs. Let's start thinking about the members who have to sell these Life Memberships. Let's start thinking about the members who want those Life Memberships in their Posts, not only for the prestige for their members, but the prestige for their Posts, and they are satisfied with the $5 pay-out.

Having said all of that, let me say this. I recognize as much as any National Officer or any member that sits in this delegation, that we have a fiduciary responsibility to appropriately fund the Trust Fund. We certainly don't want to do anything to endanger that responsibility.

I also know that we must maintain the integrity of that fund. I also know, because the Quartermaster General reported it and because it is borne out by the report of the auditors that the fund is short. But, for heaven's sake, my comrades, let's address that problem, but not with the 60 and 70-percent increase in Life Membership fees.

Let's send a message to the National Headquarters that we want equal increase and that we maintain the integrity of the fund. That is all we are asking for.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DON LINSCOTT (Post 1603 - Maine): I again rise to say I am in favor of this particular resolution, although it doesn't have all the things in it that I would like to see. Basically, what Past Commander-in-

Chief Vander Clute said, many of his interests are also my same interests.

Statisticians are a wonderful thing if you can afford them. The statisticians tell us that most of us are going to live to be 88.8. You know, as a Maine farm boy all I know is that I have got 406 members. I lost 16 members last year, and only one member was over 80.

I guess that sort of tells the statistician that maybe we have to look at a new and different direction. That same report I got also told me that this same statistician that tells me in 1999 they are going to lose 97,000 more members. Guys, I don't know about you, but the Department of Maine has not seen a membership loss for the last three or four years.

My membership is not going to lose members by 1999. We have been told that everything has to do with this Convention for we, the members. Yet in the last Quartermaster's Conference, I wanted new definitions. It seems that when the National Organization wants to share information with us, it means this is the way it is going to be.

I have sat here two days in Convention and went to my conference and saw one side of the story. I don't know about you. I saw one side of the Life Membership story. I heard one side of doing away with the citizenship for the Ladies Auxiliary.

I am for this amendment. If we pass this amendment, give us, the members out here, ideas and let us come up with the fancy things. I hope, gentlemen, that you will return this to the membership via a personal message and give it to work together with the Committee.

Another thing, if in 1999 we are going to, as the report was given to me, have more Life Members than regular members, then why shouldn't we have the right to vote on what the fees are going to be for the regular members? Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JOHN MOON (Post 2873 - Ohio): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, John Moon, Post 2873, Grover Hill, Ohio. I have heard in the last year some of the comments that were made for or against what was going to be brought up today. I have heard comments about the actuaries and their statistics, and whatever it may be.

Then I heard yesterday again that these actuaries are many times employed by life insurance companies, and that is true. These actuaries have never left or allowed the Life Membership Company to go under. That should be an appraisal and thanksgiving to these actuaries.

But then if we look at the Quartermaster General and his staff, who are obligated to bring forward their outlines and their goals of what is necessary, their fiduciary responsibility to see to it that the programs continue to go in the black and not the red, or to be free speech every year.

Then again, you hear that we have over $115 million in that fund. That is true. There is no problem with the $115 million in that fund to continue to pay. However, over the last four years, at the going rate, the payments are made to the respective Departments and to the Posts and to the National

Organization, we are doing it at a decreasing rate and losing money.

It was not an easy decision to make, but when 500 accept it on the floor, including the Commander-in-Chief, the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General made that decision, it was not just a rubber stamp. It was from earnest thoughts put forth to protect the integrity and the length and breadth of this VFW, not for today or next week, but for 15, 20, 25 years to come.

If we allow ourselves to continue at the same rate structure, we will deplete the funds. If we allow ourselves to continue at this mode, we are definitely going downhill in terms of the Life Membership. Again, we do not need an increase, we would have to be paying less.

It is not the National is going to hurt as everyone seems to think, or necessarily the Posts that are going to hurt, because as you just heard two dollars is not going to pay a light bill. But collectively two dollars times many will and collectively each and every Department, whatever the pay-out is given to them, helps set forth their programs for what they have to do to continue the success each and every year to promote the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE WILLIAM KIRSOP (Post 4256 - Florida): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I am Bill Kirsop, VFW Post 4256, Vero Beach, Florida. I come before this microphone to ask the comrades to reject B-23. Also I have a responsibility as Department Adjutant Quartermaster for the Department of Florida.

I must have gone a little bit deaf. Yesterday I sat in the meeting of the Bylaw Committee. I heard what went on there, and I heard something else out of the Quartermaster General. I heard the Quartermaster General, and anyone can correct me if I am wrong to say to us, and I received a letter this year that we would receive five dollars.

I heard him also say that it would be necessary to reduce it next year to four dollars. Our By-Law says right now he can reduce it as low as $3.50. With a reduction to four dollars, my Department would lose almost $58,000 next year. At the present rate of five dollars, our Department could only raise funds through dues and through fund-raisers.

We don't have canteens like some of the Posts do. We have to pay the National Organization, we have to pay the Veterans Service Program, which is so close to my heart. The Department of Florida, in 1988, when we opened up the Department Service Program at our own expense, no expense to the state, no expense to no one, we opened up with a dollar increase in our annual dues, which came to about $40,000.

I can't go back and ask the annual members to continue to pay for the increase at the Department's expense. When you talk about an increase of what it is, me as a veteran and a veteran since 1969 in the VFW, I have got more than my money back for the $200 dues I have paid.

I would be honored, and I know this organization is still worth $300 to

be a member. I ask you to reject B-23 and ask our Quartermaster General to look into the 21st Century and not think of immediately. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DON HARTENBERGER (Post 3553 - Illinois): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Don Hartenberger, Post 3553, Chester, Illinois, and State Commander of Illinois. I am in favor of adopting this resolution for the simple reason there are many things that come before us at our Senior's Conference in Kansas City this spring.

I went to our Quartermaster and his office and I said, "Is this fund in any danger of going broke? Is it something that we need to address right now?" I was assured at that meeting there or at his office that they could pay $5 fees from now on to kingdom come, and that this money would never go broke.

Also I have been interested in that we have approximately 900,000 Life Members. I would say half of those members, about 450,000, are World War II veterans. In 10 to 15 years there will not be a lot of World War II veterans left. What will happen to that principal amount then? Are we not going to still have that so we can draw interest off that?

I don't think we will sell that many more Life Members in the next 10 to 15 years. Looking at the graphs that I have been shown, it shows a membership increase or a fee increase that our membership goes way down. We don't see many Life Memberships, and it takes six to eight years to build it back to where it was.

Also had I been in favor of this resolution, I would be against it now from all the literature I got. It seems to me like the National is trying to sell us something. I get a letter almost on a daily basis on this program. I have a stack of mail this thick. When somebody tries that hard to sell something to me, I look deeply into it because something is wrong. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 - Connecticut): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Ron Rusko from Post 9460, Stratford, Connecticut, and a member of the Bylaws Committee. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, and fellow delegates, this By-Law amendment was debated for quite a long time yesterday with over 120 members of the Committee.

We concur. The entire Committee concurs with the National Organization that, in fact, the Life Membership fee must be raised. We concurred that the fees must be raised. We concur with James Nier, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, the Quartermaster General and everyone else, the members of the Life Membership Committee, that they must be raised.

What we don't concur with is that they be raised so darn high in one year. That is what we don't concur with. We believe, and I think this was a consensus of the Committee, and I am not trying to speak for the entire Committee that was sitting in that room, we believe if we were to take and

have the Life Membership Committee come up with a fair and equitable range for the Life Membership fee and come back to these delegates next year and present it to us, that there would be no problem raising the Life Membership fee.

The Quartermaster General stated yesterday in the meeting that they had planned to pay the $5 and were prepared to pay $5 per member this coming year, and that the thought was not any financial hardship for the next year. I suggest to you and I ask you to adopt B-23.

Give the Committee a year. Give us, the delegates of this organization, a year to decide on another fair and equitable raise for the Life Membership fee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN WASYLIK: Commander-in-Chief, John Wasylik, Post 2529, Sandusky, Ohio, Post Quartermaster and a Past Commander-in-Chief. Also I am one of the older members on this floor. I have heard this argument each time we have raised the Life Membership dues that we are going to wreck the organization and I can't afford it, and all of that.

I remind you what I have said, I am a Post Quartermaster. I know how our Posts need income. Of course, that is true up and down the organization. The entire organization needs more income. Comrades, I started 36 years ago as an optometrist. I would examine your eyes and give you a gold-filled frame and bifocal lenses for $42. The exam is $50 now. I have to charge more to keep that office open.

How do you expect to keep your Posts open? How do you expect to keep your District moving? How do you expect the National Organization to keep operating on less money or the same amount of money as ten years ago? The fault lies in the fact that we didn't raise Life Membership fees ten years ago when we should have.

We are already too late. We are hurting ourselves. As a result, we have all these outside fund-raising programs that are hurting our membership far more than any Life Membership raise will do. I have heard more complaints from my membership about that than I do the fees we are charging for the membership. I stand in opposition to this By-Law amendment and I urge that we defeat it. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much. Just an explanation before I go on to the next microphone. I just had to bring a chair up here. For those of you who know since I have traveled with, I have a back that has a tendency to pop out and it feels like it is about ready to go. If I am sitting while it is going on, please excuse me. I don't mean any disrespect

Microphone No. 1, please.

COMRADE RUSSELL RIEKE (Post 5694 - Illinois): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am a National Council member from District B that represents the State of Illinois. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I have had

many phone calls and received many letters and talked with many National officials on this dues increase.

I stand here this morning representing the State of Illinois, hopefully, that we will approve B-23. I have been Post Commander for the second time out of my home Post. I received All State Post Commander status due to the hard work of my Committee that went out and sold Life Memberships at the current rate. We had a tough time.

I also have spoken to the officials about is this fund in any kind of danger? I was assured this fund is not in any kind of danger. We hired people to invest our money. At this time we have lived and paid the Life Membership fee at the current rate off of our interest.

That Life Membership Fund will continue to grow because our investors will see to it that our money is put in the right respective interest and get the highest interest for it. I stand before you and all the delegates from the State of Illinois hoping that we will approve B-23 for the Life Membership and keep us at the same status. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you. Comrades, right now I have a difficulty up here that we need to deal with. In about 15 minutes, we need to clear this stage and prepare for the arrival of the Secret Service, and the candidate, and all the hoopla that goes with that.

The problem that we have is we have an award to present to General Shelton. If we don't present it now, he needs to leave by 11:00 o'clock and we will not have the opportunity to make that presentation.

So what I will do, Comrade Nier, I will give you the option of either speaking now and being the last speaker for right now, or the option of waiting until we begin to debate again after the candidate leaves. Whichever you prefer, I will give to you.

The other comrades, I know you are in line and you have been waiting in line. If you can be patient with us and when this is over, line up back the way you are now, I will appreciate that. We are going to have to cut off debate. I have time for one more speaker. It is your call, Jim. You can do it now or later.

Microphone No. 2, please.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I understand the situation. I would only ask that when we return to this issue I be allowed to speak first.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: You will be first when we return. I thank you very much. Thank you for your understanding, comrades.

PRESENTATION OF VFW ARMED FORCES AWARD, GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION TO GENERAL H. HUGH SHELTON

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to introduce to you Army General Hugh Shelton. General Shelton currently is the Commander of the United States Special Operations Command, and is the recipient of the VFW Armed Forces Award for his role as the

Commander of Operation "Uphold Democracy" in Haiti.

General Shelton and the forces that participated in the operation are to be commended. Operation "Uphold Democracy" was an organizational and leadership achievement of immense proportion. Prepared for combat operations, the military forces while underway were able to successfully change planes in mid air for an anticipated opposed landing to an unopposed peaceful landing of thousands of military forces.

They successfully completed the initial phase of the operation in the allotted time.

The mission complete, General Shelton and his force successfully achieved their four primary missions of protecting United States citizens, national interests and designated Haitians; restoring civil order, conducting civil military operations to stabilize the internal situation in Haiti and, fourth, assisting in the transition of a legitimate government to Haiti.

General Shelton and those forces under his command are to be commended for their actions which have reflected favorably upon the United States and its Armed Forces. Their actions contributed to the security and stability of a region important to the interests of the United States.

Please give General Shelton a very warm VFW welcome.

"VFW Armed Forces Award, Gold Medal and this Citation, presented to General H. Hugh Shelton, Commander of Operation Uphold Democracy and participating U.S. military forces.

"In special recognition of the immense organizational and leadership achievement whereby our military forces were able to successfully accomplish their four primary missions of protecting U.S. citizens, national interest and designated Haitians; restoring civil order; conducting civil-military operations to stabilize the internal situation in Haiti, and assisting in the transition of a legitimate government to Haiti.

"The actions of General Shelton and those forces under his command reflect favorably upon the United States and its armed forces and contributed to the security and stability of a region important to the interests of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 20th day of August, 1996. Approved by the National Council of Administration." It has been signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General. Congratulations, General Shelton.

RESPONSE - GENERAL H. HUGH SHELTON

GENERAL SHELTON: Commander-in-Chief Spera, Fellow Veterans of Foreign Wars and Family Members:

I am truly humbled and honored to be standing here in front of you today and to be the recipient of this prestigious Armed Forces Award. To be singled out as a representative of our great Armed Forces today makes me proud both professionally as well as personally.

I believe in a larger sense that you really don't honor me as an individual but them, the boys in the Persian Gulf, the Marine standing at order in Korea, the clerk-typist in the recruiting station in Los Angeles, or the Army paratrooper waiting for the general jump light to come on somewhere in the world today.

Gentlemen, I have had some successes in my career, but I can tell you I have stood on the shoulders of giants to arrive here today. Men like the sergeants who have told the young lieutenant how to survive and how to make a difference in Vietnam years ago.

Now, my current assignment, I am harkened every day at the great quality of young men and women in the Army, the Air Force and the Navy that make up the United States Special Operations Command and the rest of the military. You know today it is very popular to be labeled as one of the best and brightest.

I would submit to you that our Armed Forces today, the personnel that make them up, because of their professional competence, their courage and their commitment to duty in the service to their nation, that they, like you and those who have worn the uniform before, deserve to be included in the best and brightest.

The best and brightest, because they understand that some things are worth fighting for. They understand that some things are more important than themselves and the moment. They know in their very souls as you know that freedom isn't free. Today, as General Westmoreland said last night, we live in an uncertain peace.

Just yesterday I had the honor to stop in Ft. Benning, Georgia, en route to receive a citation about the Falcon Ranger. As I leave here today, I will travel to Ft. Campbell, Kentucky, to award the same award of the valor unit citation to a former Special Operations Aviation Unit, in a war that was won in Mogadishu, Somalia, and a few years ago in some of the intense fighting that we have seen since Vietnam, an action that guaranteed posthumously medals of honor and call for actions above and beyond the call of duty.

If you think that was entirely an Army action, I will tell you that there also is an Air Force Cross and Silver Stars awarded to both sailors and airmen as a result of that action. I think that you can see why I am honored to be standing here today humbled by the award that you have presented.

All of you men and women have walked the dangerous path. Your willingness to do what has to be done at the risk of your lives provided a tremendous legacy for us, both a sacrifice and honor. As President Kennedy said, "A nation reveals itself by the men that it remembers, the men that it honors." The Veterans of Foreign Wars is the epitome, I think, of that statement.

So to you, let me say in concluding, I thank you very much for the award which I humbly accept on behalf of our Armed Forces, and I can promise you today that as you turn in tonight or your children turn in tonight that you can rest assured that somewhere Americans are standing watch over the freedoms that you have helped to sustain. God bless you

and God bless the VFW, and God bless America.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrades, at this time I have just found out that General Shelton, a Vietnam veteran and a veteran of Desert Storm is not presently a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Wait a minute. If you boo him, boo us because we never asked him.

So at this time, General Shelton, on behalf of the two million plus members of the VFW, with recognition of all of your service, I would like to offer to make you a Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

GENERAL SHELTON: Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: That is how you get new members. You ask them if they belong.

We are just waiting for word for us to be called to the back room, and we were told that it would be any minute now. Please be patient with us.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE JACK KEMP

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We are honored to have with us today as a special guest, the Honorable Jack Kemp. Mr. Kemp is a former nine-term Congressman from the Buffalo area or upper New York State.

Mr. Kemp earned his stripes as an effective advocate for the poor with his tireless promotion of enterprise zones in the inner cities, and for his responsible condemnation of housing projects that mire those who live there in poverty and drugs.

As HUD Secretary, he worked effectively to adhere to President Reagan's goals of uplifting the quality of life for the poor. He serves on the Board of Directors of Habitat for Humanity. He is a Distinguished Fellow at the Heritage Foundation and serves as a member of the Howard University Board of Trustees.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that he was also a distinguished quarterback on the San Diego and Buffalo NFL teams for 13 years.

Please join me in a warm VFW welcome for the Republican candidate for the office of Vice-President of the United States, the Honorable Jack Kemp.

ADDRESS - THE HONORABLE JACK KEMP

MR. JACK KEMP: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief Spera. It is nice to be here to be introduced as the former quarterback and former Housing Minister and former Congressman. My grandson introduced me as a very important public servant.

It is a great honor to be here today with the men and women for I am reminded of Dr King's belief that freedom is not free, and it is a great price to be paid, but you remind us that the price of freedom is never so high as the loss of it. With that, we stand on your shoulders. We thank you.

In the presence of so many American heroes in the audience, I am

reminded today of something last Saturday I was able to say in Russell, Kansas. I mentioned that it becomes a tradition at the State of the Union Address every year before the Congress to pay tribute to the American hero or heroes in the audience in the galley.

I suggested that next year when President Dole gives his first State of the Union Address there will be a hero at the podium giving that address. In just a few minutes, you will be hearing from that man, but first it is my honor and privilege to introduce to you another great American hero, a comrade in arms of yours, a man who has earned the respect and admiration of every American, General Colin Powell, who helped America to a decisive victory in Desert Storm.

However, his contributions to this country go much deeper than the leadership he showed on the battlefield. Colin Powell, with whom I proudly serve on the Board of Trustees of Howard University in Washington, D.C., one of our nation's most prestigious black colleges, is a living manifestation of the American dream.

Bob and I were very proud last week at our convention when Colin Powell, in the tradition of Abraham Lincoln, speaking to our Republican convention with eloquent call for unity and reconciliation and equality of opportunity for all Americans. I had the honor last year of being asked by the Wall Street Journal to review his book "American Journey."

When I read that autobiography of Colin Powell I came to the conclusion that it described a lot more than just one man's journey through America. Instead of moving, he painted a portrait of a journey shared by countless men and women throughout our nation's history, a journey made in search of freedom and opportunity, a better life for family, children and community.

This was a journey made by Colin Powell's parents. Like so many other American immigrant families, they instilled in their children a love of freedom, of dedication to the nation and that unshakable moral code. What my American journey revealed to me above all that was Colin Powell is a man of that code.

There is a certain way to treat people, he said, a certain way to lead men and women, a certain way to worship God and prepare for battle. He is rooted in tradition. It is required by duty and reaffirmed by ceremony. By remaining true to that code Colin Powell truly does embody the American dream.

Like Bob Dole, General Powell believes that every young man and woman in America are capable of the same potential, the same fulfillment of that dream if given the equal opportunity that America guarantees, for which you fought.

The ladder socio-economic opportunity in America has to extend to our urban centers, the low-income communities all over America, and if we are to see the potential of the next generation fully realized. Colin is a proof of the words that Bob Dole spoke last week in San Diego.

Bob Dole said when the flight of the sons of immigrants, when the

grandsons of slaves fell on foreign fields, it was American blood. And he went on to say you could not read the epitaphs of the soldiers who died next to you. You knew he was an American.

It is my great honor to introduce to this hall of great soldiers another great soldier, a great patriot, a man that Bob Dole and I am proud to call our friend. Ladies and gentlemen, General Colin Powell.

REMARKS BY GENERAL COLIN POWELL

GENERAL POWELL: Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. I appreciate your very, very warm welcome. I thank you, Jack, for that kind introduction. I have to tell you that in spite of flattery to be introduced by Jack Kemp, one of the most inspirational men I have ever known, a man who exhumes his love for this country with every breath, a man of firm principles and beliefs, who will be taking a message of economic growth and family values, included as he just described, into every corner of this country over the next almost three months.

Jack is, above all, a caring man. He is a man who wants the American dream to become a reality for every one of our citizens. I think we should all be proud that he has offered himself up for service in this most important way to our country.

I am so very, very pleased to be with the VFW again. I have had occasion to speak at a number of important events over the years at your National Conventions before Desert Storm and after Desert Storm. I wear with pride and honor the Gold Medal that you presented to me in 1988, and as a reminder of what you stand for.

I have never failed to come to such a gathering of the VFW without finding myself inspired, inspired by being with fellow veterans. You are my buddies, my fellow GI's, buddies who have given so much to make our country safe and to bring freedom to the invaded, and trust to people in the world.

I salute you again for what you have done over all those years in your service and what you continue to do for our nation today. I remember vividly speaking to you at your 94th Convention a week after Operation Desert Storm, I guess it was. It was an emotional time. We had just won a great victory.

In those remarks I complimented the commanders and troops who were serving under Norman Schwarzkopf who brought that victory home to America and who brought the victory to people in Kuwait. I also thanked those who supported us back here, those who provided the weapons of war that we needed, those who provided that emotional moral support that meant so much to our troops in the Gulf.

No organization did it better than the VFW with your letters and your gifts and how you cared for families. After Desert Storm, something magical happened here in the United States. The American people fell in love again with those wonderful young men and women in uniform who served

them so proudly.

They saw these youngsters, proud, patriotic, committed, well fit, well trained. They fell in love with them all again, and parades broke out all over the country. You will remember all those little parades. There were parades in New York, Washington, and every little town and village in our country.

By the summer of 1991, I started to get calls from various commanders around the armed forces saying, "Colin, you have to do something. The troops are getting to like these parades too much. The sailors don't want to go to sea and the pilots don't want to fly, and the infantry doesn't want to run around in the mud anymore. They want to know when will be the next parade."

We told them to give the American people all the parades they wanted. We are bound together with the American people just as we were in 1945, and we are not going to let that bond be broken, and those in Desert Storm, be sure and include your Vietnam and Korean buddies, so they can get the parade they never got.

The VFW has not just been with us in times of parades and celebrations. They have been there with us and for us for 97 years, good times and bad. You were there when others turned their back on the military and our uniforms were insulted. You were there during the dark days after Vietnam when we were at a low point and had to rebuild ourselves into a first-class military.

You stayed with us. We always knew we could count on you. For that, those of us who have served after you, will always be grateful. I know that you will be there and you are fighting for a strong defense, fighting to make sure that if our youngsters in some point in the future, go into battle, will know what they are fighting for.

They will have everything they need. They will have the support of American people and they will always go to win. I know that you will always be there to receive them home, to make sure that we take care of those who have borne the burden of war and that we take care of their families.

I am here today, however, to introduce a fellow veteran to you. You know him well. He served his country in war and carries the scars of that service. He proudly wears the Purple Heart. He is wearing something to show the courage that he showed in the years that followed, a spirit that carried him to new challenges to a lifetime of service to the country and the Congress.

He now offers himself up as a service, as a leader of this great nation. He has a vision for this country, a vision he presented to us in his acceptance speech last week after his nomination for the Republican Party. He stands for a basic renewal of tradition of values, values upon which we will rest our future.

That is a vision based on the growth of our economy with the simple goal of providing the dignity and rewards of honest work to every able-bodied American who wants to work. The return of power to the people by

putting government spending and the government under control, and putting your money back in your pocket; the return of trust in this beloved land of ours to the people.

His vision includes providing leadership to the world in a way that will reassure and comfort our friends and put our enemies on clear notice that we have the strength and the will to defend ourselves and to defend our interests wherever we may be called to do so.

He has a vision that includes being an inclusive leader, inclusion in the conclusion of the word "we can." Everybody is using it and it is easy to say. I know the man from Kansas. I know that he means it. I know that he and Jack Kemp will be running a campaign that will reach out and touch all Americans.

It is a vision that America needs. As he likes to say, he was tried and tested. He is a man of strength, character, energy and, in fact, I hope he doesn't wear out Jack Kemp on the campaign trails.

My friends, I am honored to present to you fellow veterans a Life Member of the VFW, Lieutenant Bob Dole, of the 10th Mountain Division, as the Republican candidate for the presidency of the United States.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ADDRESS BY THE HONORABLE ROBERT DOLE

COMRADE ROBERT DOLE: Thank you very much. I want to introduce a couple of other guests. My former colleague and Majority Leader of the United States Senate and Ronald Reagan's Chief of Staff, Senator Howard Baker is out here somewhere. Also the former Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld from the great State of Illinois. He is over there visiting on the left. Don and I were House colleagues together some time ago. We were office neighbors, and he did a great job, and he has been very helpful to us in the past few months.

Let me say that I am very honored to be here. In fact, when we were driving from the airport, I was riding with General Powell and I was thinking, only in America could a Second Lieutenant ride with a General. It is exciting, and as he indicated he received the VFW Gold Medal Award and he wears it proudly today.

There is no question about his loyalty to America and no question about his service to America, and he will go down in history as one of the great leaders in the military of all time. I am particularly proud that General Powell is with us today and I am also very proud that Jack Kemp, who was in the Congress and has always been a strong supporter and strong advocate of America's fighting forces, and a very good friend of the VFW, and I am proud to have Jack Kemp as my running mate.

He was a quarterback for the Bills and the Chargers and he is being a blocking back for me, and we are going to have a great time in the next 78 days. I have had the great pleasure of speaking to a number of VFW Conventions. I would like to speak to your 100th Convention as the

President of the United States in 1998.

I know that Senator Thurmond spoke to your first Convention. He will probably speak again at the 100th Convention. I know that I speak for General Powell and Jack Kemp in saying how honored we are to have this opportunity again to meet with members of the VFW.

There is no question about it, as General Powell said, one of the outstanding organizations in which I am very proud to be a Life Member. Norman Staab is out there. He got me to be a Life Member. He got everybody to be a Life Member. You can't be a member of Post 6240 unless you are a Life Member.

I know that others have done a lot of great work, too, in that area. I spoke last week in San Diego, perhaps some of you may have heard it, and I did talk about the great values that a proud America through time and time again. I talked about the values of God and family and duty and honor and country.

These are values that I learned in Russell, Kansas, and Jack Kemp learned in Southern California, that General Powell learned in New York City, and that you learned in your home community. They are the values that I took with me to the hills of Italy and that you took with you to places like Normandy, Midway, and Pork Chop Hill, Saigon, the Persian Gulf.

They are the values that remain with all of us still. They remain with me and they remain with you. They are the values that have always been the heart and soul of the VFW. I see it on my right and I see it on my left. What does the VFW say? "We'll do anything for this country." That is what the VFW is all about.

Whether it is supporting a defense budget, which allows Americans philosophication of the leaders of the free world or teaching our young people what it means to be an American in your Voice of Democracy program, or ensuring that America honors this sacred commitment to care for those who risk their lives for America, and there are many in this audience, as I can see.

There are probably hundreds and thousands of stories in this audience of 5,000 or 6,000 this morning of heroism, of risking your lives for your fellow man, of suffering, of hardships. You are here today because you care. You care about the VFW, yes, but beyond that you care about America.

You care about your family; you care about freedom; you care about liberty. I bet there is not a person in this room who wouldn't be willing to risk their life one more time to keep America free. That is what the VFW is all about. It is not about politics, it is not about Republicans or Democrats or Independents, it is about Americans.

I must say when I was a young soldier in the hills of Italy, I didn't know anything about politics. Nobody asked me before they fired whether I was a Republican or a Democrat. If I had known then what I know now, I would have probably said, "I don't belong to any organized party."

Whatever the cause, the men of the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary stand today where you have always stood, throughout this century four squares in

support of God and family, and duty and honor for our country. As I look out in this gathering, as I have for the past few minutes, I am reminded of the many times we have stood together over the years.

We stood together in support of our soldiers in Vietnam. As you recall, at the time there was a rather large voice in the Congress that wanted to cut off funding even while we still had men there missing in action, women missing in action, POW's.

They were still serving and dying for our country, and there was a big effort in Congress to cut off funding. I said "no" and you said "no", and together we prevailed with the help of a lot of other people in Congress and the millions and millions of Americans all across this country.

We stood together when the Vietnam War was over in demanding a full and complete accounting of our POW's and MIA's, and, an accounting, which make no mistake about it, still has not been delivered. We still have to say every day we want an accounting.

We still have to be heard. We stood together in support of President Reagan's efforts to reverse the years of neglect and rebuild our armed forces. We watched with pride as the Iron Curtain crumbled in response and country after country turned democratic capitalistic.

One thing I said, and I have said it here before, I was in the United States Senate when all this was happening and I was the Republican leader. Many of these leaders and all these Eastern European countries and the former Soviet Union would come to America, and they were young and they were old and they were men and they were women, and some had been locked up and put in jail because they spoke up about some of the problems in their country and in effect took on the administration.

They came to our office, and I know Senator Baker remembers this, too. Many of those who come to America for foreign aid, they want a hand-out, they never mentioned foreign aid. They came to us and they talked about America. They talked about basic freedoms that we had and they just received the right to worship, the right to travel that we think nothing about.

They had to wait for years and years, and sometimes never the right to leave their countries, the right to send their children to school and the right to pick up a telephone without somebody listening on the other end; the right to vote, and almost without exception, as they would leave our office, and many would say with tears streaming down their cheeks, it was almost the same message each time, it wasn't that we want foreign aid or we want this or we want that.

No, what it was, it was very simple. They said, in fact, "We want to be like America. We want to be like America." I say that so we will never forget that we are the greatest country on the face of the earth, the United States of America.

So we are fortunate. Many have paid a price and we could fill this hall twice over for those who never came back, who never had a chance, never had the opportunity, but they preserved it for us because of the sacrifice that they made around the world.

So it is an opportunity and a privilege and honor, win or lose, to address this Convention. I am looking in the faces of men and women who are out there every day trying to make it work, creating jobs and creating opportunities with the same concerns and anxieties that Americans have everywhere about jobs, health care and what happens to me, what happens to my family, my kids and my grand kids.

So I know we stand together in one of the most important wars we have ever fought in this country, and that is the war against drugs. It is reported today in the survey just released today that drug use among young Americans rose 78 percent in the past four years.

This is nothing short of a national tragedy. I have said to myself, starting next January, I am going to make the drug war priority number one once again. I will call together the best anti-drug advocates and the best experts I can find for a White House Conference.

We will work together in a non-partisan, bipartisan way to find solutions to put us back on the course to absolute victory against the war on drugs. That is one drug that we should not use. It is time to send a clear message to our young people.

We had temptations in our time, too, different, that everyone resisted. We see what happens with increased drug use, particularly among those 12 to 17 years of age, cocaine use increased 166 percent. That is hard drugs. I know I can count on the VFW for help.

We also stood together in economically tough times to ensure reducing the deficit would not be accomplished on the back of the American veterans. We stood together in support of George Bush's heroic leadership in the Persian Gulf. We stood together in the establishment under President Reagan for cabinet status for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We stood together and we stand together still in support of the Constitutional Amendment to protect the American flag. I think it is important to this country. We have accomplished a great deal, but you have accomplished a lot more in every community in America.

Our work is far from complete. Jack and I are here not just to thank you for all you have done for America in the past, but also to share with you for just a few moments where we hope to meet America's future. I will say to my fellow Democrats, my parents were Democrats and they were the best people I knew. I did get them to convert, but it took a while.

I am not here in that binding partisanship, I believe in America as you do. As I spoke last week in San Diego, one of the great lessons of history is that if America is prepared to fight many wars and greater wars, and any wars to come, then we will fight fewer wars and lesser wars, and perhaps no wars at all.

It is a lesson, I say, I think the fact is that the administration has forgotten in the past four years while the administration has increased domestic spending by 23 percent, it has also slashed defense spending by 11 percent, and I must say very honestly it would be more if it had not been for the Republican Congress and some Democrats in Congress, the bipartisan drew

a line in the sand.

The men and women who serve in the armed forces have paid a very personal price for these reductions. Last year, the military pay was 13 percent below the comparable civilian level. It was estimated that close to 17,000, believe it or not, 17,000 junior enlisted personnel were relying on food stamps.

That should not happen if you wear the American uniform. You should not be on food stamps. The General said after the Persian Gulf War there was pride again. I know that the Vietnam veterans in this audience, they might recall their ordeal when they came home.

Some people would walk across the street if they saw a uniform. That is not happening now. We have finally erected a memorial for the Korean veterans, the forgotten veterans in this audience. I can say it no better than the former Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Bill Owens, "We cannot expect service members to lay their lives on the line when back home their families have to rely on food stamps to make ends meet."

There is no question about it. We can do better. We must restore our nation's commitment to our men and women in uniform. It is also a fact that much of what is left of a defense budget has not been used to guarantee long-term military superiority, which is the result that is very much in place.

This is just not Bob Dole and some candidate talking. That is General Dennis Reimer, the Army Chief of Staff, who told Congress recently, "Further deferral of modernization will encourage significant risk of future readiness. We must continue to produce and field adequate modern equipment or see our system completely wear out. At the current rate of replacing our tanks, we will not be completely modernized for over 40 years."

Now, if we have not been saving money to modernize our forces, where have we been spending it? In my opinion, too much has been squandered in some of the U.N. missions which has precious little to do with American security. Let me make it crystal clear, on day one of my administration I will place American security and American interests first, because placing it anywhere else endangers all of us.

I will never forget the armed forces in the missile attacks. I will never commit the armed forces, not one single Army soldier to an ordeal without the prospect of victory. I will lead as your Commander-in-Chief as President of the United States and not the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Let me also mention the word that has become an all-too frequent part of the vocabulary, the word terrorism. Under America all seven countries, Syria, Iran, Libya, Iraq, North Korea, Saddam Hussein and Cuba are states listed as sponsoring terrorism.

How has this administration chosen to deal with them? The Secretary of State has on more than 28 occasions refuses to speak out strongly enough on Syrian support for terrorism and has opposed Congressional efforts to punish Syria in harboring terrorists.

Unbelieving, this administration supported most freely U.S. nuclear

reactors despite a treaty weapons ban of mass destruction and frequent threatening of South Korea, one of our allies. Iran was given a green light by this administration to ship weapons into Bosnia, while it opposed and vetoed bipartisan Congressional attempts to arm the Bosnians and withdraw U.S. American forces so they could defend themselves.

They had a right to receive defense. We had 69 votes in the Senate that said they had that right. But it never happened. U.S. sanctions on Iraq were eased, with the active support of the administration, allowing Saddam Hussein access to millions of dollars in oil revenue.

Tougher sanctions on Libya were opposed. After three years of closing up Fidel Castro, it took the murder of Americans over international waters last February to convince this administration to support my legislation to impose sanctions on Cuba.

Furthermore, what kind of a message was sent to terrorists when this administration refrained from any retaliation after Captain Scott O'Grady was shot down over Bosnia by Bosnia Serb forces? What I would do, I would replace this confusing message with a different one.

On my first day in office, I will put terrorists and their sponsors on notice if you harm one American, you harm all Americans. America will pursue you to the end of the earth. In short, don't mess with us if you are not prepared to suffer the consequences. Don't mess with us if you don't want to suffer the consequences.

Let me just spend one or two moments on the economic side. Economics here is important. National security, military security, economic security, they are really the same side of the coin. We cannot be prosperous if our nation is at risk. We cannot be secure if a stagnant economy fails to provide the growth, the innovation, jobs, economics and the other resources necessary for our national defense.

Our economic plan is based on one simple principle, the more money you leave with the earners, the American people, the more things they can do with it and the more free and vibrant our economy will be. In other words, we trust you with your money.

Some trust the government more with your money. The reverse is true as well. That is just common sense. The more money that the government takes from the people, the less they have to spend to build and invest, and the less opportunity there is for the economy to grow.

The more they take away, the less there is of opportunity. This is a lesson that so many countries around the world has taken to heart. We must all remember that here in America, and I hope you hear a little bit about the economic plan. It is not very complicated.

It simply says that every American, every taxpayer will get a 15-percent across-the-board tax cut and we are going to balance the budget. It is not difficult to do both. You have children. I bet there are people in this audience with children and grandchildren and the $500 per child tax cut for low and middle-income families and a cut in the capital gains rate by 50 percent so you can create more jobs and more opportunity for people in

your communities.

That is what we are going to do. That is more money to save, more money to expand large and small businesses, and more money to invest in new ideas and new technologies, and above all in new jobs. We will not stop there, because under our plan we will also get rid of the IRS as we know it and that will give you a lot of help.

We are going to make our tax code flatter, fairer and simpler so it doesn't take a Philadelphia lawyer and an accountant to fill it out. We think it is time, and we can do that and put us on a path to a balanced budget. There are those that believe we can't do it, that we can't cut taxes and we can't balance the budget.

They also want you to believe, and this is the point I want to make, that our plan will mean drastic programs like Medicare, Social Security and veterans' benefits. Let me respond to that, because I am going to offer my official response to this outstanding audience.

It is the same famous one word response that General Anthony McCawley of the famous 101st Air Force days in World War II, when the German Army demanded the surrender of U.S. forces at Gestalt. The General said, "Nuts." That was his response and that is my response. Even if you don't like the tax cut, you are going to get it.

We are going to balance the budget. The interest rate is going to drop about two percent. Cutting taxes and balancing the budget at the same time is simply a matter of presidential will. If you have got it, you can do it. I have got it, and I will do it for you veterans and your families.

You think for one minute, and a lot of you are in the same category, someone who has spent three years of his life in an Army hospital, someone who owes his education to the G.I. Bill, would stand by and allow the budget be balanced on the back of American veterans?

There is no way that will happen if Bob Dole is President of the United States. All my life I have remembered veterans. I was the Service Officer in the VFW in Russell, Kansas, for a long time. I was proud to be the Service Officer.

I felt I had an obligation, because it was sort of a fraternity, it was a certain camaraderie of everybody that served in the armed forces, and not everybody could and not everybody went overseas, but this group did. We had great experiences. I will be a President who will work for VA health-care assistance and provide modern medical care more efficiently and more effectively, to provide much-needed reform in health-care eligibility requirements.

My goal is a veterans health-care delivery system that reflects 21st Century health-care advances, not the old stuff, but the new stuff. Our veterans are entitled to the best and they will have it. I will be the President who will solve the lingering problems of the disabled veterans, of the award of benefits to which they are fully entitled and desperately need.

What else can we do? We should do it. Again, it is a matter of common sense, a matter of justice. We talk about honor and duty to our coun-

try. Let's talk about honor and duty to our country. Never abandon our disabled Americans. That is not going to happen in my administration.

We are going to be a President that will improve education benefits and many employment opportunities for veterans. As a matter of fact, after I left the Senate on July 24th, the Veterans Committee reported out a bill I introduced before I left that will create a 12-member Commission to assess the effectiveness of current employment and job grading assistance programs managed by several cabinet departments and make recommendations for improving these programs.

Above all, I will be a President who will never compromise on the values that have kept America strong; the values to make the VFW a valuable national asset; the value to God, family, duty, honor and country.

Let me conclude with one comment by another friend of yours. I want to do two things as I close. First, I would like to make a presentation. This past Memorial Day, shortly before I left the Senate, I asked that a flag be flown over the United States Capitol in honor of the men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

After flying over one of America's hallmarks of freedom, I can't imagine a better place than for it to fly over another hallmark of freedom, the VFW National Headquarters. Let me present that to you, Paul.

Secondly, I want to leave you with the words of a man that Jack and General Powell and myself, and many of you of the VFW were proud to call your friend, former President Ronald Reagan. Think about 12 years ago this week. President Reagan spoke to this Convention.

I want to repeat just a little paragraph of what he said. He said, "When I look at you, when I think of all you have lived and known and learned in your lifetime of service, a lifetime of honor, I can't help wondering who more than you could better understand how precious are the gifts of life and freedom and faith. Who more than you has the courage and the wisdom to help us protect these gifts for our children and for our children's children? In my heart, I know it is true. America's future must be a future of peace, and together we will see to it that it is done."

That is what Ronald Reagan had to say 12 years ago. The same applies today. This is a great organization. I am again proud to be a member of it. Thank you very much for the invitation and may God bless this VFW and may God bless the United States of America.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL (Cont'd.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I would like to get this one completed before we leave here. If we can get people back into their seats, we will take care of this one by-Law change in just a few moments. Please stay with us and let us get that done. This is a very important change. Please do not leave until we discuss it. We will finish that one.

Let's call this Convention back to order, please. Please do not leave this hall. This is in the middle of a very important debate on a by-law change. You must listen to it and your voice should be heard.

As we closed off the debate on this, the next speaker at the microphone was the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. At this time I will turn this microphone over to you as a courtesy since he is up here. I will turn this mike over to the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the comments that he will make.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I appreciate that. I am James Nier, Post 8919, Department of Texas. Comrades, like all comrades, I ask you to reject B-23 for the following reasons. I, too, am a member of the Life Membership Committee, one of five, and I voted for the increase for the Life Membership as did the other four members of the Committee.

I did not make my personal decision in a vacuum. There was much data presented to us and many drafts were presented. Statistics, whatever it might have been, the bottom line for me to vote for this Life Membership increase was the fact that the comrade that holds the judicial responsibility to monitor that Life Membership Foundation, the Quartermaster General, recommended to this Committee that we must increase the Life Membership fees at this time and in those amounts, based on the presentation to him by the actuaries.

Now, what does that mean? I feel, comrades, that we must think long-term, the future of this great organization, as we know it and you have heard it, and I will not throw a bunch of numbers at you, but there has not been a Life Membership increase since 1976. That is 20 years ago.

What should have happened is this. There should have been incremental changes along the way. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, there were not. I would submit to you that had there been probably the Life Membership fees would not be higher than what this by-law, this change is proposing.

Now, that is the problem. Someone said, and many people have said before me, we are not going to raise these fees during my watch because it is a very emotional and controversial issue. I, as my Commander for 1996-'97, and at the Adjutant General Quartermasters, Senior Vice Conference in Kansas City, we were presented all this data. Most thought it was the right thing to do.

They didn't agree with the time. The National Organization wanted it effective 1 July, and we said okay, we will compromise and make it effective 1 September. That is what the Committee passed. I am now hearing, and probably rightfully so, the increase for the 80-year-old members is high, and I understand that, but these figures were figured by the actuaries.

Twenty years ago, the average age of longevity was 76. Now it is 82. It goes on and on. Things have changed. We can't try to fix this with a short-term type decision. If we have in our hearts the future of this organization, it has to be done now.

They told us it has to be done now. If we don't do it now, we are going to just be putting off the inevitable that will happen. I have been to Departments across the country and some have said lower the pay-out to $3.50 and do not increase the membership fees.

That is a very irrational decision, comrades, in my opinion. We are trying to pay you $7. Don't reduce it to $3.50. Comrades, I could go on and on, and I ask you to just consider one thing. The future of this organization, not this year, not next year, five and ten years from now, we are not paying up for select membership fund for the first time. I believe it is the first time this year.

That is something along the lines of $6 million on the first one. We have to monitor this thing and get it back on line or we will have a demise of the Life Membership Fund in the future. I do not think that there is anyone in this room that wants that to take place. Comrades, I respectfully ask you to reject B-23. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE AL LOEHR (Post 4847 - Minnesota): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am here to speak against B-23. In 1946, I was a member of this Committee to review the actuarial soundness of the Life Membership fee structure. We were told at that time that there are two things that you must keep in mind and that is fiscal responsibility and judiciary responsibility.

As I hear some of the comments today, I have come to the statement that my comrades to the Veterans of Foreign Wars wouldn't understand the impact and the meaning of those two words. That is fiscal responsibility and judiciary responsibility.

So many things have been said in regard to other matters, and I will not address those. I am surprised at the people who are now pursuing those dangerous, and when they signed those petitions of leadership for 20 years and never made a move to increase the fee or even discuss it.

"Don't do it on my watch. Do it on someone else's." My comrades, don't be led down the primrose path. We need to accept the responsibility in this organization that fiscally we must remain sound and under the laws of the land we must understand that judiciary responsibility is the number one thing we ought to be concerned about. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ROBERT WALLACE (Post 1851 - New Jersey): Commander-in-Chief, I am Bob Wallace, a delegate from Post 1851, New Jersey. I stand before you, my fellow delegates, and urge you to defeat B-23. B-23, in my view, takes this organization backwards.

This organization must go forward. You just heard a candidate talk about the future of our children, our grandchildren. With respect to this organization, we want this organization to be around for many, many years.

We need to establish a natural base. We need moves. This is one of those moves. I have heard some comments about the Life Membership Trustees. Four of the five Trustees are elected by us. They are representatives of us. We elected them. We chose them.

Our Quartermaster General will be derelict in his duties if he did not come before us and tell us what we had to do to ensure our economic vitality. My comrades, I also heard that the biggest benefactor of this increase is the National Organization.

You know what, my comrades, you and I are the National Organization. Do you know who decides how the money is spent? That is our representatives on the National Council. My comrades, this is a very emotional issue. There is a lot of hot buttons to be pushed.

I ask you to look at it in the same perspective that you looked at things every other week, every week, once a month when that check comes in to your household. What are you doing to prepare for the future when interest rates are going down?

There was a campaign four years ago, my comrades, that said it very clearly. It is, "The economy, stupid. Let's pay attention to the economy." My comrades, we are not being stupid. The recommendation of the Trustees of the Life Membership Fund is a viable recommendation and it is a recommendation that ensures vitality, fiscal vitality in this organization.

I ask you to put the emotions aside, think what happens at your kitchen table when that check comes in and how you are preparing for your future, and support the recommendation of the Trustees of the Life Membership Committee and reject B-23. Thank you, comrades.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JAMES CARLISLE (Post 10097 - Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Jim Carlisle, a delegate from Post 10097, Ft. Myers Beach, Florida. I rise in opposition to this resolution. The reason I am in opposition to this resolution is that we must go forward and, quite frankly, I know in my own Post we argued about a dues increase last spring.

We were going to raise our dues from $16 to $20, and four people that were arguing about it belongs to the same Elk's Club that I do that pays $100 a year annual dues. I do not understand this. I think that this dues increase for the Life Membership should have been done years ago.

I understand that it is the Commander, the Senior Vice-Commander, the Junior Vice Commander, the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General that made this decision. I want to tell you right now that I take my hat off to them for having the guts enough to do what should have been done ten years ago.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ART FELLWOCK (Post 1114 - Indiana): My name is Art Fellwock. I am a member of VFW Post 1114 in Evansville, Indiana. In our Post, we have over 1,800 Life Members, and we work the

Life Membership very hard. You know, we have received here at this Convention more by-laws changes pertaining to this Life Membership than anything else.

They were all against an increase in Life Membership. That shows us that the folks back home in every state, they were not for that Life Membership increase. Now, let me tell you, I agree with long term. We should speak of the future. I want to speak of the future.

Let me tell you right off, we say we need this increase because we have had deficit spending. I have heard that we have had deficit spending going down. Well, if you will look at the figures, we have $115 million in the Life Membership Fund.

The actuaries who we believe we should have and want every year to do that, the actuaries say we should have $119 million. My comrades, that is only a four-percent deficit. Why in the heck do we have to raise the Life Membership fees 35 percent?

You don't get a Social Security raise of 35 percent, do you? You don't get a pay raise of 35 percent. What I am saying we should do and what this Convention Board should do, we should tell the National Organization to get their act straight, to go back next year and have the actuaries again figure it.

If we need a small raise, we can raise it two or three percent. The following year have the actuaries look at it again, and if we need another small raise, let's do it that way. Let's don't raise this Life Membership fee 35 percent in one year. I am for the amendment.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1. I would make a request that the speaker that is standing at the microphone, if you would indulge me, I see the Quartermaster General standing in line there, and if you would allow him to speak, then I will come right back to you and then we will continue.

Comrades, the Chair is interested in getting all of the views on the floor. We will stay here as long as we need to and as long as you want to. I don't have a problem with that. I would like to show a little bit of respect to the Quartermaster General.

He has a very important message pertaining to this that he would like to deliver. Let's let him do it and listen to him, and we will go right back to the debate again.

Comrade Quartermaster General, will you come to the microphone, please. The Quartermaster General has chosen to wait in line like everyone else, and that is your choice. That is fine.

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GORDON SHEWMAKER (Post 3016 - Alabama): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Gordon Shewmaker, a delegate from Post 3016, Alabama. Also I am the State Adjutant/Quartermaster. I rise in opposition to B-23. I would like to go back to my 20 years and tell a little story.

Twenty years ago, when the Life Membership fees were raised, everyone in Alabama thought this was the end of the Life Membership program.

We didn't like the Life Membership program because we had the A, B and C members, which we received very little in the Life Membership program.

We were at that time receiving $4.50 per annual member. We only had ten percent Life Members in our state. Since that time, in the increased pay-out, we are well over 30 percent in Life Members. We must move forward. We must look to the future and we must increase our Life Member pay-outs as we go along.

The only way we can do that is to increase the Life Member fee. I again ask my comrades to support the defeat of B-23.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE NORMAND GAOUETTE (Post 8681 - Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Normand Gaouette, Post 8681, a delegate from the Department of Florida and also Commander of the Department of Florida. We stand in rejection of B-23. The costs for our Posts, Districts and Department are going up, while our rebillings are going down.

The individual that talked about a two-dollar increase as no big deal a little while ago. I am in full agreement with that. However, if you multiply that by 81,000 members, you are talking about a lot of money. It is our belief that we must compete and step into the Twenty-first Century.

Our program funding needs this increase. We support a lot of programs in the State of Florida. I have a registered service office in St. Petersburg. All this requires money. We must recognize the fact that the VFW is a great organization that serves us, and that takes money. We have got to recognize when we stop helping veterans, we have lost the game.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE KEN MEAD (Post 9400 - Arizona): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ken Mead, Post 9400 in the State of Arizona. I rise in support of B-23 for these reasons. Number one, when we get a membership increase for the dues, it comes on this body and we vote on it, yes or no, up or down.

I feel that any time we make any membership increase of monies for our members, such as the Life Membership Fund, it should be brought to this body and let us make the decision, not Kansas City. It was also brought up that the Chief went back to the Post Commander, to the Department Commander and to the Post Commander.

I can assure you that my 1,350-member Post operates quite well without the monies coming back from the Life Membership Fund. What we do with ours, we put it into a CD. We draw interest on it. The last time the Department of Arizona at its Convention in June voted not to raise the Life Membership Fund dues. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE STEVE JACOBS (Post 5944 - California): Comrades and delegates, I come before you for the approval of B-23. I was in that meet-

ing last night as an observer, since I wasn't on that Committee. The Quartermaster General said this has been lacking over the last several years.

Comrades, this came across to us several years ago. That is number one. Number two, the National By-Laws say the minimum will be $3.50. If the National Organization has all these experts, they should have never given the $3.50, they should have left it there where they had the money they needed to have.

I have no problem with an increase overall, but I say that a 35-percent increase is a little ludicrous. It should be over a period of time. The National Organization's share will lose approximately $900,000. The Post level will not lose that much and the Departments will undoubtedly have to suffer.

We will all have to do something. We will all have to redo our budgets. We need to do this over a period of time and not a one-time basis. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LARRY RIVERS (Post 1736 - Louisiana): Commander-in-Chief, thank you very much. My name is Larry Rivers. I am a delegate from VFW Post 1736, Louisiana. Before we started this debate, I talked to the Quartermaster of my Post. My Post dues are $10.50.

He tells me he is losing $5.50 on every Life Member he has. My Post, which was the largest in Louisiana, has had budget deficits for the last five years. We have an obligation, there is no question here. I think we need to talk about whom we owe that obligation.

We have a right to consider the views of those Posts and those Departments that are financially strong. We also have an obligation to Roy Heaths, who stood up in our Committee meeting and said we in Atlanta are trying to fund a certain program to help veterans and cannot stand pat on Life Members anymore.

We have an obligation to almost one million members that are Life Members that don't affect us. Many of you have this same cap that I have. I am a Life Member. I became eligible in June, 1969, when I was a Marine in Vietnam as a Second Lieutenant.

If I had bought the Life Membership then, I wouldn't have had to pay as much as I did in 1976. So somebody got a better deal than me because they were there and I didn't take advantage of it. Those that bought it after 1976, up to now, and buying it now, will get the same deal as well.

So we have an obligation to us as an organization. We have an obligation to all of our folks, not just the ones that don't need this increase. You know, I am 49 years old and I have been coming to VFW meetings for 21 years, almost half of my life.

Every Convention I can remember our elected officers told us as delegates listen to what is going on at this Convention because it is very important. You are deciding the future of the organization. My experience has been those delegates have done exactly that.

For 21 years, I have been one of those delegates. Many of you in this same room have as well. In 1990, our By-Laws were amended and I was in a position that you honored me by letting me hold. But, you know, in 1990 apparently somebody said, this Life Member deal is an emotional issue.

It is important to the organization that sooner or later somebody will have to make some decisions. So, apparently somebody said well, who better than those we elect to point us in the direction? As leaders, you are asked to bring recommendations, you are asked to do things.

You are asked to bring things before the body and you elect those leaders to do exactly that. I didn't volunteer to be on the Life Member Trust Fund Committee. None of the five of us volunteered. We didn't say let's get this thing passed one day. The body said we need somebody to make that decision because this will be a contingency we made and if we have strong leadership when the time to do it they will bring it forward and present it to the body.

You know why it is in the By-Laws, because it takes a two-thirds vote to change those By-Laws. We don't put things in By-Laws loosely and we don't take them out loosely. This is an emotional issue, but it cannot and it must not be an emotional decision.

Certainly, there are much greater orators in this room than I that can stir up this crowd and tell you and set up the straw man of the National Organization? Who are we talking about at the National Organization. Are you taking about Rachael and Judy, my secretaries, or me, the administrator and not the policy maker?

Who is that straw man, who is that boogie man that so many people can use to rile the truths? I will tell you who they are. They are people in which you have put special trust and they are people that work every day in Kansas City and Washington, D.C., to do the right thing for you.

Anybody who wants to somehow rile everybody up at the Department level, and in your Conventions this is the Posts against the Department. You know why, because that is the easiest thing to do. I want to tell you, my friends, we did the right thing, and this is one proud Marine that looks at my sailor, Joe Ridgley, and say I love you, and you did this right thing and I am proud to be standing by you, and the delegation will do the right thing by you. Thank you, comrades.

(Whereupon, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Nier assumes the Chair.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DANIEL BARTHOLOMEW (Post 3144 - Minnesota): Comrade Commander-in-Chief and Delegates, I am a delegate from Post 3144, Minnesota, Dan Bartholomew. I became a Life Member in 1976 and I paid $120. I am sure you did not get the return that you needed on that kind of money since that time. That was 20 years ago.

I am surprised at this Convention, because most of us are Life

Members. We are talking about Life Members on down. Really, what concerns me here is I don't see the State Quartermasters standing up at the mikes, because I know how important that money is coming back to the States and Districts.

I can't believe they are not talking about it, because they depend on that money. They don't live on a budget. What happened before, I remember when it was $5.50, and what will happen if we don't raise it now? I would like to have some clarification, Commander-in-Chief. What happens if this is not raised and you do not make the money, the $5, do you cut that again? It has been cut before and will it be cut again? Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: The Chair will recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JOHN GWIZDAK (Post 5080 - Georgia): I rise in opposition to B-23, not only simply because of the way it is written but what it has done to us today, if we accept it, is to put us back in time and back in time that we don't need to be. I am an Adjutant Quartermaster of my state and I know what the financial responsibilities are.

I also know what the By-Laws of this organization tell me. The only way that they are there is because the delegates on this floor at one time or another decided that a five-member Committee should make the decision. Now, on your watch or on my watch doesn't matter.

The By-Laws put it there for you to do it. You have chosen to make that decision today. Now, if we were not satisfied with that five-person Committee, then we should have done something about it a long time ago. Yes, I do agree that perhaps there could have been a slight increase, but someone chose not to do that at that time.

They chose not to make the decision and to bite the bullet as the five-member Committee did today. I can only tell you this, if we go back to our organizations today knowing full well that only a few states put in resolutions against the Life Membership increase, then we owe our folks an explanation also why we as delegates were not prepared to bite the bullet to put the future where it needs to be and to take our membership where it needs to be in the future. Thank you, comrades.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DANA HUSSEY (Post 4485 - New Hampshire): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Dana Hussey, Post 4485, New Hampshire, and also the Department Commander. I am in favor of B-23. When I was in Kansas City in April, they told me my quota would go to 650 Life Members for the year. That is three times what we normally do.

But then the National Organization tells us not to worry, we are going to help you. We are going to raise the fees over $100 per age group. That isn't helping us a lot. Right now we have nearly already met our entire Life Membership result last year; we have done it right now, all but 40 members of what we had all last year.

If the fee would stay the same as it is, I agree there would be changes but we don't need them all in one shot. If the fee would stay as it is, I guarantee you the Department of New Hampshire would meet its quota. You will have a surge in Life Membership and you are going to have the money that is going to be there for a long, long time.

I agree with some of the other delegates that we do need the increases, but over a period of time in small increments, not killing the older veterans. It has really hurt everyone.

Another very important question, my delegates asked me, and I didn't have the answer for them, and that is why when you knew this was going to happen and you knew that it was going to take place, we didn't know that this was going to come up, that we didn't know about the actuaries and graphs and charts.

Why were they not made available to everyone and let everyone know it? I know that is difficult to do with over a million members, but at least the Council of Administration, somebody should have been made aware of this so we would be better informed.

I am not saying what you are doing is right or wrong. All I am saying is that we should have been better informed and maybe if we were, and had a better grasp of the situation, we might have been more in support of this. I must rise in support of the resolution to defeat the increase. Thank you very much.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN GOLLIHARE (Post 1504 - Nebraska): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, John Gollihare from Post 1504 in Nebraska. The way I look at this, if we don't pass this amendment we will lose membership. Everybody says we are going to gain money and we don't lose membership.

I have talked to a lot of people in my home Post and I live in a rural area in Nebraska that is on minimum wage. They have to put food on the table. If they paid this Life Membership, you raise that Life Membership, you are taking food off the table. Otherwise they are going to quit the VFW.

I will tell you why they can't afford it. They are not making $177,000, like some people up there. If they can't control their spending, we ought to just clean house. You have got one hundred some million dollars in the Life Membership program and you probably have got $35 million in some other budget.

What you need to do is to learn how to spend your money, and you are paying all these experts about $20 million just to tell you what to do. I thought that is what we hired you guys for. I thought you guys were elected to do that. You go and spend $6 million on a doggone golf tournament. Let's spend it on veterans.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I recognize Microphone No. 1.

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL JOE RIDGLEY (Post 8220 - Missouri): I am Joe Ridgley from VFW Post 8220, Belton, Missouri. I am also the

Quartermaster General. I want to answer one question before I ever get started on the Life Membership to my friend here from Nebraska.

There is no one at the headquarters that makes $170,000 or $175,000. There is no one there that makes more than that, either. You know, I haven't heard a debate like this since 1976, my first year with the National Organization. It was my first year I went to New York City and the Quartermaster General stood up there, Al Cheatham, who I respect dearly.

He stood up there with Pete Walker, Bulldog Smith, John Wasylik and others, and they were trying to sell a by-law change to increase the fee after seven years. They were increasing the fees by 57 percent after seven years so they could pay out what was necessary to pay out to make sure that the Posts and Departments and National could be paid a similar amount to what they were being paid for their annual members.

You know, it is not easy to sit up there and listen and have people put words in my mouth. I heard a lot of things said here today that I said this and I said that. Well, then I got accused of putting too much in writing, I was sending out all kinds of information.

If I would not have sent it, I would have been accused of not giving you any information. Read it, comrades, what I have said is in there. If you want to know what I said, don't ask the Chairman of the By-Laws Committee or the Department Commander from Illinois, ask me what I said.

There are a lot of things said here today that I didn't say. I am here to tell you that it is tough because I take it very seriously. I work for you and I work for every single one of you, and I am trying to do a job for each one of you.

I am not going to stand here today and defend myself against the inaccurate statements. You can see what is in writing and it is out there. I am also not going to lower myself to attack the character of anybody. I had discussions with the Commander-in-Chief a couple of weeks ago and we didn't want it.

We said this is a Convention and we don't want to attack character. Sometimes we all feel like our character is attacked. I do want to ask where were your people when the by-laws were changed in 1990 to take your right to vote on this issue away from you? I don't know where they were.

But there are people in this room right now that were there. Ask them. They say I am speaking for the members. Well, we are playing a hand we were dealt. The by-law says that was changed in 1990, the Life Membership Committee will propose any fee changes. That is what was done.

In effect, comrades, we are sitting and debating an issue. Do you know what, you are doing just that. We are going to vote on this by-law change and you are going to vote either to increase it up or increase it down. You are going to get what you want.

You know something else, I don't know where we are at parliamentary procedure-wise, but if this by-law that was submitted established the fee

without any indication of a Life Membership Committee or anybody else recommending it to the delegates, it also takes the Life Member Committee back to three members.

You all know how politics works. The Quartermaster General can recommend anything he wants, but if the Commander-in-Chief is against it, the Adjutant General works for the Commander-in-Chief, it doesn't take much common sense to realize that that is why it was changed in the first place to make the Life Membership Committee five instead of three.

I would like to say that if this by-law is defeated, I would like this Convention to set aside B-19 submitted by the Department of California, and it says the Life Membership Committee will recommend and the delegates will vote on the member increase. I have never been opposed to that and I never will be opposed to that, you deserve that right that was taken away from you in 1990.

I think I have said enough. The increase is needed. I recommend it and I am not going to apologize for recommending it. I have recommended the fee increase and I know I am not as eloquent as some of the other speakers, but my job is not a speech maker, my job is to work with the finances of this organization. Thank you very much.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA (Post 144 - Massachusetts): Thank you very much, Comrade Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. I am Paul Spera, Post 144, Boston, Massachusetts. I come to the microphone on this issue only for the purpose of some clarification.

I have heard a lot of things, and let me begin by saying, Joe Ridgley, I may not be able to read, but I love you, too, and you are doing a great job. You were right, we did have that conversation, and this is not a personal issue for or against any individual.

Let's not make it one. Let's keep it on a higher plane and let's discuss the issue on its merits. There have been a couple of things that were said yesterday that I think need to be clarified so that you can make an intelligent decision.

The fact has been stated that if there is not an increase in the Life Membership Fund or the Life Membership fees, the fund will deplete. The fact of the matter is that this increase creates a new category. This is not going to deplete the Life Membership Fund that is there.

The amount of money that is in that Life Membership Fund pays out the $5 right now will continue to pay that out, as I understand it. So if you are receiving $5 per member under this old fee, the amount of money that is in the fund for that will still remain at that level.

If there is a problem with that, with 900,000 plus Life Members that we have now, that will continue. That is the way I understand it. I understand that this increase is to pay $7 per member for every new Life Member, not for every Life Member that you have right now.

The present Life Membership pay-out will not change for all of the Life

Members that you have. The only effect that these new people have is to change all future Life Members to $7.

Is that correct, Joe?

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL RIDGLEY: That is correct.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: So all the Life Members that we have now, the problems that we have now with the Life Membership Fund, the possibility that those Life Members are now being paid $5 will possibly drop to $4 or $3.50, that will still exist for 900,000 plus Life Members, that will still be a problem.

This will not solve that problem. I just wanted to clarify that figure, and I just wanted to let you know that everybody is correct, this is a very emotional issue. Anybody can come to the microphone here and make a motion and statements and try to move this.

Listen to it carefully. Figure out in your mind the amounts of money we are talking about. Figure out what the effect of all future Life Members increasing the two dollar per member will have on your Post, your Department, and then vote your conscience accordingly. That is all I am going to ask you to do.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN LIEBSACK (Post 2503 - Nebraska): I am John Liebsack, Post 2503, Nebraska. I come in support of this B-23 as a Past Post Quartermaster and as Membership Chairman from my Post. We have over 1,000 Life Members in our Post. We don't need that increase.

As a Membership Chairman, we are out knocking on those doors day to day. What we need are the tools to recruit those members and let's leave it there, the Life Membership fee where it is. Thank you.

(Whereupon, Commander-in-Chief Spera assumed the Chair at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE CHARLES SHORT (Post 1503 - Virginia): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Charlie Short. I am a delegate from Virginia Post 1503. I rise in opposition to this motion. Comrades, the issue is very, very narrow. The issue is only fiscal integrity of one of our funds.

I know, I have been there, I have done it, comrades, because I am the Supreme Senior Vice-Commander. I have seen personally what happens when you do not pay attention to fiscal issues, when you do not recognizes the challenges that are set before you in financial responsibilities and do not live up to those financial responsibilities.

Comrades, I also get a little emotional. I spent 18 months working every single day to try to resolve the problems that were established because we did not face financial responsibilities. I urge each and every one of you to think of only one thing.

This is a separate fund. This fund has to finance certain things. Since 1976, the CPI view, for example, has gone up well over 120 percent. Since

1976, the interest rates have dropped dramatically. Since 1976, comrades, the longevity rates of all of us have increased over 40 percent.

For the more mature that we are looking to be, and some of us are there, this is the greatest country in the world to live in. We have increased that population by over 60 percent. We just have to maintain the fiscal responsibility of his fund. It really is not going to affect recruiting.

It is really not going to affect a lot of other things, but I have heard countless times it is a big fund, you can spend it and then you don't have to address the hard issues. I don't want anybody to pay any more money for anything in the world, but that is not a fact of life.

We have an example that I can lay before you personally and directly that is a problem of the MOC had specifically with the Life Membership Fund, and they did not address the issue until just last year. They had a problem. Their financial stability of their organization was in doubt for a short period of time because they could not face the tough hard issue.

I am sorry. We are going to have to pay more money. Everything increases. You know, because we did not do something ten years ago, that was wrong. I feel that if we don't do something positive about this today, that is also a wrong. I tell you two wrongs never make a right.

I thank you for listening to me. I appreciate you all. I hope we can go together and build a better organization. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 2. Now, we do not take motions from the floor unless someone comes to a microphone. If you would like to make a motion, you must be at the microphone to do so.

The Chair recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DENNIS WALL (Post 4164 - New Jersey): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Dennis Wall, Post 4164, New Jersey. I am also the Department of New Jersey Commander. I want to report to this delegation 99.95 percent of the delegation of the Department of New Jersey approves of B-23. Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ROLLAND HILD (Post 8334 - Nebraska): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Rolland Hild, Post 8334, Nebraska, Department Commander. I make a motion that we vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion is to call for the question. Is there a second to the motion?

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JACK ARMAGOST (Post 4836 - Nebraska): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to call for the question. On the motion of calling for the question only, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye". Do I dare call for those against to say "nay". The "ayes" have it.

We have a motion on the floor. The motion is to approve B-23. If you vote "aye", you vote to approve B-23. All those in favor of approving B-23

will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed say "nay". I am going to tell you right now that the Chair is in doubt.

COMRADE CRAIG SWARTZ (Post 1069 - Ohio): I am the State Commander of Ohio and I would like to call for a roll call vote, because this takes a two-thirds majority.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I need ten Posts from ten different Departments to call for a roll call vote. I have one Post from one Department.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ALEXANDER VERNON (Post 9191 - Texas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, my name is Alexander Vernon, a delegate from Post 9191, the Department of Texas. I also request a roll call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Department of Texas has asked for a roll call vote.

At Microphone No. 2, is there someone that wants to make a motion?

COMRADE JOHN DeBOLD (Post 7642 - New York): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am John DeBold, Post 7642, New York, one of the few remaining members of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I believe that is not necessary. We can have a standing vote and not a roll call vote. You don't need a roll call vote. A standing vote is enough.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrade, I am sorry. Your comments are out of order in this particular instance. I have individuals who are now trying to request a roll call vote.

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE RICHARD FRUGE (Post 5153 - Louisiana): I request a roll call vote, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE WAYNE THOMPSON (Post 5061 - Colorado): Commander-in-Chief, Wayne Thompson, Post 5061, Department of Colorado, requests a roll call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 1, is there anyone at Microphone No. 1?

COMRADE ED MORAN (Post 7447 - Delaware): We request a roll call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE MICHAEL DePAULO (Post 5986 - Massachusetts): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Michael DePaulo, Post 5986, Department of Massachusetts, requests a roll call vote.

COMRADE ORLIN JACKSON (Department of Minnesota): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Orlin Jackson, State Commander of Minnesota, I call for a roll call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GEORGE RIEDEL (Post 969 - Washington): My name is George Riedel, and I am a delegate from Post 969, Tacoma, Washington.

We request a roll call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 2.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CLYDE LEWIS (Post 125 - New York): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Clyde Lewis, Post 125, New York, requests a roll call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE NORMAND GAOUETTE (Post 8681 - Florida): I request a roll call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much. I now have ten comrades from ten Posts and ten Departments who have called for a roll call vote. We will prepare for a roll call vote.

Comrades, this is the way it works. The Adjutant General will call the roll. The Credentials Committee will tally the votes. We will tell you how many votes you have. Now, this is going to take us a few minutes to set up, so I am going to declare a five-minute recess. A recess is in place for five minutes.

...Recess. ...

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: On a roll call, let me read to you the rules so you know how we do this. On roll calls, the Chairman or Acting Chairman, and that will be the Department Commander or the Senior Vice-Commander of each delegation shall poll is delegation on the floor and shall announce the vote of his delegation.

The delegation may arrive at a vote in any manner they see fit, but shall announce it in terms of full units and not in terms of a fractional part of a vote.

When the report of the Chairman of the delegation is not acceptable to all members of the delegation and a poll of the Department delegates is demanded by ten delegates of that Department, the Adjutant General shall poll the delegates, without discussion of the question.

So we will tell you how many votes you have, the Department Commander will announce the number of those votes for either side of the issue.

..Recess. ...

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrades, the podium says it is 1:06. When it says 1:10, we will begin the roll call. I would like to ask the Department Commanders to begin lining up at the microphone here in alphabetical order. The total delegate count is 11,786 votes.

Let me remind you that in order for this motion to prevail a two-thirds majority is necessary of the votes cast.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE CRAIG SWARTZ (Post 2847 - Ohio): I need some clarification. I believe you said it takes ten individuals. Is that ten individuals or ten separate Posts?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: No, it takes ten delegates, but they have to be from ten different Posts. For those of you who are listening to this, this is referring to when the Department Commander announces the vote for his Department, it takes ten members of that Department, ten delegates of that Department to challenge that vote.

If, in fact, ten members of that Department challenge the vote, the Adjutant General will poll the Department delegates who are present. Is that clear?

COMRADE CARL GOINS (Post 489 - Tennessee): Does the Senior Vice-Commander get that plus one vote as the Commander?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The vote for the Department Commander is his personal vote. The only one that can cast that vote is the Commander. If he is not present, then you lose that vote.

COMRADE CARL GOINS (Post 489 - Tennessee): Do you have to be registered and stamped in order to vote?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: If someone questions the vote, they must be prepared, if a delegate, to show their delegate card stamped registered in order to challenge the vote. They must have that card showing they are registered.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Europe): I would like you to repeat the total number of delegates that will vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The total number is 11,786. Comrades, we should now have the Department Commanders lined up. It looks like Microphone No. 1, is that correct? Where do we have them? I can't see them. Why don't we all get you all at Microphone No. 1 in alphabetical order, if you would, so we can begin this roll call. When the roll call begins, there will be order in this room so we can do this expeditiously.

The Adjutant General will now begin the roll call. A vote of "yes" is to pass the by-law change. A vote of "no" is to defeat the by-law change. In order to pass the by-law change, there must be a two-thirds majority. Please, let's hold the noise down so we can hear the roll call and the vote.

...As Adjutant General Rivers called the roll of the states, the following votes were cast: ...

STATE	YES	NO
Alabama		191
Alaska	48	
Arizona	183	
Arkansas	36	89
California	349	
Central America	20	

Colorado	105	71
Connecticut	196	
Delaware	42	86
District of Columbia	26	4
Department of Europe		66
Florida	30	511
Georgia		239
Hawaii	13	2
Idaho	64	
Illinois	793	
Indiana	471	
Iowa	113	
Kansas	388	
Kentucky	266	
Louisiana	122	
Maine	136	
Maryland	252	
Massachusetts	171	203
Michigan	444	
Minnesota		440
Mississippi		139
Missouri	295	3
Montana	31	
Nebraska	222	
Nevada	42	10
New Hampshire	108	1
New Jersey	345	44
New Mexico	36	68
New York	364	2
North Carolina		131
North Dakota	63	
Ohio		650
Oklahoma	127	
Oregon	50	
Pacific Areas	55	
Pennsylvania	924	
Rhode Island		58
South Carolina		144
South Dakota	98	53
Tennessee	198	
Texas	7	458
Utah	22	
Vermont	102	
Virginia	183	
Washington	164	
West Virginia	138	

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE 97TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY AUGUST 18-23, 1996

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE

SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 1996

(The Memorial Service of the 97th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held at the Commonwealth Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Paul A. Spera, presiding. The Gold Star Parents, Gold Star Wives, National Officers and Past National Chaplains were escorted by the Department of Kentucky Ladies Auxiliary.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Sergeants-at-Arms, you will prepare the room for the advancement and posting of the Colors.

ADVANCE OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the VFW National Honor Guard advanced the Colors, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.)

INVOCATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: Will you, please, stand for the Invocation by our National Chaplain.

VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN LYLE N. KELL: Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, as we meet here for this solemn occasion today, we believe that it is very adequate remembering the lives of thousands upon thousands of men and women that have given so that we can have the freedom that we have.

We praise you, God, for giving us these freedoms. We praise you for letting us live, but we come with tears in our heart for those families that have lost loved ones and thankful for those men and women that gave their lives for our country.

We ask your blessings on this solemn occasion. Touch each of our hearts in a very special way as only you, God, can do. We will praise you forever more. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Invocation was given by the Reverend Lyle Kell. Please remain standing and join me now in the Star Spangled Banner.

(Whereupon, the National Anthem was played at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We will now have a selection from

the Master's Men Chorale.

(Whereupon, the Master's Men Chorale sang the "Battle Hymn of the Republic.")

IN MEMORIAM

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrades, Ladies of the Auxiliary and Friends: We have met at this time to commemorate our comrades of the United States Armed Forces who have answered the last call. The VFW Ritual provides that the audience shall refrain from applauding. The Chief of Staff will see that there are no disturbances during this ceremony.

NATIONAL CHIEF OF JOHN SMART: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your order will be obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I request that the National Chaplain preside.

(National Chaplain Lyle N. Kell presided during the Memorial Services performed by the National Officers in accordance with the Ritual.)

(At the conclusion of the Memorial Service, the Master's Men Chorale led the assembly in singing "America.")

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: It is my honor at this time to introduce our Memorial Address speaker. Rear Admiral A. Bryon Holderby is the Deputy Chief of Chaplains of the United States Navy.

Chaplain Holderby received his Master of Divinity degree in 1963 from the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina. Following his ordination in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

Chaplain Holderby received his Master of Counseling degree from the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, Florida. Chaplain Holderby was commissioned into the Naval Reserve in 1967. Beginning his active naval duty ministry in that same year, he has served in various overseas and state side assignments, to include his present assignment of the Deputy Chief of Chaplains since 1994.

His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, three Navy Commendation Medals, the Navy Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal and Meritorious Unit Citation and the Vietnam Service Medal. Chaplain Holderby is married to the former Barbara Clark Thiel. They have two daughters and five grandchildren.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in giving a warm welcome to Chaplain Holderby.

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

REAR ADMIRAL HOLDERBY: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is good that you are here, that we can be here together to honor American

men and women who fought in defense of freedom of our land around the world.

I am a little overwhelmed by the sacredness of this moment, if you will, as you and I recall all that has been given for the sake of a peaceful world.

My office in Washington, D.C. overlooks Arlington National Cemetery where the bodies of men and women just like you and me lie. We can't help but think of the fact that they had the same concerns, the same hopes and disappointments and triumphs, tears and laughter and loves that we all have. Somewhere in that cemetery there may lie a person who could have discovered the cure for cancer or found a way to stop wars forever. But instead they lie silently in that sacred soil as our memories. Some of us may live today because they died. It is only fitting that we honor them.

Let us not, however, fail to honor one another. That we live while others died was not our decision, it was God's. God calls us sometimes to a playground and sometimes to a battleground, and we have done our best with God's help to respond. Not a single one of you feel that you have in any way done less. You were there.

Let us remember, too, to honor those who wore no uniform, stepped on no battlefield, but whose pain and fear and sacrifice were every bit as great, our families, our loved ones. Finally, this morning, let us honor America, the great experiment, the dream of the oppressed, the beacon of hope for all people around the world.

The words we speak here today, the feelings, the memories are all very real. There is a tendency in our world today not to trust words too much. It is said that Lyndon Johnson, in the course of his campaign, told some small farmers that he understood their problem because he was a rancher himself.

One of the farmers said, "Well, how big is your place?"

"Oh, it's big," said Johnson in his Texas drawl. "It is really big. I can get in my car in the morning and the sun is up and I can drive all day long and at sundown I am just getting to the other side of my property."

"Yeah," relied one of the farmers, "I know how that is. I had a car like that once myself." Our words, our memories, our feelings are real.

Certainly, it is true that our world is not perfect. Some even despair that it's close to being broken. The question is occasionally asked, "Is this society what we fought to preserve?" The answer seems to be yes and no. We didn't fight to preserve what is wrong in our society, but there is so much good in it and maybe, just maybe, you and I have been spared, been left on this earth to build on the good and try and change that which isn't good.

In a Calvin and Hobbes' cartoon, Calvin says, "You could step in the road tomorrow and, wham, you get hit by a cement truck. That's why my motto is 'Live for the Moment.' What's your motto?" Hobbes answered: "Look down the road."

I think that is part of what we are here to do today. To not only pay tribute to the men and women who have served our country well, but to look down the road. To agree on ways we can keep faith with those that fought

before us and with each other by making a difference in our society today, not just for ourselves, but for a world that looks to us still as a place where justice and human worth are valued and protected.

Last year the Chief of Chaplains, Don Muchow, was in Warsaw, Poland, at a gathering of church and military leaders of the NATO countries and former Soviet bloc nations. During that meeting, he was sitting next to a Polish Army General that said to him, "My wife and I were married by a priest in the woods, and our children were baptized in the forest. The Soviets may have occupied our land," he said, "but they never took over our hearts."

But even more telling were the words of the former Director of the Soviet KGB who in a meeting in Washington said to our Chiefs of Chaplains of the three services, "I need you to help us establish a Chaplain Corps. I have soldiers who can't tell the truth or keep a promise. I have soldiers who have no moral compass."

All around the world people look to this country for hope. This country that you have fought to preserve, this country whose good you now fight to uphold. Not a perfect place, seemingly beset with crime and self-interest, our weapons are these.

To be people of integrity, Stephen Carter of Harvard University defines integrity this way: "First," he writes, "you must decide between right and wrong. Then you must live by that decision even at personal cost, and finally you must proclaim that the basis for what you are doing is your commitment to do what you know to be right."

In short, we must do what we say we are. Then our words can be trusted and carry weight. The second effective weapon in this fight for the right is to accept responsibility for each other. "God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters." We are our brother's and our sister's keeper. There will be no joy for any of us in this world, until there is joy for all of us. Racism, sexism, anything that makes one group superior to another has no place in our land.

An Army Chaplain speaking at the cemetery on the Island of Iwo Jima 50 years ago caught the vision perfectly. He said: "Beneath this soil lie people who loved America; rich and poor, white and black, Hispanic, native American, Catholics, Jews, Protestants and others. Deep in the soil where they lie, there is no discrimination or quotas, no hatred, just the purest democracy. Anyone among us, the living, who fails to see that, can betray their sacrifice. Any one of us who lifts a hand in hate against another, or thinks one's self superior to another makes of this day a mockery."

I think, perhaps, the final weapon needed for a strong America is civility. The acknowledgement that everyone has worth and should be so treated. In a very powerful book entitled "Achilles in Vietnam", the author, a psychiatrist named Jonathan Shay, who works with Vietnam Veterans, makes this observation: "The ancient Greeks, warlike as they were, did not dishonor the enemy. We, in our country, have tended to do so. And the price to be paid for that is often disaster."

During World War II, the Japanese considered Americans too soft to

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION
WEDNESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 21, 1996

(The Second Business Session of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Commonwealth Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, was called to order at 9:00 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Paul A. Spera, presiding.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Sergeant-at-Arms, please prepare the room for the Salute to the Colors.

(The National Sergeant-at-Arms led the Convention in the Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We will now have the Opening Prayer by National Chaplain Kell.

(The Opening Prayer was given by the National Chaplain Reverend Lyle N. Kell.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Opening Ceremonies have been performed, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I would like to call on the Chairman of the Credentials Committee for his report, please.

COMRADE RICHARD TROMBLA (Post 974 - Kansas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Richard Trombla, Post 974, Department of Kansas, Chairman of the Credentials Committee. Comrades, this is a temporary report.

Delegates, 12,578; Department Commanders, 44; National Officers, 32; Past Commanders-in-Chief, 26. Members-at-Large, 1. That is a total of 12,681. That is a temporary report, Commander.

INTRODUCTION OF MILTON METZ, MARCH OF DIMES REPRESENTATIVE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much. Two of our VFW Departments and one VFW Post have made outstanding contributions to the March of Dimes this past year.

Our next guest is here to recognize their efforts. He is a well-known broadcast personality in Kentucky and Southern Indiana, active in nearly every phase of both television and radio.

In 1959, he created "Metz Here", a public opinion phone-in program which, until he withdrew from the show in 1993, was one of the highest rated local radio shows for more than three decades.

He was, for nine years, co-host and co-producer of the W.H.A.S.-TV show "Omelet." He was Channel 11 weatherman, offering his unique blend

of humor and comment.

He is a member of the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame, winner of a Ford Foundation Grant to the United States and has won awards from the National Arthritis Foundation, the National Commission on Working Women and a variety of other prestigious awards including the nation's top radio award from the American Psychiatric Association.

He is here this morning representing the March of Dimes, one of the many charitable organizations he has served throughout his long and distinguished career.

Please give a warm VFW welcome to W.H.A.S.-TV personality, Milton Metz.

PRESENTATION - MILTON METZ

MR. METZ: Thank you very much. I am Milton Metz and I am a broadcaster here in Louisville. My program happens to be called "Metz Here", and if you don't mind the pun, I am really glad to be "Metz Here" with you today. You may not know me, but I certainly know you and your heroes, heroes in many ways.

Your service to your country and all over the world is proof of that. You are heroes yet again because of battles that you are helping to win right here in America today. I am speaking now of the battles against threats to our nation's young, the threats of birth defects, of infant mortality, low birth rate, everything that the March of Dimes has fought for years because these are your children, your grandchildren.

We know this is a great country of ours, but, nevertheless, the United States is twenty-fourth in the world in its mortality. That means that babies born in 23 other nations, countries like Northern Ireland, Finland, the Netherlands and Singapore have a better chance of living to their first birthday than babies born here.

That is pretty frightening, isn't it, especially when you consider that the United States is the richest and most advanced country in the world. The good news is this. Our rate of infant mortality is the lowest that it has ever been. What does that mean? It means we are making progress.

It means we are winning battles. It means we still have a lot of work to do, but we are getting there. One of the reasons for that progress, ladies and gentlemen, is you, and that is why I call you heroes, heroes for healthier babies.

The VFW, a long time supporter of the March of Dimes, has been monumental in helping the foundation to fund vital research into the causes of birth defects and other infant problems. It has resulted in healthier babies and healthier mothers.

Over the past two years alone, the March of Dimes has made some major progress for American babies. For instance, two more March of Dimes researchers have won the Nobel Prize, bringing the total to ten Nobel Prizes. Their work has shed light on the causes of a great number of

birth defects.

The Food & Drug Administration, thanks to the advocacy of the March of Dimes, made a ruling to help prevent hundreds of babies from suffering birth defects. The Back to Sleep Campaign, supported by the March of Dimes and many other organizations, to educate parents who put their babies to sleep on their back or their side, has reduced death by 30 percent.

The March of Dimes researchers found giving antibiotics to pregnant women with bacterial infections can reduce premature births. These are wonderful achievements. You helped make them possible. While we still have to keep at it, as long as any babies are born with birth defects or other health problems, we know we can do it because we have a record of victories to build on.

On behalf of the March of Dimes and America's babies, thank you all for your long and loyal support. Thank you for being in every sense heroes for healthier babies.

I now have the pleasure of presenting some very special awards honoring achievements in 1995-1996. First, the award for achieving the second place in financial support for the March of Dimes Commission, North Dakota VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary.

Now, the award for outstanding support of the March of Dimes mission, the winner is Maryland VFW Ladies Auxiliary. Will they please come up?

Last, but not least, the award for the number one VFW Post in financial support of the March of Dimes mission goes to Salisbury, Maryland Post 194. Congratulations to our winners. Let's give them all a big round of applause for the help for the past and future generations of this nation's young. Thank you very much.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL (Cont'd.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: At this time I would call upon the Chairman of the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure and Ritual, Howard Vander Clute, Jr., so we can conclude our business on that question.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF VANDER CLUTE: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. There is one unfinished piece of business that must be addressed this morning, and that relates to the set aside of B-16, which was recommended for rejection, and yesterday was asked to be set aside concerning Section 102, Application and Affiliation of New Members.

I think procedure requires that whoever had that set aside now move to approve. We need a second so that it can be debated.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: That is correct. The person that asked that be set aside, someone needs to go to the microphone and make the motion. There being no motion to pass this, the recommendation of the Committee will be accepted and that is to reject it.

I will now relieve you as Chairman of the Committee with my thanks

and best wishes. Thank you very much. It was a great job.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: For the Report of the Committee on Finance and Internal Organization, the Chairman is Past Commander-in-Chief George Cramer.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. First of all, I would like to recognize the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Ted C. Connell, from the great State of Texas. Of course, I would like to recognize the other members of the Committee that are scattered amongst you out there.

We deliberated Monday afternoon early with the following results.

First of all, Resolution 202, PAC-Endorsement of Candidates, has been withdrawn by both submitters, the Department of New Jersey and New Hampshire. We have recommended for adoption Resolution 207, Application Form for National Members-at-Large.

Commander-in-Chief, I will move that the delegates concur with the recommendation of the Committee and adopt this resolution.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I have a motion to accept the recommendation of the Committee to adopt this resolution. Do I hear a second?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE TED BLOUIN (Post 2059 - Texas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Ted Blouin, Post 2059, Texas. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and properly seconded to accept the recommendation of the Committee and adopt the resolution. Anything on the question? All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. All the remaining resolutions were recommended for defeat or rejection.

They are 201, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Uniform Proof of Eligibility for Membership.

No. 203, Life Membership.

No. 204, Change to National Convention Schedule.

No. 205, Health Program for Department Service Officers Tied to National Program.

No. 206, Provide National Members-at-Large Rosters to Departments.

No. 208, National Membership-at-Large.

No. 209, Tax Exempt Status of Post.

No. 210, Life Membership Fee Increase.

No. 211, Continuation of the All-American Program.

No. 212, Credit Deceased Life Members to Posts at the Beginning of the Membership Year.

No. 213, National Convention Rules.

No. 214, National Convention Rules.

No. 215, Amendments.

No. 216, Life Membership Fees.

No. 217, Initiate New Cancer Program.

No. 218, Rescind Life Membership Fees Increase.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RICHARD PIGNONE (Post 3173 - California): I move to set aside No. 212.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: No. 212 has been asked to be set aside.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JOHN PETERS (Post 4809 - Virginia): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, John Peters, Post 4809, Virginia, requests that No. 211 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: No. 211 will be set aside.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DONALD HEUER (Post 9433 - Minnesota): We are now asking to set aside the approved amendments, right?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We have already passed those.

COMRADE DONALD HEUER (Post 9433 - Minnesota): We are now moving for adoption of the rejected amendments?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: If you have one that you would like to set aside, give us the number and then we will get back to that number.

COMRADE DONALD HEUER (Post 9433 - Minnesota): No. 213.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: You would like No. 213 set aside. Let's have the Post number, please.

COMRADE DONALD HEUER (Post 9433 - Minnesota): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, it is Post 9433, Minnesota.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much. No. 213 is set aside. Anybody else at Microphone No. 3? So we have 211, 212 and 213 that have been set aside. Are there any other set asides?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DONALD HEUER (Post 9433 - Minnesota): I would like Nos. 214 and 215 set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Nos. 211, 212, 213, 214 and 215 have all been asked to be set aside. Any other set asides? Hearing none, the recommendation of the Committee is to reject, and I need to have a motion to accept. The ones set aside, someone must make a motion that they be passed.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RICHARD PIGNONE (Post 3173 - California): I move that we adopt No. 212.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made to adopt No. 212. Do I have a second to that motion?

COMRADE ROBERT MARR (Post 7283 - California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Bob Marr, Post 7283, California, seconds it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to adopt 212. I will turn to the Chairman to find out what 212 is.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER: No. 212 is to "Credit Deceased Life Members to Posts at the Beginning of the Membership Year." The deliberation was as follows. Obviously, the membership throughout the organization is adversely affected by deaths of members and their concerns will increase in the coming years.

Nevertheless, the Membership Program begins with the premise that the organization must replace those deceased members or it will wither and die. Reducing the starting membership goal gives a false picture of Post members to replace deceased members in growth of its membership and give false results. The Post that is 100-percent Life Members could, as a result of deaths, have no members at all and meet 100 percent for contest purposes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE RICHARD PIGNONE (Post 3173 - California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, is that 212 he just read?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER: I am sorry. You want 211? You asked for 212, right?

COMRADE RICHARD PIGNONE (Post 3173 - California): I asked No. 212, but that does not coincide with what you just said.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER: You want the resolution in its entirety or just the "Whereas"?

COMRADE RICHARD PIGNONE (Post 3173 - California): I would appreciate it if you would go right down the line.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER: "WHEREAS, under the current system, deceased Life Members are removed from a Post's Life Member totals in September of each year but this total is not removed from the beginning total membership; and

"WHEREAS, if the total deaths were removed from the total membership, Posts would be more inspired to recruit replacement members to keep the Post's membership on a continuous rise; and

"WHEREAS, Posts located in sparsely populated areas do not have the available populations to replace these members; and

"WHEREAS, the current system has an adverse effect on Posts who work diligently in the months of July and August to increase their membership only to find they have a deficit in September;

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that when the Life Member deaths are removed from a Post's rolls in September of each year, these totals also be removed from the Post's starting total membership."

That is submitted by the Department of California.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you.

COMRADE RICHARD PIGNONE (Post 3173 - California): Thank you. My comrades, you will remember last year how 212 came up, and it allows to rectify at the beginning of the membership year. We are starting off with the same amount that we ended the previous year. Then in September, what comes along is the taking away of these deceased members.

When the Commander, Post Commanders, District Commanders think they are on the rise, all of a sudden they are hit with the taking away of these members. Therefore, it is very hard to overcome at the beginning of the year, which you have worked so hard in order to bring your membership up and have a good start.

The Life Membership is the basis of all membership. With the higher members in the Life category, each Post Commander, District Commander, Department Commander and the National Commanders at the top are the big guns in membership. That will take away these deceased Life Members and no way in the world can you bring them back.

What happens is you lose them and you are expected to go out and get two for every one you lose. That is one of the bad features of that. Not only that, but we will continue to lose each year. We will lose in the membership. The Post Commander doesn't have the same enthusiasm if he was close to being the head, the District Commander, the same thing, the Department Commander.

Everybody is trying harder to do it, but the Life Members being taken away certainly hurts you. I believe, my comrades, that our membership year should start by taking away the deceased Life Members so that everybody has a fair shake at making 100 percent, and then we will not always show a deficit.

We are on a decline, my comrades. We don't want to show that we are in a decline. We want the opportunity to bring in more members. Thank you all very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JOHN PETERS (Post 4809 - Virginia): This morning at the All-American breakfast we discussed continuation of the All-American Program.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: John, right now we are on Resolution 212. The discussion now is on Resolution 212.

COMRADE JOHN PETERS (Post 4809 - Virginia): Excuse me.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: That is okay. Do I have any other discussion on Resolution 212?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GLEN GARDNER (Post 3359 - Texas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Glen Gardner, Jr., a delegate from Post 3359, Garland, Texas. This resolution is a moot point. The membership contest quotas for Posts are no longer set by the National Organization.

There are no national membership programs. It is up to the department.

We, in the Department of Texas, have subtracted from our Posts the deceased members. If they want to do that, let them do that. It is up to the leadership of each Department to decide what the quota is for their Posts, for their Districts for contest purposes for the upcoming year. It is no longer a national issue, anyway. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE TIGER MILLER (Post 1059 - Illinois): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I agree with him. Since this is going to be a state program, how about the All-American Department Commanders? If we say he is All-American, are you going to accept him?

You are going to say no. I don't have to say this, that and the other thing. I don't believe in it that way. I believe in taking away if you don't pay. That is my belief, and I honestly feel that it will be better for everyone. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Any further discussion on the motion? Any further discussion? Hearing none, we will call for a vote. The motion is to adopt Resolution 212. All those in favor of adopting Resolution 212 will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The motion is defeated.

We are now ready for Resolution 211.

Microphone No. 2.

In order for it to come on the floor, you need to make a motion to adopt a resolution.

COMRADE JOHN PETERS (Post 4809 - Virginia): I make a motion that we adopt Resolution 211.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Do we have a second to that motion?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE TIGER MILLER (Post 1059 - Illinois): Tiger Miller, Post 1059, Illinois, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and duly seconded to adopt Resolution 211.

Mr. Chairman.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER: Commander-in-Chief, do you wish me to read the resolution?

COMRADE JOHN PETERS (Post 4809 - Virginia): Yes. We don't know what it says. We would like to have it read.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER: I will read the resolution and I will read the argument.

"WHEREAS, membership is the life blood of any organization including the VFW; and

"WHEREAS, membership in the VFW is bolstered by numerous incentives; and

"WHEREAS, All-American status has been not only a tradition, but also an effective motivation for individuals as well as Posts, Districts and Department membership; and

"WHEREAS, it may be appropriate to revise the All-American eligibility requirements; and

"WHEREAS, it is recognized that a need is identified to reduce expenditures of the All-American program;

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the All-American Program be continued at Post, District and Department levels; and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this program be modified to strengthen the eligibility requirements; and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in order to conserve funds the Kansas City trip and other similar reward trips be eliminated."

The reason we rejected the All-American Program that was formed, as it was formally conducted, was thought to serve a useful purpose in attracting membership and encouraging recruitment of members. However, its effectiveness dwindled. Some even argue that the quotas were set too low and so many award winners that the award lost its significance.

In addition, they led to the buying of annual members, which is an ineffective use of resources and puts members on the rolls that have no identity with the VFW or its goals and purposes. The VFW National Membership Program is the prerogative of the Commander-in-Chief.

The new Membership Program, as established next year by the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, is designed to place the authority of the conduct of the membership programs into the Departments. The National Organization is no longer going to dictate by way of award programs, including the All-American Program as it formerly existed, how and in what manner the Departments will conduct the membership programs.

The Departments are great to determine what incentives work best in that Department. If the Department determines that recognition similar to the recognition given to All-Americans under the previous Department worked for that Department, then the Department can initiate a program.

The Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief recognizes that the All-American Program was initially designed to award only the best of the best, made the decision to modify eligibility for All-American so that only Department Commanders, and only those Department Commanders meeting certain qualifications in terms of Life Membership and new and reinstated members were truly All-Americans.

If a Department in connection with its own Department Membership Program wants to initiate a similar plan to the All-American Program for its Posts and Districts, it is free to do so.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JOHN PETERS (Post 4809 - Virginia): The All-American Program has worked very well in Virginia as one of the best incentives of bringing in new members. We request this morning and request again, Commander-in-Chief, to reconsider this All-American Program and put it back in the place, or continue it in place as it is.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone

No. 3.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Jim Nier, Post 8919, the Department of Texas. I was at the All-American breakfast this morning. I listened intently to what the members of that delegation said at that breakfast. I have listened here this morning.

I have consulted with the membership people at National and I have consulted with the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. I want to tell you we have reconsidered and there will be one All-American Post Commander in each Department. There will be one All-American District Commander in each Department, and there will be one All-American Commander.

The criteria will say it is now a national program still, but the Departments will pick that District and Post Commander to be All-American. This will be back in place, not necessarily the same eligibility criteria how they were selected. The Department will determine that.

There will be an All-American Post Commander and an All-American District Commander, and an All-American Department Commander from every Department. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE TIGER MILLER (Post 1059 - Illinois): Let me say I was sadly disappointed when I heard they were going to take the All-American Program away. I think that it is a grand champion mistake if it is taken away. Let me say I was up there at that breakfast this morning.

In order to make the All-American this year, I personally knocked on 322 doors to make that. I did it the right way. There may be some wrong ways to do it, but if they put this program in force they have got available to the Departments and Districts, it will work.

Illinois has 19 Districts and only one? Maybe there are three or four that deserve it. And only one Post? We have got 500 in Illinois. I don't think that is right. I think the program ought to go back and be reinstated as it says here in this resolution. Therefore, I move that we adopt No. 211.

Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: You are welcome. Any further discussion on that question? Anything further on the question?

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JAMES SHANE (Post 2451 - Texas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, we are a relatively small Post. We have only got two hundred some odd folks. It is absolutely inconceivable that we would be able to do battle with the likes of our Department Commander's home Post that has some 2,000 to 3,000 folks in it.

It is the only realistic thing for the young Posts and the smaller Posts to have an opportunity to look toward for recognition and for achievement. So it is recommended that the program should remain in effect as it stands. Otherwise, the emphasis on membership as well as other program requirements, the young small Posts don't have a shot at trying to make that particular goal.

If there is no incentive, the problem is that the membership will seriously decline and the only Posts that will be in the recognition side of the house are the larger facilities and the larger organizations. Therefore, we are asking that the program be available and stand so that the young Posts and the smaller Posts can have equal footing with respect to their membership drives.

It is just as important for the National program and the State programs or Department programs and the District programs that small Posts increase their numbers as well as larger installations and the larger facilities. So, we recommend that it remain as it is so that we, the smaller organizations, have an opportunity to look forward to something as great as this All-American Program is. I thank you for your time, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JEROME HENZE (Post 9213 - Texas): I concur with our incoming National Commander Jim Nier. I think that he has the intelligence to run this program, and I think that we leave it up to our State Departments. If we go by a percentage of increase, a Post with 50 members that goes to 100 members, would have a 100-percent increase, and a Post with 2,000 must go to 4,000 in order to match it.

I think we go by percentage. I think I speak for this proposal that the incoming Commander is making. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Anything further?

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ALLEN KENT (Post 9972 - Arizona): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Gunner Kent, delegate from Post 9972, Sierra Vista, Arizona. I don't see anything wrong with the program the way the incoming Commander-in-Chief wants to have it.

It is no different than the program we used to have. We have made one All-American Post, one All-American District and one All-American Department Commander. It wasn't until the '80s that this was changed. The All-American Program is the best of the best.

It doesn't matter what your Post size is, you are going to qualify just like the big Post if you do the work out there. All the incoming Commander-in-Chief is doing is he is saying I am going back to pick the cream of the crop, and that is all that is going to get the hat.

He is saying that I am not going to continue to give All-Americans out just arbitrarily, and in some cases, because somebody has a fat wallet. That is all the incoming Commander-in-Chief is going to do. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Benny Bachand, Post 4287, Orlando, Florida. For the past 20 years, I have had the opportunity to see the All-American Program develop from a National perspective. I have been fortunate to be the Membership Director for nine and one-half years.

I have seen that it always has been the prerogative of every incoming Commander-in-Chief to change programs as he has seen fit, and most of our Commanders-in-Chief have done so We have done extensive research in this area of how the All-American does or does not benefit the membership program in this organization.

Quite honestly, it is a myth, ladies and gentlemen, to think that the All-American Program will, in fact, enhance the membership of this organization. Statistically, it is not true. Additionally, over 35 percent of our All-American Commanders come from only four or five Departments.

I have heard time and time again from most of our incoming Department Commanders that the All-American Program in the past is not fair, and because we could not justify the quotas across the board. Many of our Posts and Districts are in small rural areas and they could not have the sustaining type of growth that was necessary.

So I would urge this delegation to defeat the continuation of the All-American Program and give the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief the same rights that any other Commander-in-Chief has in determining his own membership program. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DANA HUSSEY (Post 4485 - New Hampshire): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Dana Hussey, Post 4485, New Hampshire, and also the Department Commander. I also rise to defeat this resolution. The reason is that the 100-percent part is taken away and somebody says no incentive now to go out and do the work.

The incentive is the life blood of our organization. I think that the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief has bent over backwards to make a concession he didn't have to make. I think that people will want the All-American hats, people will still want to purchase that hat.

I think that is our price to pay. You will get some unrealistic numbers. I intend to get All-American Department Commander and All-American Department. I am going to do it. I am not going to buy anything. I think that we should consider this for the good of the organization.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE LAUREL PHIPPS (Post 839 - Iowa): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I don't know if this is a good program, and none of us will know until we try it. If we start jockeying it around with three months in the year on the program, and if we start moving around this now, we don't know what we will have. Let's give it a chance to work. If it doesn't work, we can change it next year. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 2.

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, John Moon, Post 2873, Grover Hill, Ohio. I stand in total support of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier's program. I urge the rejection of this resolution, and I move the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made to move the question. Do I hear a second?

COMRADE JOHN WARNER (Post 8552 - California): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been moved and seconded. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. We will move the question.

The motion on the floor now is to adopt Resolution No. 211. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The motion is defeated.

Next is Resolution No. 213.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ORLIN JACKSON (Post 433 - Minnesota): I move the adoption of Resolution No. 213.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made to adopt Resolution 213. Do I hear a second?

COMRADE MICHAEL LABOVITCH (Post 1085 - Minnesota): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to adopt Resolution No. 213. I will call on the Chairman first.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER: Commander-in-Chief and Comrades, Resolution 213 reads as follows:

"WHEREAS, the rules governing VFW meetings are found in Demeter's Manual; and

"WHEREAS, the rules that govern the National Convention are of great importance to the Convention delegates; and

"WHEREAS, the National Convention delegates wish to follow the rules of the National Convention;

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Convention Rules governing National Conventions, and voted on at the beginning of the National Convention, be made available to the delegates upon registration and be included in the 'Committee Assignment and Schedule of Resolutions' booklet."

This resolution was offered by the Department of Minnesota. Let me read to you the Committee's reason for recommending rejection. The Convention Rules are not established until the Convention Rules Committee meets and the Convention adopts the rules.

That occurs after the Convention convenes and most of the delegates have been registered. It cannot be included in the "Committee Assignment and Schedule of Resolutions" booklet, because it is printed in advance of our Convention. Thus, there is not any way that the rules can be made available in the ways suggested by this resolution.

Copies of the Convention Rules, as recommended by the Convention Rules Committee and approved by the Convention, can be posted outside the meeting area.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ORLIN JACKSON (Post 433 - Minnesota): Commander-in-Chief, I met with the Rules Committee this year, and they had the same

rules this year as they had last year. There were no changes except for the dates and time. They told me that the prior rules have been available from previous years. Would it be possible that the previous year's rules be included in the white booklet on resolutions?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I am sure that we could put it in there. The problem we would have is there is no guarantee that the previous year's rules will be the same rules for the present year. If they weren't, then we would have created a great deal of confusion.

COMRADE ORLIN JACKSON (Post 433 - Minnesota): Possibly, the rules that would not be included could be stricken out by the delegates.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Well, I think that we are still wandering around in the same forest here. The rules are not known until they are adopted by the Convention. We don't know what the rules are. We can assume they are going to be the same.

Let me go to Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JOHN SENK (Post 335 - New Jersey): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, to print the previous Convention's Rules in the "Committee Assignment and Schedule of Resolutions" booklet would be an expensive proposition and would have no bearing on this Convention whatsoever.

Once the rules are adopted by the Convention, we can have those rules printed here and posted outside and made available to anyone that may want them. I recommend rejection of this resolution.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 3.

ADJUTANT GENERAL RIVERS: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I am Larry Rivers, a delegate from Post 1736, Louisiana. My comrades, I will give you an example. We had a vote yesterday, a roll call vote. For us to prepare and print up the rosters to have that roll call vote cost us $1,013.

That was to print them up so we could distribute them. What we are talking about here are expensive propositions. If we print up rules we adopted last year that turn out to be changed by this body who makes that decision, we have spent a heck of a lot of your money on things that really are not any good.

What we would prefer to do is once the Committee adopts those rules, print up a sufficient number and leave them laying on the table in the Adjutant General's Office for those who are concerned and want a copy to stop by and pick them up, just as you do with many other things that come from this Convention.

That is the logical way to do it. It is the most cost effective way to do it, and that is the process we intend to implement beginning next year. I would urge you to reject this resolution.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE EUGENE WARDEN (Post 8552 - Texas): I rise in opposition to the acceptance of this resolution. I say reject this based on the information that the Committee has given us and what you have heard on

the floor. I move at this time for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made to move for the question. Do I have a second on the motion? Do I have a second on the motion?

COMRADE GLEN GARDNER (Post 3359 - Texas): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to move the question. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

The motion is on the floor to adopt Resolution 213. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The motion is defeated. The Chair was not in doubt on that one.

Next is Resolution No. 214.

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3. You need to make a motion to adopt.

COMRADE DONALD HEUER (Post 9433 - Minnesota): I move adoption of Resolution No. 214.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I have a motion on the floor to adopt Resolution No. 214. Do I have a second to the motion?

COMRADE MICHAEL LABOVITCH (Post 1085 - Minnesota): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded that we adopt Resolution 214.

We will now call on the Chairman.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER: Commander-in-Chief and delegates to this Convention, Resolution No. 214 reads as follows:

"WHEREAS, members of the Germane Committee are responsible to make recommendations to the Delegates at the National Convention; and

"WHEREAS, the Committee members should be able to hear the information concerning the resolutions that may be readily available; and

"WHEREAS, some Chairmen have prevented a Department from speaking to the Resolution Committee concerning the Department's Resolution(s);

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we propose a rule which shall permit any Department submitting a resolution at the National Convention, to any Committee, be present to answer questions and testify, if necessary, on any and all matters concerning said resolution."

This was submitted by the Department of Minnesota.

The Committee's recommendation for rejection is as follows:

The resolution is directed at some Committee Chairmen. The Committee Chairmen are appointed by the Commander-in-Chief and that appointment suggests that the Commander-in-Chief has evidence that that Chairman will conduct the meeting in the best interest of all members.

The Chairman should be left to decide who and in what manner that non-members of the Committee will be heard. This resolution, if adopted, permits the proponents of resolutions special privilege not afforded other

members who are not members of the Committee.

Why should they be heard in Committee and persons who oppose the resolution not be heard? They may, likewise, be able to answer questions and testify concerning the resolutions but won't be heard. That isn't fair. In any event, almost all the Departments have representation on all Committees.

I might add that one individual was arguing this resolution or giving us his ideas on the resolution was not a member of the Committee, and we did allow him to speak. Since I have been coming to Conventions for about the last 24 years, I have not heard anyone denied of his or her privilege to speak in any Committee meeting regardless if they were a member or not.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DONALD HEUER (Post 9433 - Minnesota): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. In Dallas, Texas, three years ago at the By-Laws Committee meeting, the Chairman said only Committee members would be allowed to speak. One of our Departments had nine resolutions in that Committee.

That Department was not represented on that Committee and, therefore, those nine resolutions had no one to speak for them. The following year in the By-Laws Committee meeting, the chairman also stated that the only people allowed to speak would be those people on the Committee.

This resolution is designed to ensure that there can be a proponent allowed to speak on the resolution, for instance. It is not the intent of the Commander-in-Chief this year, who sent a letter out, as well as Commanders-in-Chief in the previous years, to the Committee that he wished they would diligently go through the resolutions and deliberate on them.

But if the proponent is not allowed to speak, how can the Committee in good faith make the correct decision? Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Anything further on the question? Anything further on the question? Hearing nothing further, we will call for a vote. All those in favor of adopting Resolution 214 will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The motion is defeated.

Resolution No. 215.

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DONALD HEUER (Post 9433 - Minnesota): I move adoption of Resolution No. 215.

COMRADE MICHAEL LABOVITCH (Post 1085 - Minnesota): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to adopt Resolution 215. I will call for the Chairman to report.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER: Thank you, Commander. Delegates to this Convention, Resolution No. 215 reads as follows:

"WHEREAS, resolutions to the By-Laws, Rules, Ritual and Manual of

Procedure may contain some change in the wording of the By-Laws, Rules, Ritual or Manual of Procedure already in place; and

"WHEREAS, delegates to the appropriate Convention may not be aware of the proposed change and why the change is proposed; and

"WHEREAS, the proposed deletions are now designated as to word, line, sentence, or paragraph, et cetera;

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, when proposed resolutions to the By-Laws, Rules, Ritual, or Manual of Procedure of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States changes the wording of the By-Laws, Rules, Ritual or Manual of Procedure already in place, the booklet of 'Proposed Amendments to the National By-Laws,' should include both the old and the new wording."

This has been submitted by the Department of Minnesota.

The reason that the Committee recommended rejection of this resolution, this proposal would not only apply to those changes proposed by the National By-Laws Review Committee but to amendments proposed by the Department Conventions. It would be very difficult for those Departments to get By-Law Amendments into that format.

In any event, the format suggested by this proposal can very often be more confusing and ambiguous, because members are not sure what is in and what is out in the proposed amendment. The procedure at least makes that clear.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DONALD HEUER (Post 9433 - Minnesota): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I propose the present format does not make it clear. What is actually taken out, except for a word or a sentence or a paragraph, those words are not printed out. That is what this resolution is designed to take care of.

It is not the intent that the proposed resolutions to the By-Laws, that the whole wording has to be included from the Department's as the Chairman indicated. The Departments would write their resolutions the same way as they have in the past, and the National Organization can print in the words that are printed into the By-Law Book and the Manual of Procedure and Ritual.

The thought is that the first time any delegate, and I should not say any delegate, but most delegates will know what the resolutions are is at the time they come to the Convention. They will be given the proposed resolution booklet. This year it is the yellow one.

They will see the resolutions as printed, but they will not have any idea what the old resolutions are, what the old wording is unless they have the by-law book in their hand. For the most part, the delegates don't come here with the by-laws book with them.

One of the problems is that the by-laws are probably the most important part of the changes in their organization. All by-law changes have to come before the Convention floor. It is not so for the Manual of

Procedure, as you can well attest by the Committee.

The Manual of Procedure today still says that six dollars will be your delegate fee. It is important for the delegates to know what the by-laws are and what is going to be changed. I feel that is of vital importance. I certainly would like to see these Committees attended by more members of this organization to be informed on what the resolutions actually state.

Unless you are at the Committee meetings, you don't hear the resolutions and that has caused a lot of problems on the Convention floor. That is about all I have to say, Commander. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you. Anything further on the question? Anything further on the question? Hearing none, we will put it to a vote. All those in favor of adopting Resolution 215 will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The motion is defeated.

There being no further business for this Committee, I will now discharge the Chairman and his Committee with the thanks of the Convention for a job well done.

PRESENTATION OF THE J. EDGAR HOOVER AWARD, GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to present the J. Edgar Hoover Award for outstanding service in the field of law enforcement to three outstanding Police Officers from the City of Plantation, Florida: Detective James P. O'Hara, Police Office Joseph A. Alu, Sr., and Police Officer Robin Massey.

These police officers are truly representative of the dedicated men and women who serve our communities and the nation in the field of law enforcement.

On July 25, 1995, Officer Alu was called to a hostage situation at a residence. Detective O'Hara and Office Massey also responded to the call. The boyfriend of a mother of three children barricaded himself at the woman's residence with a can of gasoline and a machete.

He locked the mother, her three children and himself in the bedroom and threatened to kill them all. The officers on the scene, Robin Massey, Jim O'Hara and Joe Alu, got the mother out of the residence and were talking to her trying to get more information on the situation inside when one child, an 11-year-old girl, broke free and came running out the front door screaming, "He's doing it now."

All three officers knowing the life-threatening risk involved, entered the house in an attempt to save the other two children. As they entered the room, the boyfriend, having already doused the children, girls ages 16 and 14, with gasoline, poured gasoline on Officers O'Hara and Alu and ignited it resulting in an immediate explosion and fire. The boyfriend and two girls were killed and the officers were trapped in the room.

Officer Massey managed to kick open the bedroom door from outside the room, guiding Officer Alu to the outside door. She returned and

dragged Detective O'Hara by the legs to safety. O'Hara suffered burns covering 79 percent of his body. He continues to undergo rehabilitation treatment.

Officer Alu suffered burns over 29 percent of his body. The actions of O'Hara, Alu and Massey are in keeping with the finest traditions of the law enforcement profession.

I am honored to present the 1996 VFW J. Edgar Hoover Award to these outstanding law enforcement officers. Officer Robin Massey is unable to attend. However, Jackie Eagle will accept the award on her behalf. Detective Jim O'Hara has just recently been released from the hospital and Ken Porio will accept the award on his behalf. Officer Alu is here in person to accept his award.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, J. Edgar Hoover Award, Gold Medal and Citation, presented to Joseph A. Alu, Sr.

"In special recognition of his outstanding service, professionalism, bravery and knowledge in the field of law enforcement which has earned for him the respect of his peers and the admiration of the citizens of Plantation, Florida.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 21st day of August, 1996." This has been approved by the National Council of Administration and signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General.

We have duplicate awards for each of the other two recipients. Officer Alu, congratulations.

Accepting for James O'Hara is his brother and sister-in-law. Accepting for Robin Massey is her mom.

RESPONSE - OFFICER JOSEPH ALU, SR.

MR. JOSEPH ALU: Well, I am Officer Alu. I would like to thank the Veterans of Foreign Wars for honoring the three of us with this award. I feel real close to the Florida Veterans of Foreign Wars and the National Veterans of Foreign Wars. We did receive the award in Florida also.

Although we don't wear the same hats, we all do similar type jobs. All of you are heroes to us because you protect our country and keep us safe. What we do is to protect the citizens here in the United States. We really would like to thank you all for honoring us with this award. Thank you.

RESPONSE - MR. KEN PORIO

MR. PORIO: Good morning. I am honored to be here today to accept this award in behalf of my brother-in-law James O'Hara. I would just like to say that this is a big honor to us because this award is given by heroes for a hero. I personally would like to thank you for having me come up

here. I am honored.

I would just like to say to all of you, you have been a storybook hero to me, all of you. That is true for all of you men and women. You are heroes to all of us. I speak on behalf of the generation that I feel has forgotten you.

I would just like to say to my family that when we put out the American flag it is not a free weekend or a day off, it is not a picnic, it is a remembrance of all of you, those who have gone before us, and you here today I want to thank you for everything that you have done for this great country of ours.

I would ask you to call back to arms not with weapons but in your voice so we can change laws to stop protecting the criminals and start protecting the innocent Americans that are victimized day in and day out. I am going to cut this short, but you guys still have a hell of a lot of fight in you. I saw it last night. I couldn't keep up with most of you.

So I ask you to get involved in these laws. Make these politicians answer to you, because I pray to God that another officer never has to come up here and deal with this kind of tragedy. I lived with it in the Intensive Care over eight months watching my brother-in-law.

I would like to thank you very much for inviting me. May God bless you and God bless America.

RESPONSE - MS. JACKIE EAGLE

MS. EAGLE: I just wanted to say that I am deeply honored and very proud to accept this award on behalf of my daughter, Officer Robin Eagle Massey. She regrets she wasn't able to be here with you today. On her behalf, I want to thank, you most sincerely for this award.

It is a great honor, a great, great honor. We have always looked up to the VFW and this award is special because it comes from you. Thank you very much.

PRESENTATION OF VFW EMERGENCY SERVICES AWARD, GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Annually, the Veterans of Foreign Wars presents its Emergency Services Award to an individual for outstanding contributions to the community in the field of Emergency Services.

This year we are pleased to present the VFW Emergency Services Award to a man who has dedicated his life to serving the community.

Fire Lieutenant Michael Peery began his career as a volunteer fire fighter in his hometown of Sylvania, Ohio, in 1966. In 1979, he joined the Ottawa Hills Fire Department and later transferred to the Columbus Fire Department. Lieutenant Peery's service to his community and his profession have always been distinguished.

On November 29, 1984, in the early morning hours, Acting Lieutenant

Peery responded to a fire alarm at a residence in which children were believed to be trapped. Entering the building which was totally engulfed in flames, he searched for a trapped four-year-old child which he found hiding in one of the bedrooms.

Lieutenant Peery picked up the child and felt his way through the heavy smoke to a window. With first and second-degree burns to the neck and ears, he smashed out the window with his helmet and held the child outside the burning building while other fire fighters placed a ladder at the window.

Lieutenant Peery gallantly performed an outstanding act which was clearly beyond the call of duty.

When not on duty he is active in his community, particularly in the scouting program. Lieutenant Peery's deeds, dedication and experience in the field of fire fighting and emergency services over the past 27 years exemplify the deeds and sacrifices of fire fighters and EMT's across the nation.

Please welcome Fire Lieutenant Michael P. Peery, the 1996 recipient of the VFW Emergency Services Award winner.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Emergency Services Award, Gold Medal and Citation presented to Michael P. Peery.

"In special recognition of his distinguished career spanning 17 years of exceptional service as a fire fighter in the cities of Ottawa Hills and Columbus, Ohio, and in sincere appreciation for his selfless and dedicated service protecting life and property as evidenced by his heroic actions to enter a building, totally engulfed in flames, to search for an ultimately rescuing a four-year-old child, thereby, exemplifying the deeds and sacrifices of fire fighters across the nation.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 21st day of August, 1996." This has been approved by the National Council of Administration and signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General.

Congratulations Lieutenant Peery.

RESPONSE - LIEUTENANT MICHAEL P. PEERY

MR. PEERY: This is a tough act to follow the police officers. Good morning. Speaking after these three persons, Generals, President and Vice-President candidates, it is an honor. I feel humble to be up here. To be up here receiving this fantastic award from the VFW is truly a great moment in my life. I am contemplating retirement, so perhaps this will be the last great moment.

First of all, I would like to thank all of you, the great heroes of America. Last year, I had the occasion to get the State Award from Ohio, and I was fortunate enough to be presented it on the 50th Anniversary of World War

II. I got a chance there to congratulate and thank all the World War II veterans for what they did for the United States.

This is the 51st Anniversary, but thanks again. We wouldn't be here without you. I would like to also thank the fire fighters of VFW Post 3426 of Columbus, Ohio. A special thanks to Ron Kaskow, who submitted me for this award. Without Ron, I wouldn't be up here. Thank you, Ron.

I would like to thank my wife, Esther, my son, Andrew, and daughter Allison, for being there during the hard times and sharing in the good times. They are my inspiration. It takes a special wife to be a fire fighter's wife. She treats minor injuries, the sprains, the strains and burns, and she did this in the hospital.

The worst part of being a wife of a fire fighter is listening to the news when her husband is at work and hearing that a fire fighter is missing, presumed dead in a fire, and her husband is with the company. After a while in listening to the news on my duty days, which I can understand and where other fire fighters can understand, she is a special woman, the wife of a fire fighter. Thank you, honey.

Fire fighter's kids are also special. When you work your work shift, which consists of a 24-hour day, you miss a lot of school activities, sports events, scouting activities and so forth. It is hard for some of the other kids to comprehend why your dad is not with you running the final track meeting of the year or receiving a scout award.

As they say, it goes with the job. The fire fighter's kids understands that. My son, Andrew, is 15 and does well in school. He is a Senior Patrol Leader of his Boy Scout troop of 60 boys, and is working on his last two merit badges towards his Eagle Scout Award, and he is involved in his high school cross country. His future plans include applying for the Air Force Academy. He is a special young man. Thank you, son.

My daughter, Allison, is 14. She, too, does good in school and was a Girl Scout, until her troop was disbanded, and she runs in cross country and track for her school. She isn't certain about her military service at this time, but I am sure there is something in it. She is a special young lady. Thank you, Ally.

My sister is also here. She is a retired school teacher from the City of Toledo, Ohio. I guess I should thank her for not killing me when we were growing up and for her support through the years. Thank you, Aunt Gail.

I was very fortunate when I was growing up to have had the best father and mother in the whole world. Through World War II, my mother was an air service pilot and also taught future naval pilots ground school. My father suffered a severe leg injury in high school and was not allowed to serve in the military.

After high school, he took a civilian job with the government. He also watched my sister while my mother was at war. I guess he was about 50 years ahead of his time. At the awards ceremony for my mom in 1988, I didn't get a chance to say thank you to the program.

Between the time I earned the Columbus Fire Department Medal of

Honor and the awards ceremony for that medal, my mother and father both passed away. I never got a chance to thank them. So, thanks mom and dad. This one is for you. Thank you, VFW, and God bless you and God bless the USA. Thank you all very much.

INTRODUCTION OF PRESIDENT JAMES L. BRAZEE, VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: James L. Brazee, Jr., is the National President of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., the nation's only congressionally-chartered organization exclusively dedicated to Vietnam-era veterans and their families.

Born in California, Brazee was raised in Chicago, Illinois. He graduated from New Trier Township High School and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Government and International Relations from the University of Notre Dame in 1965.

In 1968, he received a Juris Doctorate degree from Chicago-Kent College of Law. Following graduation, Brazee joined the U.S. Army and served in Vietnam in 1972. After completion of his military service, Brazee moved to Lafayette, Louisiana, where he became a leader in community-service programs.

He served on the Mayor's Task Force for Vision Lafayette and was Chair of the Committee for Services to the Elderly and Chronically Disadvantaged. In addition, Brazee served as a Judge Advocate for the Department of Louisiana in the American Legion, from 1986-'90, and taught a course on legal rights at the University of Southwestern Louisiana.

In early 1986, Brazee joined the Lafayette, Louisiana, chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America, where he served as Chair of the Membership and President of the Louisiana State Council. In 1989, he was elected Vice-President of VVA.

Brazee was elected to the office of National President by a three to one margin at the August, 1991, National Convention in San Francisco, California, and was re-elected in 1993. Brazee's 1995 election was for an unprecedented third term as National President.

Brazee is engaged in the private practice of law and lives with his family in Lafayette, Louisiana. Please welcome VVA National President, James Brazee.

ADDRESS - MR. JAMES L. BRAZEE, JR.

COMRADE JAMES BRAZEE: Good morning. I can't tell you what a pleasure it is to be here with you today and bring you greetings on behalf of the Vietnam Veterans of America. As you may know, the Vietnam Veterans of America is the only congressionally-chartered National Veterans Organization dealing exclusively with the needs of the Vietnam veterans and their families.

The reason I am here is to bring thanks to the VFW, because within the last few months our two organizations have begun to work together on two very important issues. By working together, veterans organizations with veterans organizations, we can accomplish so much more than we can do individually.

The two programs we are working on, one of those is the still unanswered question of what happened to our POW-MIA's as a result of the Vietnam War? Did we leave live Americans behind? If so, what happened to them? What about accounting for those that are still missing in action?

Recently, the VFW began your POW-MIA initiative. The Vietnam Veterans of America have their own veterans' initiative, similar programs designed to exchange information, veteran to veteran, with our counterparts in Vietnam, the former enemy soldiers, exchanging information to help account for the missing from both sides.

The idea behind this program is that maybe, just maybe, we might find additional information that otherwise wouldn't be forthcoming. Already we are meeting with dramatic results. Already we have gathered information that will hopefully account for Americans who have been unaccounted for all these years.

We thank the VFW for joining this most important program to help bring peace to American families who are still waiting for answers after all these years after the war. The other issue we are working hand in hand with you on is the issue of birth defects resulting from Agent Orange exposure.

As I know you all know, the National Academy of Science issued its report and for the very first time they linked birth defects, spina bifida with Agent Orange exposure. We think in this assembly that is the tip of the iceberg There are other defects that can be linked to dioxane exposure and chemical exposure.

By working hand-in-hand, organization with organization, we can help with the compensation and health care benefits that those children of veterans and grandchildren of veterans so justly deserve. Our country has exposed its soldiers, men and women to chemical agents, be it Agent Orange, dioxane or whatever, can cause adverse effects, not just in those veterans but in their families, has a responsibility to care for those families.

We, as veteran organizations, have the responsibility to hold our government to task to do exactly that. While it may be true that we belong to different organizations, you will find that many of our members are also VFW members and many of your veterans are also VVA members.

The important thing, and the most important thing, no matter what organization we belong to, we are all veterans serving veterans. If we work together, we can accomplish so much more than if we work separately. I am here to thank you, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, for all the efforts that you make on behalf of the veterans in this country.

I thank you for working with us and I want to tell you how much we look forward to working with you in the years ahead. Thank you very much.

PRESENTATION OF VFW AMERICANISM AWARD TO MR. JAMES LEE WITT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Ladies and gentlemen, beginning in 1959, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has presented the prestigious Americanism Award to an American who has made outstanding contributions to our society and the principles of Americanism.

This year's recipient is James L. Witt, Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. A successful businessman, community leader and county judge for Yell County, Arkansas, James Lee Witt was appointed by the President to serve as the Director of FEMA in April, 1993.

Under his direction, FEMA has reorganized into a proactive agency that provides the leadership and support to reduce the loss of life and property from all types of hazards through a comprehensive, risk-based emergency management program of preparedness, response and recovery.

Mr. Witt has reinvigorated FEMA and educated the public in what to do before, during and after a disaster to protect themselves, their families, their homes and businesses. Working with and through local governments and private organizations, FEMA has been instrumental in helping to develop proven and effective plans for recovery and reconstruction after a disaster.

Mr. Witt brings to FEMA substantial experience in emergency management, a record of fiscal responsibility and a commitment to assisting people in times of crisis. His guidance and direction and concern for the people of this country are in keeping with the highest standards in principles of Americanism.

Please welcome our 1996 VFW Americanism Award recipient, James Lee Witt.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Americanism Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to James Lee Witt, Director of Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"In sincere appreciation of his distinguished service to the nation and in special recognition of his reorganization of FEMA into a proactive agency that provides the leadership and support to reduce the loss of life and property and protect our American institutions from all types of hazards through a comprehensive, risk-based emergency program of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. His leadership has reinvigorated FEMA and educated the public in what to do before, during and after a disaster to protect themselves, their families, their home and businesses. His guidance, direction and concern for the people of this land are in keeping with the highest standards and principles of Americanism.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 21st day of August, 1996." This has been signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General.

Along with that award is an honorarium in the amount of $1,500.

MR. WITT: I want to thank your National Commander for that very kind introduction. I also want to thank all of you, the VFW organization, for the Americanism Award. I am deeply honored for the recognition that you have shown me in the work I have done.

I want you to know that I am so proud that your award bears my name. I am accepting it on behalf of all the dedicated, hard-working employees of FEMA and many others across the country at the state and local levels that work with us every day throughout the year.

The state and local level do so much to help us to promote national relief in emergency management. Three of your leaders are here and I have personally worked with them many times. I would like to thank and acknowledge that work in emergency management every day is at the state and local level.

They are Billy Ray Cameron from North Carolina, Les Tone of Arkansas and Tom Atkinson of Conway, Arkansas, and all the others that help support our disaster relief efforts across our great country in which the VFW organization has done many times since I have been Director of FEMA.

President Clinton asked me to come to Washington to direct FEMA. He gave me orders to find swift and more effective ways we could respond to our nation's disasters, whether they are man-made or man-caused, or national disasters. President Clinton and Vice-President Gore understand that when people are in the worst troubles of their lives they need a government that will response effectively, swiftly and compassionately.

We know that America needs an emergency management system that is one that can respond to and help people recover from all kinds of disasters. We are working hard to build this kind of system in our country, the most professional and the most compassionate system that we possibly can build.

It is also working hard to build the capabilities at the state and local levels as well to help their neighbors when they are in time of need of help. I think that the most important part of our success has come from the relationship we have built in the programs we have developed with the armed forces.

These initiatives have allowed us to help harness the technology in ways that have never been attempted in the past. I signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to use the National Airborne Operation Center for aircraft in certain massive disaster situations.

Also I signed a corporate agreement with TransCom, the U.S. Transportation Command, to move our people, our resources anywhere. That is the highest level of dispatch. This agreement is totally unique. Nothing has ever been done like this before.

These two agreements involved the U.S. armed forces in disaster relief, and they are unprecedented at any time in our nation's history. This last

week I signed a memorandum with the Civil Air Patrol to help us at the national, state and local levels.

I also asked our communities and corporations to form partnerships with the national franchise organizations distributing FEMA material to state and local restaurants, all across our country to help us be prepared. All of these issues have one thing in common, they involve Americans working together to help other Americans at a time of need, involving the highest form of citizenship there is, giving oneself for another.

Each of you in this room has practiced this form of citizenship, this unique form of Americanism. The people I work with in Washington and across the country practice it every single day. My contribution is to join in these efforts and also build a tax base that Americans can use this system for generations to come.

Today you honor me and I am deeply grateful for the trust that you have shown in me. I will do everything I can to not violate that trust, to build and help you and other organizations to build a better America for our children and grandchildren for their future. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Ladies and gentlemen, let me bring you up to date. We have been notified that Vice-President Gore's plane has landed. We were waiting for word from them that he is on his way. We have probably got about 10 or 15 minutes before that happens.

When he gets here, and once he gets here, as we did yesterday, we will go and get him and all those things. We have a little bit of time. What I would like to do at this time is move this program along a little bit and go back to some of our business.

I am going to call on the Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Past Commander-in-Chief Gunner Kent, to at least to begin the report of his Committee. When we get to where we need to stop, we will do it at that time and pick it up again later.

Past Commander-in-Chief Kent.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: Commander-in-Chief, thank you for appointing me as Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs. I would like to thank Vice-Chairman, R. D. "Bulldog" Smith and also Chairman of the Subcommittee on POW-MIA, Billy Ray Cameron from North Carolina, and the Vice-Chairman of the POW-MIA Committee, Bob Wallace from New Jersey.

I would like to also thank all of the comrades that have served on the Committee. I do know one thing, we had more Catholics on that Committee than we had anything else, because the Father got up and spoke on one of the resolutions, and we had a roll call and it was 53 to 43, so I know we had more Catholics than we did anything else.

At this time I would like to have the Chairman of the POW-MIA

Committee to report on his Committee.

REPORT OF POW-MIA SUBCOMMITTEE

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CAMERON: Thank you very much, Gunner. It is indeed a pleasure to be here this morning to report on the POW-MIA Committee. First of all, I would like to thank our Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera for attending our meeting and making some remarks, which I think helped the Committee along.

Also Jim Nier, the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and John Moon, a special thanks for also coming by our Committee. Before I start into my resolutions report, I would like to say once again the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary is totally committed to resolving the POW-MIA issue.

I have heard that the POW-MIA Committee is going to be dissolved in the future. That is a total rumor. The Senior Vice and Junior Vice assured me we are going to continue with the Committee and the Veterans of Foreign Wars is totally committed to resolving the issue.

First of all, our Committee met, and would our Committee members please stand. That is anyone that is on the POW-MIA Committee, please stand. There are several in the audience. I would like to say a special thank you to our Past Commander-in-Chief Bob Wallace who served as the Vice-Chairman. Bob, as usual, does a good job and we are appreciative.

First of all, I will move through the resolutions that were approved in our entire Committee, and then I will move for those and ask for a second.

Our first resolution that was approved by the Committee is Resolution 401, Support Public Awareness Projects. There were amendments just for clarification.

Our second resolution that was approved was Resolution 402, Seek Opportunity to Resolve the Korean War POW Issue. That was amended, once again, for clarification.

Resolution 418, Assist Vietnam's Recovery of MIA's as a Sign of Our Good Faith. Once again, that was amended for clarification and it was approved.

Resolution No. 424, Americans Who are Prisoners of War or Missing in Action, was amended once again for clarification.

Also Resolution 435, VFW Supports Kuwait Approved Demand Full Accounting of its MIA's was approved.

So at this time those are the ones that were approved by the Committee. I will move that those be approved and ask for a second.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BOB WALLACE (Post 1951 - New Jersey): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to accept the recommendations of the Committee on approving these resolutions. Anything on the question? Anything on the question?

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE M. G. DeBURLO (Post 5988 - Massachusetts): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, would you please read those resolution numbers again?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CAMERON: The Committee recommends approval of 401, 402, 418, 424 and 435.

COMRADE M. G. DeBURLO (Post 5988 - Massachusetts): Thank you. Commander-in-Chief, I move that 418 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We are going to set aside 418. Are there any other set asides? Are there any other set asides? If there are no other set asides, we have a motion to adopt the remaining resolutions read off by the Chairman. All those in favor will say "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. Those motions have been passed and the other resolution has been set aside.

At this time we have been informed that the Vice-President's motorcade is on its way. We are going to do whatever it is we need to do to get ready. I would like the Chairman to step aside for now.

We will have a recess in place for a few minutes.

...Recess. ...

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: We proudly welcome the Vice-President of the United States, Al Gore, accompanied by Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Jesse Brown, Deputy Secretary Hershel W. Gober, and Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera. Let's give them a warm welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF VICE-PRESIDENT AL GORE, JR.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed a pleasure for me to introduce the 45th Vice-President of the United States, Al Gore. He brings to his office almost two decades of distinguished public service in the United States Congress.

Vice-President Gore heads the National Performance Review, an initiative that has saved taxpayers more than $58 billion and reduced the size of the federal government by more than 230,000 positions, the smallest government since John F. Kennedy's administration.

Vice-President Gore has traveled the country to meet with people who live in poverty-stricken inner-cities and rural areas to hear what they need to rebuild their lives and communities. He chairs the Community Empowerment Board, which oversees various initiatives designed to bring together distressed communities to develop plans for revitalization.

Among elected officials, Vice-President Gore is recognized for his unparalleled record of environmental work and concern. He is the author of a national best-seller, Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit.

In 1969, Al Gore enlisted in the United States Army and served in Vietnam and is currently a member of VFW Post 5021, Carthage, Tennessee.

Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm reception to the Vice-President of the United States, Al Gore.

...Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation. ...

ADDRESS - VICE-PRESIDENT AL GORE

VICE-PRESIDENT GORE: Thank you very much. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Commander-in-Chief Spera, and Mrs. Spera, thank you for your very generous introduction. Secretary Jesse Brown and Deputy Hershel Gober, I will say something more in a moment.

My colleagues along with Jesse Brown and President Clinton and FEMA Director James Lee Witt, thank you for giving James Lee Witt your Americanism Gold Medal Award. We appreciate that. To Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief James Nier, to all of the distinguished guests who are present, I am told Lieutenant Governor Steve Henry and Congressman Mike Ward are here. I apologize to them. I am going to be meeting with some others a little bit later on.

May I say a special word of welcome to my fellow Tennesseeans in the VFW, and on behalf of the President I would like to say hello to the Arkansans who are here. I know he has many friends here.

May I say also that I would like to especially say a word of welcome and thanks to my fellow Vietnam veterans in this audience. You know, when President Clinton announced his intention to appoint Jesse Brown, many on the other side thought it wasn't a good choice because in their word he wasn't too much of an advocate for veterans to do the job. That is what they said.

Well, he is an advocate, because you get things done through partnerships. I want to formally and publicly here and now thank Secretary Jesse Brown and his Deputy, Hershel Gober, and their staff, their whole team, for their commitment to serving all of you who have worn our nation's uniform. I would like to thank Jesse and Hershel for being, in my opinion, the best team ever to serve America's veterans of the United States.

I am really glad to be here. You know, I was told that the reason I was invited to speak to this gathering is because of my reputation for excitement. I am used to that. I have heard just about all those stories by now. If you use the strobe lights, it looks like Al Gore is moving.

How can you tell Al Gore from a room full of Secret Service Agents? He is the stiff one. Al Gore is so poor his Secret Service code name is Al Gore. I am used to many. I am telling you every time I hear a new one, I always have the same reaction, "Very funny, Tipper."

In spite of that, I want you to know that I really enjoy serving as Vice-President. I went on one of the late night shows recently, David Letterman, and they asked me to give the top ten most enjoyable things about being Vice-President. I won't give their whole list here, but I remember number

five on the list because I am reminded of it by this podium here and the great seal of the Vice-President.

If you look at that seal and closed your left eye and turn your head just right, it says President of the United States. It gives me a thrill every time I do that.

Well, ladies and gentlemen and fellow veterans, it is really humbling to stand here with you, those of you who represent the great long line of Americans who have served and sacrificed and sometimes died for the principles upon which our nation was built.

This organization has served our country well. You have preserved and defended the ideals that have allowed us as Americans to uniquely vanquish with our enemies and give truth to the fact that America is indeed and always will be the greatest nation on the face of this earth.

Justice, liberty and democracy, that is what we stand for. There is nothing partisan about our commitment as Americans, and these are not words to use just every four years in the middle of a political campaign. These are concepts that live and breathe forever, wherever the men and women of our armed forces serve.

You are here today, our veterans among America's heroes, and you give these words life and meaning. You have done so in every single battle that has bequeathed democracy and security to our republic, whether in the Persian Gulf or in Vietnam, or in Korea, or earlier on the battlefields of World War II.

More than 16 million brave Americans served in World War II, including Bob Dole. Incidentally, all Americans deeply respect Senator Dole's distinguish service in that war, dedication to his country and courage in fighting back from injuries that he received in the line of duty.

We appreciate you and your services as well, and Jesse Brown's service, and the dedication that America's veterans have shown to our country. All Americans know that we honor our nation by honoring each and every one of our veterans. This means more than ceremonies and parades.

It is something deeper, more eternal. It means preserving and protecting what you fought for, opportunity at home, leadership around the world, and above all an America that is strong, safe and free. That is why I am here today to tell you what President Clinton has done to secure these virtues and what he plans to do in his next term if the American people grant him one.

Now, I know that the other day the VFW-PAC by a very slim margin gave its endorsement to our opponent. That is fine. It is their right to speak their mind. After all, that is what democracies are about. Still if there is one thing that we have learned from America's veterans, it is this. Stand up and defend what you believe in.

So today I am standing here to defend what we have done and tell you why we believe our vision is the right vision for America. First of all, we believe that everyone willing to take responsibility and work for it must

have the opportunity to reach the American dream.

That means working together to create a strong economy, an economy that creates good jobs with growing incomes. Let's not forget, because many Americans cannot forget, that four years ago our economy had driven into the ditch.

Unemployment was very high, wages were low, the deficit had been tripled and was still going up. We were trying to come out of a triple dip recession. Three times the economy struggled to recover and three times it sputtered and failed. We needed to put our economic house back in order.

Our national debt had quadrupled. Indeed, we have a surplus this year, except for the interest payments on the debt rolled up between 1981 and 1993. Well, President Clinton came forward with the right tools, namely, a bold economic plan issued in January, 1993, not long after he took his hand off the Bible having taken the oath of office as President.

Some of you remember that plan. It was attacked on partisan grounds. Many preferred the status quo to change. We had to fight hard to get it passed. In fact, in the House of Representatives, it passed by a single vote margin. Then it went over to the Senate where it was a 50-50 tie vote, causing momentary despair. Some of you know your Constitution.

There is a provision there in which roughly translated the Vice-President, every time I vote, we win. I voted and we won. We adopted the change. Change began to occur. All of a sudden the economy began to start producing jobs again.

Look at what has happened since that time. Ten million new jobs have been created. The vast majority are with higher wages. Our auto industry is number one again. We have 800,000 new construction jobs. Our high tech industries are number one in the world again.

Four and one-half million more Americans are private homeowners than was the case four years ago. We have produced results for the American people. We have the lowest combined rate of unemployment, interest rates and inflation in 30 years. The budget, the deficit had climbed to $300 billion a year, and was still going up, that has been cut by 60 percent. In fact, it has come down four years in a row, the third time that has happened in a President's term since before the Civil War, way back in 1852.

That is something hard to do. That is because it takes leadership from someone who is willing to set priorities. One way we did it was by reinventing government, downsizing the government in a smart way, not eliminating it. You know, there is a difference between just declaring government the enemy and trying to eliminate as much of it as you possibly can, and fixing it and eliminating the waste and the abuse and the part that needs to be cut out to keep the parts that can serve the American people.

It is kind of a difference that is illustrated in the old story about the veterinarian and the taxidermist that went in to business together. They put a sign out in front of their establishment that said, "Either way, you get your

dog back."

Well, there is a difference. We want to fix it. We don't want to get a trophy and put it on the wall. That is how we have gone about it. The President has produced an economy that is growing with wages that are finally going up again, adjusted for inflation, going up in every single category, including, incidentally, yesterday's raise in the minimum wage for ten million hard-working families that need and have earned a minimum wage.

We have not stopped there. We have declared war on crime. We took 19 deadly assault weapons off the streets. We put 100,000 community police officers into a program toward the sidewalks and streets of every city in America. Most of them are already there.

We are fortunate that General Barry McCaffrey, who fought with gusto with some of you in Desert Storm is now leading our war against drugs, fighting to reverse the trend that began before this administration came into office. We are beginning to make strides.

The youth crime rate has just started to come down. In every single category, crime is down dramatically and has come down for the last four years in a row. We have made progress in accessing education and improving education. We have taken new steps to protect our environment.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have stood up for this nation's veterans who have stood fast for America. We are proud that President Clinton, in setting his priorities, priorities that have brought this deficit down and are aiming us toward a balanced budget the right way, in setting those priorities we are proud that President Clinton requested a billion dollars increase in funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We are disappointed that the Republican Congress cut his request by $915 million. We believe this should be a priority. We are proud that this President insisted that disabled veterans and military retirees receive full cost-of-living adjustments on benefits.

He believes that is a priority. We are proud that today more Vietnam veterans, who suffered because of exposure to Agent Orange, are now entitled to the disability payments they earned with their service. We are proud of the steps we are taking to provide help for the veterans' children who suffered from spina bifida.

We are proud that under Bill Clinton's leadership we have doubled Veterans Administration funding of programs for the homeless veterans and have been proactive in improving services for the Persian Gulf veterans, women veterans and POW's.

We are proud that President Clinton has helped 1.5 million veterans obtain civilian jobs. We are proud that under President Clinton the veterans' unemployment rate has been cut by almost a third from 7.2 percent, when we took over, to 4.9 percent in January of this year.

So I want to ask you to look at the record. Look beyond the rhetoric, look beyond the political words, and look at the facts. We invite you to look at a record under Bill Clinton that has been in the words of Jesse

Brown the best record for veterans in America since President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, because it has been a priority for President Clinton.

May I invite you to look at the record of both candidates. Look at the voting record. We acknowledge and praise Senator Dole's service and courage. That is fair; that is right. It is also fair and right to ask you to look at the record. I invite you to do so.

Let me say also that we are proud of our commitment to obtain the full accounting of America's POW-MIA's, and I want to assure you no stone will be left unturned and no clue overlooked until our missing comrades are accounted for. We owe this to the families of those missing Americans.

Let me make another point. My fellow members of the VFW, we are proud, extremely proud that when members of the other political party, to which President Clinton and I do not belong, threatened veterans' benefits in a strategy designed to shut down the federal government twice in order to try to convince the American people to buy their agenda, President Clinton stood firm.

He did not budge and he did so with a veto. Veterans' benefits were among the items prominently listed in what was at stake in that battle. You know, in many ways the difference between our parties really couldn't be sharper. Last winter, during that budget debate, the other side wanted to offer an indiscriminate tax break, far larger than what we have proposed, and pay for it by cutting the things that Americans value most: education, Medicare, healthy environment, veterans' benefits.

So President Clinton stopped them in their tracks and said, "I will not accept it," and twice vetoed it. Now, they are up to the same old tricks. This time with an even bigger tax cut, even more indiscriminate, and absolutely no way to pay for it. It is a retreat from a balanced budget.

Our veterans, all of you, did not sacrifice so that this generation could blow a huge hole in the deficit and saddle our children with an unmanageable debt. That is exactly what the Republican plan would do. They may claim this burden will not fall on the backs of our children or the elderly, or veterans, but let's be honest, it may not be today or tomorrow, or the next day, but with the Republican plan veterans would have to pay. There is no way around it.

Yesterday Senator Dole said that cuts in veterans' benefits are off the table. Later, I don't know if you saw the words spoken by his spokesman after his speech, but he corrected the record and he said, "No, veterans' benefits are not off the table."

Well, you have a right to know whether they are on the table or off the table. If they are going to be cut, how deeply, by the amount that was proposed in the budget that Speaker Gingrich and Senator Dole tried to convince the President not to veto?

You know, big and indiscriminate tax cuts that give more to the wealthy Americans than anyone else just doesn't fit in with the campaign rhetoric saying veterans' benefits are off the table, Social Security is off the table, military is off the table, Medicare is off the table.

If you believe that, then fine. But if you will look at the record and look at what certainly would occur, then you will come to a different conclusion. That is why President Clinton has offered a better approach for a stronger America, targeted tax cuts that would help middle income families.

That is a tax deduction for job training and college education, making two years of college as universal as the high school education is today. A tax cut that we can afford and that is paid for in a set of priorities that includes respect for and protection for veterans' benefits.

Now, that is the choice. Of course, even with all of the progress here at home, let me say that we understand very clearly that America cannot be truly strong at home unless we are also strong overseas. Although Communism's dark shadow has long last given way to a better way to freedom and hope for millions of people around the world, we know that the forest of destruction still lurks in our midst.

Dangerous threats of terrorism, international crime, ethnic and religious hatreds, and threats caused by weapons and mass destruction have re-emerged with a vengeance. That is why it remains our most solemn duty to ensure that the men and women of our armed forces remain the best equipped, best trained and the best readiness fighting force in the world.

We intend to make sure of this. That is why it remains our duty to ensure that the equipment which supports them and the strategies that guide them are the most sophisticated on God's earth. We give no quarter to anyone who says that our fighting men and women are not the very best, the best supported and the readiness that this world has ever seen.

America has the best right now. Just ask the former dictators in Haiti, who got out of Haiti when they heard our troops were on the way. Ask the Balkan commanders in Bosnia who went from the battlefield to the negotiating table when they learned that America's will was not to be tested, and now for the first time in five long and bloody years the children of Sarajevo wake to a school bell and not a mortar shell.

America is the indispensable nation. Our citizens and our soldiers still mark the distance between peace and war on a planet that is now just awakening to the profound possibilities of free minds and free markets. As we learned in the Forest of Argonne, on Pork Chop Hill, in Caisson and along the berms of Iraq, freedom is never free.

As the President said on so many occasions, when our interests and our values demanded, America must act and leap. It is our greatest tradition. That is why the President's commitment to fully fund our armed forces is unyielding. That is why he has made adjustments to increase the defense budget three times in three years, adding back a total of more than $50 billion to strengthen the readiness of our armed forces and the quality of life for the men and women who serve in uniform.

That is why he acted to ensure that the very best of the next generation of military hardware, like the B-230's and the F-22's will begin into production at the turn of the century. That is why since 1993, President Clinton has requested over $6 billion to develop and procure state of the

art missile defense designed to shoot down short range missiles that might be armed with conventional chemical biological or nuclear warheads.

We are also committed to the development and deployment of even more advanced air theater missile dependence. We are pledged to develop by the year 2000 a national missile defense system that could be deployed as early as 2003 should a long range missile threat to America's shores emerge.

I strongly object to those in the Republican Party who say that this administration is not committed to readiness in maintaining the forces that we need to meet the challenges of the future. Let's remember a very important fact.

This is the President, Bill Clinton, who said firmly and clearly no to those who called for a decline in military spending at the turn of the century. It is the Republican Congress themselves that would cut defense at the turn of the century to try to make their numbers fit together.

Again, look beyond the rhetoric and look at the facts. Let me repeat. It is the Republican defense budget, not President Clinton's budget that drops in the next century. President Clinton's budget, which is also there for you to see, does not. It increases. The facts are facts.

Illusions must be penetrated. The fact is that no person is as committed to military readiness to the security and well-being of our troops, to the safety of our nation as President Bill Clinton. We yield to no one. Nowhere has this been more true than in our determined fights against terrorism.

Mark my words, the fight we wage against those who promote fear destruction and terror is a fight we will win. That is why this President passed the most sweeping counter terrorism bill in our history over the objections of the Republican Congress, despite efforts by the Republican leadership to weaken that bill.

That is why, for example, when former President Bush was threatened by assassin's bullet, when he visited Kuwait, President Clinton sent our fighter planes and Tomahawk missiles to Baghdad to send a clear signal that the line America drew in the sand is as clear today as it was five years ago.

That is why we are working right now to increase the security of air travel, to expand our counter-terrorism intelligence capabilities, to open new offices for law enforcement, particularly the FBI across the globe, and to demand the no sanctuary pledge for terrorism, sending a clear, uncontrovertible message that any person who dares to take on the United States of America, the message is you can run but you cannot hide. We will come after you.

In defense of our nation and our families, we will act alone when necessary and with our friends as partners when possible. Sometimes as peace keepers, but always as patriots and as Americans. Incidentally, don't let anybody tell you that when an American President decides to assign our troops to serve with our allies in human peace keeping operations, that he somehow relinquishes his command authority.

That is bunk, pure and simple. Despite what some might have you

believe with political rhetoric, the chain of command is a hallowed line that runs from the President to every serviceman and servicewoman in every unit everywhere in the world, including those who were assigned with our allies to serve in U.N. operations.

That command relationship between the President of the United States and our men and women in uniform is never broken, and it will never be. Wherever they serve, the President has ultimate command authority over every single one of our stalls and it is by his authority alone that anyone can request our troops to perform a military task.

Ask our colleagues in combined operations in Korea, or those who defended our nation in the deserts of Iraq, or those who have brought peace to the Balkans. Well, America never has and never will retreat from the obligations of leadership.

Policemen, no; staunch flexible and mighty defenders of our vital interest, always. That is the VFW way, that is the American way. Opportunity at home, leadership abroad, a strong, safe and free America, that is the vision of Bill Clinton.

I would like to leave you with the words that are inscribed on a plaque at the headquarters of the Department of Veterans Affairs just a couple of blocks from the White House. They are words that are sacred to President Bill Clinton and me, and to his whole team.

They are the words of a Republican, Abraham Lincoln, the words he uttered in his second inaugural address, but they are, of course, words that have nothing whatsoever to do with partisanships but everything to do with what it means to be an American.

President Lincoln said, "It is our responsibility to care for him who shall have borne the battle for his widow and his orphan."

That was our duty then and that is our duty today. We will do it. God bless American veterans, God bless America. Thank you.

...Whereupon, the assembly extended a
prolonged standing ovation. ...

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: May I have the Chairman of the National Contests Committee, to come forward, please.

PRESENTATION OF FIELD CONTESTS AND VFW COLOR GUARD

COMRADE ROBERT BRADY (Department of Pennsylvania): We will now have the results of the Field Contest at the Patriotic Rally. The winner of the Senior Men's VFW Color Guard Contest for the Field Contest is the 98th Division, VFW Post 9251, Rochester, New York. The unit will come down front, please.

The winner of the Field Contest for the Auxiliary Color Guard, Senior Ladies VFW Auxiliary, representing District No. 6, Department of Arkansas, Little Rock, Arkansas. Congratulations, ladies.

In the Junior Division, the Junior ROTC Color Guard, the winner is Griffin High School, the Female Unit, representing Griffin High School AJROTC, VFW Posts 5448 and 8480, Griffin, Georgia.

The winner of our Junior ROTC Armed Drill Team was Griffin High School, VFW Posts 5448 and 8480, Griffin, Georgia.

The Junior ROTC Unit, Unarmed Drill Team, Ladies, representing VFW Post 8632, Rubidoux High School, Riverside, California.

The United States Patriotic Rally, the Best Appearing Senior VFW Color Guard was judged to be the New Jersey State Honor Guard. The plaque will be accepted by the Department Commander by Dennis Wall.

Now Commander Orlin Jackson will accept the plaque for the Best Appearing Senior Ladies VFW Auxiliary Color Guard, representing VFW Post 295, South St. Paul, Minnesota.

REPORT OF POW-MIA SUBCOMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Let's get back to the business we were in when we closed down. We were at the point where Resolution 418 was set aside. Now, if you want to take action on it, someone must come to the microphone and make a motion and have it seconded.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE M. G. DeBURLO (Post 5988 - Massachusetts): I am here offering amendment to No. 418. The Sergeant-at-Arms has a copy to give to the Chair.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We have the original motion to pass all of the resolutions as reported, and this one was set aside, so that motion is still on the floor. The Parliamentarian has instructed me, and I agree, that in order for us to do this we first need a motion to approve, since it was set aside and removed from the others that were already approved.

Someone needs to make a motion to approve 418 and second it, and then I will accept the amendment.

COMRADE M. G. DeBURLO (Post 5988 - Massachusetts): I so move, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Do I have a second to that motion?

COMRADE RON DORSEY (Post 856 - Texas): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to approve Resolution 418. We now have an amendment to the Resolution 418. I will turn this over to the Chairman. Will you read your amendment? Do you have a copy? Will you read your amendment, please? Make a motion to amend the resolution by the following amendment.

COMRADE M. G. DeBURLO (Post 5988 - Massachusetts): Commander-in-Chief, I make a motion to amend Resolution 418 with the following amendment:

After listening to the presentation from the representatives of our allies from Taiwan and Korea, this amendment is offered in the same spirit.

"WHEREAS, our National Officers in Vietnam are only allowed to hold

meetings with Communists' efforts and our former allies of the Republics of Vietnam are not considered veterans;

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that during any future trips to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam our national officers request to hold meetings with the servicemen and women who fought alongside U.S. forces during the Vietnam War and that they also be granted the status of veterans by the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam."

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Do I have a second to that amendment?

COMRADE RON DORSEY (Post 856 - Texas): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Now, will you read the original resolution, Ken.

COMRADE KENNETH STEADMAN: Resolution 418 is to assist Vietnam's recovery of MIA's as a sign of our good faith.

"WHEREAS, during the periodic visits to Vietnam concerning our POW/MIAs, our National Officers have been asked by the Vietnamese for any information American veterans may have concerning Vietnam's 300,000 MIAs; and

"WHEREAS, members of the U.S. Joint Task Force-Full Accounting" fully support any U.S. veteran effort that would help Vietnam locate and recover its MIAs, as our effort would generate good will among the Vietnamese; and

"WHEREAS, our government officials in Vietnam and Laos and VFW National Officers have noted the increased importance of good will in helping to resolve the POW/MIA issue and recover our MIAs;

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that at each level of the VFW — National, Department, District, County Council, Post — strenuous efforts be made to collect any information which might be of value in determining the fate of Vietnam's 300,000 MIAs and of assistance in the recovery of their remains; and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge all levels of the VFW to solicit all Vietnam veteran members (and non-members) for any information or material that could be used to determine the fate of Vietnamese MIAs and their graves. Such information and material include battlefield souvenirs especially if they contain names or other identifying information; personal effects such as photos, letters, identification documents, taken from casualties; sketch maps, photos, overlays (annotated with dates and locations if possible) which would be of help in identifying Vietnamese grave sites; and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VFW National Headquarters publicize this effort and provide Departments with materials which might be used in further publicizing our efforts and that the VFW Washington Office act as the collecting point and repository of all such information obtained from our members and the public at large; and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that on subsequent trips to the region by VFW National Officers, such information be turned over to Vietnamese

authorities as an expression of our desire to assist them in recovering their MIAs and to encourage their greater effort in helping us reach the fullest possible accounting of all MIAs."

This has been submitted by the Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Let me do this. There is nobody at Microphone No. 2. Does anyone want to speak on this?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 - Connecticut): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ron Rusko from Post 9460, Stratford, Connecticut. I am also the POW/MIA Chairman this year. I had the proud pleasure during your administration in serving as the Chairman.

I rise to speak on the amendment to Resolution 418. Commander-in-Chief and Fellow Delegates, I think that as the amendment is presented it is just somewhat flawed in that the first part of the resolution requests, or the amended resolution requests that our officers be allowed to talk with the veterans of the Vietnam War on their side.

There is nothing wrong with that. But in the second part, it pretty much demands that the government of Vietnam give to the veterans of Vietnam the veteran status. That would be like them telling us to take away your status as a veteran before they would talk to us.

To simplify it, we simply cannot go over there and say we want you to give those veterans veteran status. We have no right to do that. So if the maker of the amendment would agree to strike all after the word in this amendment "during the Vietnam War", and let me read the sentence, "That our National Officer request to hold meetings with the servicemen and women who fought alongside U.S. forces during the Vietnam War," and strike all after that, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I think this amendment to the resolution would serve us well.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE M. G. DeBURLO (Post 5988 - Massachusetts): Commander-in-Chief, as the maker I concur with Ron Rusko's suggestion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Does the seconder concur?

COMRADE RON DORSEY (Post 856 - Texas): I concur.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The maker and seconder of the amendment agree that this amendment to the resolution will end with the words "Vietnam War" in the last sentence, "and that they also be granted the status of veterans by the government of Socialist Republic of Vietnam is now removed from the amendment." Is that correct?

COMRADE KENNETH STEADMAN: That is correct.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Okay.

Microphone No. 2, anything else on the question? Microphone No. 3, anything on the question? Anything on the question?

COMRADE M. G. DeBURLO (Post 5988 - Massachusetts): It is just that I want to remind everybody that we have afforded the same courtesies to our former allies, all 56 nations in World War II, and our allies who have served in Korea, and I think it is only fitting that those who fought with us,

beside us and died with us be given this courtesy and recognition. Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you, comrade. We will now vote on the amendment. We have got someone running, jumping, hopping and skipping to the microphone.

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ROBERT WALLACE (Post 8651 - New Jersey): The beginning of the resolution, as I heard it, says that the former allies of the United States are not considered veterans by the government of Vietnam. I am told that on a recent trip by the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier he was told by the leaders in Vietnam that whether you served on the North Vietnamese side or the South Vietnamese side, they consider everyone a veteran.

The intent to meet with everyone is good, but I question the status of us saying they are not veterans when the leadership of this organization was told by the governmental leaders they are considered veterans. I think we should strike those words also.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I better go back to the maker of the motion one more time.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE M. G. DeBURLO (Post 5988 - Massachusetts): Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. I know what the Vietnamese officers have said and I know what they have alleged. However, in fact, that is not so and, in fact, there are remains that we have recovered that have been stored in the land of Hawaii and they have not been accepted and will not be accepted to return to their families.

What this amendment does, it makes it just a little bit clearer and points out to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Communist government there, that we are not abandoning our former allies and that is all. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Anything further on the question? Hearing nothing further on the question, we will vote on the amendment. All those in favor of the amendment, please signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The amendment has passed.

On the motion, as amended, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The motion is passed and the resolution passed as amended.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CAMERON: We have Resolution No. 431, Americans Who are Prisoners of War or Missing in Action. We rejected this in favor of Resolution 424 because it was covered in Resolution No. 424.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Hearing no set asides on this, the standing of the Resolution Committee will be accepted and they will be rejected. Anything further?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CAMERON: Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I will at this time dismiss the Chairman of the Subcommittee with my best wishes and thanks for a good

job and return this back to Past Commander-in-Chief Gunner Kent.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS (Cont'd.)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: The National Security Affairs Resolutions, I will read now the resolutions that were adopted, or adopted as amended, by the Committee.

Resolution 404, The Lesson of the Cold War, adopt.

Resolution 405, Limit Foreign Ownership of U.S. Businesses and Properties, adopt.

Resolution 406, Stop Illegal Immigration at the Border, adopted as amended.

No. 407, It is Time to Push Castro Out, adopt as amended.

No. 408, Punish Terrorists Now, adopted as amended.

No. 409, Strategic Defense Should be a Strategic Priority, adopt as amended.

No. 410, Honoring Those who Serve, adopted.

No. 411, Oppose Lifting the Defense Department Ban on Homosexuals in the Armed Forces, adopt.

No. 412, Maintain an Effective U.S. Coast Guard, adopt.

No. 413, Standing Firm for Freedom, adopt as amended.

No. 414, National Strategy of Peace Through Strength, adopt as amended.

No. 415, Halt the Erosion of Intelligent Services, adopt as amended.

No. 416, Retain U.S. Military Forces in Europe, adopt.

No. 417, Support the Joint Chiefs on Withdrawal from Yugoslavia, adopt as amended.

No. 419, Oppose U.S. Force Under Foreign Command, adopt.

No. 420, Support for the Republic of China on Taiwan, adopt as amended.

No. 421, Oppose Women in Combat, adopt.

No. 422, Retain the Selective Service, adopt.

No. 423, A Reinvigorated Merchant Marine is Essential to a Strong Defense, adopt.

No. 425, Time to Monitor the Panama Canal, adopt.

No. 426, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for Bosnia Veterans, adopt.

No. 434, Support of the Republic of Korea, adopt.

No. 436, Army Officer Base Medal for Those Who Served in Italy in 1945 from 25 May, 1945 to 26 October, 1954, adopt as amended.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move that the Committee's recommendation for adoption should be approved.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE BENJAMIN PEZZA (Post 4651 - Rhode Island): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to accept the recommendations of the Committee and adopt the resolutions as listed. On the question, any set asides? Hearing none, we will put it to a vote. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. The motion carries.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: I will now read the resolutions that were rejected by the Committee.

Resolution 427, U.S. Military Placed Under U.N. Command and the Question of Legality of Presidential Decision Directive (PPD 25), rejected in favor of Resolution 419.

No. 428, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for Korean Service, rejected.

No. 429, Enact Legislation to Prevent Members of the United States Armed Forces from Serving Under the Command of a Foreign Officer and Wearing the United Nations Insignia, rejected in favor of Resolution 419.

No. 430, Support Legislation for a Special Service Medal for "Atomic" Veterans, rejected.

No. 432, Allegiance to the United States of America only, rejected.

No. 433, Recognition for All Ex-Servicemen for their Participation in Nuclear Tests Conducted by the United States of America, rejected.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Do we have any set asides?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE BOB ARNOLD (Post 7283 - California): I request No. 430 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Do I hear any other set asides? Hearing no other set asides, the recommendation of the Committee is accepted and all other resolutions have been rejected.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JERRY WILLIAMS (Post 7636 - California): I make a motion that we accept Resolution No. 430.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I need a second to that motion.

COMRADE ROBERT MARR (Post 7283 - California): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I would like the Chairman to read the resolution, please.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: Resolution No. 430, Support Legislation for a Special Service Medal for "Atomic" Veterans.

"WHEREAS, members of the United States Armed Forces have participated (both willingly and unwillingly), in test detonations of nuclear devices, served in Hiroshima or Nagasaki, Japan, following the detonation of nuclear bombs, and served and continue to serve at duty stations on land, sea, and air where they are exposed to atomic and/or radioactive weapons, equipment, and nuclear reactors; and

"WHEREAS, the United States Government knew or should have known of the potential harm to the health and well-being of these military members; and

"WHEREAS, radiation exposed veterans and their families have suffered because of ill health; and

"WHEREAS, the plight of 'Atomic' veterans deserves to be recognized for their service to our country by a special service medal for 'Atomic' veterans;

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we go on record in support of legislation which would award a special service medal for 'Atomic' veterans."

The intent of this resolution is to support legislation which would award a special service medal for Atomic" veterans. This was submitted by the Department of California.

Comrades, the reason the Committee felt this legislation should be rejected is because from the officers' point of view that many veterans willingly and unwillingly in other places that have affected their health but have not received any such Expeditionary Medal.

We felt if this medal was given that we would have another medal and another medal and another medal. It is up to this delegation if they want to say yes, they suffered, and then if they want them to receive a medal, it is all right with me.

COMRADE JUDGE BROWN (Post 7792 - California): I speak in favor of adoption of this resolution, and it doesn't matter where veterans have served in other dangerous places. This is trying to get our foot in the door for these veterans. Having been one of the ones that dropped a nuke bomb and went by and missed, and knowing that the Air Force and Navy especially are not aware or will not acknowledge what aircraft and what ship in certain locations at any given time, we need to do this.

We need the National Organization's help in getting this passed in Congress. We have 40 Congressmen on board and 16 Senators signed on, and the Vice-President who just spoke is in favor of this legislation. So I would encourage this body to ask the National Organization to go on record and support this resolution. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE PAUL CROTEAU (Post 8203 - Florida): I speak in favor of the motion, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, because being with the VAHS, I work with veterans, not only "Atomic" veterans that have served in other areas and suffered undue duress or whatever.

It doesn't matter if we have to strike one medal or we have to strike ten medals. The fact of the matter is that World War II is over, Korea is over, and we know what we are. A lot of people were innocently used, and I think that we owe them a tribute.

After all, they are our comrades in arms. I am speaking now as a man who has worked in a VA Hospital for five years and have worked in different programs, and I have worked with all these people. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GUNNER KENT (Post 7972 - Arizona): I speak in favor of this motion. Too long the veterans, all the information about them has been hidden by the government, not released by the government. Everything that happened to them supposedly didn't happen to them, but something must have happened to them.

They are not in perfect health anymore. To give them a medal to show them our appreciation for their service to this country, knowingly served in areas where our country knew that nuclear waste was at or nuclear radiation was and didn't inform them, I think it is just a very small thing that a great organization like the Veterans of Foreign Wars can do. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Anything further on the question? Anything further on the question? Hearing none, we will put it to a vote. All those in favor of passing this resolution will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed will say "nay". The motion carried and passed.

COMRADE RALPH TRADER (Post 2863 - Delaware): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, as a member of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, the Chairman did not report what happened with Resolutions 401 and 402.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Those were the POW/MIA Subcommittee. We have done those.

COMRADE RALPH TRADER (Post 2863 - Delaware): There was no report on this.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The report was just made by Billy Ray Cameron.

COMRADE RALPH TRADER (Post 2863 - Delaware): He didn't include those.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: They were approved. Nos. 401 and 402 were approved.

COMRADE RALPH TRADER (Post 2863 - Delaware): Thank you. I did not hear him announce that.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: That was done by Billy Ray Cameron, Subcommittee Chairman.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: That is it, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I want to thank you very much, Chairman Kent, and release you and your Committee with my thanks for a job well done.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We will next have the Committee on General Resolutions. The Chairman is Ray Soden.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SODEN: Commander-in-Chief and Delegates, the Committee on General Resolutions met and I want to thank

Vice-Chairman, an outstanding Past Commander-in-Chief, Clyde R. Lewis, who was very helpful in our deliberations. At this time I will read the resolutions that were approved.

No. 302, Support Legislation for the Relief of Major Nguyen Quy An and His Daughter Nguyen Ngoe Kim Quy.

No. 304, Old Ironside Penny's Campaign, approve.

No. 305, Endorse 100th/442nd/MIS monument in Los Angeles, approved.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, those are the three resolutions that have been approved by the Committee. I move for their adoption.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I have a motion to adopt those resolutions. Do I have a second?

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN MOON (Post 2873 - Ohio): In the essence of time, I will second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to approve the resolutions that have been read by the Chairman. Is there anything on the question? Hearing none, we will put the matter to a vote. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The resolutions are carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SODEN: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief. We have two that were rejected.

Resolution 301, Prevention of Further Memorial Desecration and Defamation of Character of the U.S. Intrepid, was rejected.

Also Resolution 303, Preserve the HOGA(YT-146) for Display, was rejected.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Do we have any set asides from either of those?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE FRED WONG (Post 1540 - Hawaii): I request that 303 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: No. 303 has been set aside. Any further comments? Any further comments? Hearing none, 301 is hereby rejected as suggested by the Committee.

On 303, would you like to make a motion to adopt No. 303.

COMRADE FRED WONG (Post 1540 - Hawaii): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Fred Wong, Post 1540, Hawaii. I make a motion to adopt Resolution 303.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Do I have a second to the motion to adopt?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE EDWARD VILLIALUME (Post 6827 - Florida): I will second that motion to adopt.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to adopt Resolution No. 303. I would like the Chairman to read it, please, with the reasons.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SODEN: Resolution No. 303, Preserve

the HOGA(YT-146) for Display.

"WHEREAS, the United States Navy Tug (HOGA(YT-146), was a hero of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, rescuing sailors and attending to the raging fires of the U.S.S. Arizona and the U.S.S. Nevada; and

"WHEREAS, the HOGA is the only remaining Naval vessel that has the distinction of serving at Pearl Harbor on that day; and

"WHEREAS, the HOGA and her crew, led by Chief Boatswain, Mate Joe B. McManus, were awarded a citation by Admiral Chester Nimitz for their heroism on that day; and

"WHEREAS, HOGA is now being made available by the United States Navy for transfer to the Memorial Ship Program established under Title 10, U.S.C. Section 7308; and

"WHEREAS, the HOGA has been named by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of America's Most Endangered Places; and

"WHEREAS, the Honolulu-based non-profit organization Friends of the HOGA is making application to the Navy to acquire the HOGA for permanent display in Hawaii; and

"WHEREAS, by Navy regulations Friends of the HOGA must obtain private financing in order to acquire HOGA, move her to Hawaii, and preserve her for display;

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we wholeheartedly support the intentions of Friends of the HOGA to move the tug to Hawaii and put her on permanent display, and will cooperate with them and assist them in their fund-raising efforts to the maximum extent allowed by the by-laws and policies of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States."

This resolution was rejected on the fund-raising aspect of it, and the Committee felt that we could not put the organization into a position to raise funds for this particular program as we get hundreds of requests to do this. It was suggested, and I would concur with it, that it be amended.

If we will just strike out "and will cooperate with them and assist them in their fund-raising efforts to the maximum extent allowed by the by-laws and policies of the Veterans of Foreign Wars" it will take out the fund-raising aspect of it.

Therefore, I will offer that amendment, Commander-in-Chief, and I move for the adoption of the amendment.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: There has been an amendment offered. Do I hear a second to the amendment?

COMRADE FRED WONG (Post 303 - Hawaii): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We have a second to the amendment. Is there any question on the amendment? Hearing none, we will have the question. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The amendment carries.

We are voting on the motion, as amended. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The motion carried and the

resolution is passed, as amended.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SODEN: Commander-in-Chief, thank you. I want to thank the Committee for their cooperation and for their input. Thank you for giving me a great group of Committee members. As you are aware, the Committee on General Resolutions does not get discharged until the end of the Convention. We hope we get no overtime. Thank you.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We did not finish like we were supposed to yesterday, so we will have the Report of the Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions by Past Commander-in-Chief Walter G. Hogan.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOGAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief Spera, the Veterans Service Resolutions Committee convened at 2:00 p.m. Monday, August 19, 1986. Your instructions were read and roll call was taken, and preliminary matters were discussed. The Committee was divided into three Subcommittees to carefully deliberate each of the 59 Resolutions that were assigned to this Committee.

The Subcommittees were established as follows:

Medical Programs and Veterans Benefits, chaired by Paul Curtice from Indiana, Vice-Chairman Richard Branson from Georgia.

The Subcommittee on Employment was chaired by Walter Kula and the Vice-Chairman was Gary Kurpius from Alaska.

The Subcommittee on Benefits was chaired by Tom Hanson from Minnesota, and the Vice-Chairman was Al Simmons from Maryland.

Before proceeding with the report, I want to take a moment to express the Committee's appreciation to Frederico Juarbe, Director of National Veterans Service, and James Magill, Director of National Legislative Service, for the valuable technical guidance which they and their staff provided to this Committee.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank Past Commander-in-Chief John Mahan from Montana for serving as Vice-Chairman of this very special Committee. A special note of thanks goes to Jimmy E. Wallace, special assistant to the National Veterans Service, who acted as Secretary of the Committee and coordinated the results of our deliberations.

Commander-in-Chief, with your permission, I will begin the Committee Report by presenting those resolutions which the Committee recommends be approved as written. Past Commander-in-Chief Mahan will then proceed to report those resolutions which were approved, as amended, and finally I will conclude the report by presenting the resolutions the Committee recommends for rejection.

If for any reason you, the delegates at this Convention, would like to have a resolution set aside, please so indicate after I have completed the segment of the report. I will now proceed by reading the resolution

numbers which the Committee recommends for approval as written.

They are No. 602, No. 604, No. 605, No. 615, No. 620, No. 623, No. 629, No. 630, No. 631, No. 642, No. 646, No. 647, No. 648, No. 650, No. 651, No. 652, No. 653, No. 654, No. 655, No. 656, No. 657, No. 658 and No. 659.

Commander-in-Chief, at this time I ask the delegates if there are any resolutions they wish to set aside? Commander-in-Chief, I now move that all resolutions recommended for approval by your Committee be accepted by the delegates attending this 97th National Convention.

COMRADE ANTHONY PISCOPO (Post 529 - Massachusetts): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to accept the recommendation of the Committee and approve the resolutions. Is there anything on the question? Hearing nothing on the question, we will put it to a vote. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN MAHAN: These resolutions are approved, as amended:

Nos. 601, 603, 606, 608, 609, 610, 611, 613, 614, 620, 627, 628, 635, 639, 641, 643, 645, 648 and 649. I move that they be adopted, as amended.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE BRUCE WEISE (Post 8057 - Wisconsin): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to accept the resolutions, as amended. On the question, is there any discussion? On the question, is there any discussion? Hearing none on the question, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The motion passes.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOGAN: I finally will present the resolutions on which the Committee recommendation was for rejection in favor of other resolutions, or just rejected. Again, if a delegate would like any of these resolutions to be set aside, make it known by the resolution number and request such action after I complete the report on this final group of resolutions.

They are No. 607, No. 612, No. 616, rejected in favor of 650.

No. 617, rejected in favor of No. 601.
No. 618, rejected in favor of No. 657.
No. 619, rejected in favor of No. 652.
No. 621, No. 622, rejected in favor of 651.
No. 624, rejected in favor of No. 603.
No. 625, rejected in favor of No. 650.
No. 626, rejected in favor of No. 650.
No. 622, rejected in favor of No. 601.
No. 633, rejected in favor of No. 620.

No. 634, rejected in favor of No. 653.
No. 636, rejected in favor of No. 651.
No. 637, rejected in favor of No. 620.
No. 638, rejected in favor of No. 601.
No. 640, rejected in favor of No. 654.
No. 644, rejected in favor of No. 642.

Commander-in-Chief, this concludes resolutions recommended for rejection by your Committee. I then ask if any delegates have any resolutions from this group which they wish to be set aside?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE PAUL CROTEAU (Post 8203 - Florida): Commander-in-Chief, Paul Croteau, Post 8203, North Port, Florida. I move to set aside No. 624.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: You have set aside No. 624.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RONALD TYLER (Post 1462 - Pennsylvania): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Ron Tyler, Post 1462, Past Department Commander of Pennsylvania, requests set aside of Resolution No. 621.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Are there any further set asides? Any further set asides? Hearing none, we will accept the recommendation of the Committee and all those others will be rejected.

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2 on Resolution 624. Do you care to make a motion on that?

COMRADE PAUL CROTEAU (Post 8203 - Florida): I move that we accept Resolution No. 624, which has been rejected in favor of 603.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: You want to make a motion to accept 624.

COMRADE PAUL CROTEAU (Post 8203 - Florida): That's right.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Let me have your name, Post and Department.

COMRADE PAUL CROTEAU (Post 8203 - Florida): I am Paul Croteau, Post 8203, North Port, Florida.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Now, let me see if I can get a second to this. Is there a second to the motion?

COMRADE JAY COHILL (Post 4194 - Florida): I will second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded that we accept Resolution 624.

On the question, Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE PAUL CROTEAU (Post 8203 - Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I think Resolution 603 requires — I am 80 years old, and I am a little nervous.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: That is okay. Take your time.

COMRADE PAUL CROTEAU (Post 8203 - Florida): I think Resolution No. 624 should be accepted because No. 603 negates legislation that —

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrade, let me suggest something to you. Can I have the Chairman read 624 and 603, and that way the comrades will all know what you are talking about. Just hold it, and I will let you come right back to the microphone.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOGAN: Resolution 624, Constitutional Power to Fund Veterans Earned Entitlements.

"WHEREAS, the adequate funding for our Veterans earned entitlements continues to be in jeopardy; and

"WHEREAS, we, the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, are constantly striving to defend, support and comply with the Constitution of America; and

"WHEREAS, the Constitution of the United States grants power only to the U.S. Congress to issue all U.S.A. money for all government expenditures, such as adequate funding for our Veterans earned entitlements; and

"WHEREAS, the adequate funding for Veterans earned entitlements continues to be in jeopardy because the Federal Reserve Bank note has (since the year 1964) completely replaced the United States note; and

"WHEREAS, the Federal Reserve note (credit money) has directly accelerated the increase of the national debt, which has directly accelerated the increase of the annual interest payments from the U.S. Treasury to the Federal Reserve Bank, which has directly accelerated the annual increase of the national deficit, which has directly rendered it to be mathematically impossible to balance the national budget, which has directly resulted in the act of our government borrowing more interest-bearing credit money from the Federal Reserve Bank, which has directly caused great devaluation of the U.S.A. dollar, which has directly caused inadequate funding for our Veterans earned entitlements; and

"WHEREAS, the credit check clearinghouse functions, which is now under the authority of the Federal Reserve bankers does deprive the U.S.A. government from regulating the value of the U.S.A. dollar, which directly deprives adequate funding for our Veterans earned entitlements;

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the VFW members invoke the United States Congress to exercise its constitutional power to issue all U.S.A. money (interest free) for all U.S.A. government expenditures and to place all credit clearinghouse functions under the jurisdiction of the U.S.A. government, thereby enabling the U.S.A. government to solve its national debt, its deficit, and to balance the national budget, thus enabling adequate funding the Veterans earned entitlements."

That is Resolution No. 624.

Resolution No. 603, the Department of Veterans Affairs Budget.

"WHEREAS, there are presently more than 27 million veterans of whom over 10 million have reached an age where they required increased health care including long-term care; and

"WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs' budget has fallen from

4.3 percent of federal budget outlays in 1970 to a estimated 2.4 percent in fiscal year '95; and

"WHEREAS, the laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs authorizing benefits for veterans, their dependents and survivors are classified into the following general categories: compensation for service-connected disabilities and death, pension for income maintenance of veterans and survivors, educational and training assistance and loans, servicemen's life insurance, veterans' life insurance, hospital and medical care service, nursing home and domiciliary care, including state veterans' home construction funds, health manpower training, medical and prosthetic research and burial benefits; and

"WHEREAS, it appears that the facilities which the Department of Veterans Affairs presently operates will not accommodate by any measure the anticipated demand for services over the next 20 years; and

"WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs has stated that by the year 2000, a 68-percent increase in hospital beds will be needed with special geriatric evaluation units at each medical center, and that outpatient clinics should be able to support 26 million visits with the appropriate prevention, geriatric and specialized services; and that 25 Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centers be established; and

"WHEREAS, veterans who served honorably in our Armed Forces during periods of war or hostility have rendered a very special service to our great nation; and if in need of health care, should be timely provided the finest care by the Department of Veterans Affairs;

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge the Congress of the United States to pass a budget and appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs which will fully fund and maintain the integrity of the benefits and entitlements program and enhance Department of Veterans Affairs health-care system."

The reason why 624 was rejected over 603 is because 603 called for a budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs that will take care of all of the commitments and will fund all the benefits that the veterans are entitled to, whereas, No. 624 is a very proud resolution that is asking for exactly the same thing in essence.

It says that we should have enough money in the Department of Veterans Affairs budget to fund those entitlements of veterans. No. 603 does that, and that is the reason why 624 was rejected in favor of 603.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrade, if you would like to come to the microphone, I will give you some time to speak on it.

COMRADE PAUL CROTEAU (Post 8203 - Florida): Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. Resolution 603 requires legislation from the U.S. Congress. Resolution No. 624 does not need Constitutional legislation to be passed because Article I, Section 8, Clause 5, gives the power to Congress to issue United States money to fund all veterans' earned entitlements.

However, Congress needs to be reminded that they can exercise its

power to issue adequate funds for veterans' earned entitlements. Now, every CPA should know that it is mathematically impossible to balance the budget with monies that are issued by the Federal Reserve National Bank.

The national budget can only be bound by money issued by the U.S. Congress in compliance with the Constitution of the United States. So as to being adequate funds for veterans' earned entitlements, I move that we vote to accept Resolution 624 independently of Resolution 603, which is a very good resolution. It is the same resolution, but 603 has to go through Congress and legislation, and 624 does not.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JIMMY WALLACE (Post 1503 - Virginia): Commander-in-Chief and Comrades, I would urge this delegation to reject the motion that the comrade has put forth. I would urge this delegation to reject the motion that the comrade has put forth.

The reasons he is citing there, if you listen to what was read about issuing the tax-free money and have the government go and get interest-free loans, you can't go into the bigger banks and do that. That is doing away with the Federal Reserve also.

If you really think about that motion that came forth that is not a veterans issue. It has nothing to do with veterans' benefits.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Anything further on the motion? Anything further on the motion? Hearing none, we will now vote on the motion. All those in favor of approving No. 624 will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed will say "nay". The motion is defeated.

On No. 621, someone else set aside No. 621.

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RONALD TYLER (Post 1462 - Pennsylvania): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Ron Tyler, Post 1462, Department of Pennsylvania and Past Department Commander. I move to accept, as amended, Resolution No. 621.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion is on the floor. Do I have a second?

COMRADE CHARLES BEISTLINE (Post 6374 - Pennsylvania): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded that we accept Resolution 621.

On the question, I recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RONALD TYLER (Post 1462 - Pennsylvania): Comrade Commander, once again, I am Ron Tyler, Post 1462, Department of Pennsylvania, Past Department Commander. There is an amendment to this presently at the podium. I would ask that the amendment be read.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I will ask the Chairman to read it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOGAN: Commander Paul, we met with the delegation from Pennsylvania and we submitted to the Committee the amendment and the Committee has approved the amendment.

"I would move at this time, with his permission, that we move the

question for acceptance, as amended."

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: It has been moved. Is there a second to that motion?

COMRADE CHARLES BEISTLINE (Post 6704 - Pennsylvania): I will second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: It has been moved and seconded. Now, on the question, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

Now, on the motion itself, the motion down on the floor is to approve No. 621, as amended. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed by saying "nay". The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOGAN: Commander-in-Chief, this concludes my Report of the Committee on Veterans Service. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Committee members who are here, and unless there is further business to be accomplished, I recommend this Committee be discharged.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you, Past Commander-in-Chief Hogan. I will now discharge you and your Committee with thanks of the Commander-in-Chief of this Convention for a job well done, and a special thanks to the staff members who acted as advisors to this Committee. Thank you very much.

Do we have anything else? We have one more report. At this time I would like to call on the Chairman of the Committee on Americanism and Community Activities, Past Commander-in-Chief Eric Sandstrom.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON AMERICANISM AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ERIC SANDSTROM: Commander-in-Chief, I would like to thank you in behalf of the Committee that you appointed for all did a fine job, especially my Vice-Chairman, Jack Carney, from the great State of Florida, who did an outstanding job.

I want to thank you, Jack, and Mike Gormalley for assisting us on this Committee. I will read the resolutions that we have recommended for adoption.

Resolution No. 101, Support Volunteer Protect Act.

Resolution No. 102, Request for Congressional Review of the Federal Flag Code.

Resolution No. 103, Mandate English as the Official Language of the United States; and Resolution No. 106, which is Flag Desecration.

I move adoption of these four resolutions.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JACK CARNEY (Post 4642 - Florida): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded to adopt the resolutions as read. On the question, hearing none, we will call for a vote. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all

those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SANDSTROM: I will read the numbers of the ones that we rejected. They were Resolution No. 104, Independence Day Bell Ringing.

No. 105, No Age Limit for Sons of VFW.

No. 107, rejected in favor of 103, and Resolution No. 108, Sons of Vets.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Do I have anyone to set aside any of these resolutions? Are there any set asides?

Microphone No. 2, are you waiting to set aside something? If there are no set asides, then we will accept the recommendation of the Committee and those resolutions have been rejected.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SANDSTROM: That concludes our job. Are we being fired?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Yes.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SANDSTROM: Thank you, again, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I release you and your Committee with the thanks of the Convention for a job well done. I thank you, Jack, for moving my chair.

PRESENTATION OF BUDDY POPPY WINNERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We have the winners of the National Buddy Poppy Contests. At this time I will call to the podium Jim Rowoldt.

COMRADE JAMES ROWOLDT: Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. A few years ago, the National Headquarters decided to honor those Departments who were able to achieve over one million sales or distribution of the buddy poppies. It is a pleasure for me today for the Commander-in-Chief to present plaques to the Departments of Illinois, California and Texas.

Illinois, this past year, had 1,049,000 sales. The Department of California was second with 1,029,000 and the Department of Texas was third with 1,027,000. So you can see those three states were within 20,000.

Thank you for these three Departments, and thank you to all the comrades of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

I know it is difficult with the programs these days, but I know all of you are out there trying. We had the display contest and hopefully everyone was able to go to the lower level and review these displays. It was very successful. It was one of our largest in the last five years, and if you missed it, it is your loss. Thank you.

WINNERS OF INSURANCE DRAWING

ASSISTANT QUARTERMASTER GENERAL LARRY MAHER: Briefly, I

would like to announce the insurance drawing.

First, for yesterday for $25, Jimmy M. Cook, Post 5789, Missouri, has not picked up his award. Also Jack Egerton, from Post 3015, New Mexico, has not picked up his $25 award.

Today's winners are for $25, John S. Masek, Post 1500, Ohio.

For $50, Joseph W. Stein, Post 1341, Arkansas; and for $100, Frank Jarosfenski, Jr., Post 8795, Pennsylvania.

Those awards can be picked up in the hall back behind here. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Let me make a couple of announcements before we close up. First, let me say thank you to all of you who are here. I really appreciate your staying here and showing your dedication and your sharing in the business of the VFW since that is what we are here for.

I have a couple of announcements I did earlier, but I will repeat them again. Maine, New Hampshire and D.C. are having a reception tomorrow in Room 1056 of the Galt House East. If you are a Past Department Commander for the year 1978-'79, go from here to the Galt House East, Room 1446, and meet with Eric Sandstrom.

The Department of Kentucky and the Department Commander Billy Lyons cordially invite all delegates to an open house at the Hirschborn Hotel at 7:00 p.m. this evening. There will be bus service from the Convention Center starting at 6:30 at 4th and Jefferson Streets.

The Department Commanders for '95-'96 and the '96-'97 Commanders and the Senior Vice Commanders for '96-'97, there is a reception this afternoon from 3:00 to 5:00 in the Grand Ballroom of the Hyatt Regency. You should have gotten invitations on it. We will see you there from 3:00 to 5:00.

There being no further business to transact this morning, I will call on our Chaplain for our Closing Prayer.

(Whereupon, the Salute to the Color was given at this time followed by the Benediction by Reverend Lyle Kell.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: This meeting stands in recess until 9:00 o'clock tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the session was recessed at 1:20 o'clock p.m.)

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION
THURSDAY MORNING, AUGUST 22, 1996

(The Third Business Session of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Commonwealth Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, was called to order at 9:00 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Sergeant-at-Arms, prepare the room for the Salute to the Colors.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Yes, sir.

(Whereupon, Sergeant-at-Arms Sarver led the Convention in the Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance.)

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Lyle Kell gave the Opening Prayer.)

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: At this time I would call on Richard Trombla, Chairman of the Credentials Committee, for its report.

COMRADE RICHARD TROMBLA (Post 1174 - Kansas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Richard Trombla, Post 1174, the Department of Kansas and National Credentials Committee Chairman. This is a temporary report as of last night.

Delegates, 13,081; Department Commanders, 49; National Officers, 39; Past Commanders-in-Chief, 26; and one Member-at-Large. That, comrades, is a temporary report. The total is 13,196.

I would like to remind you the following Department and Council members have not registered yet at this Convention. They are the Commanders of Central America, Connecticut, Iowa, New York, the Pacific Areas and Puerto Rico. The Council member is from District E. Those people have not registered at this Convention at this time.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Convention Rules provide if there were any further resolutions to be introduced to this Convention, they had to have been in the hands of our National Adjutant General this morning by 9:00 o'clock a.m.

There having been none, there will be no further business for the General Resolutions Committee. I hereby dismiss and discharge that Committee with my best wishes and the best wishes of the Convention for a job well done. Thank you, Jim, and your Committee.

PRESENTATION OF "CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP" CITATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: At this time I would like to call to this podium the Immediate Past All-American Commander of the Department of Florida to receive an award. Good morning.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Certificate of Commendation to the Department of Florida in recognition of 41 consecutive years of membership growth, having seen attainment of over four decades of continuous membership gain by the Department of

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 19th day of August, 1996." This has been signed by Paul Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General.

To you and all the comrades of the Department of Florida, congratulations and best wishes for your 42nd consecutive years which I know you will attain this year. He says Spike did it all.

COMRADE ROBERT WOOD (Department of Florida): Comrades, one of the things that Paul Spera has stayed away from is a visit to Florida. I took him to Gainesville, and that was the first time he had ever had a Commander-in-Chief there. So they were taking him around to different areas to talk to different people.

He stopped in this one room, and the nurse said this is Miss America a few years back. Well, he went in there and she was the runner-up or the contestant for the Miss America Pageant in 1910. This lady, you can imagine Mother Theresa, and that is her. Paul has never been lost for words.

He comes up and said, "How do you do?" He said, "By the way, are you a member?" She said, "No, I am a Christian." Thank you all very much. I am so glad so many states helped Florida when their members come down, because they don't retire, they just come down and work for us.

Now, I want to thank all of you for this award.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: What he didn't tell you, when we walked into the room, the first thing she said was, "Hey, how is Spike?" Now, you go and explain that to the Florida delegation.

INTRODUCTION OF SYDDIA LEE-CHEE, DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY, U.S. SAVINGS BOND PROGRAM

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Our next guest is Syddia Lee-Chee, Manager of the Office of National Organizations and Federal Programs for the Department of Treasury's Savings Bond Program. In that capacity, she is responsible for promoting ownership of U.S. Savings Bonds to members of hundreds of national associations across America. She is also one of the Treasury Department's leaders in implementing a program to market savings bonds to the Hispanic community in the United States and Puerto Rico.

A native of Panama, Ms. Lee-Chee distinguished herself as a student by founding the International Students Association in Business and Economics. Upon graduation, she worked for the Gillette Company in Puerto Rico, and also served as the Executive Director of the National Advertising Council in Panama. She also received a Certificate of Advanced Study from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., where she studied International Business.

Please give a warm VFW welcome to Syddia Lee-Chee.

PRESENTATION BY MS. SYDDIA LEE-CHEE

MS. LEE-CHEE: Good morning, Commander-in-Chief Spera. Distinguished guests and delegates of the Veterans of Foreign Wars 97th National Convention, thank you for inviting me to this meeting and taking the time to hear the Treasury's message about savings bonds.

I think that it is obvious you need no introduction to savings bonds because bonds, as we know them, had their beginning back in 1941. We were about to enter World War II. Early in the program, the Treasury Department had no way to market bonds, so they called on the public, corporations, the banking industry, federal and state governments and, of course, our armed forces in helping with the patriotic effort to promote bonds.

Americans responded in ways that could not be imagined. People gave of their time, energy and resources to make the savings bond program a success. They volunteered, which is a very unique characteristic of the program. It is the proud tradition of the savings bond program and it is played out by the critical and essential volunteer elite of which you are members.

Members of the nationwide PAC have over half a million committed Americans who each year give their time and energy to the cause of selling bonds. Believe me, it never has and it never will happen without you. This country is in your debt.

Your delegates and one of your members, who is serving as the National Savings Bond Program, is what keeps us going. Savings bonds are not only a proud part of our past, they are for the future. Why are savings bonds about the future? Because savings is about putting aside a little money today for a better tomorrow.

One of the primary purposes of the savings bond program is to encourage Americans to save more. This is where you come in. It is you, our community leaders, who enable the savings bond program. It is you, the leaders of a very large network of citizens, who help further this program's important goals.

For example, consider the potential reach of your publication, not only your members but to anyone else who needs it. Our job is this low, steady education of our fellow citizens. It is not always glamorous, but in the long run, there is a big payoff.

One of the savings bonds' programs very successful effort in educating children is our Post contest for students in grades four to six. Through this contest, we have a ripple effect of awareness of savings and bonds to parents, grandparents, teachers and our community.

So we begin very simple and the payoff can be great. The payoff can increase financially and pay off in more dedication and pay off in more comfortable retirement. Savings bonds have always been a good investment and they are a good investment today, particularly since we updated them

last year.

First, we want to provide small investors with market face rates with a fair return on their money right from the start. We also wanted to make savings bonds simpler and easier for the message to understand. The new rate of structure, just ask bond family to define it.

That is security of federal income on interest earnings for the redemption, and avoid its state and local income tax. For those who qualify, you are to exclude bond interest from income when the bonds are used for college education costs for yourself, a spouse or a dependent child. When we sell bonds, we are really selling our citizens on the future.

I ask you to continue to work with us by encouraging your family, your neighbors and co-workers to save. Many people don't realize that saving on a regular basis is a real benefit. It is really a benefit. It is the only way to build our future. Please accept the Treasury's thanks for all your past efforts on behalf of this unique American program.

Before I close, Benny Bachand, will you please come to the podium? Benny, on behalf of the Treasury Department, I want to present you with this eagle. It is a unique award, a symbol of our thanks to you and all the members of the VFW for your continued patriotism in the U.S. bond program. I look forward to working with all of you in the future. Thank you.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND: Thanks.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Very shortly, we will be escorting our National President to the podium. Before I do, let me make an announcement. The Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief has been exhibiting some flu symptoms for the last few days. Last night they took him to the VA Hospital.

They sent him back to the hotel sometime in the middle of the night and they took him back to the VA Hospital. He is very severely dehydrated. His blood pressure dropped precipitously. They now have him in intensive care only so they can monitor him as they attempt to rehydrate him again.

He is hoping to be able to be out of the hospital and back here with us again tomorrow morning. As we get any updates, while we are in session, we will let you know what they are. It is not a life-threatening situation, but it certainly is something that is serious enough for them to be watching. So we will all keep him in our prayers today.

Sergeants-at-Arms, are we ready? Will you check on it for me, please. While you are doing that, we will make one more presentation, George. Let me at this time call to the microphone, to this podium, the Chairman of the VFW Political Action Committee, Howard Vander Clute, for a presentation.

PRESENTATION OF GOLDEN EAGLE AWARD TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA BY THE VFW POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF VANDER CLUTE: Thank you,

Commander-in-Chief. I have two pieces of business that I need to do. One is the presentation and one is to correct the record so that we have an accurate account for this Convention. I reviewed yesterday the written ballots that were reported in writing and the electronic ballot. On the question that came before the VFW-PAC, whether to endorse Robert Dole as the presidential candidate, the vote was four yes, two no and one passed, one absent. It is necessary for us to get that reported accurately.

Commander-in-Chief, we want to on behalf of the Board, and I speak on behalf of all of us as well as the staff in Washington, to present you with this plaque in recognition of your continuous support of the VFW-PAC. I want everyone to know that this particular plaque is bestowed upon you in special recognition of your physical support of $500 that is a personal check, on behalf of the VFW-PAC and further the aims and ideals of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. We are indeed grateful, Commander-in-Chief, for your support.

This is an award that goes to every Commander-in-Chief, again in recognition of his support philosophically of the VFW-PAC and for campaigning on our behalf for the contributions and for the integrity that the PAC has in selecting candidates that best represent the position of the VFW.

Commander-in-Chief, you have been outspoken and articulated towards our operations in Washington. We appreciate it very much. And you, sir, deserve this very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much. It is a pair of eagles. I am glad that Bob Currieo is not here. He will try to take them home with him. He loves these.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will kindly escort to this podium the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Mrs. Helen Lenehan.

INTRODUCTION OF LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT HELEN LENEHAN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrades, it is indeed a very special honor for me to present this next lady. She has over many years in her history of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars performed duties that have enhanced all of the programs of our organization.

She has served her organization endless hours as she has climbed to greater heights. She has gone from her local auxiliary level through the level of her district, through the level of her department in Colorado to ultimately climb to the top and become the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary.

This morning I attended her meeting and at that time I indicated to all of the ladies present that there have been many wonderful past National Presidents in our organization. We have been truly blessed in the leadership of that Ladies Auxiliary.

I also told them that, in my opinion, I have the best. I have the best of

the best. She is warm, she is generous, she is hard working, and she epitomizes all the things that the Ladies Auxiliary stands for.

At this time let me present to you the National President of our Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States from the great State of Colorado, "Climbing to Greater Heights", Mrs. Helen Lenehan.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

RESPONSE - LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT LENEHAN

PRESIDENT LENEHAN: Thank you very much. Commander-in-Chief Spera, National Officers and VFW Members:

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to greet you once more as National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. This has been a terrific year for the Ladies Auxiliary. We topped $3 million in our Cancer Aid and Research Fund for the eighth year in a row.

We continue our sponsorship of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, and we volunteered 2.9 million hours in hospitals around the country. For my special project this year, we volunteered 164,560 hours and donated $862,933 to benefit homeless veterans.

I am very proud when see the '95-'96 program achievements. In this time, it seems very difficult to increase our membership, but I am very pleased that we came so close to 100 percent this year with our final total reaching 99.165 percent, for a total of 758,891 members. I know that you are equally proud of the VFW achievements this past year, and we are all proud to be a part of what we have achieved together in your efforts.

One outstanding program we worked on this year was the Courtesy Calling Card Program. I am very proud to say that the members of the Ladies Auxiliary contributed 52 percent, or $16,556 for this excellent program. My sincere thanks to all of you for your assistance to the Auxiliary during this past year and also to me personally.

I know many of you were very, very involved when I made my official visits to the various states. I want to particularly thank all of you for everything you did in the past year. I also feel that I have the very best. I know I have the very best Commander-in-Chief that any National President has ever, ever had.

We have worked so closely together, and Paul and Joanne, and Lee and I have become lifetime very special friends because of our work this year. Paul, there are no words I can say but thank you to you for your kindness and your wonderful, wonderful hospitality that you have shown to Lee and I.

I have a few last little gifts that I brought for you. If you will come up, please, Paul. I know that all of you are very aware that Paul loves Oreos. Many of you throughout the state and all my auxiliaries of sisters have given him a lot of Oreos.

Paul, this is my last contribution. First of all, here is a nightshirt, "I Am An Oreo Lover." One of your commanders made those in Arizona, traveled

400 miles to pick up this Oreo candle for you. Here is another Oreo T-shirt. This is my last contribution.

Here is some little thing for your ice cream. Here are some Oreos. Here is a cup to tell you how to eat an Oreo cookie. Here is an Oreo magnet for you. I have spent so much money this past year on Oreo cookies, and all this other Oreo paraphernalia that today I set up a stand in town and I sold orange slices for ten cents apiece. I hope you enjoy the fun.

Lee, please come up here. Here is a little gift to you and Joanne for all of your kindness to us. As I said, there is no way in the world that I could have accomplished this if it wasn't for my husband, Lee. I thank him from the bottom of my heart for giving up six whole years and doing all those wonderful things for me and his full support from the bottom of my heart. Thank you, Lee.

Joanne and Paul, it has been a wonderful year. I have appreciated all your love and your support. Here is just a little gift, and I would like for you to open it. It is a crystal eagle. From the Ladies Auxiliary, I would like to present you this set of flags to remember our year together.

Paul, one of your Commanders brought you a meal from McDonald's, a Happy Meal from McDonald's. I also want to present to you my Chief of Staff, Pat Mortensen. Once again, Commander, thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Let me officially, for those of who you don't know, introduce my wife, Joanne. Thank you. I had the opportunity at the ladies meeting to thank her for her patience, her love and her understanding for the last 30 years, and for the next 50.

Sergeant-at-Arms, will you kindly escort our guests from the hall down the center aisle.

INTRODUCTION OF MR. JAMES CHANCELLOR

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Please welcome James Chancellor, a Vietnam veteran and VFW member from Post 5635, Hobart, Indiana, who is here to present military service rings he has designed and created to recognize individuals who have served in our armed forces.

Today he will present rings to Past Commander-in-Chief Jack Carney, Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Kimery, and from the VFW Foundation, Robbie Fazen-Marchant.

Now, James Chancellor.

PRESENTATION OF MILITARY SERVICE RINGS BY MR. CHANCELLOR

COMRADE JAMES CHANCELLOR (Post 5365 - Indiana): Good morning, friends. My name is Jim Chancellor. I am very grateful to be here. I am honored to be with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and I am personally thankful for the kindred spirit of all past warriors.

In World War I a poem was written by Lieutenant Colonel John Gray.

It says, "To you with bitter hands we glow the torch. It adorns the whole house. If he breaks faith with those that die, we shall not see their poppies glow in Flander's Field."

I want to take a minute to talk to you about that torch, about war and the spirit of the war hero. Commitment and effort and doubt know no boundaries. They stand race, religion and time and place. No one will argue that Sitting Bull, Patton or Westmoreland were great leaders and heroes to their men, although they lived in very adverse times.

We live in the greatest country in the world, and it is because of the spirit of the warrior, that spirit is the common thread that binds us all together. Our leaders of the past, like Grant or Lee or Powell and Schwarzkopf, they have, indeed, passed the torch.

Not only are they the leaders, it is people like Audie Murphy, the Sam Davidsons, the Tony Jewels and the Larry Rivers that made us proud and the spirit of the warrior, that legend of the warrior will continue to grow and will never die. I have been in war. I was with the 115th Helicopter Company in Vietnam.

I was a gunner on the helicopter that was shot down and I received a Purple Heart and received the Medal for Valor. During my days in Vietnam, I cried as I embraced a new found friend who died in my arms. I laughed with the man who was a stranger to me just a week earlier when he shared letters from his little sister and showed me pictures of the newborn baby brother.

I feared sometimes when I laid my head down to sleep, and the endless prayers I prayed, sometimes when I walked, sometimes when I ate, but mostly when I fought. We shared the same experiences of the war that you and I have experienced and everyone in this building have experienced. They are with me today just like I am sure they are with you.

I give lectures at high schools and colleges. I talk to today's children about their parents and about their grandparents and how they might react in certain situations and why they react in certain situations.

Many of our young will never be called on to be warriors on the battlefield, but everyone must know that freedom is not free, that sometimes it takes fighting and sometimes it takes dying to keep freedom strong. War has changed us all, everyone in this building.

Before I went to Vietnam, I sat down with my father. Dad was a belly gunner in World War II, and he told me that the war would change me forever. I didn't understand that at the time. He told me that my pursuit for freedom would always be strong, that I would not love him, my family or even my own son like I did. I didn't understand him then.

It has been 30 years since I have had that conversation and today in front of you I can tell you that I understand him. My father passed away several years ago, but he is with me every day of my life. His spirit is with me, his spirit of the warrior, the spirit that is with all of you today.

General MacArthur said, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away." He is absolutely correct. The spirit lives on. It is this courage and bravery

that we all share. Anyone who is willing to sacrifice, anyone who is willing to fight and perhaps die to keep America strong is a warrior that I respect.

From Gettysburg to Flander's Field where the poppies still grow, we have passed the torch from generation to generation. From the poppy fields to the beaches of Normandy, to the hills of Korea, we again passed that torch. And with that torch, with the best and fire and commitment to keep America strong, we are all truly the same. From the hills of Korea to the jungles of Vietnam, to the desert of Saudi Arabia, our efforts are exactly the same. This is the spirit of the warrior that we must have.

This is the spirit of the warrior that I speak upon that needs to be passed on. Fourteen years ago, I designed a Vietnam veterans ring. This ring was to be worn by Vietnam veterans. Today, I am proud to introduce the American veterans ring, veterans will want to be worn by all veterans. I think you can tell how I feel about it. I think are all the same.

This ring is meant to unite us. It is meant to be recognized on sight, not to carry around any kind of political opinions, controversial conversations or personal comparisons. It is simply a way to kindly say I know about war, I understand about war. I care about you, my fellow veterans.

Today the four veterans will receive the first rings from this war collection. Unfortunately, our incoming National Commander is not available this morning and our prayers are with him. I will read a little bit about James Nier. He is from El Paso, Texas, was elected Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars at the 96th National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona.

He is the third Texan to be elected to the high office and his election placed him in position to become the next VFW Commander-in-Chief. He joined the VFW in 1981, and is a Life Member of Post 8919 in El Paso, Texas. He is a Life Member of the Disabled American Veterans and Military Order of the Cootie, and belongs to the American Legion.

He serves on four Veterans Advisory Boards and a Veteran of the Year in 1987-'88 by the United American Veterans Organization of El Paso. Again, he is unable to accept and our prayers and best wishes are with him.

World War II, for those of you who don't know, I have a booth this week in the Exhibitor's Hall. Many, many people came by and looked at the World War II veterans ring. It is a replica of the ruptured duck. It is a beautiful ring. I am not here to talk about the ring, I am here to talk about the World War II people that came by and looked at it. They believe as we believe it is time to unite. They believe as we believe it is time to take down any fences and become one.

In receiving the ring, please come forward James Kimery, Past Commander-in-Chief, 1990-'91. James was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars during the 91st National Convention in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1990.

He joined the organization in 1952 while on active duty with the Air Force. After two years as Department Chair, he was elected Department Commander in 1970. In 1986 and '87, he served as National Inspector

General and was a member of the National Council of Administration.

He also held several Western Conference positions and National appointments. He resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and is a member of Post 9354, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Please welcome him.

The next is the forgotten warrior, Korea. I say that not tongue in cheek, because the Korean War has always been very special to me. My sentiments are the same with the Korea and Persian Gulf, and World War II, the spirit of the warrior was life again and continued to grow.

Receiving the first Korean ring is Jack Carney, Past Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Jack was sworn in as Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars at the 94th VFW National Convention in Dallas, Texas, on August 27, 1993.

He was the first Floridian to hold the distinguished VFW position. He joined the VFW in 1958. He has served as VFW Post Commander and held every elected office on the District level. He was All-American Department Commander in '69 and '70, and served as Assistant Adjutant Quartermaster for seven years, a Life Member of VFW Post 4645, Satellite Beach, Florida.

He is a member of the Military Order of the Cootie, the American Legion and the Elk's Lodge in Melbourne. He is a native of West Virginia and he has five children and eight grandchildren. He receives the first Korean ring.

Desert Storm, Persian Gulf. This was a war that was fought very differently, but a war that was still fought with courage, bravery, commitment and love of country. We, too, embrace all the veterans into the VFW, and our next Desert Storm veteran is blazing a path with her work.

Robbie Fazen-Marchant, I am sure I butchered her name, is the recipient of this award. She was appointed Director of the VFW Foundation on January 1, 1996. She served in the United States Army from June, '89, until September, '91. During Operation Desert Storm, she served in the Signal Platoon 306 Military Intelligence, and among her military decorations she was awarded the Southwest Asia Medal, and she is currently a member of the Kansas Army National Guard.

Marchant joined the VFW in 1991, VFW Post 846, Overland Park, Kansas. She and her husband, Roger, live in Kansas City, Kansas, now. Please welcome Robbie.

For those of you who choose to wear a ring from this collection, I want you to wear it with American pride, integrity and honor. I want you to wear it for all fallen veterans, for every comrade you have sought beside you. Let it be your torch. Let it be for the courage and mark of the spirited warrior.

In closing, I want to tell you I would not trade my experiences in Vietnam for the world, not the good ones nor the bad ones, because it was an honor to fight for America and what she stands for, and it also put me in a very, very special class of true Americans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thank you very much.

PRESENTATION OF JAMES C. GATES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The James C. Gates Distinguished Service Award is presented annually to an individual or organization that has made extraordinary contributions in advancing veteran employment opportunities. This year we are honored to present this prestigious award to Richard R. Gray.

Rick, as friends call him, served in the U.S. Army for over 23 years, retiring with the rank of Sergeant Major. Since his retirement four and one-half years ago, he has been a Veterans Outreach Program Specialist at the White River Junction Office of the Vermont Department of Employment and Training.

For Rick, a Vietnam veteran, work is more than just a job; helping veterans is his way of life. He created a support group for veterans searching for employment - "Vet Net." It's a program in which veterans meet once a week to share employment information with each other and listen to guests speak on employment and benefit issues.

Rick has appeared on many local radio stations as well as WCAX-TV promoting veterans' programs and employment. He has been instrumental in writing a new agreement between the VA, Vocational Rehabilitation and the State Department of Employment and Training.

When the office gets a new job listing, Rick works to ensure that veterans get priority. He searches throughout the state and county to find a veteran a job. Since July of 1995, Rick has personally placed over a hundred veterans in jobs. One of the most productive Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialists in the State of Vermont and this nation, Rick's innovation, motivation and dedication have changed the way the White River Junction Office serves the employment and training needs of its local veterans.

Rick also serves as the Department of Vermont's Employment Officer.

Please join me in recognizing our 1996 James C. Gates Distinguished Service Award recipient, Richard R. Gray.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, James C. Gates Distinguished Service Award presented to Richard R. Gray, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist, Vermont Department of Employment & Training, White River Junction, Vermont.

"In recognition of extraordinary achievement and exceptional leadership in advancing employment opportunities for our nation's veterans and distinguished service in promoting the goals and objectives of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hand and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of August, 1996." It has been signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General. Congratulations, Rick.

Along with this there is an honorarium of $1,000.

RESPONSE - MR. RICHARD GRAY

MR. GRAY: I am honored to be here. I would like to thank Commander-in-Chief Paul and other National members and, of course, the Vermont delegation. Commander Max is there somewhere. I am really proud to be representing Vermont even though I am a flat-lander from Massachusetts.

I take my job seriously and I just want to cover a couple of points that you also had in your catalogue there. That is reference to some of the training programs and things I see that are appearing out in the field.

Just recently at the VA White River Junction, they have eliminated the home care services there. They gave them 30 days to find a place to live, so things at the VA are diminishing, they are regrouping. There are a number of federal employees that will be losing their jobs.

You had some of the training programs that have been successful and not being eliminated. And other training for veterans and non-veterans, the money is being depleted rapidly. We don't have our budget. It is decreasing. That is in your booklet.

You also mentioned the NVTI training in Denver. I have had the opportunity to go out there on six different occasions to get updated on veterans' benefits, vocational counseling and all the other programs that are designed for those out in the field to provide better services to veterans when they come in.

Of course, their funding is about every other month up and down the roller coaster at this point in time. So these things, while out in the field, you look up your veterans' representative in your employment office and make sure they are working for you.

Also I want to identify that just recently in the Stars and Stripes, two weeks ago, one state decided not to have it in their state. They are downsizing up in the New England area. I am concerned about that, not because of my job but because of the services provided by these ladies and gentlemen out there.

Another issue that I have been working on specifically up in our area, as mentioned, the area is the homeless issue with veterans and that meets with continued progress, and we are working on it in our specific area. Geographically, everyone has a different type program in regards to this.

I feel strongly we do have a homeless problem in the Vermont and New England area that we need to work on. I thank you for the distinguished honor, the James C. Gates Distinguished Service Award. I thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief.

PRESENTATION OF EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR AWARD/LARGE TO DynCORP, FORT HOOD, TEXAS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: This year we are deeply honored to recognize DynCorp of Fort Hood, Texas, as the Large Employer of the Year.

On June 2, 1995, DynCorp, a firm which has provided aircraft services

to U.S. armed forces since 1950, was awarded a four-year $82 million contract to provide aircraft maintenance, logistics, and modification services to the U.S. Army.

Pressed for time since operations were set to commence on July 1, 1995, DynCorp used the Texas Employment Commission as a recruitment site. An employer response team was formed to quickly find a pool of qualified applicants. The success of the TEC team was evident when full operations began as scheduled on July 1, 1995.

To date, DynCorp has hired 565 people, 464 or 85.7 percent of whom are veterans, 48 of whom are disabled. The cooperation between DynCorp and the TEC veterans staff serves as a fine example of the utility of and need for veteran employment representatives in this country.

DynCorp is to be commended for its progressive policy of hiring veterans. The company justly merits honor and recognition by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Here with us to receive this award is Mr. Harry Frazier, Program Manager.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States National Large Employer of the Year Award presented to DynCorp, Fort Hood, Texas.

"In recognition and grateful appreciation for meritorious service in effecting a very comprehensive policy toward the recruitment, employment and promotion of veterans.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of August, 1996." This has been signed by Paul Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - MR. HARRY FRAZIER

MR. FRAZIER: Commander-in-Chief Spera, Delegates and Distinguished Guests:

It is indeed an honor to be here today to accept this award on behalf of the employees, the majority of which are veterans at DynCorp at Fort Hood. Thirteen months ago, we were awarded this contract. It was very important to us to determine who were the best people to maintain the United States helicopters to do their logistical chores.

The answer was obvious that it was veterans. They were the ones that were trained and the ones we wanted on our force to go out and do this. They have done a tremendous job. I will tell you that we employ 376 and are growing. We will maintain that 87 to 90 percent veterans employees.

I would like to tell you without the assistance of Mr. Mike Owen of TEC, and Mr. Jerry Fitzgerald, the Texas Work Force Commission, we could not have been successful in this. On behalf of all of the people at Fort Hood and DynCorp, and the Texas guys, it is a great honor. Thank you very much.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE ROSS PEROT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Please bear with us for a moment or two. We are getting ready to bring in a special guest.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will please escort our next guest, the Reform Party candidate for the office of President of the United States, Mr. H. Ross Perot.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to introduce our next guest. He has been an active veterans' advocate since his graduation from the United States Naval Academy in 1953. His military service includes four years at sea aboard a destroyer and later an aircraft carrier in the 1950's.

Following his discharge in 1957, he went to work for IBM as a salesman. In 1962, borrowing $1,000 from his wife, Margo, he started a data processing company called Electronic Data Systems. Two decades later, he sold his company to General Motors for $2.5 billion and became GM's largest individual stockholder and a member of the Board of Directors.

His fight on behalf of the POW during the Vietnam War resulted in his receiving the highest award given by the Department of Defense to a civilian, the medal for Distinguished Public Service. His successful efforts to free two ED's employees, who became hostage of the Iran government in 1979, resulted in the best novel, "Wings of Eagles." That novel later became a TV mini series.

A lifelong Texan, he has answered his state's call to provide his expertise in the field of public education and the prevention of illegal drug activity in the Lone Star State. Among his many accomplishments and awards, he takes special pride in receiving the VFW 1981 Dwight D. Eisenhower Award for his support of our armed forces.

In the 1992 presidential race, he was the Reform Party's candidate for that high office. He comes to us again this year as that party's candidate for President of the United States.

Please welcome a true patriot and a friend of veterans and the VFW, H. Ross Perot.

ADDRESS - THE HONORABLE H. ROSS PEROT

MR. ROSS PEROT: Thank you very much. It is a privilege to be with you today. As I stand before this group, I think of the Colorado Rugged Rangers and a handful of people who stormed the beach to get away from the British Fire Department at the top of the cliff where tremendous amounts of artillery and fire pouring down on these people, they climbed the ladders, they took out the artillery, they sent up the flare and Normandy invasion began.

So that proves the story that a handful of ordinary Americans are capable of extraordinary achievements one more time. Is that true? A little over a year ago, a handful of American people, because only 19 percent of the people trust our government, decided to create a new party.

They said it couldn't be done. It takes two years in California alone to

create a new party. Ordinary people did it in 18 days. Sixty-two percent of Americans want a new party, and I am pleased to announce to you that, by golly, they did it and they built it. It belongs to them and it is not a penny of special interest money in it.

We never forget how lucky we are to live in this great country. It is the greatest country in the history of man. I don't have to tell this group that I am speaking to a nationwide audience that freedom is our most precious possession, that freedom is fragile, and after a hundred years we take it for granted.

We must never, ever take it for granted. You have fought, you bled and your friends died for freedom. We must treat it as a very special, precious commodity. Each time we break the law, we give up part of our freedom. History teaches you solutions to local problems and the state problems, and the local problems if nothing else works, pass a federal law.

We have got enough upside down now. Every little problem that comes up, we are going to fix that for you. Most of these problems you and I have to fix for ourselves in a free society. Right? You know that and I know that. Let's face it. We can't become discouraged and cynical.

You didn't in World War II. I am sure all of you fought in those big tough battles in World War II, Korea, and I understand people from World War I are here. God bless you. That is wonderful. You understand that there are bad days and those bad days when you saw a lot of your friends lost.

You never gave up and we must never give up because we own this country. The people in Washington are our servants. They work for us, believe it or not. You pay their salaries. Stay focused on that. You have the final decision of what happens, not the money of the special interests.

All the special interest money in the world is not worth a plug nickel. Unfortunately, it does cause problems and I hope we will stop that and we will try. Our country has severe financial problems. We have got to deal with them now. If we don't we are going to have a financial meltdown.

In this audience there are a lot of people who grew up and lived in the Depression. You don't want that to happen again. You certainly don't want it to happen again because in the Depression our government was in strong financial condition and was a positive force in getting us through.

This time around it will be a major liability. We can't let that happen to our children and grandchildren. I know you know, and I know myself, if necessary, we would all move out and live under a bridge for those children and grandchildren, because we are devoted to them.

The facts are we have spent their money, and I make that point now. We are the world's super power. You have to be an economic super power to be a super power. If you question that, look at Russia.

One more point. You have to be a manufacturing super power to be a super power. You won World War II, because no matter how many planes were shot down, how many tanks were destroyed, no matter how much was wiped out, we could at least supply them. All the guts and determination of the world without weapons won't win.

You had that, but you also had the weapons. In 1960, we ran this great country for $100 million a year. That was not half of the interest on the debt now of $1.5 billion, and we have $5 trillion in debt. That is so big nobody can relate to it.

I will tell you this is more debt than we have money in print. I think that is too much debt for even Forest Gump. They tell us things are getting better. Look at their numbers in the forecast. All those money was accumulated in the last 15 years.

That gave a lot of history from 1993. Well, maybe that will fix it. Here is the President's Office of Management and Budget Report one year after the big tax increase, forecasting that in the year 2020, the debt will be increasing at the rate of $1.4 trillion a year.

In the year 2030, it will be going up to $4.1 trillion every year. The debt is $5 trillion and will be increasing four-fifths of that by the year 2030 according to the President's office. If I have not gotten your attention so far, go to Page 25 of the President's budget in 1995 and read that.

He predicted that the next generation to be born, a little baby born tonight, will pay 82 percent tax rate. Isn't that the end of America's dream? These are the government's numbers. I have to keep saying that, otherwise, you think I am talking to Khomeini.

These are the government's numbers. These numbers are now 84 percent, and since the American people took it out of the budget. Every brethren has got to read this now. The procurement handbook regarding military equipment from foreign supplies and in plain Texas talk, "You ain't going to believe this one." Here it is.

"Foreign dependence on equipment does not mean foreign capability. Foreign sources cannot be automatically excluded on the basis to protect classified or unique technology from others. Just because a foreign firm has control of the technology does not make us vulnerable.

"Shear physical distance from the United States is not by itself a risk which merits for some course excluded." Does that policy make any sense to you at all? Did either of the other two candidates even bring that little skunk up and hold it by the tail?

No, they are in the process of putting it through. You know who coined the words "Tell the people what they want to hear"? Lyndon did. We have patented that term in the good old USA. Speaking of that, we are now in the process of wiping out our patent system so all these other countries around the world that now 40 to 50 people, because of one worker in the United States, can have access to our patents and not pay the royalties. That doesn't make any sense, either.

We must be a manufacturing super power to defend this country. Please keep that in mind. We have two deficits. We have talked about the deficit budget, and the other is a trade deficit. Most people don't understand it. Keep in mind the trade surplus is good.

Oh, boy, that is good. That trade deficit is bad. That means our money is going out of the USA, going into the bank overseas. Keep in mind they

take that money and they buy U.S. bonds, and you and I pay interest to those countries overseas.

If they ever lose confidence in those U.S. bonds and start to dump them, we are going to have the mother of all meltdown and we cannot let that happen. If you have got a friend drinking too much, and say, "I know my liver will go some day but I am not going to worry about it now," if you are a real friend, you will stick a cork in the bottle and get that guy to quit, right?

That is what we have got to do right here. In 1960, 90 percent of the goods we bought in the USA, were made here. Today it is around 50 percent. Over two million manufacturing jobs have gone to Asia alone, and half a million jobs have gone to Mexico.

Who is winning, who is losing? Our trade deficit for this year is $174 billion. Our cumulative trade deficit is over a trillion dollars. This is the largest of any nation in the history of man. The Japanese deficit, our deficit with Japan, is $59.3 billion. Our deficit with China is $38 billion this year and will be $50 billion next year.

To show how stupid our trade deals are, we are the only industrialized country in the nation that has a trade deficit with China. Did anybody bring that up when they were talking to you? Absolutely not, because they are bought and paid for by these companies that want to take the jobs out of the USA and take it over to child labor in Taiwan, and make the tennis shoes for $5, pay $20 to ship them and assemble them, and sell them to our kids for $150, and they will kill one another on the street to get them.

Is that what you want? I don't think so. Now, I am a little embarrassed about that one. It was the jobs in the USA and it makes you all rich and the trade deficit is so far $53 billion and going south.

Now, how are they managing their money? Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, the annual forecast is that it will be $3.9 billion in the year 2023. That is more than twice what we spent to run the whole country today. They have created things that won't work. They won't talk to you about them and they will tell you what they want you to hear.

I am going to cut the insurance. God bless them. Right? That is what, about 50 bucks a year to you? That doesn't stack up against $3.9 trillion. Okay. We don't buy that. Folks, have you ever gotten any free candy in your life? I don't think so. You are not getting any now.

Medicaid when created, the coverage was $1 billion in the year 1990, and it costs you $41 billion today. He couldn't manage that. Medicare was created in the mid-'60s and was forecasted to cost no more than $9 billion in the year 1990. It costs $98 billion.

Social Security is forecast to have a $5.5 trillion deficit in the year 2050? This is the government's numbers. In the year 2060, Social Security tax rate for employees are forecasted to be 40 percent of the employee's paycheck. You can't keep this going. You have got to change it.

You will absolutely protect the people who are retired, but if you let it continue like this you are just creating a problem. If I don't make any other

point here to this audience, let me make this point clear. Did they talk about the Social Security Trust Fund? There is not a Social Security Trust Fund. The money has been loaned.

You say that is all right, we have a note, full faith and credit with the USA. But the government doesn't have any money until you give it to them, right? You have got to pay all that back so that people can get their Social Security check and have to pay interest.

By the way, you will have to pay interest on the interest because they are just letting that accumulate so the deficit looks lower in '96. Then they can say, "God bless you, we are taking care of you." In a free society, you take care of yourself. Right?

Now, everywhere I go people say, "Why won't Social Security work anymore, Ross? It used to?" In 1945, it had 40 people that worked, and I say what do you think it is? They say, well, they put the money in every two weeks and the employer puts an equal amount in the Pension Fund and it is invested, and we get it when we retire. Wrong.

You are part right and part wrong. You have put the money in and the boss puts the money in. As soon as that money hits Washington, faster than Dominoe's Pizza it goes out the door to people who are retired. My faith in people in the United States is a "Road" Scholar, r-o-a-d, Scholar, one who is street smart and with common sense.

People come up to me at Wal-Mart and say, "Okay. Ross, it didn't work." In 1945, we had 40 people at work for every person who died. It worked in 1950, we expanded benefits and we only had 16 people that worked for every person retired and we raised the rates and it still worked.

Today we have three people that work for every person retired, and it is squeaking like an old car. In the year 2020, we will only have two people that work for every person that is retired. We have got to start now protecting the retirees, transition it to a true Pension Fund, and then put that problem behind us.

This is like arterial bleeding, the longer you wait, the less likely you are to save the patient. All they are going to do is to lean forward with tears in their eyes in 1996 and say, "I am going to take your money and I am going to protect Social Security as we know it." Well, anybody that will buy that, I will sell you a Brooklyn Bridge over the phone this afternoon. Okay? Fine.

The number one vote industry in the United States, I want to announce to you is good news, great news on industry, the bad news is the U.S. government. As business people, you are saying what is the product? They don't have one. Where does it get its money? From you.

Well, does it make a profit? No, it is losing money. This is not exactly the kind of program a company would need You have $5 trillion in debt. We spend $1.5 trillion a year. We all live in a mansion on the hill. We should have Utopia and a yacht in Palm Beach and a Rolls Royce in the garage.

Our only problem should be too much debt, right? Personally, if you

spend that much money, you would have it all. You would have all the toys and just too much debt. Here is what happens. The standard of living dropped four out of five Americans, 20 percent dropped in wages since 1973.

Both parents have to work now to maintain a middle class living. A two-paycheck family has barely the same paycheck as 25 years ago for one. For all you business people who don't understand, assets minus liabilities equal net worth. That is from Page 18 of the President's 1997 budget.

Our assets were $2.5 trillion and our liabilities, $5.296 trillion. We have a negative net worth of $2.98 trillion, and we are leaving all of the bad stuff out of our budget. If you keep books in the way the government does, they would put you in jail literally.

The liabilities are not even mentioned and that is $17 trillion. I covered all this and the New York Times wrote a story about Perot forgot the fact they don't count things like the Grand Canyon. I said that would be a poor place to farm if you bought it. Look at it.

Now, if the people don't have any money, they can't pay or go look at it. Right? Recreation, we are talking about work. We tried big companies and it didn't work. Your federal pensions are not funded. Your veterans' pensions are not funded.

Month to month the money comes in from the taxpayers and the money goes out to you. That is not a way to run a railroad, that is not a way to organize a group in silent prayer. That is sure not a way to put together a two-car funeral, and it is no way to run the pension fund.

Do you recall there is no pension fund? You keep hoping and praying tonight that money coming in keeps coming in. Right? We have got to change that and re-engineer it. Why all these programs? The programs they design never work. They have a dream, a detailed dream.

I had a dream like an artist on a scrap of paper. Attach them to massive legislation. They don't ever design to detail, they don't ever prior test any of these programs. They don't optimize them. They don't deposit them and they don't find out how to make it work in a cost-effective way.

They put in a dream funding it with taxpayers' money, and every time they foul up they increase taxes. We have to go in and re-engineer these programs, like it or not, and the sooner we start, the sooner we finish.

If you had a good friend that you had rushed to the emergency room after a terrible accident who was bleeding arterially, with broken fingers and blood out of his nose, if all the doctors worked on the broken fingers and nose, you would wonder about their priorities. Right?

That is what you hear right now, the little things. I am talking about the things that makes the nation's heartbeat right here. We have got to start talking about these programs. Right? Now, they don't like you to. Parties won't face these problems. Neither of the two parties takes responsibility. Each blames the other.

My position is they were both there when it happened. Nobody else was there. Somebody has to take the responsibility. Now, they are going to

present you with fascinating, exciting plans to some of these problems, and they are going to present you, both parties, with the mother of all tax cuts to fix it.

Let me give you an analogy. You come and say, "Ross, I am hopelessly in debt and I can't pay my bills. You are a businessman. Could you give me some advice?" I would say, "Sure, I will give you some great advice." They say, "What is that?" I say, "Get your boss to cut your salary."

"Ross, I can't pay my bills now." I said, "Let's change the subject." Right? That is what they are telling you right now and ask yourselves are they giving you hard facts or are they spending their time promising you free candy?

It has been my privilege to work closely with veterans all my adult life. Many of those things have been covered here today. All I can say is that as far as I am concerned, you represent the best of America. You are our heroes. Any time I am called on, I respond. I don't do it for credit or recognition. I do it because deep down in here I appreciate what you have done.

The interesting thing is that we had a very important General from the Pentagon that said if you can't figure out the solution to the problem, call Ross. Believe me, I have had some interesting calls in my life. Number one, General Motors needed to send a half billion dollars in an hour to the Embassy, and they couldn't figure out how the U.S. government could do it.

I sat there and scratched my head and called back to the vice-president of the bank, and she laughed at me and said, "Both of you have forgotten the time zones. The bank is open." She got it there in 30 minutes. Would you like a little less talk and a lot more action in the future? That is what we need.

When we had two people taken hostage in Iran, the government couldn't get them out. They had not done anything wrong. It was our obligation to get them out. Guess who did it? The Vietnam veterans. Guess who built my company? The Vietnam veterans.

So for the first time in my life I had to ask people to risk their lives. These people have been in combat. A lot have been hit. They knew what it was all about. I thought maybe one out of five would volunteer. One hundred percent of them volunteered to go. They were led.

You know they executed mission impossible and they got the people out here that you don't know. The Marine Sergeant was shot during the revolution just as we got to Turkey. Our team was exhausted as you would expect, but their old mind set is if that man is going to die, we will go back in and get him.

We had a dream and simply was leading and we would go back and fly in. We flew the abandoned air fields. We had light on that and had a Sergeant in place and had came under radar. That was not critical. I think that tells you the spirit of those Vietnam veterans. You don't leave the wounded on the battlefield.

That is what I have learned, first, you commit the nation before you put your troops in combat, and then you commit the troops. You always thank and honor the troops when they come home. We didn't do that in Vietnam. We did it after Desert Storm.

I have a short interesting story. When they had a state parade in Dallas, a few days before the parade, they had forgot to raise the money for the parade, and they asked me if I would do it. I did it and I called the Vietnam organization in Dallas and I said you should be there.

They said no. I looked them in the eye and I said, "I have not asked you for anything. Do it for me." I won't repeat what they said, but they did. Desert Storm came to town and I told them I had invited the Vietnam. They said, "They have fought a long dirty war. Put them in front of us." How is that for a good spirit?

Then the Generals and the Admirals came to town. I told them about the parade schedule and they would be up front. They said, "No, Ross, put us behind the Vietnam veterans and in front of the Desert Storm veterans. We fought with both of them."

I couldn't control the crowd's reaction to the Vietnam veterans. When they turned on Main Street, it was like the Super Bowl parade that I have seen in Dallas on several occasions. The crowd went wild over these middle-aged men, not in uniforms, some of them in fatigues, most just in civilian clothes. These are tough guys.

They were crying openly, and at the end of the parade we had a barbecue, and again and again they came up to me and said, "Ross, this is the best day I have had since I came home." It is time to say thank you to the people in combat, honor the people who have been in combat because they have risked their lives for you.

You don't leave the wounded behind, you don't leave prisoners of war behind. They should receive the finest medical care. I have spent a good part of my time on that one right there. The families should be supportive. Throughout my life, I have been able to produce results. I have taken action. I want to solve the problems that face this country.

That is the only reason I am running. I want a better country for our children. So the record is clear of my commitment to this country and those who served in the armed forces, it is a critical time in the country's history, I have never asked the veterans for anything, but I want a promise from all 27 million of you today, I want a promise that you will study issues, you will get the facts, you will vote in November and not be manipulated by the propaganda that will be dumped on you day by day during this campaign, just like Tokyo Rose dumped it on you in World War II.

You ignored it and won the war. Ignore it and vote for people that you believe will do the job. I don't ask you to vote for any specific candidate. That would be improper. I ask you to get the facts and vote your conscience. Twenty-seven million veterans is more than enough of a swing vote to determine who will be the President of the United States and who gets elected in every House and Senate race.

Why don't you get organized and just go do it. Let's pass on a country to our grandchildren and leave them with a legacy that our parents and grandparents left us. Let's make the 21st century the greatest in our country's history.

I close with Bill Simons, his first race. World War II, small team wanted to show up in a submarine raft. Take that radio station on top of the mountain. They lived in the jungles for six weeks and ate what they could find. They had a lot of bananas. He never ate another one after that.

He got in a mission and there were 16 people at the top. It was a cliff behind the radio station and there was a sloping mountain going up to it. Everybody came up the slope. He realized there was only one man on duty at a time. After six weeks of observing, he left his men behind.

This is leadership. He left his weapon behind. He carried a knife in the center of his back and climbed the cliff because nobody had been down the cliff. He caught the man on the guard by surprise. He killed him with his knife. He took the weapon, went into the barracks and shot 15 people in their sleep.

You don't wake up your enemy in the middle of the war. You know that, I know that. Then he blew up the radio station and walked down and placed himself in the rubber raft and went back to the submarine. That is a classic case of Churchill's words action this day, that is what we need, that is what made this country great. That is what you have done all your life.

Let's strap it on one more time. You guys get organized and decide who is going to lead this country in the 21st century. I know you will make the right decision. Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF SMALL EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: This year we are honored to present the prestigious VFW National Small Employer of the Year Award to Anamet Electrical, Inc., a company whose policies and achievements in hiring, promoting and training of veterans are noteworthy.

Anamet Electrical, Inc., is located in Mattoon, Illinois, and is a subsidiary of Anamet, Inc., of Waterbury, Connecticut. The company has been in business since 1952 and since its inception has traditionally maintained a strong veterans' presence in the make-up of its personnel.

Veterans' preference is applied for purposes of recruitment, placement and promotion by Anamet Electrical, Inc. Anamet is a company of 102 employees, 49 of whom are veterans. In 1995, Anamet hired 22 people, including 11 veterans. Seventy-three percent of the veterans hired by Anamet in 1995 remain with the company today, a retention rate which far exceeds the national average.

It should be noted that Anamet Electrical, Inc., turned to the local office of the Illinois Department of Employment Security to fill its employment needs. This office is typical of the hundreds of employment service offices throughout the country which thousands of veterans use to find gainful and

meaningful employment.

As well as supporting veterans, Anamet is a strong supporter of the National Guard and the Reserves. While it has no legal obligation to do so, Anamet pays the difference between an employee's average earnings and the pay he or she receives while on annual training. Such a generous practice is to be commended.

Here to accept the award for Anamet Electrical, Inc., is Tom Stitt, Manager of Human Resources.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States National Small Employer of the Year Award presented to Anamet Electrical, Inc., Mattoon, Illinois.

"In recognition and grateful appreciation for meritorious service in effecting a very comprehensive policy toward the recruitment, employment and promotion of veterans.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of August, 1996." This has been signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General. Congratulations and thank you very much.

RESPONSE - MR. TOM STITT

MR. TOM STITT: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief Spera. My wife, Helen, and I are very happy to be here today to accept this award on behalf of Anamet Electrical in Mattoon for all the employees in Mattoon. I would like to also at this time extend our thanks to Sid Daniels, Director of the National Veterans Employment, Don Porter, State of Illinois Employment Officer, and the Vietnam Job Service Rep for the State of Illinois in Wilmington, Illinois. Also Jeff Elson and Dave Kimmy, Veterans Employment Officers for the Illinois Job Service in Mattoon, Illinois.

All of these folks were instrumental in helping us achieve this great honor from the VFW today. I have been an employee of this company for almost 40 years. I have been instrumental in the hiring practices and I have felt very strongly as a veteran myself that veterans make the best employees.

I have 40 years of experience to prove that. The employees at Anamet have proven that. We will continue this practice throughout my career. I am sure that the person that takes my place will carry on as we have carried on in the past. I am also happy to indicate that the monetary award we are receiving today will be turned over to Commander Don Hartenberger, Department Commander of Illinois, for them to use as they see fit

To the Illinois delegation, I apologize for not meeting up with you folks last night, but we just weren't able to do so. If Don Hartenberger is here, thank you, Don. Thank you all.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I have just presented the gentleman with a $1,000 honorarium that goes with the award. He has indicated that will go back to the VFW Post in Mattoon.

PRESENTATION OF LOCAL OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We are honored to recognize the Killeen Local Office of the Texas Employment Commission for our National Local Office of the Public Employment Service Award.

The Killeen Local Office has excelled in providing services to employers and veterans alike. In support of veterans their commitment to service is a total effort. They promote veterans services at every opportunity

During 1995, the Killeen Local Office provided job placement, counseling and other services to over 9,000 veterans. In an area where unemployment hovers at nine percent, 55 percent of the veterans received at least one referral to a job, 21 percent were directly placed, and 16 percent were provided substantial services that led to employment.

In working with this pool of veterans, the staff did not limit its search to just the local community but pointed veterans to jobs all over the state and across the nation. Of special note is the Killeen local office's participation in the Department of Labor's Transition Assistance Program for separating veterans.

The staff of the Killeen local office gave 63 classes to 2,324 separating soldiers at Ft. Hood. The staff also provided frequent briefings regarding employment to Ft. Hood soldiers and was also involved in the Army career and alumni program.

These accomplishments clearly identify the Killeen local office as one that has excelled in service to veterans and one that justly merits recognition by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Here to accept the award is Mike Olen, lead Local Veterans Employment Representative.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States National Employment Service Office Award presented to Killeen Local Office Texas Employment Commission, Killeen, Texas.

"In recognition and appreciation for meritorious, professional employment service rendered to veterans.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of August, 1996." This has been signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - MR. MIKE OLEN

MR. MIKE OLEN: Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief Spera. Members of the VFW and the Texas delegation, I would like to start off by saying you all know how to have hospitality. That was fun last night and I enjoyed it. It is a privilege and honor to accept this award on behalf of the Killeen Local Office of the Texas Work Force Commission.

We have changed our name. Just like the VFW, Killeen has been strong

in providing quality service to veterans and has demonstrated that by leading Texas in placing veterans in jobs for each of the past five years. Employment and service is important to veterans.

At the local, state and national level, we must all be assured of priority of service to veterans. That is not just as a part of the social plan or project, but as a concrete recognition. It is an obligation by a nation to those that have served. It is needed, it is right and it must continue. The question is if it continues, it is up to you. Again, I would like to thank the VFW and its members for this award.

In closing, I would like to mention the honorarium accompanying this award has been designated for the Killeen Area Home and Hope Shelter so that the VFW spirit of caring and serving veterans continues within the community and follows a theme "We'd do anything for this country."

PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD, GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION TO PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ALLEN F. KENT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: His theme was "First to Serve," and he exemplified what that meant in a very personal manner. Allen F. "Gunner" Kent led from a forward position. He was up on the front lines the entire year he served as our VFW Commander-in-Chief. He was visible and he was forceful.

"Gunner" went to Vietnam to find out about our POW/MIA's and, by the way, since he speaks Vietnamese, he asked his own questions and he understood the answers. He didn't have to rely on a translator.

That same personal involvement marked everything he did in the 1994-'95 year, a period marked by fierce battles on Capitol Hill over budget cuts and the impact they would have on veterans affairs. Today veterans continue to enjoy many of the entitlements that might have been lost had "Gunner" not gone toe-to-toe with those who would forget the sacrifices of America's veterans.

"Gunner" joined the VFW in 1968 after a 24-year career in the United States Marine Corps. He came home with the bronze star with two Combat V's, a Vietnamese Campaign Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, Marine Corps Unit Citation with two stars, Navy Commendation Medal, Navy Unit Commendation with two stars, among others.

He moved quickly through elective and appointed positions in our organization. Wherever he served, he served with distinction: All-American Post Commander, Captain of the All-State Team, and in 1988, All-American Commander, Department of Arizona.

Recognition of his leadership abilities went beyond the ranks of the VFW. In 1979, he was chosen Arizona's "Young Vietnam Veteran of the Year."

We are indeed fortunate in having Allen F. "Gunner" Kent as our VFW Commander-in-Chief. Under his leadership, the VFW carried on a proud

tradition dating back to the founding of our country: "First to Serve." And now a VFW member who has served us well and who continues to serve America's veterans from a position on the staff of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, I am very pleased and very proud to present to you Allen F. "Gunner" Kent of the great State of Arizona.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Distinguished Service Medal and this Citation awarded to Allen F. 'Gunner' Kent, Commander-in-Chief, 1994-'95.

"In sincere appreciation and special recognition of his total dedication and commitment to the highest ideals of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and his continuing efforts in support of its programs and purposes. Through his exceptional leadership during the 1994-'95 administrative year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars demonstrated its readiness to be the 'First to Serve' our nation and its veterans.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of August, 1996." This has been signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General.

As a personal note, Gunner, let me say that it was indeed an honor for me to be a part of that "First to Serve" team.

RESPONSE - PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief, National Officers and my Fellow Comrades. I would just like to thank you very much for this honor and especially thank the Department of Arizona and VFW Post 9972 for all its support.

I would like to introduce my lovely wife, Becky, who stood with me through all the times when the shots were fired and some missed and most missed, though. I would like everybody to just remember one thing, please. It has been a great Convention.

We have some good times and we have had some battles, and we have all discussed it and we have heard our opinions. Let's all remember one thing, when we leave here, we are members of the greatest veterans organization this world has ever seen.

Our main job and our main purpose when we go back home is to make sure that the veterans of this country are taken care of and that this country remains a strong, strong national defense. May God bless all of you and may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD, GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION TO PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES CURRIEO

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: James R. "Bob" Currieo joined the VFW in 1962. Twenty years later, he was elected Commander-in-Chief of

the VFW. That says a lot about Bob Currieo and his exceptional leadership ability. And what's even more amazing about that record of achievement is that for the first 11 years of that period he was still on active duty with the United States Army, a service he had joined in 1951.

Bob is a Korean War veteran who served as a gunner in the 3rd AAA Battalion, the 3rd Infantry Division, through some of the heaviest fighting of that bitter war.

Afterwards, he came home, went to college, joined the VFW, and was named one of Arizona's Outstanding Young Men in 1966 by the National Junior Chamber of Commerce. He also served on the Arizona Governor's Veterans Advisory Council.

As I have said, his career in the VFW was outstanding. The same year that he retired from the Army was also the year he served as Commander, VFW Department of Arizona, and he made All-American that year.

At a time when the veterans of Vietnam were trying to get adjusted to a post-Vietnam America, Bob led the way in fighting for Agent Orange compensation, a role that he has continued to fulfill as the Executive Director of the VFW Washington Office. Today, thanks in large part to his efforts, compensation is being awarded for at least nine medical conditions related to Agent Orange exposure.

Bob was appointed to the position of Executive Director of the VFW Washington Office in 1994 at our 95th National Convention. Before that appointment, he had served as the Director of the VFW Political Action Committee.

Now, please join with me in welcoming one of the truly great leaders of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Bob Currieo of the great Department of Arizona.

"The Veterans of Foreign Wars Gold Medal of Merit and this Citation awarded to James R. 'Bob' Currieo.

"In special recognition of his exceptional service as an articulate spokesman and exceptional advocate for our nation's veterans and for the programs and purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars during his more than 36 years of distinguished and effective leadership in every elective office of the organization culminating in his election to the highest office of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1982-'83 during which time he led the organization with the motto 'Strength Through Service' as Commander-in-Chief, and in sincere appreciation for continuing to serve the organization with great dignity as the Director of the VFW Political Action Committee and most recently as the Assistant Adjutant General and Executive Director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars' Washington Office.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of August, 1996." This has been signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General. Bob, thank you for everything.

RESPONSE - PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: I said I had a two-hour speech, but he said he was leaving anyhow. I do want to thank you, Commander-in-Chief, and the national leadership of this organization, and especially to you comrades because I consider this a high honor coming from you.

In my capacity as Executive Director of the Washington Office, as well as Commander-in-Chief and PAC Director, and the other offices I have held on the national level, I was working for you. You were not working for me. This is the attitude that we must continue to keep in mind that we work for you.

You are the rank and file members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. You are the VIPs of this organization, and we are here to serve you. As we leave this Convention, Gunner said it all, and I join him in the same remarks, we have had some battles, and we will come back next year and probably have some more, but when we leave this Convention we must unite and unite behind the leadership of our organization and unite behind the principles of our organization, and we must move forward for the good of all veterans of these United States.

Thank you, Paul. Thank you, comrades. God bless you and God bless America.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I have to go do some business, and I will turn the microphone over to the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

(Whereupon, Junior Commander-in-Chief Moon assumed the Chair at this time.)

OUTSTANDING VA HEALTH CARE PROVIDER AWARD

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: It is an honor for me to introduce Mr. Santo F. Trombetta, VFW Outstanding VA Health Care Provider of the Year Award.

The National Hospital Committee of the Veterans of Foreign Wars has established an award recognizing an Outstanding VA Health Care Provider of the Year. This year's recipient is Mr. Santo Trombetta, who is a recreation therapist at the Grand Junction VA Medical Center.

An avid skier, Mr. Trombetta has worked diligently over the years to develop a skiing program for those who are wheelchair bound. Through the eyes of his patients, he visualized a ski clinic, where physically-challenged veterans could learn adaptive skiing techniques. This vision came true in 1988 when the VA held the first winter sport clinic in Grand Junction, Colorado, and has continued this exceptional program each year.

The clinic has grown from 88 veterans to over 300 disabled participants of which many are visually impaired. Even though many are at first apprehensive about their capabilities, a week at the clinic restores their faith in themselves and strengthens their abilities to face challenges in spite of their disabilities.

These gutsy veterans have their own motto, which demonstrates their spirit and aggressiveness, "If you haven't left blood on the mountain, you ain't been there."

It is with great pride that I present this year's Outstanding VA Health Care Provider of the Year Award to Mr. Sandy Trombetta from Grand Junction, Colorado.

The citation reads in part, "The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Outstanding VA Health Care Provider Award, 1995-1996, presented to Santo F. Trombetta in special recognition of your individual achievements in support of the programs and purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as the Outstanding VA Health Care Provider of the Year.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of August, 1996." It has been signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - MR. SANTO TROMBETTA

MR. TROMBETTA: Commander-in-Chief, Delegates and Honored Guests, I would really like to thank you for this honor today. Actually, you honor me for something I really consider a privilege, and that is to serve our nation's veterans.

I would especially like to thank the members of Post 1247 in Grand Junction, Colorado, and especially the State Department VFW in Colorado, who, when I first came up with this idea about doing something like this, many people thought it was a crazy idea because a lot of people had been injured and they felt that we were going to injure them a little further.

Some of those guys did get hurt and bounced around, but I will tell you they bounced right up and really attacked the challenge that lay before them. I will never forget the day the VFW called me, and I was worried about having funding and seeing if we could put this program together.

They were right there and they shared our dream and shared our vision. Now, this dream and vision has become a reality. I look around you and I see your motto, "We'd do anything for this country." I would say that I will continue to do anything in my power for our nation's veterans. Thank you very much and God bless you all.

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: Thank you very much, Mr. Trombetta.

At this time, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce Comrade George Clark, who is from the Department of Kentucky, a World War I veteran, a 96-year-old veteran in World War I. Please join me in recognizing Comrade Clark.

COMRADE GEORGE CLARK (Post 8551 - Kentucky): I want to thank all of you for being here and showing your interest in the battle. I want to tell you that if the thinking that prevailed at the time of World War I was present today, a draft dodger would not be in the White House. Thank you

all.

OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE PROVIDER AWARD

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: It is my pleasure this morning to introduce Yvonne Toth, VFW Outstanding Community Health Care Provider of the Year Award.

This year we are honored to present the VFW Outstanding Community Health Care Provider of the Year Award to Ms. Yvonne Toth of Erie, Pennsylvania.

Ms. Toth is a Military Affairs Activities Assistant at the Pennsylvania Soldier's and Sailor's Home. She began her career as a nursing assistant and was promoted to a therapist in the Therapeutic Activities Department in November, 1985.

Eve is a dedicated, hard working person whose daily focus is to provide all her residents with individual attention and understanding. She encourages them to participate in events, crafts and other activities designed to enhance the quality of their lives and promote good health and well-being.

With a keen sense of human relations, she understands the importance of dignity in life and treats all whom she meets with kindness. A simple smile on the faces of her patients whom she loves says it all.

I am honored to present this year's VFW Outstanding Community Health Care Provider of the Year Award to Ms. Yvonne Toth of Erie, Pennsylvania.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Outstanding Community Health Care Provider Award, 1995-1996, presented to Yvonne Toth.

"In special recognition of your individual achievements in support of the programs and purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as the Outstanding Community Health Care Provider of the Year.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 22nd day of August, 1996." This has been signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General. Congratulations.

RESPONSE - MS. YVONNE TOTH

MS. TOTH: I would like to thank you all for the great honor you have given me, especially VFW No. 169 of District 28 of Pennsylvania for their nomination. I chose a quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson that best describes the philosophy of life I try to use in my work with veterans.

> "To love others too much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children.
>
> "To leave the world a bit better. To know that even one person has breathed easier because I lived. That is to have succeeded."

You knew these men in battle. I have them afterwards and they are still just as brave as when you knew them. Thank you very much.

OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER AWARD

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: This is the third year that the VFW has presented an award recognizing an individual for their exemplary service as a health care volunteer. This year's recipient is Comrade Joseph Schirmers, a member of VFW Post 4847 in East St. Cloud, Minnesota.

A Post Hospital Chairman and Service Officer, Comrade Schirmers is the Chairman for his Department's Commander's Special Project. At the national level, he is the Big Ten Conference Sergeant-at-Arms and one of our own National Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms. However, the majority of Joe's time is spent volunteering at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center.

Joe's day normally begins at 5:00 o'clock a.m. when he picks up donuts and coffee for the patients who have outpatient appointments. His daily duties include delivering medical records and mail to the inpatient wards. He assists pharmacy service by packaging medications for mailouts to veterans, and somewhere between all those duties, he finds time to visit with patients and help feed them their meals.

Webster's Dictionary defines the word "volunteer" as one who gives of himself for service to others of his own free will. Joe Schirmers gives meaning to the word "volunteer".

I am very, very proud to present this year's VFW Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award to a dear friend, Mr. Joseph Schirmers from St. Cloud, Minnesota.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Outstanding Volunteer Award, 1995-'96, presented to Joseph Schirmers.

"In special recognition of your individual achievements in support of the programs and purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as the Outstanding Volunteer of the Year.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of August, 1996." This has been signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General."

RESPONSE - COMRADE JOSEPH SCHIRMERS

COMRADE SCHIRMERS: First of all, let me say that if it wasn't for my lovely wife I wouldn't have the enthusiasm. She is with me, and my seven children are with me, and this is a great honor. I have been volunteering since I was 27 years old, and that was my life after we started out.

My motto is "We will do anything for veterans in the VA." At this time I would like to have my Post Commander and his wife, who put this thing together, to please stand. Also the State of Minnesota, who supported me,

and my Post and my Commander-in-Chief, John Staum.

He said I was his personal aide today, and I appreciate that. God bless you, John, and from the Big Ten, and all the delegates and everybody who is here. I am proud to serve you. This is 36 years I have volunteered. The best we can do is to help those that are less fortunate.

The ones that are going down the hall, you push me today and maybe somebody will push you tomorrow. That is what we have to keep in mind. There are a lot of people figuring they are never going to be there, but we are going to be there sometime or other.

I really appreciate this award. I humbly receive it in behalf of the 2,200,000 veterans that would love to be here with me to share this honor. God bless you all and have a safe trip home, and let's keep on working for America. Thank you very much.

OUTSTANDING POST SERVICE OFFICER AWARD

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: This is the fifth year in which we recognize the Outstanding National Post Service Officer. The Post Service Officer is the crucial first link for veterans and their dependents at the "grassroots" level.

This award is presented annually to the VFW Post Service Officer who attains the highest percentage of claims assistance referrals. These are referrals made on behalf of veterans, their dependents and survivors to the appropriate VFW Department Service Officer for processing within the Veterans Benefits Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The recipient of this award, whom we honor here today, is Comrade Dennis Cauley. Comrade Cauley is Post Service Officer for VFW Post 174 in Providence, Rhode Island.

His presence here this morning testifies to the commitment of Comrade Cauley to his duties as a Post Service Officer. It means that he has reached out to members of his Post, dependents of members of his Post, survivors of deceased members of his Post, and members of his Post's Ladies Auxiliary, and gone that extra mile on their behalf. His service to others is in the finest tradition of our VFW commitment to "Honor the Dead by Helping the Living."

It is for that reason that we formally recognize him today. In addition to the personal awards, VFW Post 174, Providence, Rhode Island, will receive a plaque recognizing Mr. Cauley's accomplishments.

Please join me in welcoming Comrade Cauley to be honored by this assembly.

Comrade Cauley, on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I will give you a pin that you can wear on our lapel as the Outstanding Service Officer for 1995-'96. This is a plaque, National Outstanding Post Service Officer Award, presented to Post 174, Providence, Rhode Island.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Outstanding Post Service

officer Award presented to Dennis Cauley, Sylvester S. Payne Post No. 174, Providence, Rhode Island.

"In special recognition for having achieved an exceptional record of service to VFW members and their families, marked by a spirit of dedication, compassion, selflessness and faithful adherence to the VFW principle: 'Honor the Dead by Helping the Living.'

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of August, 1996." This has been signed by Paul A. Spera, Commander-in-Chief, and Larry W. Rivers, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - COMRADE DENNIS CAULEY

COMRADE DENNIS CAULEY (Post 174 - Rhode Island): I want to thank you very much for this award. I will display it proudly. I accept it because you people think I am worthy of it. I am a veteran helping other veterans. That is the name of the game. Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, Commander-in-Chief Spera assumed the Chair at this time.)

INTRODUCTION OF PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: This is not going to take me long to present the Past Commanders-in-Chief that are present because there are only four present.

From 1958 to 1959, Past Commander-in-Chief John W. Mahan.

1978-1979, Past Commander-in-Chief Eric G. Sandstrom.

From 1989 to 1990, Past Commander-in-Chief Walter G. Hogan.

From 1991 to 1992, Past Commander-in-Chief Robert E. Wallace.

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Each year at our Convention and at various functions during the year we have a dedicated group of individuals, sometimes you get mad at them and sometimes they get mad at you. They always follow the instructions of the Chair, though, and they do a great job for us.

They keep order, they keep decorum and they always do it looking great. So, at this time it is a pleasure for me to introduce to you your National Sergeants-at-Arms. From Post 402, Department of Pennsylvania, with 27 years of service, George Sarver.

From Post 2083, Department of Connecticut, with 20 years of service, Nicholas Polansky. From Post 4159, Michigan, with 19 years of service, Fred VonHinken. From Post 1645, Massachusetts, with 13 years of service, Carl C. Aiello. From Post 6240, Kansas, with eight years of service, Barry Hoffman.

From Post 4206, Florida, with five years of service, Bill Miller. From Post 2275, California, two years of service, Keith McDonald. From Post 1911, with on year of service, and his first Convention, Dan Brown. From Post 9134, North Carolina, one year of service, and his first Convention, Gary Barringer.

And the Senior, from Post 4847, Minnesota, with 34 years of service to the National Sergeants-at-Arms, Joe Schirmers. Give them a big hand.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Sergeants-at-Arms, you will kindly seek out and escort to this podium the Representatives from our National Home.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, we have accomplished your order, sir.

VISIT OF NATIONAL HOME REPRESENTATIVES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: At this time let me bring to this podium the President of the Board of Directors of the VFW National Home, Edward Sanders.

COMRADE EDWARD SANDERS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief and my Comrades:

It is an honor for me to appear before you today bringing you greetings from the entire Board of Trustees of the National Home and the staff. It is good to tell you that the National Home is alive and well. We now have 70 children on campus and 70 in college.

We are doing great. Our forefathers in 1925 had the knowledge and the wisdom to establish the National Home. Seventy-one years later we are still doing well and finally are moving into the 21st century.

On May 30th, I had the opportunity to attend a graduation party for the May graduates. Near the end of the evening a young lady said to me, who had just graduated from the university, she said, "Mr. Sanders, will you do something for me?" I said, "I will be more than happy to."

She said, "Will you tell the VFW thank you." She said, "If it were not for the VFW and the VFW National Home, I would not be where I am today." She said, "Just tell them thanks for me." That is what your National Home means to these children. We will go ahead with your support and continue this.

Chief, I know our schedule doesn't jive too well this year, but I do have something for you to remember the National Home during your visit last October, and I wish you a most successful Convention this year. I think you have had a great year.

At this time I would like to introduce the Executive Director of the National Home, Susan Shoultz.

NATIONAL HOME DIRECTOR SHOULTZ: I am a little shorter and I had to move those down a little bit. To our Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera, National Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief and to you the fine

comrades of this organization:

The National Home has served the children and grandchildren of members for over 71 years and we are preparing for the future at this time. How we carry on the mission for caring for children while serving as a living memorial for our nation's veterans.

Almost three years ago I was directed by the Board of Trustees to increase the number of children utilizing the services of the National Home while at the same time creating a financial, secure organization. I am pleased to say that the 1995-'96 year is the first year that it has shown the results of our hard work

The expense for 1995-'96 was $400,000. The last time our expenses were under $400,000 was 1988. During the 1995-'96 year, the number of children that entered the National Home doubled the admissions over the two previous years. While the average number of children at the National Home was 70, the National Home cared for over 113 individuals during this past year.

For the '96-'97 year, we will continue to increase the number of children and to continue on with the plans to reduce expenses and prepare the program for children who will come to us and find a home and a new beginning. This week you have had many important guests visit you at this Convention to ask for your support and to tell you what they can do for you in order to earn that support.

I, too, am here to ask for your continued support. There is maybe nothing I can do for you personally, but I can and will assure each of you that the National Home will continue to stand as a living memorial for all who served our country during the wars.

It is my pleasure to introduce to you a young lady from the Department of Illinois that has come to the National Home. Her name is Elena Hancock.

REMARKS BY 1996 BUDDY POPPY CHILD

BUDDY POPPY CHILD ELENA HANCOCK: Hello, everyone. My name is Elena Hancock. I am eight years old. I like to play on the monkey bars. I like to play and sing. I like to swing and I like my parents, and I love Sue and I love my mom and dad, and when I grow up I want to be a teacher. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: That is the first pin. She will be coming out into the audience. She loves to collect pins. Everybody get your pins ready for her. She brought a bag to fill it up. Thank you very much.

NOMINATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: At this time nominations are now open for the office of Commander-in-Chief for the year 1996-1997.

Nominating first will be Ted C. Connell, Past Commander-in-Chief.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TED CONNELL (Post 9192 -Texas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I rise for two things, one to give you an update that we just received. The Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, they believe they have his fever checked, and they are keeping him for a while to undergo some further tests, and he still hopes that he will be with us tomorrow for the installation.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I come forth to place in nomination the name that we all know, a man that we are extremely proud of. I could give you his complete history, but you have heard it many times this year. So in the interest of time, I would simply rise to place the name of Jim Nier for Commander-in-Chief of our illustrative organization. Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you.

For the purpose of seconding the nomination, the Chair recognizes Glen Gardner from the Department of Texas.

COMRADE GLEN GARDNER (Post 3359 - Texas): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, State Officers, Fellow Comrades and Friends:

I stand before you today with pride, with confidence and with admiration, and with optimism to second the nomination of my friend James E. Nier from VFW Post 8919, El Paso, Texas, for the office of National Commander-in-Chief for 1996-'97. With pride, we can add the name James E. Nier with that of Ted Connell and T. C. Selman, two of the greatest Commanders-in-Chief in our 97 year history, as another Texan leader that will go on to lead our great organization on the National level.

With confidence, Jim Nier will not only do the same thing, but he will join Ted Connell and T. C. Selman to provide this organization the type of leadership necessary at this crucial time in our history. With admiration for a comrade who proudly served his country as a member of the United States Army for 22 years, who continues to serve more than 55,000 veterans of El Paso County, at the El Paso Veterans Council, who has served his Post, his District and his Department of Texas admirably and as demanded, and has served the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States on the national level; and most of all, with optimism, optimism that the programs brought forth by Commander-in-Chief Nier during 1996-'97 will help rejuvenate our great force and shore up the foundation that is necessary for the future of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Optimism that is brought with the knowledge that Jim Nier will use the same leadership traits that made him successful as a Post Commander in '89-'90 in El Paso, Texas, District 10 Commander and All-American Commander of the Department of Texas.

Leadership dictates that you listen to other leaders, to the professional staff in Kansas City and Washington, and most of all, to you, my comrades, the grassroots members of this great organization where decisions are made and programs are changed.

Therefore, comrades and delegates to this 97th Annual Convention to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I ask for your help, your support and your vote for Jim Nier as National Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 1996-'97. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: For the purpose of seconding the nomination, we have Bill E. Lark, Past State Commander from Columbia, South Carolina.

COMRADE BILL LARK (Post 4262 - South Carolina): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. My fellow comrades, I stand before you with great pride to second the nomination of James E. Nier for Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: And showing support of solidarity we have the 1989-'90 Commanders who served with Jim Nier under Wally Hogan, Past Commander-in-Chief.

To make it official for the record, since he is not present here this morning, we do have a letter on file from James E. Nier that he will accept the nomination. Are there any further nominations for the office of Commander-in-Chief? Are there any further nominations for the office of Commander-in-Chief? Are there any further nominations for the office of Commander-in-Chief? Hearing none, the nominations will be held open until tomorrow morning at election time.

Nominations are now open for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. The Chair recognizes Roger Taylor, the State Senior Vice Commander, Post 2873, Grover Hill, Ohio, for a nomination.

NOMINATION OF SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMRADE ROGER TAYLOR (Post 2873 - Ohio): Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera, Officers, Delegates, Members and Guests to this 97th National Convention, the greatest veterans organization ever, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States: Some nine years ago in Cincinnati, just up the river from here, I had the distinction and the distinguished honor and pleasure of nominating a man to become the first Vietnam veteran to serve as Commander of Ohio.

I am now pleased and honored to place his nomination today for the high office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. One year ago in Arizona, the great VFW members chose my good friend and comrade, John Moon, to represent you as your Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

I feel you made a magnificent choice. John has served our organization with distinction this past year. That is no surprise to fellow members from the Buckeye State as he has served our Department with distinction for over 26 years. John is a Marine veteran who served with the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Division in Vietnam.

Among his many awards are the Vietnam Service Medal, the Three Bronze Stars, Vietnam Campaign Medal and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, Combat Ribbon and National Defense Service Medal. Although

he has been active in all levels of our organization, John's roots have never left his home Post of Grover Hill.

He has been Adjutant for 14 terms and served as our Commander three times, twice being named All-State Post Commander. He has served our County Council. He was Ohio's District Commander in 1974-'75, and he was named All-American Department Commander.

He went on to serve us well in our great organization as a member of the National Council of Administration. In his distinguished VFW career, he has shown the ability, dedication, knowledge and determination to serve our organization as Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

It has been said that the men and women of the VFW will do anything for this country. I proudly nominate today a man that will do anything for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. My good comrades, I am indeed honored to nominate for the high office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, a great spokesman for this nation's veterans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, a true leader from the Big Ten Conference and the great State of Ohio, my good friend John E. Moon.

For the purpose of seconding this nomination, I call on Craig Swartz, State Commander, Post 2947, Fremont, Ohio.

COMRADE CRAIG SWARTZ (Post 2947 - Ohio): Commander-in-Chief Spera, National Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief and Delegates to the National Convention:

It is with extreme pride that I stand before you today as the Department Commander of Ohio, who in 1987-'88 served as Post Commander when John Moon held this office. He is a man of sole leadership and single minded-ship of the concerns of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He has been a true friend and person to me, and he will be a true friend to all Veterans of Foreign Wars and a fellow Marine. It is an honor to second the nomination of John E. Moon for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the year 1996-'97.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I call on Past Commander-in-Chief Walter G. Hogan, Post 6498, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for the purpose of a second.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF WALTER HOGAN (Post 6498 - Wisconsin): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Paul. National Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief and the Delegates to this 97th National Convention:

One year ago, I had the high honor of seconding the nomination of this young American for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. I have watched this individual for many years as he moved through the various chairs of our organization.

I was impressed then as I am now. It gives me a great honor and privilege to second the nomination of John Moon for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Are there any other nominations for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other

nominations for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until tomorrow morning.

NOMINATION OF JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Nominations are now open for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. For the purpose of a nomination, I call upon John W. Mahan, Past Commander-in-Chief, Post 1116, Helena, Montana.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN MAHAN (Post 1116 -Montana): I am here to nominate a friend, a colleague and a comrade, Tom Pouliot. Tom was born in 1943, after our first Commander from Montana, Bob Merrill, who is over 100 years old, had already left office.

He was 11 years old when I held the job as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. This young man is one of 11 children in the family, ten brothers and sisters. His father was a great member of the VFW, his mother of the Auxiliary. He grew up with the VFW.

When he was 18, he joined the Navy, from 1962 to 1966. He was an air crewman in Vietnam. After his service to his country, he graduated from San Jose College in California. He returned to Montana and gained a Doctor of Jurisprudence in Law. He is an attorney, a judge, and in my opinion, he has done everything he can do in the VFW up to now in the state and the local level.

He has been Post Commander, District Commander, All-American State Commander, a member of the National Council of Administration, the Judge Advocate General, Vice-Chairman of the Voice of Democracy, the Americanism Committee, Chairman of the Legislative National Committee.

I nominate the man with the right stuff, Tom Pouliot, as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Seconding this nomination is Eric Sandstrom, Past Commander-in-Chief, Post 969, Tacoma, Washington.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ERIC SANDSTROM (Post 969 - Washington): Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. It is not often that a Marine stands up here to second the nomination of a sailor. I am proud to do it at this time. I did not know what kind of a sailor he was, neither do I know what kind of a lawyer he is, but I do know what kind of a man he is.

Tom Pouliot is always friendly, always dedicated. He certainly is well qualified. He is always a gentleman above all, and always down to earth. Besides, he has a cute wife. It is a great honor for me as an old, old Marine to second the nomination of a young, young swabby as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of this great organization.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: For the purpose of seconding the nomination, I call on George Riedel, Jr., Past State Commander, Post 969, Tacoma, Washington.

COMRADE GEORGE RIEDEL (Post 969 - Washington): Commander-in-Chief and Delegates to this great 97th National Convention of the VFW, my name is George Riedel. I am from the Department of Washington. I am very honored to stand before you and second the nomination of Tom Pouliot for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

The Western Conference has given us the best man for the job, a dedicated team player, who is ready to join the above and beyond team for 1996-'97. Thank you, Montana, for giving us your favorite son for this all important job.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Are there any further nominations for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until tomorrow morning.

NOMINATION OF QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Nominations are now open for the office of Quartermaster General. For the purpose of a nomination, I recognize William J. Radigan, State Adjutant-Quartermaster, Post 3061, Vermillion, South Dakota.

COMRADE WILLIAM RADIGAN (Post 3061 - South Dakota): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, National Officers and Delegates to this 97th National Convention: It is a privilege for me this morning to come before you joined by representatives of all the conferences for the purpose of placing in nomination the name of a comrade in the office of Quartermaster General.

Joining me are Precilla Wilkewitz from Louisiana, representing the Southern Conference; Bill McCarthy, from the Department of Massachusetts, representing the Eastern Conference; Rhett Daverio from California, representing the Western Conference; and David Roath from Missouri representing the Big Ten, along with me.

It has been my privilege in the term of office that I have held for some time as Adjutant/Quartermaster of South Dakota to work with Past Quartermasters General: Bob Handy, Al Cheatham, Herb Irwin, James Bowden and Joe Ridgley. I have watched the first three as they patiently and carefully trained their successor.

It has been a pleasure for me to work with those people. As we come here today, it probably will be appropriate for me to outline for you all the proper qualifications of Joe Ridgley whom I am going to nominate. I will make it brief and I will tell you simply that Joe Ridgley has the desire to serve in this office.

I believe that is brought forth to all of us by the fact that he had worked for more than 20 years in the Veterans of Foreign Wars in the Quartermaster General's Office to prepare himself to serve us as he currently does. He is a young man that has the desire to do it.

He has the energy to meet the challenge. I think that after this week you will all realize that sometimes it is difficult, but he is willing and he

knows what has to be done. In addition to all of that, Joe has the education and the technical knowledge that this office requires.

We are fortunate that we have Joe Ridgley. So today, as my colleagues join with me, we present to you our nomination collectively of Joe Ridgley, Post 8220, Belton, Missouri, for the office of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: For the purpose of seconding the nomination, I recognize the State Quartermaster from Missouri.

COMRADE DAVID ROATH (Post 5606 - Missouri): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Past National Commanders and Delegates to the 97th National Convention:

It is indeed an honor for me to stand before you today to second the nomination of an outstanding, dedicated comrade, a comrade who has served this organization from its Post level through the National level, a comrade who is presently serving us as Quartermaster General and who puts the interest of our organization in the forefront.

He is a comrade willing to help when help is asked for. It is an added pleasure for me as this comrade is a member of my Department, the Department of Missouri, and is a Life Member of VFW Post 8220 in Belton, Missouri. I, along with the other Department Quartermasters of the Big Ten Conference, the Western Conference, the Eastern Conference and the Southern Conference, who are represented here today at the microphone, proudly second the nomination of Joe Ridgley as our Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Are there any further nominations for the office of Quartermaster General? Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until tomorrow morning.

Nominations are now open for the office of Judge Advocate General. For the purpose of a nomination, I call upon Ray Sisk, National Council member, Post 97, Bakersfield, California.

NOMINATION OF JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

COMRADE RAY SISK (Post 97 - California): Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief, and in particular to my comrades and the delegates at this 97th National Convention:

It is my privilege to stand before you and put the name of Leonard Herrst as your Judge Advocate General in nomination. I will let you know a little bit about him. Lenny is a World War II veteran serving aboard the Battleships USS Iowa and the Life Cruiser Topeka in the Pacific Areas in World War II.

Lenny has a degree from the University of Minnesota, the University of Southern California, and a Juris Doctorate degree from Loyola of Los Angeles. He is in general practice in Lawrence, California, and semi-retired. Although Lenny was eligible for this organization in 1945, no one

asked him until 1971.

That is how he became a member and the next year he became a Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Besides serving on numerous committees as chair and a member at the various levels of our great organization, he has served as Judge Advocate of his Post, Judge Advocate of the District, and as Judge Advocate of the Department of California.

In the year 1993-'94, he won the Kansas City trip, the Washington Conference trip as the District Commander. He was the All-State Team Captain in California and an All-American District Commander in 1993-'94, so you know you have got a working Judge Advocate General.

He is presently our Department Judge Advocate, District Judge Advocate and Post Judge Advocate, and now we are asking for your support for him as the Judge Advocate General. I proudly place in nomination the name of Leonard Herrst from California for Judge Advocate General. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: For purposes of seconding the nomination, we have Robert C. Marr, the State Commander, Post 7283, Lancaster, California.

COMRADE ROBERT MARR (Post 7283 - California): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Fellow comrades, some things come just a little easier than others. Accordingly, it will be easy for me to perform this important task today. Comrade Lenny Herrst is exceptionally well qualified.

He is dedicated and he has all these qualities in one package. It is my honor and privilege to second the nomination for Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Leonard Herrst.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Are there any further nominations for the office of Judge Advocate General? Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations? Hearing none, the nominations will be held open until tomorrow morning.

Nominations are now open for the office of Surgeon General. For the purpose of a nomination, I call to the podium Gordon W. Kirk, National Council member, Post 8854, St. Paul, Minnesota.

NOMINATION OF SURGEON GENERAL

COMRADE GORDON KIRK (Post 8854 - Minnesota): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. National Officers, Comrades, Delegates and Friends:

It gives me great pleasure to nominate a comrade and a friend for National Surgeon General. Comrade Reif graduated from the University of Minnesota Medical School in 1949, certified by the American Board of Family Practice in 1971, recertified again in 1977 and 1983.

He is a member of the Minnesota Medical Society, the American Medical Association and the Minnesota State Medical Association and the American Academy of Family Physicians, and Past President of the Minnesota Chapter in 1973-'74. He was Director of Medical Health

Education at St. John's Hospital from 1993 until the present, and Director of Medical Affairs, St. John's Hospital, January, 1990 to 1993.

He was Vice-President of the Medical Affairs for Health East from 1986 to 1989. He is a member of the governing board of the State Veterans Home from 1988 until 1993, and a member of the State Legislature, the House of Representatives, District 53-B, elected in November, 1978, and re-elected again in 1980 and 1982.

He served on the Governor's Task Force on Ethics, on the Metro Task Force for Future Health and Care Planning in 1981 and 1982. He served on the Governor's Advisory Committee on Chemicals Efficiency Treatment in 1981. He has a Combat Badge, Medical Badge, Medical Corpsman and European Theater in 1943 to 1947, Captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps from 1951 to 1952.

He is a Life Member of Post 1782, White Bear Lake, Minnesota, and was National Surgeon General, 1992-'93, of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He was Department Surgeon from 1992 until the present. At this time, comrades, I place in nomination the name of Robert W. Reif, M.D., from the great State of Minnesota and a member of the Big Ten Conference for the office of Surgeon General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: For the purpose of seconding the nomination, I call on Orlin Jackson, State Commander, Post 1720, Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

COMRADE ORLIN JACKSON (Post 1720 - Minnesota): Commander-in-Chief Paul and the rest of the comrades, it gives me great pleasure, after listening to the biography of Dr Reif, I know he is well qualified to be the Surgeon General, to second the nomination.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Are there any further nominations for the office of Surgeon General? Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until tomorrow morning.

Nominations are now open for the office of National Chaplain. For the purpose of a nomination, I call to the podium George Lisicki, National Council member, Post 2314, Carteret, New Jersey.

NOMINATION OF NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

COMRADE GEORGE LISICKI (Post 2324 - New Jersey): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief and Delegates to the 97th National Convention:

This morning I have the honor and privilege to place the name of Reverend William J. Bleiler from Mullica Hill, New Jersey, in nomination for the high office of National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for 1996-1997. Starting in life as a young plumber, Father Bleiler was drafted into the United States Army and earned his eligibility for the VFW Occupation Forces in Germany as a member of the Military Police.

Following his Army service, he entered the seminary under the G.I. Bill

and was ordained as a priest on January 6, 1966, by his Holiness Pope Paul VI in St. Peters Basilica. He is now a member of the diocese of Camden, New Jersey.

He is a member of VFW Post 10886, where he serves as Chaplain and also serves as Chaplain of his District to the Department of New Jersey, and since 1994 as Chaplain of our Eastern States Conference. I am proud and privileged to place the name of William J. Bleiler in nomination for the high office of National Chaplain for 1996-1997. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: For the purpose of a seconding speech, I call to the microphone Dennis Wall, State Commander, Post 7164, Avenel, New Jersey.

COMRADE DENNIS WALL (Post 7164 - New Jersey): Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Past National Commanders-in-Chief, and Delegates to them 97th National Convention:

I stand before you with great pride and honor to second the nomination of an outstanding priest with the Department of New Jersey, Father William Bleiler. As George Lisicki says, he is our District Chaplain. He has done an excellent job in the Department of New Jersey. I proudly second that nomination.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Are there any further nominations for the office of National Chaplain? Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations? Hearing none, all nominations are held open until tomorrow morning.

WINNERS OF INSURANCE DRAWING

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: At this time I call to the microphone the Assistant Quartermaster General for an announcement.

ASSISTANT QUARTERMASTER GENERAL LARRY MAHER: Very briefly, again I would like to announce the insurance drawing winners as drawn by the Commander-in-Chief earlier this morning.

The $25 winner is Perry A. Martinson, Post 1222, Minnesota.

The $50 winner is Daniel H. Heye, Post 2266, California.

The $100 winner is Baucom B. Hinson of Post 4411.

The $1,000 winner is John Rettagliata, Post 10367, Nevada.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Tomorrow the session will begin at 9:00 o'clock a.m. I again would like to thank each and every one of you that has remained for this Convention session this morning, by being here and being interested in the business of the VFW.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the room for the Salute to the Colors and the Closing Ceremonies.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Comrades, please stand at attention and face the flag of our nation and salute.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Lyle Kell gave the Closing Prayer according to the Ritual.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Commander-in-Chief, the Closing

Ceremonies have been performed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you. This meeting is recessed until 9:00 o'clock tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 12:30 o'clock p.m.)

FOURTH BUSINESS SESSION
FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 1996

(The Fourth Business Session of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in the Commonwealth Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, was called to order at 9:00 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Paul A. Spera presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the room for the Opening Ceremonies.

SALUTE TO COLORS AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Comrades, will you please rise and facing the flag of our nation, stand at attention and salute.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was given at this time.)

OPENING PRAYER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I will call on Comrade Chaplain Lyle Kell at this time.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN KELL: Comrades, before I say the Opening Prayer, since this will be the last time I will be before you, I really have appreciated being your National Chaplain and I wanted to say that I have been working in and will continue to work in the field of post-traumatic stress disorder for veterans.

The State of Washington has put out a brochure. I think it is the only state in the union that has done that, and it is filled with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders. If any of you or any of your comrades that you know need help in this department, please contact your service officer to do so.

Also I want you to know this, and I will share it with you so you can also be a part of it, this is to request that Lyle Kell, National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States be invited to be a guest chaplain for the U.S. House of Representatives. That paperwork is in the mill. I am really thankful for it. Shall we pray.

As we pray, let us all stop and have a special prayer for our new Commander-in-Chief.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Kell gave the Opening Prayer from the Ritual.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Opening Ceremonies have been performed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you. At this time I would like to call on the Chairman of the National Credentials Committee, Richard Trombla from Post 1174 in Kansas to give his final report. As he is coming up, allow me to introduce the rest of the Committee.

The Vice-Chairman is Elwood B. Rickards, Post 7234 from Delaware; Vice-Chairman James L. Mascola, Post 3580, Illinois; Vice-Chairman James A. Kennedy, Post 3877, Minnesota; and Vice-Chairman James H. Willis, Post 534, Missouri.

FINAL REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE RICHARD TROMBLA (Post 1174 - Kansas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief and Comrades, I am Richard Trombla, Post 1174, Kansas, Chairman of the National Credentials Committee. This is the last report and the final report at this Convention. The total delegates, 13,369; 1 Member-at-Large; Department Commanders, 53; National Officers, 39; Past Commanders-in-Chief, 26. That is for a grand total of 13,487.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, this is the final report. I request that you dismiss this Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you. Having accepted the final Credentials Report, the National Credentials Committee will be dismissed with the thanks of the Chair and the Convention for a job well done. Thank you very much.

COMPLETION OF CONVENTION BUSINESS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Do we have any further Convention business to come before us?

COMRADE JOHN SENK (Post 335 - New Jersey): I move that the proceedings of the Veterans of Foreign Wars 97th National Convention be submitted to the Speaker of the House of Representatives for printing as a House document in accordance with Public Law No. 620, 90th Congress, approved October 2, 1968, Title 214 of the United States Codes, Section 1332.

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN MOON (Post 2783 - Ohio): I proudly second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and properly seconded. Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any discussion on the motion? Hearing none, all those in favor of the motion will say “aye”; those opposed “nay”. The “ayes” have it. The motion carried.

Before we continue with the business of the organization, I am sure everybody is interested and concerned about our Senior Vice Commander-

in-Chief. They are with him now at the hospital. The people have gone to visit him this morning.

They notified me that he is resting comfortably. He is showing some improvement. He is able to speak better, and he sends his best wishes to everyone here and thanks all of you for your prayers. There is some indication he may have had a slight heart attack yesterday.

He is resting comfortably and his prognosis right now is good. What we will do is proceed with all of the proceedings this morning, and Past Commander-in-Chief Ted Connell, once the elections are over, will install the new Commander-in-Chief in his hospital room and everything else will take place here.

So I am sure that each and every one of you will keep Jim in your prayers as you travel home. We will keep everyone posted somehow on his condition once the Convention ends.

At this time I will call on Assistant Adjutant General John Senk for an announcement.

NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL HOME TRUSTEES

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: Thank you, Chief. As prescribed in the by-laws, the candidates for the Fifth National Home District, representing Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama and Central America, have submitted to the Adjutant General's Office Helen Carmarato, Ladies Auxiliary to VFW Post 1658, Ball Harbor, Florida; also Ann Dielens, Ladies Auxiliary to VFW Post 6925, Mulberry, Florida; and Clara McCrary, Ladies Auxiliary to VFW Post 2573, Wilmington, North Carolina.

For the Eighth National Home District, representing Illinois and Indiana, William N. Hedge, VFW Post No. 5782, Elwood, Indiana, and Edward F. Sanders, VFW Post No. 360, Mishawaka, Indiana.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much. This is my final chance to say thank you to each and every one of you. The Chinese proverb says that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. I took that step more than 30 years ago while I was in the Republic of Vietnam, received an application from Boston Post 144, and an invitation to join the VFW.

The next thousand miles of that journey have been challenging and fulfilling, challenging because of all the things we as veterans face, all of the things that need to be done for America that we do on a daily basis and fulfilling because of you.

I have had the opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with the greatest bunch of American heroes that anyone could have the opportunity to serve with. Anything that I have been able to accomplish in 30 years for the Veterans of Foreign Wars has been because of you.

Whether it is that special group of people at 246 Hanover Street in Boston, Massachusetts, or in District 2, or the Department of Massachusetts,

the Eastern Conference, or all of you in the VFW, the successes have not been mine. They have been yours.

Every step along the way I have realized that you have given me an honor and a privilege to serve this organization, to serve America's veterans and to serve America. I hope, and this was the hope I had when I took the oath of office a year ago, I hope that your feelings for me today are as high as they were on that day.

I hope that this past year as Commander-in-Chief I have conducted myself in a manner in which you would have expected me to conduct myself. I hope that you believe that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is a little bit better because I have been here.

If you believe that, then I have been a success. If I have been successful, so have you. To all of you, but most especially, to my wife, to my family, to my children, to all of those in my personal life who for nearly 30 years have missed me on important occasions, for all of the things I have missed that I probably shouldn't have, and for all of the time that I stole away from them so that I could serve the VFW, I will spend the rest of my life saying thank you to them, especially, and to my wife.

With that, thank you and God bless you all and God bless America.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We will now proceed with nominations and election of officers for the 1996-1997 VFW year. The name of James Nier has been placed in nomination for the office of Commander-in-Chief. Are there any further nominations for the office of Commander-in-Chief? Are there any further nominations for the office of Commander-in-Chief? Are there any further nominations?

Hearing none, the Chair will recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ALEXANDER VERNON (Post 9191 - Texas): I make a motion that the Commander-in-Chief be elected by acclamation.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I have a motion on the floor. Do I have a second to that motion?

COMRADE ED KRENEK (Post 8787 - Texas): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and properly seconded that the Convention elect by acclamation to the office of Commander-in-Chief, James E. Nier from the great State of Texas. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye". Those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The motion has carried.

The family of the newly-elected Commander will be escorted around the hall by Alexander Vernon, the Texas Commander.

Nominations are now open for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. The name of John E. Moon, from the Department of Ohio, has been placed into nomination for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Are there any further other nominations? Are there any further

nominations? Are there any further nominations?

Hearing none, the Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GEORGE FOX (Post 6772 - Ohio): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move that nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of this great organization be closed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Would you like to finish that, and that we cast one ballot for John Moon, please?

COMRADE GEORGE FOX (Post 6772 - Ohio): I move that the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for John Moon for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you. Do I have a second to that motion?

COMRADE GEORGE COX (Department of Ohio): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and seconded. On the question, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The Adjutant General will cast one unanimous ballot for John Moon for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: Commander-in-Chief, it is an honor for me on behalf of the Adjutant General to cast one ballot for the election of John Moon for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Nominations are now open for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. The name of Thomas A. Pouliot, from the great State of Montana, has been nominated as the candidate for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Any further nominations? Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations?

Hearing none, I recognize Microphone No. 1.

PAST COMMANDER IN CHIEF JOHN MAHAN (Post 1116 - Montana): I move that the nominations be closed for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast a unanimous ballot for Tom Pouliot from the Big Sky Country of Montana.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Do I have a second?

COMRADE DAVID TUPPER (Post 3596 - Montana): I am David Tupper, Post 3596, Department Commander of Montana, proudly seconds that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and duly seconded. Is there anything on the question? Hearing none, we will go to the vote. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried. Tom Pouliot is elected Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. The Adjutant General will cast one ballot.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, it is indeed a pleasure for me to cast one ballot for the election of Tom Pouliot as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the

Veterans of Foreign Wars for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Nominations are now open for the office of Quartermaster General. The name of Joe L. Ridgley has been placed into nomination from the great Department of Missouri. Are there any further nominations for the office of Quartermaster General? Are there any further nominations?

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DONALD WATTS (Post 5553 - Missouri): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I request that we close the nominations for Quartermaster General and that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast a unanimous ballot for Joe L. Ridgley for the office of Quartermaster General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JOHN KRUG (Post 2210 - Missouri): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and duly seconded that nominations close for Quartermaster General and that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Joe Ridgley for election to Quartermaster General. All those in favor say "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The Adjutant General will cast one ballot.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: Commander-in-Chief, it is indeed a pleasure and privilege for me to cast one ballot for the unanimous selection of Joe L. Ridgley for the position of Quartermaster General for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Nominations are now open for the office of Judge Advocate General. The name of Leonard R. Herrst, from the Department of California, has been placed in nomination. Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations? Hearing none, the Chair will accept a motion.

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ROBERT MARR (Post 7283 - California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move for the election by acclamation of Leonard Herrst for the office of Judge Advocate General.

COMRADE PAT O'CONNOR (Post 2967 - California): I second the nomination for Leonard Herrst for the office of Judge Advocate General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: The motion has been made and duly seconded to elect Leonard Herrst by acclamation. On the question, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, it gives me great pleasure to cast one unanimous ballot for Leonard Herrst for the office of Judge Advocate General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Nominations are now open for Surgeon General. The name of Robert W. Reif has been nominated from the great Department of Minnesota. Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations?

Hearing none, I recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ORLIN JACKSON (Post 1720 - Minnesota): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move that we close the nominations for National Surgeon and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast a unanimous ballot for his election.

COMRADE GORDON KIRK (Post 8854 - Minnesota): It gives me great pleasure to second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: It has been moved and seconded to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of Robert Reif as Surgeon General. On the question, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried. The Adjutant General will cast one ballot for the election of Robert Reif.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I cast one ballot for the unanimous election of Robert W. Reif, M.D., as Surgeon General for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Nominations are now open for National Chaplain. The name of William J. Bleiler, from the great Department of New Jersey, has been nominated for this position. Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations?

Hearing none, I recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GEORGE LISICKI (Post 2314 - New Jersey): I move that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of Reverend William J. Bleiler for National Chaplain for the ensuing year.

COMRADE DENNIS WALL (Post 7164 - New Jersey): I proudly second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: It has been moved and duly seconded that we close nominations and cast one unanimous ballot for Reverend William J. Bleiler. Is there anything on the question: All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, it is again a privilege to cast one unanimous ballot for the selection of Reverend William J. Bleiler as National Chaplain for the ensuing year.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF COUNCIL MEMBERS-ELECT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: At this time I would call upon the Assistant Adjutant General to read off the names of the National Council Members-Elect.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: Sergeant-at-Arms, will you please escort the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the presentation of the caps. The following National Council Members-Elect will receive their caps this morning:

Representing District No. 2, Massachusetts and Connecticut, William J.

Madera.

Representing District No. 4, the District of Columbia, Delaware and Europe, Bruce A. Withers.

Representing District No. 6, Virginia and West Virginia, Scottie E. King.

Representing District No. 8, Georgia and Alabama, Wayne Dial.

Representing District No. 10, Oklahoma and Arkansas, Leslie F. Thone.

Representing District No. 12, South Dakota, North Dakota and Wyoming, William F. Cerny, Jr.

Representing District No. 14, Montana, Washington and Idaho, Earl E. Chase.

Representing District No. 16, Central America, Pacific Areas, Alaska and Hawaii, Dannie Cooper.

Representing District D, Ohio, George W. Marks.

Representing District E, Department of Minnesota, Gordon W. Kirk.

Representing District H, the Department of Texas, F. E. Gene Warden.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENTS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: I will call back to the microphone the Assistant Adjutant General to announce the list of appointments.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: Commander-in-Chief-Elect Nier has asked that we read the list of appointments:

Adjutant General - Larry W. Rivers, Post 1736, Louisiana.

National Chief of Staff - Bill E. Lark, Post 4282, South Carolina.

The Inspector General - Charles R. Stephens, Post 3128, Alabama.

National Sergeant-at-Arms - George F. Sarver, Jr., Past 402, Pennsylvania.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much. Before we go into the Installation of Officers, which is the next order of business, at this time I would like you to all join with me in thanking our VFW National Band for a job well done, and I discharge them from the Convention with our best wishes. Thanks.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: We will now proceed with the Installation of Officers.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will escort the Installing Officer to a position on my right.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I have the honor to present Past Commander-in-Chief Jack Carney, who has been officially appointed the Installing Officer.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrades, as you are aware, Commander-in-Chief-Elect Jim Nier is hospitalized and will not be with us

this morning. Therefore, the Ritual will be altered accordingly.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the term for which you and your subordinate officers were elected or appointed has now expired. It is my duty to ascertain the following. Have the officers for the ensuing year been duly elected?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: Have the books of the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General been examined and approved by the National Council of Administration?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: Does the Adjutant General have on file proof of eligibility for all officers to be installed during this installation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: He does.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: I would remind any officer not having proof of eligibility on file and not being installed at this time, that the by-laws prescribe you must within 60 days of election or appointment submit to the Adjutant General for his file a copy of your proof of eligibility.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, are the funds in the hands of the Quartermaster General ready to be turned over to his successor when duly installed?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: They are.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: You will now surrender to me the gavel. Past Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera, you have now been relieved of your duties as Commander-in-Chief of this organization. It is proper to remind you that in assuming the chair of Past Commander-in-Chief, it will be your duty and privilege to counsel and otherwise assist your successor through the experiences you have gained during your term of office. You will now station yourself at my right.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now present the officers-elect at the altar as the Assistant Adjutant General prepares the list of officers to be installed.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK:

Commander-in-Chief, James E. Nier.
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, John E. Moon.
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Thomas A. Pouliot.
Adjutant General, Larry W. Rivers.
Quartermaster General, Joe L. Ridgley.
Judge Advocate General, Leonard R. Herrst.
Surgeon General, Robert W. Reif.
National Chaplain, Reverend William Bleiler.
National Chief of Staff, Bill E. Lark.
Inspector General, Charles R. Stephens.
Council Members:

District No. 1	-	Arthur Roy
District No. 2	-	William J. Madera
District No. 3	-	Armando C. Azzinaro

District No. 4	-	Bruce A. Withers
District No. 5	-	John L. Dahman
District No. 6	-	Scottie E. King
District No. 7	-	Roy C. Womble
District No. 8	-	Wayne Dial
District No. 9	-	George M. Pullie
District No. 10	-	Leslie F. Thone
District No. 11	-	Bernard J. Boyle
District No. 12	-	William F. Cerny, Jr.
District No. 13	-	Jack L. Armagost
District No. 14	-	Earl E. Chase
District No. 15	-	James H. Ferguson
District No. 16	-	Dannie Cooper
District No. 17	-	Gary L. Clark
District No. 19	-	J. Hollis Smith
District A	-	Americo D. DiLoretto
District B	-	Russell R. Rieke, Sr.
District C	-	Ralph U. DeMarco
District D	-	George W. Marks
District E	-	Gordon W. Kirk
District F	-	Wayne A. Buck
District G	-	Raymond C. Sisk
District H	-	F. E. Warden
District I	-	George J. Lisicki
District J	-	Eugene R. Manfrey
Past Commander-in-Chief	-	Paul A. Spera

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Comrade Installing Officer, the officers are in their respective stations for the installation.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: Thank you, Sergeant-at- Arms. National Officers-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I will administer to you the Officers' Obligation.

You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, the following Officers' Obligation was given at this time:

"I do hereby solemnly promise that I will faithfully discharge to the best of my ability the duties of the office to which I have been elected or appointed, according to the Constitution, By-Laws and Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I solemnly promise that at the close of the term to which I have been elected or appointed, or sooner if so ordered by proper authority, I will surrender immediately to only the duly authorized person or persons, all records, money, or other properties of this organization in my possession or under my control. All this I freely promise, upon my honor, as a loyal citizen of our great Republic. So help me God.")

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: As you were.

Comrade Chaplain, you will deliver the prayer.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN KELL: I want to thank my beautiful wife, Dottie, for 50 years of helping me before I pray.

Almighty God, as we pause at this critical moment, we recognize you as our God and our divine protector, and we ask that you give your blessings upon these, your comrades, who now become fellow officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

We beseech you, O Lord, that you are always present among us, to grant wisdom to these so in their deliberations they can continue to favor you, to favor our great country and the betterment of this organization.

May your spirit sustain them and may your power preserve them, and may your hand protect them in the faithful and fruitful performance of their duties. Amen.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: As you were.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now escort the officers to their respective stations.

National Officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, you now occupy the position of honor to which your comrades have elected you. You learn well the responsibilities entrusted to you so you may intelligently discharge the duties you are to undertake.

The Constitution, By-Laws and Ritual of our organization prescribe in detail the duties of your respective offices. By virtue of the confidence placed in you through your election or appointment, we assume that you will acquaint yourself thoroughly with your duties.

I would like at this time to have the video to roll, please.

(Whereupon, the video was as follows:

"PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CONNELL: It is August 23rd at 9:30 a.m. As the Installing Officer for Jim Nier for Commander-in-Chief of the VFW. Jim, I will ask you at this time to raise your right hand and repeat after me.

"'I do hereby solemnly promise that I will faithfully discharge to the best of my ability, the duties of the office to which I have been elected of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, which I have been elected in accordance with the Constitution, Ritual and By-Laws of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I solemnly promise that at the close of the term to which I have been elected, or sooner if so ordered by proper authority, I will surrender immediately to only the duly authorized person or persons, the National Charter, all records, monies and other properties of this organization in my possession or under my control upon my honor as a loyal citizen of our great Republic. So help me God.'

"I declare Jim Nier to be the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Jim.

"COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT NIER: Thank you very much, Ted. I want to thank Ted and Glen Gardner, and Bill Lark and Alex Vernon for nominating me yesterday, and I want to thank Ted for installing me in the hospital this morning. I wish to thank all the folks that have conveyed all

their thoughts here at the hospital, and your prayers.

"I would be remiss if I did not take just a moment and give a special thanks to the wonderful staff at the Louisville VA Medical Center. At approximately 3:30, Thursday morning, I entered this hospital and this morning the staff literally saved my life. To Larry Sander and his entire staff, I shall be forever grateful.

"To all of the delegates at the Convention, I wish to tell you that I love you all, I hope that God is with you in your travels home as you leave the Convention. This is just one more indicator that the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary must always continue to fight to ensure that the VA medical system has the money to continue to provide the wonderful care that it continues to do as these folks have helped me yesterday and today.

"May God bless each and every one of you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you all very much.")

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: Senior Vice Commander-in- Chief, representing the Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier, I will now present you with this gavel. I will ask that all National Officers please stand, set forth your right hand and repeat after me:

"Comrade Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier, I pledge my sincere allegiance." Thank you. As you were.

Officers and Delegates of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I now declare the National Officers duly installed and this organization in working order for the ensuing year. I will relinquish the podium to the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

PRESENTATION OF PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LAPEL PIN AND GOLD LIFE MEMBERSHIP CARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: Thank you, Past Commander-in-Chief Carney. It is indeed an honor and privilege to call to this microphone Immediate Past Commander-in-Chief Paul A. Spera for a presentation. Past Commander-in-Chief Spera, in behalf of Jim Nier and myself, the newly-elected Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tom Pouliot and the entire organization, we would like to present to you the Past Commanders-in-Chief lapel pin for an outstanding job, an outstanding veteran, an outstanding member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. On our behalf, we wish to give you this small token of appreciation.

One other token, Past Commander-in-Chief Spera, I present to you your Gold Life Membership Card.

IMMEDIATE PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: At this point in the Convention, I would ordinarily be making the presentation of the Commander-in-Chief pin to Jim Nier. At this time I have the very high honor to introduce to you Commander-in-Chief Nier's family, Cheryl Nier Fox, the daughter of Commander-in-Chief, his granddaughter, and Milicent Harris, his aunt.

He has two special friends listed here, Pete and Courtney Wimmersburg. Are they here? I would like to bring to the microphone, so that I may present this pin to the mother of our Commander-in-Chief, Mrs. Marian Moody.

MRS. MOODY: Thank you all for including us.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: I will bring to the podium for a presentation of the hat a very, very dear friend, Mr. Bill Lark from South Carolina, the new Chief of Staff of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Now, I will call to the podium Charles Stephens for the presentation of his hat from the great State of Alabama as our new Inspector General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

INSPECTOR GENERAL STEPHENS: Thank you. I hope and pray that our Commander-in-Chief overcomes this illness. Thank you.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: Normally, I am ready to irritate or pick on Jim at this time, because I have spent the entire year teaching him quite often, and if he were up here right now, I would be joking or saying something snide to get him kind of mixed up.

I wish he were right here now because I am very mixed up. He has one year to practice for this, and I have had about one minute. One thing I must say that I am deeply honored to be substituting for Jim at this time. Jim would do the same for me.

He is a delightful person, a sincere person, a true comrade who no one in their hearts can measure the deep love and devotion he has for this organization. I just received the comments a few minutes ago as I was sworn in that Jim says he will be back shortly.

If you think he was doing 100 percent before, he is going to be doing 200 percent because he is now going to be healed up. This organization is his life. His life is the organization. He has an outstanding family here to our left. He has an outstanding family in the great State of Texas, in the Southern Conference, and he has an outstanding family throughout the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I am deeply proud and honored, on Jim's behalf, to thank each and every one of you for your long, continued and dedicated support of the greatest organization in the world, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

On Jim's behalf, I would at this time ask that my wife come forward for the pin and my hat, and then I am going to call upon the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for his remarks. I forgot that. Bear with me. My wife is actually doing twofold duty.

She comes over here and she has to go back and do some more work. If I may introduce at this time my wife, Susie, our daughter Valerie and our granddaughter Samantha, whom I think knows everyone now. My dear mother-in-law Veronica, and we call her "Ronnie".

My other mom, Faye Thomas, and a couple that has been like a brother and sister to me, a friend of mine from my Post, Roger and Chris Taylor,

Junior Vice Commander of Ohio. Also my nephew, Gary Moon, and a guy that I look up to each and every day, my dear brother, Larry Moon, who spent a lot of time in Vietnam before I went there.

Again, my remarks will be very short. I will do everything I can this year to make sure that this year is a great success. Anything that Jim needs or wants, I will be there to help him. I look to Paul Spera, Past Commander-in-Chief, and I thank you very, very much for everything that he has done to help me, to assist me and to give me the knowledge and the information that I needed to go through this year.

If there is anything that any of the chair officers can do for you, just call on us and we will do our utmost to make sure it happens. I look to the great State of Ohio, my comrades there, the comrades from the Big Ten and, like Jim, to the entire membership of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I thank you very much. I hope that you will be with me this year so we can continue to make the Veterans of Foreign Wars the strongest organization in the world. Thank you very much.

Comrade Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tom Pouliot, we will ask his wife to place the cap on him at his time.

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF POULIOT: This is my wife, Shirley, my strong right hand and my conscience about half the time.

Comrades and guests, this is a wonderful Convention for me, especially. It doesn't get any better than this. I have just been elected Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. What I loved about this Convention was the participation out there this year, beginning at the Council meeting and all during our business sessions.

I loved the fact that everyone was involved this year, that we had a floor fight or two where we had to have a roll call vote. That means that you are alive and that you are active, and you are concerned about what happens. We, as the leaders, the line officers this year, we will attempt to direct you so that the VFW and all veterans organizations and services to veterans may get stronger and better.

If we are marching in the wrong direction, we need you to tell us that. I think that you have told us some of that this weekend. That is wonderful. I am proud of you because that is what you need to do for us. In return, we will dedicate ourselves totally 100 percent to the veterans in the VFW.

This year Jim has made some changes. Sincerely, honestly and prayerfully, he has made these changes believing they will be in the best interests of the veterans in the VFW. I believe that, too. I will do everything I can to help Jim in his programs work this year so that this organization may be better and stronger.

I ask you to help us accomplish that also. Please go home, please take the programs, work at them sincerely and honestly, and make them work this year. Thank you, comrades and friends. I guess I cannot really begin to thank everyone who helped me to be elected, because I would name everybody in the Western Conference and a lot of people in the other four conferences also that have been friends over the years. I would just thank

everyone. God bless you and God bless the VFW.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: I now call upon the Judge Advocate General, Leonard Herrst, for the presentation of the cap.

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL HERRST: How about that, even after 50 years. Well, I don't know whether usually the Judge Advocate General makes any remarks. I was just told by the Commander-in-Chief at this time to stand and that I can do.

To the National Officers and Distinguished Guests, Comrades, Sisters and the other Guests:

I want to thank you for the high honor of this opportunity to serve as your Judge Advocate General, but first I want to thank a few people. I want to thank Ray Sisk, the District G representative, for his nomination, and especially his guidance and his inspiration.

Also Bob Marr, my Department Commander in California, for seconding the nomination, and also I want to thank Post 1961 of Gardena, California, for their support. Also District 4 of California for their support and, of course, the Department of California for their support.

Particularly, I want to thank the Western Conference for their support and their nomination. Indeed, the other three conferences as well for their support and endorsement. I especially want to thank all of you comrades for this high honor.

I would like to at this time formally, so to speak, introduce my wife. The last time I introduced my wife, I said, "This is my wife." This time I have to remember to say this is my wife, Diana, Junior Vice of the Ladies Auxiliary to Post 1621, Gardena.

I pledge to support and assist Commander-in-Chief Nier as he requests, the Council and the Convention, and that is all that is mandated, comrades, by the National By-Laws and Ritual. Again, I thank you all very, very much for the privilege of serving you. Thank you very much.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: One thing I found through the years, when you get on a roll with two attorneys, you let them go side by side. So, Tom and Lenny, you are all set. Now, let us back up so they can have their brotherhood and let me do it properly, and I introduce to you Judy Ridgley to place the hat on our newly-elected Quartermaster General, Joe Ridgley.

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL RIDGLEY: As I said this before, comrades, I humbly thank each and every one of you for electing me. I thank you for supporting me and our staff the last year, and for giving me the support this year in your election.

I also would like to thank very much Post 8220 in Belton, Missouri, and my Department of Missouri. Most of all, I want to thank each and every one of you, each and every one of your Departments, because I really, truly believe that you-all do make the decisions in this organization. We work for you, I work for you, and I will continue to work for you.

John introduced my wife, but I would like to tell you she is not only my wife but she is my best friend. She stands with me in good times and bad

times and frustrating times, and not so frustrating times. I appreciate that, because she puts up with a lot of long hours on my part, both in the office and at home, that are necessary to do the things that the staff needs to do in Kansas City and Washington, D.C.

I appreciate her, and as we all do, we appreciate all of our families that put up with those times. It is important that we as members in this great organization continue to make some tough decisions and decisions that sometimes are not popular decisions.

I, too, as others have said, do appreciate the debate that we had at this Convention. That tells me what you truly want. You truly are the members. You do make the decisions and we do work for you. We have to continue to talk about the tough things to meet the challenges of the 21st century, not only to complete our mission but as we all know it takes finances to perform a mission that our charter requires us to perform.

It is critical that we work together and describe those challenges and carry out those goals that are chartered to us and provide them in the mission they give us to carry out. I also realize, comrades, that every dollar the National Organization spends came through the sweat of our members.

I have been accused of treating our members' money like it was my own. I am here to tell you, comrades, I am going to continue to protect our members' money and your money as if it was my own. I think the 2.1 million members of our organization deserve that.

I will continue to work for you. Our staff will continue to work for you. I thank you in behalf of our staff for the support you give them in everything that you do. Thank you all again and God bless everyone.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: Now, I call forward to the podium for the presentation of the hat, Dr. Robert Reif, from the great State of Minnesota.

COMRADE JOSEPH SCHIRMERS (Post 4847 - Minnesota): At this time it is a great pleasure for me to present your hat. I have served with you 19 years and we have a real Surgeon General. You have a great year. Thank you very much.

SURGEON GENERAL REIF: Thank you, Joe. Comrades, I am deeply honored at this opportunity to serve in this Post as the National Surgeon General for this great organization. I regret that my wife and family could not be here. My wife had surgery recently and wasn't up to the travel.

I want to assure you that I am going to discharge my duties and responsibilities of this post and office to the best of my ability as I did in 1992 and '93 when I held this position before. I would hope in the coming year that I would be granted the opportunity to draw on my professional knowledge and experience to provide any information or suggestions to our Commander-in-Chief concerning decisions affecting the health status of our members and the veteran community. Thank you for this honor and opportunity.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: Thank you, Dr. Reif.

I now call forward to the podium Reverend William J. Bleiler for the

presentation of the hat of the National Chaplain. His sister will make the presentation.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: I want to congratulate Lyle Kell on his year as Chaplain, and he has given me a number of pointers that I hope will help me throughout this year. I am grateful to George Lisicki, to my Department of New Jersey, who nominated me yesterday and today.

He is a Past State Commander, worked very hard in the membership over the years, and has always been bringing up things, and he is also on our National Council. He is over here, George Lisicki. I also thank Dennis Wall, our Department Commander, who seconded the motion.

These gentlemen are men, as we say in that prayer, men of stainless integrity. I thank also the whole Department of New Jersey who supported me over the years, the Eastern states who since 1994 were pushing me forward and supporting me.

I also thank the Big Ten, the Southern Conference and the Western Conference. I went to the caucuses on Monday and I felt their endorsement and their support. I thank all of the comrades from those conferences. I also thank the National Officers who allowed my sister to put my cap on and my brother-in-law, Jimmy.

Will you stand up. They drove down from New Jersey in a van, and tomorrow we are going on to Nashville, Tennessee, and return to New Jersey by say of the Smokey Mountains. I was wondering what I would say on this occasion, and I think it is appropriate that I share with you just a few words from this card.

I had dinner with my sister, Peggy, and Jim last night, and they gave me this card of congratulations. The words are so appropriate. It says, "To someone who knows there is more to a dream than wishful thinking." It has a little countryside scene of sand hills and inside it says, "Dear Bill, you dared to storm to capture the battle."

I would just like to end by saying something about the rainbow. When we open the Bible on the alter of our meetings, in that first book of Genesis there is a story of a rainbow. When Noah came out of the ark and decided the rain was over, there was a rainbow showing in the sky, a complete rainbow.

It symbolized a new beginning, a new relationship with God, who was above and beyond. That rainbow was shining through the sky right down to earth. That was God's new blessing upon this new humanity. All I can think is of my appointment to this high office, and all my National Officers, we in a sense are that team that will make this rainbow shine all throughout this year, not only across America but coming from Europe and going to the Pacific.

When we go out of this ark, this building as Noah did, we are going to be there as that new team to make that rainbow shine. So I hope to be a link along with our team to develop that new relationship, that new beginning, and God's blessings coming down from above and beyond to all our veterans in our communities. All I can say is that may God bless you

and God bless America.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: It is indeed an honor for me at this time to ask Tom Pouliot, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, to please come forward so I can place the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief pin on his lapel.

Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier, when I spoke to him yesterday, asked that his acceptance speech be given today. After consulting with a bunch of us at the hospital, Glen Gardner, Larry Rivers, Joe Ridgley and myself, and with Kimmie, we told Jim that it was only fair that Jim give his acceptance speech at his homecoming.

The words that Jim will bring forth to you, those should come from Jim and only Jim. A man who has worked so hard for so many years to be placed in the position of Commander-in-Chief, it would only be right that that individual be allowed to give his own remarks.

I only feel that in my heart as I look to Jim's family here, a few months back when I was told I would have some surgery and I wasn't going to be able to do a few things, I really got down thinking that this was it. I had fear that they would be cutting on a leg and maybe taking it off. I will say that I was scared as hell.

Now, I look over here at Jim's family and knowing that the fever has broken and everything, that Jim is going to be okay, I know what he has been going through. Believe me, for Jim to miss this, this is one of the highest points in his life, but we are going to make it up twofold.

We are going to work extra hard this year to see to it that James Nier has the best year ever in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JOHN SENK (Post 335 - New Jersey): Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, there being no further business to come before this Convention, and the National Officers having been duly installed for the ensuing year, I move that the 97th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States be closed sine die.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: The motion has been properly made. Is there a second?

COMRADE ART TUCKER (Department of Delaware): Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Art Tucker, Past Department Commander from the Department of Delaware. I second the motion.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: The motion has been moved and properly seconded. The question is on the floor. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The motion carried.

Comrade Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the room for the Retiring of the Colors.

CLOSING CEREMONIES

(Whereupon, the Honor Guard Retired the Colors at this time.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: Chaplain Bleiler will

give the Closing Prayer at this time.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Bleiler gave the Closing Prayer from the Ritual.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SARVER: Comrade Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, the Closing Ceremonies for the 97th National Convention have been performed.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: Thank you. I now declare the 97th Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars adjourned sine die.

(Whereupon, the Convention was duly adjourned at 11:00 o'clock a.m., sine die.)

AMENDMENTS TO NATIONAL BY-LAWS AND MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL

B-1 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 201 —FORMATION, CHARTERING AND INSTITUTING.

Amend Section 201, National By-Laws, by deleting the words, "twenty-five (25)" in the first paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"thirty-five (35)"

Amend Section 201 further by deleting the words, "twenty-five (25)" in the first paragraph, subparagraph 1. and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"thirty-five (35)"

Amend Section 201 further by deleting the words, "ten (10)" in the last sentence of the fourth paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"twenty (20)" (Disapproved)

B-2 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 210 —SURRENDER OR FORFEITURE OF CHARTER.

Amend Section 210, National By-Laws, by deleting the words, "ten (10)" in the second sentence of the first paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"twenty-five (25)"

Amend Section 210 further by deleting the words, "ten (10)" in two instances in the sixth sentence of the first paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"twenty-five (25)" (Disapproved)

B-3 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 211 —SUSPENSION AND REVOCATION OF CHARTER.

Amend Section 211 (f), National By-Laws, by deleting the words, "ten (10) members in good standing on its rolls on February 1" and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"twenty-five (25) members in good standing on its rolls" (Disapproved)

B-4 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 211 —SUSPENSION AND REVOCATION OF CHARTER.

Amend Section 211 (a), National By-Laws, by adding the following:

"The Commander-in-Chief may suspend the charter of any Post not submitting a properly completed Report of Election of Officers for the new V F W year by August 1st of the new V F W year for a period of up to ninety (90) days. This suspension will be automatically terminated should a properly prepared Report of Election of Officers be received at National Headquarters. At the end of the ninety (90) days, the Commander-in-Chief may cancel or revoke the charter of any Post not properly submitting a list of officers to National Headquarters." (Approved)

B-5 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 212 —DEFUNCT POSTS

Amend Section 212, National By-Laws, by deleting the first paragraph in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 211, the Commander-in-Chief may, upon the recommendation of the Department Commander, declare a Post's charter forfeited and canceled if such Post has less than twenty-five (25) members in good standing, has failed or refused to pay the Department and National dues on all its members in good standing, as prescribed by these By-Laws or has neglected to submit a Post Report of Election by August 1st of the current year." (Disapproved)

B-6 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 212 —DEFUNCT POSTS.

Amend Section 212, National By-Laws, by deleting the words, "ten (10)" in the first paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"twenty-five (25)" (Disapproved)

B-7 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 220 —VACANCIES AND REMOVAL OF ELECTIVE OFFICERS.

Amend Section 220, National By-Laws, by adding the following to the second paragraph:

"Should the vacancy occur in the office of Post Quartermaster, the Post Commander may appoint a Pro Tempore Quartermaster to carry out the duties incident to that office. The appointment shall in no instance span more than sixty days and shall be null and void upon the election of a Post Quartermaster." (Approved)

B-8 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 220 —VACANCIES AND REMOVAL OF ELECTIVE OFFICERS.

Amend Section 220, National By-Laws, by adding the following to the fourth paragraph:

"Such action, and reasons therefor, shall be reduced to writing, in the form of a Special Order, and delivered personally or by certified United States mail at the removed officer's last known address." (Approved)

B-9 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 222 —DELEGATES-COUNTY COUNCIL, DISTRICT, DEPARTMENT AND NATIONAL CONVENTIONS.

Amend Section 222, National By-Laws, by adding the following:

"(g) Delegates elected under this section shall not be considered instructed and may exercise full authority in the duty to be performed." (Approved)

B-10 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 515 —ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICERS; CHAIRMEN AND COMMITTEES.

Amend Section 515 (c), National By-Laws, by deleting the words, "and non-salaried" following the word elected and preceding the word members in the second sentence and following the word elected and preceding the word members in the third sentence. (Approved)

B-11 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 608 —OFFICERS, ELECTED AND APPOINTED.

Amend Section 608 (c), National By-Laws, by deleting the words, "and non-salaried" following the word elected and preceding the word members in the second sentence and following the word elected and preceding the word members in the third sentence. (Approved)

B-12 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 610 —OFFICERS, POWERS AND DUTIES.

Amend Section 610 (d) (16), National By-Laws, by deleting the words, "and non-salaried" following the word elected and preceding the word members in the first sentence and following the word elected and preceding the word members in the second sentence. (Approved)

B-13 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 610 — OFFICERS, POWERS AND DUTIES.

Amend Section 610 (f) (13), National By-Laws, by deleting the words, "and non-salaried" following the word elected and preceding the word members in the first sentence and following the word elected and pre-

ceding the word members in the second sentence. (Approved)

B-14 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 710 —INSPECTION.

Amend Section 710, National By-Laws, by deleting the word "officer" in the second sentence of the first paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"member" (Approved)

B-15 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 1102 —ELIGIBILITY.

Amend Section 1102, National By-Laws, by deleting the last sentence of the first paragraph in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"Members must be not less than sixteen (16) years old." (Approved)

B-16 (Proposed by Departments of Iowa and Nebraska)

SECTION 102 - APPLICATIONS-AFFILIATION OF NEW MEMBERS.

Amend Section 102, National By-Laws, by deleting all therein and substituting in lieu thereof the following:

"Every application for admission to membership shall be in writing. The form of such application shall comply with the rules and regulations as may be from time to time prescribed in the Manual of Procedure.

Except as otherwise provided herein with respect to At Large Membership, each eligible member shall be a member of a Post. Membership in more than one Post at one time is prohibited. Any person who is or becomes a member of more than one Post shall elect to remain in the Post of his or her choice and surrender membership in any other Post. In the event no election is made, the Commander-in-Chief or his designee shall assign the member to a Post.

Department Members At Large. Anyone eligible for membership who is unable to join or does not desire membership in a Post may become a Department Member-At-Large of the Department upon application to the Department Adjutant, proof of eligibility and payment of annual dues of twenty dollars ($20.00) to the Department, one-half (1/2) of which amount shall be transmitted to the Quartermaster General on monthly consolidated reports." (Disapproved)

B-17 (Proposed by Department of Kansas)

SECTION 109 - RIGHT OF APPEAL.

Amend Section 109, National By-Laws, by adding the following paragraph after the first (1) paragraph:

"Aggrieved members shall be advised in writing of their right to submit, and the procedure to submit, an appeal, as provided by this Section." (Disapproved)

B-18 (Proposed by Department of New York)

SECTION 111 - LIFE MEMBERS.

Amend Section 111 (a), National By-Laws, by deleting the second (2) paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"Conterminous with Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States 1996-1997 fiscal year commencing September 1, 1996 and thereafter, Life Membership fees shall be charged in accordance with the fee schedule established by the Life Membership Committee and approved by the delegates assembled at the National Convention." (Disapproved)

B-19 (Proposed by Department of California)

SECTION 111 - LIFE MEMBERS.

Amend Section 111 (a), National By-Laws, by deleting the second (2) paragraph in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"Life membership fees shall be charged in accordance with the fee schedule as established by the Life Membership Committee approved by the National Convention provided, however, that the minimum fee shall be:

ATTAINED AGE	LIFE MEMBERSHIP FEES
Through 30	$200.00
31-40	185.00
41-50	165.00
51-60	145.00
61-70	115.00
71-80	85.00
81 and over	50.00"

(Disapproved)

B-20 (Proposed by Departments of Massachusetts, Iowa, Connecticut and Minnesota)

SECTION 111 - LIFE MEMBERS.

Amend Section 111 (a), National By-Laws, by deleting the second (2) paragraph in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"Conterminous with the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, 1996-1997 term and thereafter, Life Membership Fees shall be charged in accordance with the fee schedule established by the Life Membership Committee and approved by the delegates assembled at the National Convention provided, however, that the minimum fee shall be:

ATTAINED AGE	LIFE MEMBERSHIP FEES
Through 30	$200.00
31-40	185.00
41-50	165.00
51-60	145.00
61-70	115.00
71-80	85.00
81 and over	50.00"

(Disapproved)

B-21 (Proposed by Department of Kansas)

SECTION 111 - LIFE MEMBERS.

Amend Section 111 (a), National By-Laws, by deleting all before the : in the second (2) paragraph and substituting in lieu thereof the following:

"Life membership fees shall be charged in accordance with the fee schedule after recommendation by the Life Membership Committee and approved by the National Convention provided, however, that the minimum fee shall be:" (Disapproved)

B-22 (Proposed by Department of Colorado)

SECTION 111 - LIFE MEMBERS.

Amend Section 111 (a), National By-Laws, by deleting the first (1) sentence of paragraph two (2) and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"Life membership fees shall be charged in accordance with the fee schedule as recommended by the Life Membership Committee and approved in accordance with the requirements of Article XIII-Amendments."

Amend Section 111 (b), National By-Laws, by deleting all before the second comma in the second sentence of the second paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"An amount, as recommended by the Life Membership Committee, and approved in accordance with the requirements of Article XIII-Amendments" (Disapproved)

B-23 (Proposed by Department of Nebraska)

SECTION 111 - LIFE MEMBERS.

Amend Section 111, National By-Laws, by deleting all therein and substituting in lieu thereof the following:

"Any person who is a member in good standing of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States may become a life member by payment of the proper fee to the Post Quartermaster as indicated below. Any person otherwise eligible for membership but not previously a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States may become a life member upon election to membership in accordance with Section 103, payment of any admission fee in accordance with Section 104 and submission of a Life membership application and payment of the proper life membership application fee to the Post Quartermaster as provided below. A former member otherwise eligible for reinstatement to membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States may become a life member upon reinstatement to membership in accordance with Section 106, payment of such reinstating fee as may be assessed by the Post and submission of a life membership fee to the Post Quartermaster as provided below. A life member shall not be subject to further membership dues levies of any kind and shall have all the benefits and privileges of Post, Department and National membership as long as he shall live.

Life membership fees shall be charged in accordance with the following schedule:

ATTAINED AGE	LIFE MEMBERSHIP FEES
Through 30	$200.00
31-40	185.00
41-50	165.00
51-60	145.00
61-70	115.00
71-80	85.00
81 and over	50.00

Any applicant whose 31st, 41st, 51st, 61st, 71st or 81st birthday will occur after the date of application and on or before December 31 of the current year shall pay only the fee that would be required on his next birthday.

Upon receipt of the required fee, the Post Quartermaster shall immediately forward payment, through the Department Quartermaster, to the Quartermaster General together with the life membership application of the individual. The life membership shall become effective immediately upon the receipt of the fee by the Quartermaster General.

The Quartermaster General shall deposit all sums received by him for life memberships in a special fund called the "Life Membership Fund," and shall issue a suitable life membership card.

A Life member who shall subsequently be found ineligible for membership shall forfeit his life membership, in which case he shall be entitled to a proportionate refund of fees paid. A member who shall be discharged from the organization by reason of disciplinary action shall forfeit his life membership. In such event no refund of fees paid will be made.

Death of a life member following the issuing of the checks paying his per capita tax for the next calendar year to National Headquarters, the respective Department Headquarters, and to his local Post, shall not be a cause for a refund of said per capita tax.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE: There is hereby constituted a life membership committee, to consist of the Commander-in-Chief, the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General. Such committee shall be known as the Board of Trustees of the Life Membership fund. The Quartermaster General shall be treasurer of such Board of Trustees, and shall have custody of the life membership fund.

The Board of Trustees hereinabove referred to shall have broad administrative powers to administer the life membership fund, to invest it and reinvest it in Class A securities, all to the best interest of the life membership of the organization and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, except that each year such Board of Trustees shall be obligated, to the extent funds are available in the "Life Membership Fund," to make payment of dues in September of the current year for the following calendar year to Posts, Departments and National Headquarters on all life members recorded as of August 31 of the current calendar year. In addition, to the extent funds are available in the "Life Membership Fund," payment of dues shall be made in January of the following year for persons who have become life members during the period September 1 to December 31. Such payments shall be:

Three dollars and fifty cents per capita tax to National Headquarters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, three dollars and fifty cents to the Department Headquarters, and three dollars and fifty cents to the local Post to which each life member belongs. The Board of Trustees by publication of notice in the General Orders no later than May 1 of any year shall have authority, when in its sole judgment the investment return warrants it, to increase or decrease its obligation for each calendar year. Said amount shall be paid during September of each calendar year for the next calendar year during the lifetime of the life member." (Approved)

B-24 (Proposed by Department of Texas)

SECTION 411 - DISTRICT DUES.

Amend Section 411, National By-Laws, by deleting in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"Delegates assembled at a District Convention, providing notice

has been given to each Post thirty (30) days in advance of pending proposal, may assess or increase annual dues per member per Post." (Approved)

B-25 (Proposed by Department of Michigan)

SECTION 515 - ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICERS; CHAIRMEN AND COMMITTEES.

Amend Section 515 (c), National By-Laws, by deleting from the third (3) sentence the following:

" ; provided, however, that salaried officers appointed by the Commander may only be removed by the Commander with the approval of a majority of the elected and non-salaried members of the Department Council of Administration" (Disapproved)

B-26 (Proposed by Department of Nebraska)

SECTION 608 - OFFICERS, ELECTED AND APPOINTED.

Amend Section 608, National By-Laws, by deleting all therein and substituting in lieu thereof the following:

"(a) The National elective officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be the Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Quartermaster General, Judge Advocate General, Surgeon General, National Chaplain and regional National Council of Administration members representing regional districts hereinafter set out in these By-Laws.

(b) The Commander-in-Chief shall appoint an Adjutant General, Chief of Staff, Inspector General, National Historian, National Americanism Chairman, National Bugler, Sergeant-at-Arms, two (2) Color Sergeants, two (2) Color Guards, Guard and such other special directors and subordinate officers and Aides-de-Camp as the circumstances from time to time may require.

(c) National officers, elected and appointed, shall submit proof of eligibility to the Adjutant General. National officers shall not be installed or assume the duties of their office until proof of eligibility has been submitted and properly reviewed. Such proof of eligibility shall be open to and reviewed by the Commander-in-Chief, Adjutant General and Quartermaster General prior to installation to office. In the event an elected or appointed officer fails to submit proof of eligibility within sixty (60) days of election or appointment, any right of the officer to hold the office shall be forfeited and the office declared vacant." (Disapproved)

B-27 (Proposed by Department of Colorado)

SECTION 608 - OFFICERS, ELECTED AND APPOINTED.

Amend Section 608 (c), National By-Laws, by deleting in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"(c) The Commander-in-Chief shall appoint an Adjutant General, Assistant Adjutants General, Chief of Staff, Inspector General, and Sergeant-at-Arms. He may appoint such other, committee chairmen and committees as may be necessary to carry out the responsibilities and functions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, provided that, with respect to salaried officers, the proposed salary of such officers, shall be made subject to the approval of the majority of the elected and non-salaried members of the National Council of Administration. The Commander-in-Chief retains authority to remove officers, committee chairmen and committees appointed by him at any time." (Disapproved)

B-28 (Proposed by Department of Colorado)

SECTION 610 - OFFICERS, POWERS AND DUTIES.

Amend Section 610 (f)(12), National By-Laws, by deleting in its entirety and renumbering (13) as (12) and (14) as (13). (Disapproved)

B-29 (Proposed by Department of Nebraska)

SECTION 610 - OFFICERS, POWERS AND DUTIES.

Amend Section 610, National By-Laws, by deleting in its entirety and substituting in lieu thereof the following:

"(a) Commander-in-Chief: The Commander-in-Chief shall enforce the Act of Incorporation, By-Laws, Ritual and Manual of Procedure of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the orders of the National Convention and National Council of Administration and for this purpose he may issue such orders as may be necessary. He shall preside over meetings of the National Convention and the National Council of Administration, decide all questions of law and usage, subject to an appeal to the National Council of Administration, and/or the National Convention. He shall appoint immediately after entering upon his office the appointive officers listed in Section 608, and committees not otherwise provided for, and may remove these officers at his pleasure; provided, however, that if any such officers are salaried the appointment shall be made subject to the approval of the majority of the elected and non-salaried ex-officio members of the Council of Administration, and such officers may only be removed by a majority vote thereof.

The Commander-in-Chief shall call a meeting of the National Council of Administration not less than thirty (30) days nor more than sixty (60) days after the adjournment of the National Convention for the purpose of adopting the annual budget and the transaction of any business which

may properly come before the National Council of Administration. He may call such other meetings of the National Council of Administration as he deems advisable.

The Commander-in-Chief shall sign or authorize the Adjutant General to sign for him all vouchers for expenditures of funds by the Quartermaster General.

(b) Vice Commander-in-Chief: The Vice Commanders-in-Chief shall, when called upon, assist the Commander-in-Chief and in his absence or disability, they shall discharge the duties of his office according to seniority.

(c) Adjutant General: The Adjutant General shall keep correct records of the proceedings of the National Convention and Council of Administration; he shall conduct its correspondence and issue the necessary orders under the direction of the Commander-in-Chief. He shall prepare all books and forms required for use of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, under the direction of the Commander-in-Chief. He shall keep proper files of all correspondence and copies of all general and special orders issued. He shall transfer to his successors in office without delay all books, papers and property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in his possession. He shall give security for the faithful discharge of his duties, to be approved by the Commander-in-Chief, and shall receive as compensation for his services such sum as the Council of Administration may from time to time determine.

He shall transmit to all Department Commanders not later than sixty (60) days after meetings of the National Council of Administration abstracts of the business transacted.

(d) Quartermaster General: The Quartermaster General shall have charge of the funds and securities of the organization. All real property of the organization shall be under his management. He shall keep a correct account of all moneys due and receivable from all sources and shall disburse all moneys properly payable by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. He shall keep a record of all liabilities of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and shall be in charge of the Supply Department and the purchase and sale of emblems and supplies under the direction of the National Council of Administration. The Quartermaster General shall be treasurer of all committees of the National Council of Administration handling funds. He shall keep his books, vouchers and records according to forms authorized by the National Council of Administration. He shall prepare a quarterly report for the National Council of Administration and submit copies thereof to the Department Commanders. He shall prepare for the Adjutant General before each National Convention a list showing the Posts in good standing and the number of delegates to which each Post is entitled. He shall deliver to his successor in office all moneys, books or property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in his possession. He shall give good and sufficient security in a sum to be approved by the National Council of

Administration for the faithful discharge of his duties and shall receive such compensation for his services as the National Council of Administration may from time to time determine.

Assistant: He shall, subject to the approval of the Commander-in-Chief and two-thirds of the Members of the National Council of Administration, immediately after entering his office, appoint an Assistant who shall be a full-time salaried officer. The Assistant Quartermaster General shall give good and sufficient security in a sum to be approved by the National Council of Administration for the faithful discharge of his duties and shall receive such compensation for his services as the National Council of Administration may from time to time determine. The Assistant Quartermaster General shall discharge all duties delegated by the Quartermaster General and during the absence of the Quartermaster General the Assistant shall discharge the duties of the Quartermaster General to the extent designated by the Quartermaster General. During the disability of the Quartermaster General, as determined by two-thirds vote of the National Council of Administration, the Assistant Quartermaster General shall discharge all duties of the Quartermaster General except that he shall not serve as a member of the National Council of Administration. The Assistant Quartermaster General may be removed by a two-thirds vote of the members of the National Council of Administration.

Budget - Annual: The Quartermaster General shall prepare a tentative budget for the financial operations of the ensuing year. Said budget shall set forth all anticipated income and estimated expense. Restricted funds shall be budgeted separately in every instance, and the budget shall be in balance. The tentative budget shall be submitted to the Commander-in-Chief for consideration within ten days following adjournment of the National Convention, and final action must be taken on the adoption of the budget at the first stated meeting of the National Council of Administration, and, when adopted, the budget shall be the expenditure guide for the ensuing year.

Not later than thirty (30) days after the first meeting of the National Council of Administration, he shall forward to all Department Commanders a detailed copy of the National budget adopted by the National Council of Administration for their information.

(e) Other Officers: The remaining National officers shall have powers and duties as provided in the Manual of Procedure, or as may be assigned them by the National Council of Administration or the Commander-in-Chief." (Disapproved)

B-30 (Proposed by Department of Kansas)

ARTICLE VII - MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS.

Amend Article VII, National By-Laws, by adding thereto a new Section designated Section 717 as follows:

"**SECTION 717 - RESOLUTIONS.**

All Department resolutions which affect matters outside state boundaries must be approved by the originating Department Convention and forwarded by the Department Adjutant to the Adjutant General not later than July 1 of each year.

Resolutions that originate within a Department must bear that Department Convention's approval prior to submission to the National Convention. A resolution disapproved by the originating Department Convention, or not acted upon by that Department Convention will not be considered by the National Convention.

Resolutions may also be originated by Department officers or the Department Convention itself and acted upon by the Department Convention.

A National Officer may originate a resolution concerning National affairs and submit it directly to the National Convention without Department action.

A National Convention Committee may originate a resolution and present it for approval during the National Convention.

Proposed amendments to the National By-Laws must also have Department approval if submitted by a Post, District or County Council, and must be received by the Adjutant General by the first working day in July in order that they may be publicized as required by Article XIII of the National By-Laws. Such proposed amendments must be definite and specific as to the material to be deleted or added, containing the exact wording of the proposed change." (Disapproved)

B-31 (Proposed by Department of Kansas)

ARTICLE XI - LADIES AUXILIARY.

Amend Article XI, National By-Laws, by deleting the title in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"**ARTICLE XI - VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES (VFW) AUXILIARY"**

Amend Section 1101, National By-Laws, by deleting in each instance it appears the word "Ladies" and inserting in lieu thereof "VFW".

Amend Section 1102, National By-Laws, by deleting in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"Membership in the Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be limited to wives, husbands, widows, widowers, mothers, fathers, stepmothers and stepfathers (who have performed the duties of parent), grandmothers, grandfathers, daughters, sons, granddaughters, grandsons, foster and step daughters and sons (who attained that status prior to age sixteen (16) and for whom the duties of parent were performed), of persons who were or are eligible for membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Members must be not less than six-

teen (16) years old.

Men and women eligible for membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be eligible for membership in the VFW Auxiliary."

Amend Section 1103, National By-Laws, by deleting the word "Ladies" in the first sentence and inserting in lieu thereof "VFW".

Amend Section 1104, National By-Laws, by deleting the word "Ladies" in each instance it appears and inserting in lieu thereof "VFW". (Disapproved)

B-32 (Proposed by Department of Kansas)

SECTION 1201 - FORMATION AND CONTROL.

Amend Section 1201 (d), National By-Laws, by deleting the section in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"(d) Auxiliary. The Military Order of the Cooties is authorized to establish an Auxiliary for adults and establish eligibility for such Auxiliary, provided that membership shall be limited to members in good standing in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary. Such association shall be subject to the control of the Supreme Scratch (National Convention), Supreme Commander and Supreme Council of Administration of the Military Order of the Cootie. Grand Pup Tents and Pup Tents may authorize the establishment and discontinuance of corresponding Auxiliaries in accordance with the By-Laws of the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States, provided that an Auxiliary to a Pup Tent shall be chartered only after approval by the Post with which it is affiliated." (Disapproved)

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE MANUAL OF PROCEDURE

M-1 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 222 —DELEGATES-COUNTY COUNCIL, DISTRICT, DEPARTMENT AND NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Amend Section 222, Manual of Procedure, by deleting the words "of not to exceed three dollars ($3.00)" in the first sentence of the eighth paragraph. (Approved)

M-2 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 710 —INSPECTION

Amend Section 710, Manual of Procedure, by deleting the words "officer connected with the Department of Inspection" in the second sentence of the first paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"member within his respective jurisdiction" (Approved)

M-3 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

SECTION 1101 —FORMATION, CONTROL, AND DISBANDMENT OF AUXILIARIES

Amend Section 1101 (e), Manual of Procedure, by adding the following to the second paragraph:

"Notice of such contemplated action shall be given to the Post, County Council, District and Department Commander thirty (30) days prior to the surrender or cancellation of an Auxiliary charter." (Approved)

M-4 (Proposed by Departments of Connecticut, Iowa, and Utah)

SECTION 101 - ELIGIBILITY.

Amend Section 101, Manual of Procedure, by adding at the end of the section, a new eligibility category as follows:

"National Defense Service Medal (30 consecutive days or 60 days not consecutive duty outside continental limits of the United States)."	27 June 1950 to a date to be determined

(Disapproved)

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE RITUAL

R-1 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

Amend the Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States under the heading "**OBLIGATION**" on page 33 by deleting the word "government" in the first line of the second paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the word "Constitution" and placing "a period" after the word "thereto" in the second line of the second paragraph and deleting the remainder of the paragraph.

Further amend the "**OBLIGATION**" on page 33 by deleting the word "Constitution—" in the second line of the third paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the words "Congressional Charter," and further amend by deleting "—according to our Constitution—" in the second line of the fourth paragraph. (Approved)

R-2 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

Amend the Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States under the heading "**MEMBER'S OBLIGATION**" on page 44 by deleting the word "government" in the first line of the second paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the word "Constitution" and placing "a period" after the word "thereto" in the second line of the second paragraph and deleting the remainder of the paragraph.

Further amend the "**MEMBER'S OBLIGATION**" on page 44 by deleting the word "Constitution—" in the second line of the third paragraph and inserting in lieu thereof the words "Congressional Charter," and further amend by deleting "—according to our Constitution—" in the second line of the fourth paragraph. (Approved)

R-3 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

Amend the Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars by inserting after PLATE No. 1A on page 11 the following:

Plate No. 1B

(Approved)

R-4 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

Amend the Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars by deleting PLATE No. 5 on page 57 and inserting in lieu thereof the following:
Plate No. 5

(Approved)

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON AMERICANISM AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

No. 101 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT VOLUNTEER PROTECTION ACT

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support state and federal legislation protecting volunteers

representing non profit organizations and government entities from personal civil liability. (Approved)

No. 102 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

REQUEST FOR CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW OF THE FEDERAL FLAG CODE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon our representatives in the Congress of the United States to have a complete review of the existing Federal Flag Code so that we secure consistent respect for the flag of the United States of America. (Approved)

No. 103 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

MANDATE ENGLISH AS THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE UNITED STATES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we reaffirm mandates of previous conventions to seek legislation mandating English as the official language of the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we seek legislation to: 1) limit bilingual education to short term transitional programs only; 2) effect a speedy return to voting ballots in English only; 3) make more opportunities available to immigrants for learning English and maintaining the English languages a condition for naturalization; and 4) enact legal protections for the English language, at state and national levels through the designation of English as our official language. (Approved)

No. 104 (Submitted by Department of Nebraska)

INDEPENDENCE DAY BELL RINGING

(Disapproved)

No. 105 (Submitted by Department of Connecticut)

NO AGE LIMIT FOR SONS OF VFW

(Disapproved)

No. 106 (Submitted by Department of New Jersey)

FLAG DESECRATION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars shall authorize our peers to pro-

ceed to have flag desecration, in any form, abolished and should notify our government and its representatives that it should be made unlawful to do so. (Approved)

No. 107 (Submitted by Department of New Jersey)

MAKE ENGLISH OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE U.S.A

(Disapproved)

No. 108 (Submitted by Department of Minnesota)

SONS OF VETS

(Disapproved)

CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

No. 201 (Submitted by Department of Colorado)

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
UNIFORM PROOF OF ELIGIBILITY FOR MEMBERSHIP

(Disapproved)

No. 202 (Submitted by Departments of New Jersey and New Hampshire)

PAC-ENDORSEMENT OF CANDIDTATES

(Withdrawn)

No. 203 (Submitted by Department of Pennsylvania)

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

(Disapproved)

No. 204 (Submitted by Department of Nevada)

CHANGE TO NATIONAL CONVENTION SCHEDULE

(Disapproved)

No. 205 (Submitted by Department of Maine)

HEALTH PROGRAM FOR DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICE TIED TO NATIONAL PROGRAM

(Disapproved)

No. 206 (Submitted by Department of Kansas)

PROVIDE NATIONAL MEMBER-AT-LARGE ROSTERS TO DEPARTMENTS

(Disapproved)

No. 207 (Submitted by Department of Kansas)

APPLICATION FORM FOR NATIONAL MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the last sentence on the National at-Large Membership application appearing over the applicant's signature, be changed to read, after the words "I believe in God" by adding, to wit:

> "I also certify that (1) I am entitled to a campaign ribbon or medal authorized by the U.S. Government based on my overseas service or; (2) I have served overseas in Korea. I further give authority to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to verify my entitlement to membership"; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that immediately following the line "Dates of Service: From_____To_____", the following be inserted, to wit:

"Name of Campaign Ribbon or Medal_____.
(Note: Ribbon or Medal not required for service in Korea)". (Approved)

No. 208 (Submitted by Department of Kansas)

NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP-AT-LARGE

(Disapproved)

No. 209 (Submitted by Department of Delaware)

TAX EXEMPT STATUS OF POST

(Disapproved)

No. 210 (Submitted by Department of California)

LIFE MEMBERSHIP FEE INCREASE

(Disapproved)

No. 211 (Submitted by Department of California)

CONTINUATION OF THE ALL-AMERICAN PROGRAM

(Disapproved)

No. 212 (Submitted by Department of California)

CREDIT DECEASED LIFE MEMBERS TO POSTS
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MEMBERSHIP YEAR

(Disapproved)

No. 213 (Submitted by Department of Minnesota)

NATIONAL CONVENTION RULES

(Disapproved)

No. 214 (Submitted by Department of Minnesota)

NATIONAL COMMITTEE RULES

(Disapproved)

No. 215 (Submitted by Department of Minnesota)

AMENDMENTS

(Disapproved)

No. 216 (Submitted by Department of New York)

LIFE MEMBERSHIP FEES

(Disapproved)

No. 217 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

INITIATE NEW CANCER PROGRAM

(Disapproved)

No. 218 (Submitted by Department of Wisconsin)

RESCIND LIFE MEMBERSHIP FEES INCREASE

(Disapproved)

CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

No. 301 (Submitted by Department of New York)

PREVENTION OF FURTHER MEMORIAL DESECRATION AND DEFAMATION OF CHARACTER OF THE U.S.S. INTREPID

(Disapproved)

No. 302 (Submitted by Department of California)

SUPPORT LEGISLATION FOR THE RELIEF OF MAJOR NGUYEN QUY AN AND HIS DAUGHTER NGUYEN NGOC KIM QUY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support S. 389, H.R. 1087 and H.R. 1287; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Departments urge all Posts and Auxiliaries to write letters to their Congressional representatives in the House to support H.R. 1087 and H.R. 1287and to their Senators to co-sponsor S.389; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all members be urged to write to their House Representatives to support H.R. 1087 and H.R. 1287 and to write to their U.S. Senators to co-sponsor S. 389; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW National Legislative Services in Washington, D.C. write letters to all 435 members in the House and urge their support for H.R. 1087 and H.R. 1287 and to the 100 members in the Senate and urge their
co-sponsorship of S. 389. (Approved)

No. 303 (Submitted by Department of Hawaii)

PRESERVE THE HOGA (YT-146) FOR DISPLAY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we wholeheartedly support the intentions of Friends of the HOGA to move the tug to Hawaii and put her on permanent display. (Approved as Amended)

No. 304 (Submitted by Department of Massachusetts)

OLD IRONSIDES PENNIES CAMPAIGN

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, that the VFW endorse, affirm, support and assist the "Old Ironsides Pennies Campaign", by playing a leading role in promulgating its message and theme, at no cost to the National Organization, through its publications, and as a grassroots organization reaching out to its Posts nationwide and its affiliates to encourage the participation of local schools and other organizations in this effort. (Approved)

No. 305 (Submitted by Department of Washington)

ENDORSE 100TH/442ND/MIS MONUMENT IN LOS ANGELES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the 100th/442nd/MIS Monument in Los Angeles as a permanent remembrance to Japanese Americans and all other Americans who answered the call to make the supreme self-sacrifice for their country. (Approved)

CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

No. 401 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT PUBLIC AWARENESS PROJECTS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the National Organization will:

(a) ensure routine distribution to the field of pertinent, credible and responsible information on a routine basis and, as requested, to provide such information about other POW/MIA organizations as may be needed by the Departments;

(b) encourage participation in the program by veterans groups of other friendly nations such as our NATO and Far Eastern allies;

(c) encourage exchange of information among State POW/MIA Chairmen, to include publishing up-to-date lists of POW/MIA Chairmen; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that each Department exercise maximum initiative to maintain the vitality and thrust of the POW/MIA program at Department levels by encouraging such actions as:

(a) display of the black POW/MIA flag, subordinate to the U.S. Flag, at any function at which it is proper to fly the U.S. Flag;

(c) encourage support of information exchange at Post levels;

(d) appoint an interested member at the Post level to act as the POW/MIA project officer; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the National Organization of the

VFW supports the annually announced POW/MIA Recognition Day. (Approved as Amended)

No. 402 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO RESOLVE THE KOREAN WAR POW/MIA ISSUE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the VFW is encouraged by the recent U.S.-North Korean Joint Operation to resolve the status of Americans still unaccounted for in Korea; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that with renewed vigor, the VFW urge the U.S. and Republic of Korea governments to increase their contact with the North Korean and Chinese governments, to pursue and expand the current joint effort to include the live POW issue and thus seek new opportunities to resolve this humanitarian issue as soon as possible; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW, in keeping with United States laws and in consultation with the Korean and U.S. governments, continue its active efforts to resolve the issue of Korean War POW/MIAs. (Approved as Amended)

No. 404 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

THE LESSONS OF THE COLD WAR

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the lessons of the Cold and Gulf Wars taught us that our peace, our freedom and our security can best be achieved by remaining united in common purpose with our many allies and friends whereby we share both the danger and security burden and by maintaining a national defense which in combination with our allies and friends, is equal to those continuing threats; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in contrast to the Korean and Vietnamese Wars, the lessons of the Gulf War are apparent: to ensure victory in future wars, the United States, led by resolute leadership and backed by unwavering public support, should quickly and decisively engage the full range of its military power until the threat to our security is eliminated. (Approved)

No. 405 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

LIMIT FOREIGN OWNERSHIP OF U.S. BUSINESSES AND PROPERTIES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to enact legislation to limit foreign own-

ership of United States corporations, companies, businesses and property and industrial technologies and/or processes which could become vital or sensitive to the national defense of the U.S. and which will protect the economy of the United States. (Approved)

No. 406 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

STOP ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AT THE BORDER

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the President and the Congress to expand and strengthen the Customs and Immigration services and the U.S. Coast Guard, and enact such emergency measures as necessary to prevent smuggling of illegal aliens and stop, detain and deport potential terrorists or those with ties to terrorist groups; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that, as appropriate, military resources be employed to assist in stopping the flow of illegal aliens into the country; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the President and the Congress should carefully consider new legislation which would incorporate the results and recommendations of the recent bipartisan review of the 1986 Immigration act. (Approved)

No. 407 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

IT IS TIME TO PUSH CASTRO OUT

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the U.S. Government to continue its present policy of no trade with Communist Cuba and no diplomatic recognition of that communist state and to increase the economic and political pressure on Castro; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the U.S. Government to use all measures, short of violence and/or invasion, to increase the pressure on Castro in conjunction with his isolation, to hasten the time until Castro's dictatorship is overthrown and Cuba can regain its freedom. (Approved as Amended)

No. 408 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PUNISH TERRORISTS NOW

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we continue to urge that the U.S. should take decisive action against all terrorists and terrorist states and bring to justice those responsible for the destruction of PanAm Flight 103 and the barracks in Saudi Arabia

and to serve as a warning that all terrorists — no matter what country gives them refuge — will be hunted down and brought to justice; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we continue to urge decisive action in the war on terrorism by:

(a) remaining on the offensive against terrorists rather than passively remaining on the defense;

(b) instituting and pressing our allies to support a quarantine on those "outlaw countries" guilty of inciting, harboring or aiding and abetting terrorists;

(c) holding all countries accountable for the security of American citizens traveling within their borders; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Congress should authorize and the President should declare a quarantine against the outlaw Qadhaffi regime of Libya and other terrorist states found to support and harbor terrorists. (Approved as Amended)

No. 409 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

STRATEGIC DEFENSE SHOULD BE A STRATEGIC PRIORITY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support both a deployable theater missile defense and a strategic missile defense before the end of this century as a priority defense requirement. (Approved)

No. 410 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HONORING THOSE WHO SERVE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the VFW calls on all elected and appointed officials to publicly recognize the major contributions and sacrifices made by those in military service; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that our elected and appointed officials acknowledge the professionalism of our servicemen and women by ending the erosion of entitlements and expanding the benefits of service and by so doing, show that this nation cares for those who have served and sacrificed. (Approved)

No. 411 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

OPPOSE LIFTING THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT BAN
ON HOMOSEXUALS IN THE ARMED FORCES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we unequivocally oppose the efforts of the President and homo-

sexual organizations to force the military services to accept and/or retain homosexuals and urge that this matter be taken before the Supreme Court to seek final judicial reaffirmation of the homosexual exclusion policy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the aforementioned Code should be rewritten in an effort to dismiss any possible question of the denial of civil rights based on moral, religious or ethical behavior, as it is not the intent to inflict that upon said persons, rather a just concern for the good order, discipline, stability and readiness of our Armed Forces and its operations. (Approved)

No. 412 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

MAINTAIN AN EFFECTIVE U.S. COAST GUARD

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress and the Administration to provide the funding necessary for the Coast Guard to carry out its numerous duties, including but not limited to, drug interdiction and enforcement, military readiness, pollution control, maritime safety, search and rescue missions as well as their many other duties and missions. (Approved)

No. 413 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

STANDING FIRM FOR FREEDOM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we stand firm for freedom, and in furtherance of the ideals of freedom and democracy, we support a foreign policy that nourishes the newly won freedoms in Europe and elsewhere, and we maintain our military strength against both the possibility of the reversal of Europe's freedom and the threats to these other important regions of the world. (Approved)

No. 414 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

NATIONAL STRATEGY OF PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we continue to support a national strategy of peace through strength, the general principles of which should be:

(a) maintaining a strong economy at home and protecting our overseas resources of energy and vital raw materials;

(b) maintaining an American military presence in Europe and Asia to stabilize the military balance in these regions and help our friends and allies to defend themselves from aggression;

(c) maintaining such strategic, nuclear and conventional military forces (including Active, Reserve and National Guard components) trained

and equipped with such high technology weapons and equipment and with sufficient bases and infrastructure which in the judgment of our military leaders are more than equal to the current threats and adequate to meet our current defense requirements;

(d) helping formerly communist controlled countries in their process of converting to freely elected democratic governments;

(e) maintaining effective security and intelligence capabilities to prevent strategic surprise from any quarter; and

(f) employing the leadership necessary to inspire, focus and unite the national will and international unity to further our goal of peace and freedom. (Approved as Amended)

No. 415 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HALT THE EROSION OF INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we reject deep reductions in our national intelligence agencies, instead supporting appropriate expansion and funding to ensure that we will have adequate warning of future political, military, economic or technological changes that would increase the risks to our national security and vital national interests abroad and that Congress appropriate necessary funds to strengthen the intelligence services. (Approved as Amended)

No. 416 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

RETAIN U.S. MILITARY FORCES IN EUROPE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that while we continue to support military withdrawals and reductions as agreed to by the NATO Alliance, the changing circumstances in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States require the residual presence of such combat ready ground, air and naval forces as the NATO military commander recommends and NATO's political authority has approved; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that such U.S. forces remain based in Europe and that the United States retain such land, sea and air bases as necessary to support military operations in Europe and elsewhere; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. reaffirms our support for the continued existence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and its military structure and strategy in Europe for the foreseeable future; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, believe these military forces will help stabilize the European situation by showing the concern of the United States for Eastern Europe and expressing our determined leadership for Western Europe.

(Approved)

No. 417 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT THE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that to prevent further endangerment to our troops, we support the view that unless unforeseen circumstances arise, the U.S. forces assigned to IFOR should be withdrawn from the former Yugoslavia by the end of the one year time limit. (Approved as Amended)

No. 418 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ASSIST VIETNAM'S RECOVERY OF MIAS AS A SIGN OF OUR GOOD FAITH

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that at each level of the VFW — National, Department, District, County Council, Post — strenuous efforts be made to collect any information which might be of value in determining the fate of Vietnam's 300,000 MIAs and of assistance in the recovery of their remains; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge all levels of the VFW to solicit all Vietnam veteran members (and non-members) for any information or material that could be used to determine the fate of Vietnamese MIAs and their graves. Such information and material include battlefield souvenirs especially if they contain names or other identifying information; personal effects such as photos, letters, identification documents, taken from casualties; sketch maps, photos, overlays (annotated with dates and locations if possible)
which would be of help in identifying Vietnamese grave sites; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VFW National Headquarters publicize this effort and provide Departments with materials which might be used in further publicizing our efforts and that the VFW Washington Office act as the collecting point and repository of all such information obtained from our members and the public at large; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that on subsequent trips to the region by VFW National Officers, such information be turned over to Vietnamese authorities as an expression of our desire to assist them in recovering their MIAs and to encourage their greater effort in helping us reach the fullest possible accounting of our MIAs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that whereas our national officers traveling to Vietnam are only permitted to hold meetings with communist veterans and our former allies of the Republic of Vietnam are not considered veterans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that during any future trips to the

Socialist Republic of Vietnam our National Officers request to hold meetings with the service men and women who fought alongside U. S. Forces during the Vietnam War. (Approved as Amended)

No. 419 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

OPPOSE U. S. FORCES UNDER FOREIGN COMMAND

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose any plan or directive placing U. S. military forces under the command of foreign military officers including those who are operating exclusively under orders from the United Nations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress be urged to examine Presidential Decision Directive 25 to determine if any Constitutional authority has been misused, and if so, to find an appropriate remedy. (Approved)

No. 420 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT FOR THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that while recognizing the settlement of the legitimacy question remains an issue between the two countries we support and urge the admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan to the United Nations and other international bodies so that those agencies can be useful in fostering a spirit of cooperation and assisting the resolution of the legitimacy question; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the President and the Congress of the United States to adhere strictly to the concepts of the Taiwan Relations Act by approving the sale to the Republic of China on Taiwan such state of the art military equipment, weapons and technology to include the previously approved sale of F-16 aircraft to the Republic of China on Taiwan as may be necessary to maintain adequate defense capabilities to provide for military balance and stability in the area; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the United States Government to employ the full range of its economic, diplomatic and military influence if it is necessary to contain the overtly aggressive posture of the Peoples Republic of China and to use this influence to further the peaceful settlement of remaining disputes. (Approved as Amended)

No. 421 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

OPPOSE WOMEN IN COMBAT

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we go on record as opposing assignment of women within the

Armed Forces to jobs that call for them to aggressively seek out, close with and kill or capture enemy forces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the United States Congress to exercise its responsibility and examine the personnel assignment policies of the Defense Department with the view of passage of legislation restricting the assignment of women from direct combat positions. (Approved)

No. 422 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

RETAIN THE SELECTIVE SERVICE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the VFW goes on record as supporting the ongoing existence of the Selective Service System in its stand-by status and urges the United States Congress to provide the funds necessary to retain the Selective Service System. (Approved)

No. 423 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

A REINVIGORATED MERCHANT MARINE IS ESSENTIAL TO A STRONG DEFENSE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we believe a Merchant Marine fleet and a viable ship building industrial base are necessary to our national security and our global economic competitiveness; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support legislative initiatives to preserve a modernized U.S. flag merchant fleet and an economically viable ship building industrial base capable of expanding to support future military requirements. (Approved)

No. 424 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief

AMERICANS WHO ARE PRISONERS OF WAR OR MISSING IN ACTION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the President of the United States of America and every member of the U.S. Congress to speak out on every occasion to expedite the return of those U.S. Servicemen who are still Prisoners of War or Missing in Action; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW continues to exert the maximum effort on all governments and agencies involved to account for our MIA's from World War II, Korea, Southeast Asia and the Cold War. (Approved as Amended)

No. 425 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

TIME TO MONITOR THE PANAMA CANAL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign of the United States, that we urge the President and the Congress to closely monitor conditions in the Republic of Panama, to be prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to protect the Canal and to ensure continued freedom of passage, and to carefully reexamine the conditions of Panama and the region before the scheduled turnover with a view to balancing the views, concerns and interests of Panama, its neighbors and the United States. (Approved)

No. 426 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief)

ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL FOR SERVICE IN BOSNIA

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that it calls for awarding the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for service in the following Balkans operations (retroactive to June 1, 1992): Provide Promise (air drops over Bosnia and medical teams in Croatia), Deny Flight (air missions flown from Italy and carriers in the Adriatic Sea), Able Sentry (Macedonia), Sharp Guard/Maritime Monitor (enforcement of embargo) and Joint Endeavor (Bosnia). (Approved as Amended)

No. 427 (Submitted by Department of Oregon)

U. S. MILITARY PLACED UNDER U. N. COMMAND
AND THE QUESTION OF LEGALITY OF
PRESIDENTIAL DECISION DIRECTIVE (PPD 25)

(Disapproved)

No. 428 (Submitted by Department of Pennsylvania)

ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL FOR KOREAN SERVICE

(Disapproved)

No. 429 (Submitted by Department of Pennsylvania)

ENACT LEGISLATION TO PREVENT MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES
ARMED FORCES FROM SERVING
UNDER THE COMMAND OF A FOREIGN
OFFICER AND WEARING THE UNITED NATIONS INSIGNIA

(Disapproved)

No. 430 (Submitted by Department of California

SUPPORT LEGISLATION FOR A SPECIAL SERVICE MEDAL
FOR "ATOMIC" VETERANS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we go on record in support of legislation which would award a special service medal for "Atomic" veterans. (Approved)

No. 431 (Submitted by Department of Virginia)

AMERICANS WHO ARE PRISONERS OF WAR OR MISSING IN ACTION

(Disapproved)

No. 432 (Submitted by Department of Arizona)

ALLEGIANCE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ONLY

(Disapproved)

No. 433 (Submitted by Department of Washington)

RECOGNITION FOR ALL EX-SERVICEMEN
FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN NUCLEAR TESTS
CONDUCTED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

(Disapproved)

No. 434 (Submitted by Department of Pacific Areas)

SUPPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Government of the United States to increase its military aid and assistance to the Republic of Korea by providing modern state of the art weapons and technology to safeguard her freedom, and promote the security in the Pacific and Asian regions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United States in concert with its allies bring pressure to bear on North Korea to comply with the nuclear safeguard accord of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to be a responsible country in the community of nations and to come to the table for peaceful dialogue directly between the South and North. (Approved)

No. 435 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VFW SUPPORTS KUWAIT'S DEMAND FOR AN ACCOUNTING OF ITS MIAS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign of the United States, that we strongly urge the United Nations, the United States Government and other governments to take such action as necessary either unilaterally, through our allies, or the United Nations, that will force Iraq to account for those Kuwaiti citizens still missing. (Approved)

No. 436 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

APPROPRIATE ARMY AWARD FOR THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE REGION OF TRIESTE, ITALY, 8 MAY 1945 - 26 OCTOBER 1954

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign of the United States, that we urge the Secretary of the Army to issue an appropriate Army award to those soldiers who served in the region of Trieste, Italy, during the period 8 May 1945 to 26 October 1954, inclusive.
(Approved as Amended)

CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

No. 601 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

REFORM OF ELIGIBILITY FOR ACCESS TO VA HEALTH CARE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Congress enact legislation bringing order to the present chaos affecting eligibility of VA health care by providing all veterans with mandated access to the full continuum of VA health care; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Congress and the Administration take appropriate action to ensure that third-party collections by VA remain with that agency and not be offset from its annual appropriation and that Medicare reimbursement to VA be authorized for care provided to veterans again without any offset from its appropriated funds; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that specific appropriations support be established for any medical programs directed by the Congress to be provided to veterans both now and in the future. (Approved as Amended)

No. 602 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ADEQUATELY FUND THE VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress in its annual appropriations, to fund the Department of Veterans Affairs construction to allow it to carry out a program of modernization or replacement of aging facilities, which includes a sound system for setting construction priorities, which in combination will ensure the continued provision of quality health care to our nation's veterans. (Approved)

No. 603 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BUDGET

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress of the United States to pass a budget and appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs which will fully fund and maintain the integrity of the benefits and entitlements programs and enhance Department of Veterans Affairs health care system. (Approved as Amended)

No. 604 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

COST-OF-LIVING INCREASE FOR VA BENEFICIARIES
AND MILITARY RETIREES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to provide timely annual increases in an amount at least commensurate with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for all Department of Veterans Affairs' beneficiaries and military retirees. (Approved)

No. 605 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CONCURRENT RECEIPT OF RETIREMENT PAY AND
VETERANS DISABILITY COMPENSATION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly advocate legislation to be enacted to permit the concurrent receipt of longevity military retirement pay without reduction of the Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation. (Approved)

No. 606 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

AMENDED TAX RETURNS FOR MILITARY RETIREES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress amend current law whereby a military retiree will be allowed to file amended tax returns beyond the current three-year limitation. (Approved as Amended)

No. 607 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF PASTORAL CARE BEING PROVIDED VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES AT VA MEDICAL CENTERS

(Disapproved)

No. 608 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

FUNDING FOR VA MEDICAL CENTERS AT TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE AND BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we go on record as urging the Congress and the Administration to provide the funding necessary for the construction of the already approved VA Medical Center adjacent to the David Grant US Air Force Medical Center at Travis Air Force Base and a VA Medical Center in Brevard County, Florida; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense. (Approved as Amended)

No. 609 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES HEALTH BENEFIT PROGRAM (FEHBP) FOR MILITARY RETIREES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to enact legislation requiring the Department of Defense to offer military retirees the full range of FEHBP under the same terms as do all other federal departments, agencies, and the post office. (Approved as Amended)

No. 610 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VA SHOULD RECEIVE A REASONABLE SHARE OF THE MCKINNEY ACT FUNDS SET ASIDE FOR RESOLVING HOMELESSNESS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we ask Congress to ensure that HUD provides VA a proportion-

ate share of the McKinney Homeless Assistant Act funding to help eliminate homelessness among veterans and their families. (Approved as Amended)

No. 611 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

TAX FAIRNESS FOR TROOPS DEPLOYED TO POTENTIAL CRISIS AREAS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to pass legislation that would allow all military personnel entitled to receive imminent danger pay have their gross income earned exempted from federal taxation and to eliminate estate taxes or current back taxes owed should a member be killed or die of wounds received. (Approved as Amended)

No. 612 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION RESTRUCTURING

(Disapproved)

No. 613 (Submitted by Colorado)

DESERT STORM VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the VFW will not support any Veterans Benefits Administration restructuring proposals until completely satisfied that in every instance of program consolidation, there is no lessening in timely and quality service for all veterans and other claimants, to include more points of access to services. (Approved as Amended)

No. 614 (Submitted by Department of Colorado)

TO SUPPORT LEGISLATION PROVIDING BENEFITS AND SERVICES
TO VIETNAM VETERANS' CHILDREN WITH SPINA BIFIDA

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge congress to immediately enact legislation providing benefits and medical services to Vietnam veterans' children who suffer with spina bifida and which are comparable to those provided to service-connected veterans including health care, compensation, rehabilitation, education, employment, adaptive housing, adaptive automobile, and insurance coverage; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that such legislation mandate the provision of service coordination assistance to ensure that Vietnam veterans'

children with spina bifida and their families receive outreach services and are able to access VA benefits and services, and specialized human service programs for persons with developmental and other severe disabilities offered by federal, state, and local government agencies as well as other human service organizations. (Approved as Amended)

No. 615 (Submitted by Department of Montana)

VETERANS' PREFERENCE IN PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly support veterans' preference in federal, state, and local employment, as provided by a grateful nation, and oppose any and all efforts to reduce this preference; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we continue to speak out forcefully and publicly on the issue of veterans' preference. (Approved)

No. 616 (Submitted by Department of Hawaii)

BENEFITS AND OTHER PRIVILEGES TO FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS

(Disapproved)

No. 617 (Submitted by Department of Illinois)

SUPPORT PASSAGE OF H.R. 3321

((Disapproved)

No. 618 (Submitted by Department of Illinois)

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO HAVE SEPARATE BUDGET

((Disapproved)

No. 619 (Submitted by Department of Illinois)

EMPLOYMENT TEST

(Disapproved)

No. 620 (Submitted by Department of Massachusetts)

STATE VETERANS' HOMES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, to seek support for the State Veterans' Homes to receive not less than 33 1/3% of the national; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States urge the National Association of State Veterans Homes and the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs to support mutual planning efforts and the establishment of sharing agreements between the DVA medical facilities and the State Veterans Homes. (Approved as Amended)

No. 621 (Submitted by Department of Pennsylvania)

AMEND NATIONAL SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE ACT OF 1940

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support any proposed legislation to amend current law and allow equitable relief to assure payment of the remainder of the face value of a veteran's National Service Life Insurance policy to those contingent beneficiaries affected by the restriction of optional 3 mode of settlement between the period of enactment of the National Service Life Insurance Act of 1940 and September 30, 1944, the date that resolved this inequity by adding the optional 4 mode of settlement. (Approved as Amended)

No. 622 (Submitted by Department of Georgia)

ESTABLISH A NATIONAL CEMETERY IN THE GREATER ATLANTA AREA

(Disapproved)

No. 623 (Submitted by Department of Georgia

COLLOCATION OF ATLANTA VA REGIONAL OFFICE
WITH ATLANTA VA MEDICAL CENTER

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to build a new regional office in Atlanta under the enhanced use program next to the VA Medical Center in Decatur and the U.S. General Services Administration be told to identify other federal agencies that do not deal directly with the public to fill the VA space in the new Atlanta Federal Center. (Approved)

No. 624 (Submitted by Department of Florida)

CONSTITUTIONAL POWER TO FUND VETERANS EARNED ENTITLEMENTS

(Disapproved)

No. 625 (Submitted by Department of California)

SUPPORT S. 72, RELATIVE TO VETERANS' BENEFITS FOR FILIPINO VETERANS AND SCOUTS WHO SERVED WITH THE U.S. ARMED FORCES DURING WWII

(Disapproved)

No. 626 (Submitted by Department of California)

SUPPORT S. 55 AND H.R. 1136, 'THE FILIPINO VETERANS EQUITY ACT OF 1995"

(Disapproved)

No. 627 (Submitted by Department of California)

SUPPORT LEGISLATION FOR MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENT TO MILITARY TREATMENT FACILITIES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we go on record in support of legislation for medicare reimbursement to military treatment facilities. (Approved as Amended)

No. 628 (Submitted by Department of California)

HEALTH CARE FOR PERSIAN GULF WAR VETERANS EXPOSED TO DEPLETED URANIUM WEAPONS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we request the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs make whole-body count testing for depleted uranium a standard part of the Persian Gulf War Veterans' medical examinations, and offer testing to veterans who already took the medical exam but were not tested for depleted uranium; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we request the Secretary of Defense to order a thorough review of the use of DU weapons by the U.S. Military, to include an independently reviewed study of the health and environmental consequences of DU use. (Approved as Amended)

No. 629 (Submitted by Department of California)

ADDITION TO THE LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA NATIONAL CEMETERY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we request legislation to authorize the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to utilize a portion of this land to extend the present national cemetery boundaries at West Los Angeles, California, to provide a burial for those eligible veterans residing in this area. (Approved)

No. 630 (Submitted by Department of California

SAN FRANCISCO NATIONAL CEMETERY,
PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we reaffirm our commitment of VFW National Resolution 681 (1990), as listed above and seek legislative action to secure a minimum of eleven acres of property that adjoins the San Francisco National Cemetery located at the Presidio of San Francisco; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we petition Congress to enact legislation requiring that the government agency (Department of Defense and/or Department of the Interior) provide this eleven acres of property to the Department of Veterans' Affairs National Cemetery systems to be used for burial of our nations' veterans and armed forces members; whenever appropriate funding may become available. (Approved)

No. 631 (Submitted by Department of California)

PRESERVATION OF THE NATIONAL SOLDIER HOME
LOCATED AT THE V. A. MEDICAL CENTER, WEST LOS ANGELES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we request the United States Congress to ensure adherence to the expressed wishes of the donors of said land, that the terms and consideration of the grant be adhered to, that the Pacific branch of the national Soldiers' Home for Disabled Veterans be maintained on said property, that an opportunity be offered to those who were displaced from said National Soldiers' Home to return thereto and that the admission requirements for entering the home revert back to the original status. (Approved)

No. 632 (Submitted by Department of California)

PAIN CENTER FOR THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA/NEVADA
VA NETWORK

(Disapproved)

No. 633 (Submitted by Department of California)

ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR STATE VETERANS HOMES

(Disapproved)

No. 634 (Submitted by Department of California)

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL INVOLUNTARILY SEPARATED FROM MILITARY SERVICE

(Disapproved)

No. 635 (Submitted by Department of California)

ESTABLISH A MILITARY TREATMENT FACILITY AT MARCH AFB IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY CALIFORNIA FOR MILITARY RETIREES AND THEIR DEPENDENTS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we go on record in support of an outpatient military treatment facility at the former March AFB hospital. (Approved as Amended)

No. 636 (Submitted by Department of California)

CLOSED MILITARY BASE CEMETERIES

(Disapproved)

No. 637 (Submitted by Department of New Hampshire)

FULLY FUND STATE VETERANS HOMES

(Disapproved)

No. 638 (Submitted by Department of Virginia)

ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM FOR VETERANS EXPOSED TO BIOLOGICAL, CHEMICAL, NEUROLOGICAL, RADIOLOGICAL, STRESS PRODUCING CONDITIONS WHILE IN MILITARY SERVICE

(Disapproved)

No. 639 (Submitted by Department of Virginia)

REDUCE THE WAITING TIME FOR A DECISION BY THE BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we request the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs, to take all necessary steps immediately to reduce this waiting time to an acceptable time frame. (Approved as Amended)

No. 640 (Submitted by Department of Virginia)

COMPLIANCE WITH VETERANS' PREFERENCE LEGISLATION

(Disapproved)

No. 641 (Submitted by Department of Wisconsin)

SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE (VETS)

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we hereby go on record to urge the Congress of the United States to appropriate sufficient funds to support the current VETS mission. (Approved as Amended)

No. 642 (Submitted by Department of Wisconsin)

SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR THE LOCAL VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT REPRESENTATIVES (LVERS) AND DISABLED VETERANS OUTREACH PROGRAM (DVOP) REPRESENTATIVES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we hereby go on record to urge the Congress of the United States to appropriate sufficient funds to support the number of LVER and DVOP positions as required by Title 38. (Approved)

No. 643 (Submitted by Department of Texas)

VETERANS' PREFERENCE IN FEDERALLY ASSISTED EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we hereby petition Congress to enact legislation which requires that veterans' preference be applied in all federally assisted employment and training programs. (Approved as Amended)

No. 644 (Submitted by Department of Texas)

FULL FUNDING FOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

(Disapproved)

No. 645 (Submitted by Department of Texas)

FUNDING OF NATIONAL VETERANS' TRAINING INSTITUTE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Administration and Congress to support full funding of the National Veterans' Training Institute so it can effectively carry out its mission. (Approved as Amended)

No. 646 (Submitted by Department of Texas)

RETAIN NATIONWIDE PROGRAMS OF EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FOR AMERICA'S VETERANS/DISABLED VETERANS AS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose any such elimination of federal direction and control over the employment assistance entitlements earned by America's veterans/disabled veterans through their honorable service. (Approved)

No. 647 (Submitted by Department of Pacific Areas)

NATIONAL VFW PARTICIPATION IN DOD OVERSEAS JOB FAIRS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we provide maximum level of support for all future Overseas DOD Job Fairs with materials, information, and the assignment of knowledgeable and qualified National Employees/Officers to the Job Fairs. (Approved)

No. 648 (Submitted by Department of Pacific Areas)

REPAIR AND SEEK HELP FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THE CEMETERY AT CLARK AIR BASE IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the United States Government, by legislative or administrative action, to seek a long term solution to the neglect of the Clark cemetery; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that until a long term solution is reached the Veterans of Foreign Wars seek support from all available sources to assist the VFW Posts in the Philippines with the annual cost of the repair and upkeep of the Clark Cemetery. (Approved as Amended)

No. 649 (Submitted by Department of Pacific Areas)

SUPPORT PROVISIONS OF SSI TO CITIZENS
RESIDING IN U.S. TERRITORIES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to support provisions of SSI to citizens residing in U.S. Territories. (Approved as Amended)

No. 650 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

BENEFITS FOR FILIPINO VETERANS AND SCOUTS WHO SERVED WITH
THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES DURING WWII

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation to recognize veterans of the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, while such forces were in the service of the Armed Forces of the United States during World War II, as having been active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars support additional legislation that directs the Secretary of Army to issue a certificate of service to every national of the Philippine Islands deemed by the Secretary to have performed any military service in aid of the Armed Forces of the United States during World War II. (Approved as Amended)

No. 651 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that legislation be enacted to provide at least one open national cemetery in each state with additional cemeteries in major metropolitan areas where the veterans' population warrants it; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United States government not abandon military base cemeteries, and if there is no military base to assume their upkeep and care, they be incorporated into the VA National Cemetery System. (Approved)

No. 652 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SKILL STANDARDS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United

States, that we will work in partnership with government, industry, education, labor and community stake-holders to ensure that development of a National System of Skill Standards includes full review and consideration of Armed Forces training and development standards. (Approved)

No. 653 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

REACTIVATE SMOCTA

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to take immediate action towards making SMOCTA a top priority training and jobs program for recently separated service members. (Approved)

No. 654 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SANCTIONS FOR VIOLATION OF VETERANS PREFERENCE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge Congress to enact legislation which provides that intentional violation of a provision the Veterans' Preference Act is a "prohibited personnel practice" and therefore is subject to corrective and disciplinary action, and intervention by Office of the Special Counsel. (Approved)

No. 655 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VA MEDICARE SUBVENTION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the swift enactment into law of legislation authorizing VA to collect and retain Medicare dollars. (Approved)

No. 656 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

STANDARDIZE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) ELIGIBILITY FOR GUARD AND RESERVE PERSONNEL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation to standardize Unemployment Insurance Benefits for Guard and Reserve personnel. (Approved)

No. 657 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXCLUSIVE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEES FOR THE DEPART-

MENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to establish separate appropriations subcommittees exclusive to the Department of Veterans Affairs in both the House and Senate. (Approved)

No. 658 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

COOPERATION WITH SBA'S OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, through its National Veterans Employment Office, be and is hereby authorized to enter into mutual agreements with the Office of Veterans' Affairs of the U. S. Small Business Administration, to promote, strengthen, and create veterans owned small businesses, and thereby foster employment opportunities for veterans of our military forces. (Approved)

No. 659 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

FUNDING OF SBA VETERANS PROGRAMS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the strengthening and funding of an effective veterans entrepreneurship program in the U. S. Small Business Administration. (Approved)

NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL

Chairman: Howard E. Vander Clute, Jr., Past Commander-in-Chief, New Jersey
Vice Chairman: Arthur J. Fellwock, Past Commander-in-Chief, Indiana

(Room 201, Upper Level, Commonwealth Convention Center)

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	Charles H. Ayers	2739
Alabama	Lester E. Kapelka	5850
Alaska	Leander P. Carr	9978
Arizona	John M. Jackson	3632
Arkansas	Bobby G. Julian	6527
Arkansas	Leslie King, Jr.	4554
Arkansas	Leslie F. Thone	3141
California	Walter Hamilton	7420

California	James Sehrt, Jr.	1934
Central America	Marion H. Lasater	3876
Colorado	Mike Bokan	1771
Colorado	Terrance D. Jacobson	3471
Connecticut	Edward L. Burnham	1724
Connecticut	Ronald Rusko	9460
Delaware	Paul R. Phillips, Jr.	2863
Delaware	Ira Truitt	7422
District of Columbia	Paul E. Wampler	284
Florida	Raymond D. Brennan, Jr	10131
Florida	James W. Carlisle	10097
Florida	Niel Ramsdell	11146
Georgia	T. D. Culpepper	5032
Georgia	John F. Gwizdak	5080
Georgia	Charles B. Stephenson	C of A
Idaho	A. R. Mason	6399
Illinois	William Regan	2377
Illinois	Vernon A. Soukup	8081
Illinois	John C. Vrtjak	1612
Indiana	Terrance Aubuchon	1563
Indiana	John L. Dahman	C of A
Iowa	Leslie G. Portwood	817
Kansas	Clyde H. Hatcher	1254
Kansas	John J. Stang	Past C-in-C
Kentucky	Leroy Ford	5480
Louisiana	Joseph Guidry	3121
Louisiana	Stanley Plessala	4222
Maine	Donald Libby	832
Maine	Peter Miesburger	9389
Maryland	Charles P. McConville	521
Massachusetts	Theodore R. Eaton	2104
Massachusetts	Roy A. Luppino	1645
Michigan	Assad Allie	147
Michigan	William P. Bennett	7573
Michigan	James VanHauter	4553
Minnesota	Michael Brainard	6587
Minnesota	James Connolly	4020
Minnesota	Robert E. Hansen	Past C-in-C
Mississippi	Leslie C. Blanchard	6731
Mississippi	J. Hollis Smith	C of A
Missouri	Marion B. Reynolds	5168
Missouri	Glenn Schaffer	11041
Montana	Tom Pouliot	1116
Nebraska	John Gollihare	1504
Nebraska	Billy Smith	7028
Nebraska	Dwaine Wilson	1652

Nevada	Frank Risewick	10047
New Hampshire	James McKinnon	8270
New Jersey	G. Bruce Eveland	7677
New Jersey	Frank Kvidahl	493
New Jersey	John Mooney	711
New Mexico	Lloyd E. Vanderhoof	3370
New York	Daniel Dwyer	161
New York	Elton Klein	478
New York	Charles Schnobrich	3068
North Carolina	Frank P. Durbino	9133
North Carolina	Preston F. Garris	2615
North Carolina	William J. Hendren	2031
North Dakota	Paul S. Aaberg	6139
Ohio	Lawrence Krugman	1079
Ohio	Greg Vela	7424
Oklahoma	Curtis O. Bohlman, M.D.	Surgeon General
Oklahoma	Jack E. Naifeh	577
Oregon	Samuel F. Jeffers	9745
Oregon	Doyle Souders	2807
Pacific Areas	Leon R. Vileo	9951
Pennsylvania	Benjamin Bowers	1690
Pennsylvania	Americo D. DiLoretto	C of A
Pennsylvania	Donald J. Gobbel	33
Pennsylvania	Frank J. Zenzer	676
Rhode Island	James R. Ross	6342
South Carolina	George M. Pullie	C of A
South Carolina	Johnnie C. Robinson	2889
South Dakota	James V. Becker	6481
South Dakota	William F. Cerny	9950
South Dakota	Ray Gallagher	2755
Tennessee	Joe A. Murphy, Jr.	1289
Tennessee	Roy C. Womble	C of A
Texas	Glen M. Gardner	3359
Texas	Robert J. Lyons	8246
Texas	Earnest G. Mudd	8541
Texas	David H. Slider	6441
Texas	F. E. Warden	8552
Utah	Donald B. Myers	8307
Vermont	Rene Rocheleau	778
Virginia	James L. Booth	2216
Virginia	Charles B. Wilkerson	9808
Washington	George F. Riedel	969
Washington	Neal Van Wieringen	1949
West Virginia	Richard W. Homan	Past C-in-C
West Virginia	Ralph W. Honaker	1064
Wisconsin	Steven D. Lawrence	10272

Wisconsin	Art Lunde	6498
Wisconsin	Edward F. Stockel	7896
Wyoming	Gary Mathisen	2221

COMMITTEE ON AMERICANISM AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Chairman: Eric Sandstrom, Past Commander-in-Chief, Washington
Vice Chairman: John M. Carney, Past Commander-in-Chief, Florida

(Room 210, Upper Level, Commonwealth Convention Center)

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	Thomas B. Dean	2760
Alabama	Oliver W. Dial	924
Alabama	James Green	4388
Alaska	William Timmons	9978
Arizona	John Halstead	3632
Arizona	Shirley Shaw	4647
California	Leondas Wright, Sr.	4647
Colorado	Alvin V. Collins	41
Colorado	James Fiedler	10578
Colorado	Robert L. Goltz	41
Colorado	Wayne J. Thompson	5961
Colorado	Richard Wellensiek	4171
Connecticut	Richard Marshall	3263
Connecticut	Bruce Messenger	9929
Connecticut	Dominic Romano	7330
Delaware	David F. Butters	475
Delaware	William T. Robbins	3420
District of Columbia	L. Anderson	284
District of Columbia	Flora V. Moore	284
Europe	Pearce C. Bybee	10557
Europe	Clinton Townsend	10692
Florida	Charles R. Clemons	2032
Florida	John Crane	4407
Florida	Earl Heath	4705
Florida	Robert A. McDade	9236
Florida	Edwin H. Shuman	4256
Florida	LeRoy A. Zigmund	4209
Georgia	William R. Johnson	658
Georgia	Lynn Wilcox	665
Hawaii	Roland Lum	94
Hawaii	Nicholas S. Young	1540
Idaho	Randall E. Russell	C of A
Illinois	Joseph Berg	5691
Illinois	Eugene J. Karban	7980

Illinois . . . . . .Richard Kutz 2486
Illinois . . . . . .Robert J. McMahon 2298
Illinois . . . . . .Thomas Morgan 1592

Indiana	George R. Ensley	10006
Indiana	John Etsinger	985
Indiana	Vincent Gumulauskis	1563
Indiana	David Lantz	1130
Indiana	Dwight Smith	6904
Iowa	Muriel E. Allan	3633
Iowa	Roger Schwieso	941
Iowa	Gary Williams	5459
Kansas	Daniel Pestinger	1432
Kansas	McKinley Smith	8773
Kentucky	Ronald Myers	1096
Kentucky	Joe C. Oliver	4075
Louisiana	Wilton J. Aucoin	4222
Louisiana	Lincoln J. Savoie	5153
Maine	Joseph H. Gallant	832
Maine	Arthur J. Roy	C of A
Maine	George A. Vokey	6859
Maryland	Tomas F. Bunting	2562
Massachusetts	Frank J. Coombes	2394
Massachusetts	T. George Kotros	1526
Massachusetts	William J. Madera	1702
Massachusetts	William T. McCarthy	3439
Massachusetts	Cornelius Sharron	9566
Massachusetts	Donald M. Smith	1526
Massachusetts	Frank J. Tucker	10339
Michigan	Val Lemoncelli	552
Michigan	James Warner	1888
Minnesota	Dave Adams	1782
Minnesota	Calvin D. Ferber	612
Minnesota	Francis J. Ginther	210
Minnesota	Gordon Kirk	8854
Mississippi	Glenn Patterson	6473
Mississippi	Raymond Tox	4057
Missouri	Jack P. Adams	3404
Missouri	Charles Earls	3777
Missouri	Robert Newell	1738
Montana	Robert C. Smith	3177
Nebraska	Vern E. Hoffart	131
Nebraska	Norbert Koenig	247
Nebraska	Eugene Kuhn	10718
Nebraska	James J. Pacas	4836
Nevada	Michael Musgrove	2350
Nevada	Herbert Tellkamp	2313
New Hampshire	William Champagne	1698
New Jersey	Manuel Almedia	2226
New Jersey	Robert Bischoff	9691

New Jersey	George Goodrich	4410
New Jersey	Dominic Lombardelli	809
New Mexico	Lawrence R. Frappier	3015
New Mexico	Robert L. Riddle	10763
New York	Ron Bush	6433
New York	Harold Leavor	9487
New York	Jack I. Simons	9217
North Carolina	Cecil E. Sanders	891
North Dakota	Kent Anderson	9068
North Dakota	Robert Volk	1868
Ohio	Ray Bayless	9520
Ohio	Eugene C. Cook	693
Ohio	Joe Ferencie	1863
Ohio	Frank Hofstetter	2947
Ohio	Dan Long	1069
Ohio	Ralph Rhue	9294
Oklahoma	Paul Niedzwiecki	15037
Oklahoma	Earnest Staton	10876
Oregon	Johnnie Baugh	1383
Oregon	Ed L. Williams	10644
Pacific Areas	Frank J. Sass	10216
Pennsylvania	John Adamecz, Jr.	245
Pennsylvania	Wiliam C. Allen	213
Pennsylvania	Frank Lopes	92
Pennsylvania	Donald Mills	6241
Pennsylvania	Norman Rettig	249
Rhode Island	Manuel V. Oliver	329
South Carolina	James Hammond	4262
South Carolina	Louis A. Thornton	4262
South Dakota	James E. Fortin	750
South Dakota	Howard J. Hermanson	791
South Dakota	Larry L. Scudder	1273
South Dakota	John W. Youngberg	5807
Tennessee	Charles F. Bearden	1289
Texas	Bobby J. Burton	3216
Texas	Charles L. Cannon, Jr.	5076
Texas	W. T. Evans	4372
Texas	E. J. Krenek	8787
Texas	George B. Sparkman	9181
Texas	Donald L. Wright	8134
Utah	Aaron Crosman	7398
Vermont	Clifton E. La Plante	782
Vermont	James H. Lane	6689
Vermont	Kevin Maloney	6689
Virginia	Luther E. Anderson	392
Virginia	James E. Higgins	7059

Washington	Richard Petersen	10018
Washington	Delbert W. Underwood	9476
West Virginia	Scottie E. King	1064
West Virginia	Donel C. Kinnard	9097
West Virginia	Ralph Stump	2716
Wisconsin	Ken Dorow	9469
Wisconsin	Michael Furgal	2312
Wisconsin	John Miller	9537
Wyoming	Charles Ellingwood	4343

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

Chairman: George R. Cramer, Past Commander-in-Chief, Illinois
Vice Chairman: Ted C. Connell, Past Commander-in-Chief, Texas

(Room 107, Lower Level, Commonwealth Convention Center)

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	Travis Ledbetter	3016
Alabama	Jimmy Manley	4765
Alabama	Tommy G. Richardson	2760
Alaska	Robert Green	1685
Alaska	Robert Klotz	9785
Arizona	William S. Fisher	720
Arizona	Frank Page	9399
Arkansas	M. O. Cowley	2259
Arkansas	Bobby Hoggard	4517
Arkansas	Charles O. Wright	8347
California	H. John Flanery	85
California	Lenny Herrst	1961
California	Vernon Hollins, Sr.	5394
California	Kenneth Murray	2075
Colorado	Ray Ammerman	3631
Colorado	Darrell D. Elliott	1771
Connecticut	John W. Ledwith	2849
Connecticut	Natt McIntire	1672
Connecticut	Loren Owen	10219
Delaware	Richard D. Dundee	7234
Delaware	Gerald Fournier	7234
District of Columbia	Kenneth J. Allen, Jr.	341
District of Columbia	George A. Lange, Jr.	284
Europe	Norman J. Hirschman	10592
Florida	Alex Damalas	10097
Florida	John E. Hamilton	7909
Florida	Ron G. Lee	7987
Florida	Robert P. Loftus	4643

Florida	Kenneth A. Thie	9272
Georgia	Edward P. Grealish, Jr.	3200
Georgia	Roy L. Jordan	6686
Georgia	Robert K. Nelson	3200
Hawaii	James W. O'Brien	8616
Idaho	Emmett Olmstead	2072
Illinois	Russell D. Helmers	5915
Illinois	Edward Jarnell, Jr	8081
Illinois	Edward Ward	3480
Indiana	David Havely	5864
Indiana	Jerry B. McIntyre	2695
Iowa	Patrick Shanahan	788
Iowa	James Shelton	941
Kansas	Robert Sander	1751
Kentucky	Aaron N. Cardwell	4075
Kentucky	Roy M. Heirakuji	1913
Louisiana	Cecil Mills	2238
Louisiana	Landry Saucier	1736
Maine	Wallace Berard	1285
Maryland	John J. Gistedt	2678
Maryland	Thomas J. Hercek	467
Maryland	Robert L. Miedzinski	2632
Massachusetts	Thomas Brennick	834
Massachusetts	Albert J. Konan	523
Massachusetts	Thomas Landry	697
Massachusetts	Robert E. Llewellyn	1526
Michigan	Donald E. Bell	8802
Michigan	Robert Faidley	7309
Michigan	Colon P. Laney	1071
Michigan	Jack C. Stevens	2358
Minnesota	Harold Genrich	1222
Minnesota	Merlin O. Hanson	1639
Minnesota	Lester G. Orton	363
Mississippi	Bill Hoyt	4272
Mississippi	Jerry D. Moyers	3373
Missouri	Paul Connors	30
Missouri	Chester Doile	6272
Missouri	Charles R. Hauer	6840
Montana	Earl E. Chase	1548
Montana	Charles A. Larsen	1116
Montana	Elred M. Teeples	4042
Nebraska	Carl L. Eby	2503
Nebraska	Earl Stiner, Jr.	3421
Nevada	LeRoy J. Heath	10047
New Hampshire	Michael Annis	2860
New Hampshire	Robert St. Onge	8214

New Jersey	Cosmo DeVincenzo	809
New Jersey	Fred Madsen	2636
New Jersey	Harry Morecroft	6061
New Mexico	James C. Anderson	401
New Mexico	Stanley W. Johnston	3277
New Mexico	Frederick H. Smalley	3221
New York	Wilbur Gray	1602
New York	John Scherer	1372
North Carolina	Johnie M. Dyson	9881
North Dakota	Wallace Bolte	1326
Ohio	Darwin Beyer	693
Ohio	Robert Cockrell	1082
Ohio	Ray Conlin	1069
Ohio	Keith Harman	30335
Oklahoma	Gene Langston	3573
Oklahoma	Truman Odell	539
Oregon	Alfred Foust	4273
Oregon	Merlin Pepion	3440
Pacific Areas	Roy L. Banning	10216
Pacific Areas	Clifton Wilsey	2485
Pennsylvania	Thomas Millhouse	2435
Pennsylvania	Howard Stegemann	598
Rhode Island	Benjamin Pezza	4651
South Carolina	Melvin L. Emore	3034
South Carolina	Eugene Moore	641
South Dakota	Stanley E. Seymour	5860
South Dakota	Tom M. Sherman	3342
South Dakota	William H. Tarrell	1640
Tennessee	Gail Wilson	5156
Texas	J. Gene Bond	2147
Texas	C. W. Buchanan	3892
Texas	Buford E. Hudson	2147
Texas	Charles S. Pearson	1533
Texas	Manuel O. Rivas	C of A
Utah	Thomas Kennedy	3586
Utah	Virgil Reiske	4918
Vermont	Curtis E. Brown	758
Vermont	W. Tom Myette	9653
Virginia	Otis N. Berry	637
Virginia	John L. Fanshaw, Jr.	7819
Virginia	Tommy W. Hines	7166
Washington	James W. King	3067
Washington	Edwin F. Rasmussen	9430
West Virginia	Billy E. Javins	8129
West Virginia	Eugene Patrick	3856
West Virginia	John F. Payne	3466

Wisconsin	Ervin R. Antoniewicz	9469
Wisconsin	Joel Walker	1904
Wyoming	William Saunders	579

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

Chairman: Ray R. Soden, Past Commander-in-Chief, Illinois
Vice Chairman: Clyde A. Lewis, Past Commander-in-Chief, New York

(Room 207, Upper Level, Commonwealth Convention Center)

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	Jack F. Ivy	2702
Alabama	Aubrey C. McClure	6073
Alaska	Marcus Butler	10252
Alaska	Gerald J. Dorsher	5559
Alaska	Horace Johnson	9978
Arizona	Forrest Barker	1796
Arizona	Donald Maynard	7968
Arizona	R. Bennett Smith	549
Arkansas	Leroy Moore	5742
Arkansas	Raymond Smorol	4513
California	Richard Eubank	10165
California	James Lambert	8547
California	Richard Lussier	3834
California	Terry Reeder	10110
Central America	John R. O'Keefe	3822
Colorado	Darrell Anderson	2551
Colorado	Gerald Norman	6403
Connecticut	Edward S. Banas, Sr.	C of A
Connecticut	Robert A. Chartier	4608
Connecticut	Andrew F. Flanagan	10219
Connecticut	Nelson Foss	2046
Delaware	Clarence Burris, Jr.	8801
District of Columbia	Jose Aguilar	5471
District of Columbia	Helen Jeffrey	346
Europe	George W. Eby	10692
Europe	Harold Hedges	10692
Europe	Richard A. Maryland	9845
Florida	John Fogarty	8681
Florida	Paul Y. Goldych	4256
Florida	James F. Reynolds	10167
Florida	Edward Villialume	6827
Georgia	Fred Bollenberg	3200
Georgia	Ray E. Brooks	2785
Georgia	Robert W. Pickens	4706

Hawaii . . . . . .John H. Chung, Jr. 2875
Hawaii . . . . . .Jesus L. Lagueras 10850
Hawaii . . . . . .Frederick A. Wong 1540
Idaho . . . . . .Andrew Novosad 9443
Idaho . . . . . .Robert Wayment 10328
Illinois . . . . . .Eddie J. Griffith 1301
Illinois . . . . . .John W. Johnston 7190
Illinois . . . . . .George R. Lobb 3579
Indiana . . . . . .Roger Baker 6841
Indiana . . . . . .R. L. Johanningsmeier 1257
Indiana . . . . . .Leo R. Reller 2366
Indiana . . . . . .Charles Scott 261
Indiana . . . . . .E. Spencer Walton Judge Advocate General
Iowa . . . . . .Robert C. Peters 5981
Kansas . . . . . .Richard Hill 9764
Kansas . . . . . .Kenneth Mueller 6401
Kansas . . . . . .Charley Shoemaker 56
Kansas . . . . . .Lawrence Tholen 2864
Kentucky . . . . . .John Hofstetter 3205
Kentucky . . . . . .Con E. Virgin 1168
Louisiana . . . . . .Tom W. Byrd 3619
Louisiana . . . . . .Floyd Landeche 3665
Maine . . . . . .Ralph T. Danby 832
Maine . . . . . .John N. Trembley 3381
Maryland . . . . . .Clayton A. Deaver 1858
Maryland . . . . . .James Lohman 9619
Massachusetts . . . . . .John O. Beal 1857
Massachusetts . . . . . .Walter G. Gansenberg 834
Massachusetts . . . . . .Michael J. Imbracsio 639
Massachusetts . . . . . .Stanley T. King 2346
Massachusetts . . . . . .Wilfred E. Roberts, Jr. 697
Massachusetts . . . . . .Rudolph N. Sibilio 144
Massachusetts . . . . . .David K. Somers 1645
Massachusetts . . . . . .Francis L. Sweeney 486
Michigan . . . . . .Kenneth Bieskie 3672
Michigan . . . . . .Eric L. Halvorsen 5065
Michigan . . . . . .Jerry Kilburn 4034
Michigan . . . . . .Richard LaFave 5670
Minnesota . . . . . .Patrick T. Bohmer 246
Minnesota . . . . . .Timothy Collier 295
Minnesota . . . . . .Ted Theodorsen 6320
Minnesota . . . . . .Frank Volk 2717
Mississippi . . . . . .H. C. Craig 3373
Mississippi . . . . . .Marvell Lowery 10024
Mississippi . . . . . .Donald Verucchi 9573
Missouri . . . . . .James E. Gill 2657

Missouri	John C. Krug	2210
Missouri	Marion Meier	5553
Montana	Ken Handl	2154
Nebraska	Anthony J. Gallardo	131
Nebraska	Lewis Hoobler	3606
Nevada	Russell Forbes	3819
Nevada	Daryl L. Mobley	3630
New Hampshire	Robert Madigan	483
New Hampshire	Raymond Thibeault	11254
New Jersey	James Campbell	2226
New Jersey	George T. Christenson	4949
New Jersey	William A. Goode	809
New Jersey	George J. Lisicki	C of A
New Jersey	Raymond H. Skinner	1838
New Jersey	George VanAllen	7504
New Mexico	Clyde Arsbon	3274
New Mexico	Tyrone M. Benson	7686
New Mexico	James H. Ferguson	C of A
New Mexico	David C. Wimmer	7686
New York	Neil Connolly	7227
New York	Michael Heiman	2535
New York	Vincent Siesta	546
North Carolina	Daniel A. Murphy	9100
North Dakota	John L. Strauss	1868
Ohio	Cliff Bauer	3360
Ohio	James Comedy	3383
Ohio	Herbert L. Hines	8445
Ohio	Raymond Mallett	1058
Ohio	George W. Marks	352
Oklahoma	William P. Beane	4977
Oklahoma	Daniel E. Bennett	1189
Oregon	John Nathan	4248
Pacific Areas	Kenneth W. Schaefer	2485
Pennsylvania	Neale Deibler	6493
Pennsylvania	Charles Feltenberger	2435
Pennsylvania	Charles A. Skalos	2754
Pennsylvania	Robert Snyder	6954
Pennsylvania	L. E. Stone	1718
Rhode Island	Armondo C. Azzinaro	C of A
Rhode Island	Anthony J. Scudieri	172
Rhode Island	Arthur W. Williams	183
South Carolina	John D. Patty	9539
South Carolina	George E. Watts	5208
South Dakota	DeLane E. Fickbohm	6149
South Dakota	Ralph J. Haas	791
South Dakota	Eugene Rottenbucher	2730

Tennessee	David Wilson	4848
Texas	William R. Ruckman	2494
Texas	Lavern H. Terbl	9168
Texas	William B. Warren	8564
Texas	Ron Wilfong	1798
Utah	John A. Jones	8307
Vermont	John J. Millerick	1034
Vermont	John J. Zuba	786
Virginia	Herman R. Fitzgerald	2216
Virginia	Kenneth A. Ward	7327
Washington	Robert H. Berleen	9430
Washington	Donald E. Bracken	2289
Washington	Andrew Martin	10018
West Virginia	James M. Burkhart	1212
West Virginia	Carl L. Stewart	629
Wisconsin	Bernard J. Boyle	C of A
Wisconsin	Robert George	6498
Wisconsin	Mike McPhail	9362
Wisconsin	John Schultz	6377
Wyoming	Herb J. Carstens	7756
Wyoming	Pete Quinell	7756

COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Chairman: Allen F. Kent, Past Commander-in-Chief, Arizona
Vice Chairman: R. D. Smith, Jr., Past Commander-in-Chief, Georgia

(Room 208, Upper Level, Commonwealth Convention Center)

SUBCOMMITTEE ON POW/MIA

Chairman: Billy Ray Cameron, Past Commander-in-Chief, North Carolina
Vice Chairman: Robert E. Wallace, Past Commander-in-Chief, New Jersey

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	Gerald Brock	2702
Alabama	Clyde Maddox	5658
Alabama	Benjamin R. Minshew	49
Alaska	John Guinn	10041
Alaska	James Ruotsala	5559
Arizona	Bernard P. Fabritz	7401
Arizona	John Knowles	2364
Arizona	Dennis O'Neil	720
Arkansas	Garnett E. Bell	11011
Arkansas	John Bostic	2283
Arkansas	Ron L. Helton	9095

Arkansas	Charles Wilkison	4554
California	Richard Pignone	3173
California	Pete Sozzoni	1900
California	Kenneth Stevens	9223
California	Harry Tanabe	9879
California	Joe Velasquez	5059
Central America	Dannie Cooper	3822
Central America	Walter F. Griggs	3835
Colorado	John M. Loring, Jr.	9221
Colorado	Vincent Neuroth	9644
Connecticut	Burdett P. Flynn	10060
Connecticut	Donald O'Connor	9066
Connecticut	Thomas C. Walker	Past C-in-C
Connecticut	William Woodbury	1724
Delaware	Tom Nagle	3238
Delaware	Benjamin Pernol, Jr.	C of A
Delaware	Ralph Trader, Jr.	2863
District of Columbia	John P. Breen	2979
District of Columbia	Mitchell A. Mabardy	346
Europe	Todd H. Ota	3885
Europe	Dean White	27
Florida	John N. Fabbro	4206
Florida	Richard Fitzgerald	7721
Florida	Raymond G. Gaouette	8681
Florida	Todd W. Hansford	4353
Florida	Eugene R. Manfrey	C of A
Florida	Donald C. Miller	10097
Georgia	J. Morris Pickens	4706
Georgia	Johnnie M. Shiver	4830
Hawaii	Norbert K. Enos	C of A
Hawaii	Richard J. Haake	3850
Hawaii	Paul K. Kenolio	3850
Idaho	Ralph Hollingsworth	3296
Illinois	Maurice H. Kerckhove	2153
Illinois	Gerald Lee	4183
Illinois	Russell R. Rieke, Sr.	C of A
Illinois	Michael J. Spagnoletti	6869
Indiana	Leo W. Farnsley	3281
Indiana	George Magurany	802
Indiana	Michael Smith	2999
Indiana	Lenas Weisheit	1114
Iowa	Donald Fisher	6172
Iowa	Arthur Weber	1623
Kansas	Thomas Montgomery	112
Kansas	Norman G. Staab	Past C-in-C
Kansas	Raymond Wells	8773

Kentucky	Clarence R. Adkins	10017
Kentucky	Carl Forman	5421
Louisiana	Patrick E. Carr	Past C-in-C
Louisiana	John Lutz	6640
Louisiana	R. V. Martin	8973
Louisiana	William M. Procter	1736
Maine	Chase M. Libby	6859
Maine	Jean D. Nadeau	3335
Maryland	William E. Berry	6694
Maryland	Joseph F. Rosetta	9619
Massachusetts	Roland F. Durrell	1272
Massachusetts	Jere L. Hill	2425
Massachusetts	Rev. John F. Leonard	639
Massachusetts	Francis Powers	7272
Massachusetts	Tyler Thomas	144
Massachusetts	Leroy Williams	Inspector General
Michigan	Dale J. Brubaker	3941
Michigan	James N. Goldsmith	4139
Michigan	John J. Harrow, Jr	3724
Michigan	Jay W. Kotcher	9809
Michigan	Elmer J. Wurster	7546
Minnesota	Joe J. Mach	210
Minnesota	Joe McArthur	8520
Minnesota	Dean E. Means	C of A
Minnesota	John S. Staum	Past C-in-C
Minnesota	James D. Vetter	4020
Minnesota	Larry G. Ziebarth	6843
Mississippi	Dewey King	4889
Mississippi	Prentiss Nelson	4490
Missouri	Eugene L. Hoeltge	5077
Missouri	James R. Mueller	5077
Missouri	Calvin Vogelsang	3838
Montana	Louie A. Kuylen	4099
Montana	Robert T. Merrill	Past C-in-C
Montana	William H. Miller	9250
Nebraska	Jack L. Armagost	C of A
Nebraska	Kenneth R. Collins	7029
Nebraska	Vernon L. Fleshman	3755
Nebraska	John R. Liebsack	2503
Nebraska	Dan G. Petersen	131
Nevada	James Childers	3848
Nevada	Randall Morris	2313
New Hampshire	Robert Crout-Hamel	1772
New Hampshire	Jerry A. Parenti	8546
New Jersey	Frank DeLorenzo	6257
New Jersey	Fred DiPietro	8840

New Jersey	Pierre Lamereaux	2314
New Mexico	Albino B. Fajardo	4293
New York	Arthur E. Koch, III	6780
New York	Joseph Kreuzer	2940
New York	Samuel Pilato	307
New York	Rev. Albert G. Salmon	6912
North Carolina	Michael T. Burris	2615
North Carolina	A. G. Parker	8719
North Dakota	Joseph Shoman	7564
Ohio	James Dickens	5532
Ohio	Roger McGlinch, Sr.	4239
Ohio	Father George Rinkowski	5530
Ohio	Terry Roan	C of A
Ohio	Joseph Seibert	6428
Ohio	Dr. John Wasylik	Past C-in-C
Oklahoma	Daniel M. Davies, Jr.	4876
Oklahoma	James E. Newman, Sr.	C of A
Oklahoma	James Williamson	1189
Oregon	H. Merle Jackson	2471
Oregon	Patrick Jordan	4248
Pacific Areas	Thomas I. Elliott	9467
Pacific Areas	John F. Welsh	8180
Pennsylvania	Frank C. Hilton	Past C-in-C
Pennsylvania	Paul Kopp	8896
Pennsylvania	Almon J. Long	283
Pennsylvania	Anthony J. Longo	5205
Pennsylvania	Gary Moon	631
Rhode Island	John J. Barone	8955
South Carolina	William J. Jolin	6087
South Carolina	Arthur D. Mann	10420
South Dakota	Walter F. Joynt	1273
South Dakota	William J. Radigan	3061
South Dakota	Duane E. Starkey	2969
Tennessee	James A. Hartley	4893
Texas	Charles Howard	3393
Texas	M. John Knapp	2544
Texas	Chuck E. Sinclair	8905
Texas	Paul L. Smith	3990
Texas	Robert Speake	1922
Texas	Peter Stack	4344
Utah	Duane Hall	5560
Utah	Benito G. Russo	3586
Vermont	Merritt Edwards	782
Vermont	Kevin Maloney	6689
Vermont	Everett McCabe	2571
Virginia	Georgia E. McCracken	C of A

Virginia	Walter F. Collins	4809
Virginia	Orville W. Teter	3103
Washington	Thomas J. Asaif, Sr.	2995
Washington	Krist Huseby, III	969
West Virginia	Russell E. Hanlin	6735
West Virginia	Calvin L. Moran	4326
West Virginia	Paul E. Nealis	1101
West Virginia	James E. Taylor	4326
Wisconsin	Roy J. Friedel	1904
Wisconsin	James Jolliffe	2260
Wisconsin	Robert Yerks	6498
Wyoming	Charles E. Fresorger	C of A
Wyoming	Ralph Logan	2311
Wyoming	Arthur L. Rymill	2918

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

Chairman: Walter G. Hogan, Past Commander-in-Chief, Wisconsin
Vice Chairman: John W. Mahan, Past Commander-in-Chief, Montana

(Room 218, Upper Level, Commonwealth Convention Center)

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	Jerry Cole	5846
Alabama	Clarence A. Gardner	3407
Alabama	Charles Stephens	3128
Alaska	Robert Anderson	10252
Alaska	Gary Kurpius	10221
Arizona	Fred Chapman	1760
Arizona	Manuel Ferra	3516
Arizona	William Silva	836
Arizona	Ronald L. Slater	9829
Arkansas	James Ford	3031
Arkansas	John Foster	2278
California	Robert Etheridge	2073
California	Pat O'Connor	2967
California	Raymond C. Sisk	C of A
California	Jerry Williams	7636
Central America	Donald Neely	3822
Central America	David Waites	6565
Colorado	George H. Palmateer	4171
Colorado	Douglas H. Raymond	9565
Connecticut	Ronald Christopher	5095
Connecticut	Benjamin T. Lord	5095
Connecticut	Michael Montecalvo	6933
Connecticut	Glenn Tewksbury	10362

Delaware	Walter Kula	3257
Delaware	William G. Schaen	475
District of Columbia	A. Leo Anderson	284
Europe	Wylie K. Miller	11281
Europe	Bruce A. Withers	10436
Florida	James DePass	10068
Florida	Stephen J. Kennedy	8152
Florida	Donald L. Pierce	8696
Florida	James Talbert	8093
Georgia	Richard Branson	5080
Georgia	General M. Crumley	7720
Hawaii	Kevin Bradley	94
Hawaii	Frank Lamson	970
Idaho	T. C. Brock	10444
Illinois	Rick Frank	1461
Illinois	John Leary	8739
Illinois	Walter C. Luksta	9115
Illinois	Edward A. Trennert	2255
Indiana	Paul Curtice	1257
Indiana	Robert Jenkins	6919
Indiana	James J. Thiel	717
Indiana	Joe Yost	3281
Iowa	Dowd J. Brandt	9662
Iowa	W. P. Shannon	733
Iowa	Daryl Shinker	2349
Kansas	Thomas Sanko	1714
Kansas	Leon Shaw	704
Kentucky	Raymond J. Barnes	1913
Kentucky	Homer Brown, Jr.	5484
Louisiana	Jack Coursey	5951
Louisiana	Gervous R. Lambright	3619
Maine	Timothy Getz	3335
Maine	Kenneth S. Snow, Jr.	6977
Maryland	Thomas E. Ryan	10080
Maryland	Alfred N. Simmons	8509
Massachusetts	James J. Busa	1272
Massachusetts	Robert Malmberg	1526
Massachusetts	Gardner S. McWilliams	2425
Massachusetts	Anthony B. Piscopo	529
Massachusetts	Joseph V. Riley	1093
Massachusetts	John T. Tynan	561
Michigan	Wayne A. Buck	1888
Michigan	Edmund R. Gucwa	6896
Michigan	Harvey P. Krug, Jr.	116
Minnesota	Daniel Bartholomew	3144
Minnesota	Thomas L. Hanson	1639

Minnesota	Joseph Hartel	4847
Minnesota	Richard A. Zierdt	6587
Mississippi	David Grimes	4057
Mississippi	Bob L. Keeling	4486
Mississippi	Otis Washington	9832
Missouri	William Merideth	5366
Missouri	David Morgan	5331
Montana	Erich J. Maki	4149
Nebraska	Gary C. Krause	2503
Nebraska	George Lee	1652
Nebraska	Hugh B. Morris	3606
Nevada	James L. Martin	3819
Nevada	George Reichard	8250
New Hampshire	John M. Lilly	1698
New Hampshire	John W. Smart	Chief of Staff
New Hampshire	Joseph Tomasino	8546
New Jersey	Howard Siverson	4374
New Mexico	Allan W. Kuchinsky	7686
New Mexico	Roland G. LaFrance, Sr.	10124
New Mexico	Joe D. Salas	401
New York	Ralph U. DeMarco	C of A
New York	Paul Dyer	7290
New York	Melvin Garrett	6396
New York	William McGarr	6196
New York	Mario Raimondi	7868
North Carolina	Harlan LaBar	2057
North Dakota	Arnold Maier	1326
North Dakota	Earl Redlin	3545
Ohio	Bob Johnson	8850
Ohio	Myron Young	9571
Oklahoma	Johnie Asbury	1334
Oklahoma	R. F. Sadler	1189
Oregon	C. George Anderson	2666
Pacific Areas	Charles Clay	1509
Pacific Areas	Earl W. Hanson	9555
Pennsylvania	John Gunn	2506
Pennsylvania	George W. Mullen	4480
Pennsylvania	Joseph Salvo	5267
Pennsylvania	John Thomas	128
Pennsylvania	Ronald Tyler, Sr	1462
Rhode Island	John A. Bucci	10011
South Carolina	M. Hugh Gunter, Jr.	8738
South Carolina	Richard L. Mayhew	641
South Carolina	Teofolio Rivas	641
South Dakota	Darrell K. Foell	3342
South Dakota	William A. Hollmann	7319

South Dakota	Glenn D. McFarland	3312
Tennessee	Cooper T. Holt	Past C-in-C
Tennessee	R. P. Locke	5066
Tennessee	John Scott	4848
Texas	Ernest M. Harper	3377
Texas	R. Earl Lord	10351
Texas	Manual Mays	9191
Utah	Kenneth Bezzant	7398
Utah	Gary L. Clark	C of A
Utah	James Payett	7442
Vermont	Brad Reynolds	798
Vermont	Donald R. Young	10038
Virginia	Henry E. Cluney	4809
Virginia	John E. Dodge	1503
Washington	Gordon Davis	11270
Washington	Kenneth M. Harrison	1135
West Virginia	Robert J. Milby	6450
Wisconsin	William Backes	8320
Wisconsin	Tony Eulo	6498
Wisconsin	Max Schoedel	9469
Wisconsin	William Steifvater	659
Wisconsin	Bruce Wiese	8057
Wyoming	A. L. Ellefson	7756
Wyoming	Kenneth Weber	2918

COMMITTEE ON CREDENTIALS

Chairman: Richard Trombla, Post 1174, Kansas

Department	Name	Post No.
Delaware	Elwood B. Rickards	7234
Illinois	James L. Mascola	3580
Minnesota	James H. Kennedy	3877
Missouri	James H. Willis	534

COMMITTEE ON CONVENTION RULES

Chairman: Clifford G. Olson, Jr., Past Commander-in-Chief, Massachusetts
Vice Chairman: James L. Kimery, Past Commander-in-Chief, New Mexico

(Room 102, Lower Level, Commonwealth Convention Center)

REPORTS OF THE NATIONAL OFFICERS

Commander-in-Chief

Paul A. Spera

In every sphere of veterans affairs - at home and abroad - those of you in the field made the VFW's voice heard loud and clear this past year. As a consequence, the organization's influence was evident on Capitol Hill.

The future of the VA health care system has been in the eye of a political storm for nearly two years. By sponsoring eligibility reform legislation in the 104th Congress, VFW took a giant leap in assuring VA medical care into the 21st century.

As that legislation weaves its way through the labyrinth of congressional hallways, you must remain steadfast in lobbying your respective representatives and senators. Keep in mind the distinct advantage at hand during an election year. Our ability to sway Congress is at its peak.

No matter what your personal political party preference, it is imperative that you exercise your franchise. Politicians must perceive unity among veterans on fundamental issues. And preserving and making more accessible VA hospitals is one issue behind which most of us can unite.

So during this presidential contest, which will shift into high gear after our convention concludes in Louisville, VFW must mobilize its electorate like never before. Each veteran's vote does make a difference. The slightest of margins in many elections have profoundly altered the course of major policies.

If the VFW-PAC, National Legislative Service or the Action Corps can be of assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to utilize any or all of them. Questions regarding a candidate's voting record and bills vital to veterans can be readily answered.

DOMESTIC AGENDA

While overhauling the VA medical system has topped the VFW's agenda, other important issues have been addressed as well. Attention has been focused on Persian Gulf Syndrome and Agent Orange, for example. Just recently, compensation was authorized for more cancers attributed to herbicide exposure in Vietnam.

The fight for benefits continues, too. Cost-of-living allowances (COLAs) for military retirees were debated often. The VFW was always there to make sure they were not diminished in the rush to cut the budget. A host of issues, in fact, were tied to the effort to balance the budget. In the end, the VA was spared severe losses in money and personnel.

This was in no small part due to the efforts not only of your lobbying team in Washington, but to the thousands of volunteers at the grassroots level who persevered in contacting their representatives in Congress. Clearly, the power of the often-derided "veterans lobby" is not mythical.

Attention to the concerns of active duty personnel also is paramount. You don't have to look into a crystal ball to predict that the organization's future constituency will come from today's all-volunteer, career-oriented

armed forces.

That's why responding to their needs has to be automatic. When some in Congress attempted to raise the individual's contribution to the Montgomery GI Bill, the VFW rose to defeat them.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Defense topics arose in relation to China/Taiwan and Cuba in 1996, and the VFW responded quickly in accordance with the dictates of its resolutions. But it was the civil war in Bosnia and the dispatch of GIs there that headed the list on foreign fronts.

While we opposed U.S. military intervention based on past experiences in Somalia and Lebanon, Posts - as they always do - rallied to the support of the Army units in the field. Packages and letters flowed to GIs, boosting morale and demonstrating solidarity among several generations of overseas veterans.

In late June, I visited Bosnia as part of a veterans organizations' delegation. My two days there convinced me that the 1st Armored Division and all other elements of Task Force Eagle can adequately handle any contingency. Still, they should be home by Christmas as promised.

For their service, the VFW believes Bosnia veterans should be properly recognized with the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM). Only the prestige the AFEM carries will accord them the respect they deserve.

Keeping faith with soldiers of all eras is essential. That's why the VFW never loses sight of casualties from past wars. Relations with Communist Vietnam and North Korea revolve around a full accounting of Americans lost in the Vietnam and Korean wars.

Diplomatic initiatives aimed at Hanoi must be coupled with safeguards that each U.S. concession will be matched with an increased information flow from the field and Vietnamese archives. The same holds true for North Korea. Though progress has been made with the North, its leaders remain largely recalcitrant.

Internationally and nationally, every VFW accomplishment is the direct result of your efforts. As I end my tenure as Commander-in-Chief, let me thank my home Post, Department of Massachusetts, Eastern Conference, Ladies Auxiliary, Kansas City and Washington staffs and Jim Nier and John Moon for answering the Call to Duty.

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief

James E. Nier

Serving on the Call to Duty team has been a most gratifying and invaluable experience. Thanks to all involved for making this possible over the past year.

It soon became obvious that the key to VFW's success on all fronts is continuity. A common agenda must be established at the outset by all

national chair officers. Only by picking up where a predecessor left off can the organization hope to realize its goals.

Long-term planning is essential. Though a chair officer's term spans only one year, he must constantly think of the future. In this age, it can require years of lobbying to institute change or pass a piece of legislation. That's precisely why a team effort is essential.

As you are all well aware, eligibility reform of the VA medical system has headed the list of priorities for years. Legislation was finally introduced in 1996 to open access for more veterans. This must remain the primary objective for whomever leads the VFW until it becomes reality.

Other health-related issues are of concern, too. Presumptive compensation for veterans suffering from Agent Orange exposure, ionizing radiation and the malady known as the Persian Gulf Syndrome is warranted. VFW supports whatever research and laws are necessary to assist them.

Continuing battles over the budget, especially concerning the VA, will remain of keen interest. Though the VA as an institution enjoys widespread support, we must keep vigilant. As the number of veterans in Congress drops, that support will diminish.

MANNING THE RAMPARTS

As a recent article in VFW magazine pointed out, we live in an "era of savage peace." Despite the end of the Cold War, defense preparedness is no less important. What that demands are armed forces manned by volunteers who are properly compensated and superbly armed.

If they are going to serve in places like Bosnia and other potential hot spots such as the Golan Heights on the Israel- Syria frontier, they must be the best-equipped and best- trained in the world.

Speaking of global military interventions - the recent tendency has been to commit U.S. troops and prestige to peacekeeping missions that should be the U.N.'s responsibility. Somalia, where a humanitarian operation evolved into a military one, is a case in point.

These types of operations not only drain the defense budget but dull the edge of combat units designed to act aggressively. National interests - not humanitarian impulses - should dictate the use of our precious resources.

Thank you to all members in the field who have been so supportive of me during my travels this year. I look forward to working with you in the future and to achieving many worthwhile goals.

Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief

John E. Moon

Helping to lead the VFW is a privilege. In my present capacity, I have been able to apply what I learned during many years in the Department of Ohio and on the National Council of Administration.

Those lessons guided me in 1995-96 and will continue to do so as long

as I am active in the VFW. Dealing with people and their concerns is something to which I have devoted a good portion of my life.

Veterans need an organization - the VFW - to assist them and their families. And for nearly 100 years we have done just that.

How that assistance will be most effectively dispensed in the 21st century is the question that must be answered. As an organization, we are at a threshold - a major turning point. Change is inevitable if we are to survive.

But survival alone is not enough. The VFW has to remain vital - not only to veterans but to the nation. Our place in society will be judged on what we accomplish for all of America. As society increasingly splits into competing special interest groups, the VFW should strive to unite for the common good.

Veteran status transcends all political convictions, religions and races. This provides us with a unique opportunity to again be a unifying factor in society. In some ways, many of you have been doing so ever since you hung up your uniform years ago.

Civic duty is the concept that prompted you to serve in war in the first place. Why not maintain that tradition in your local communities? While the Washington Office is designed to lobby and the Kansas City office to administer, Posts remain the most visible arm of the VFW nationwide. They

are intended to do good all over.

To have a meaningful impact, the VFW will have to launch a renewed two-pronged offensive. Community service as the hallmark at the local level coupled with a commitment to America nationally will assure us enthusiastic public backing well into the next century.

None of this precludes concentration on the bread-and-butter issues so vital to members and veterans in general. Preserving and advancing VA medical care, especially eligibility reform, is a key component of all VFW strategy. Lobbying of Congress in this regard will continue unabated.

Earned benefits of all kinds - VA home loans, the GI Montgomery Bill for the volunteer military and service- connected pensions - will be protected without hesitation. The fight for compensation for Persian Gulf veterans will continue until justice is done.

Issues of national security - particularly placing American lives on the line abroad - never leave the front burner. These and all critical issues will be pursued vigorously.

Judge Advocate General

E. Spencer Walton

What a pleasure and a continued joy it was for me to serve as your judge advocate general for the year 1995-96.

When stands on various issues had to be taken, the Commander-in-Chief and his officers were in the forefront, stating their positions on behalf of the VFW.

Society is continually on the move, and it is our duty and yours to stay on top of these movements. Only then can we serve the organization in the manner that it so richly deserves.

As my term as your judge advocate general comes to a close, allow me a moment to extend to all my fellow veterans my deep gratitude for the many courtesies I have received during the year.

Let me assure you that I will continue to play an integral part in the VFW. Whether in or out of office, we all have an obligation to continue our involvement.

Commitment to the organization is the key to success, especially as we head into the 21st century.

Surgeon General

Curtis O. Bohlman, M.D.

Comrades and Sisters, as we come to the close of program year 1995-96, let us reflect with pride on our many accomplishments. We have successfully conducted programs in our local communities highlighting the fact that the same veterans, who fought for the freedoms enjoyed by all cit-

izens today, are still striving to make a difference at home. We continue to ensure that honor is paid to our country and the flag by visibly participating in parades, memorial services, flag-raising ceremonies, and other local patriotic events. We educate the youth in our local schools by teaching them the history of the wars firsthand - told by those who were there - and instruct them that freedom is not free.

Through our Voice of Democracy program we reach thousands of high school students annually and challenge them to focus their literary talents on a patriotic theme. We continue to support the children in our National Home. We regularly visit old veterans in VA hospitals and in veterans centers of our various states.

Through the participation of VFW members of the War Veterans Commissions, through our letters to legislators and our visits to the Capitol on Veterans Awareness Day, we help guarantee that those who served their country when called are not forgotten.

By employing a talented staff in our Washington Office - men with skills in tracking legislation important to veterans, with the ability and ready information to provide testimony to congressional committees - we are able to affect the plight of America's veterans in the halls of Congress in a real and visible manner. Through the VFW Action Corps we are able to coordinate letters and phone calls to our legislators in a timely fashion and communicate the veteran's view much more effectively. All of these things we are able to do because we have banded together - more than two million strong - with our comrades in this great organization.

When our comrades make their final departure, we solemnly participate in their military funerals - and in so doing we impart to them that final honor they are so richly due.

National Chaplain

Rev. Lyle N. Kell

Grace is the way. The Bible says, Be strong in grace. I challenge all comrades, learn the art of extending grace to those who have hurt you. Also, scripture says we must forgive. But, how can I forgive when I can't forget? How can I forgive the Japanese, Germans and Italians for what they did to America. The thousands they slaughtered, tortured and starved to death. The answer is, I can't.

This disturbs me because the Bible says in Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake, has forgiven you."

So what am I to do? If the trauma is so great and the pain so immense that I can't forget, what am I to do? As the Lord Jesus hung on that old rugged cross he said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

That's it. Let's do the same thing Jesus did. That's how we can begin the long lifetime process of learning how to forgive, by consciously day by day

extending grace to those who have harmed us.

Grace is unmerited favor. That is, a favor one doesn't deserve. Hatred does more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to the object on which it is poured. Extending grace is one great way to understand our Call to Duty.

Thanks to Paul Spera, our Commander-in-Chief, and all VFW comrades for a super year.

Chief of Staff

John W. Smart

It has been an honor and privilege for me to serve as National Chief of Staff of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Commander-in-Chief Spera, thank you once again for this opportunity to serve you and our organization.

I also want to thank the national officers and the Kansas City and Washington staffs for providing their assistance. Their dedication to our organization should not go unnoticed.

During the past year, I have had the opportunity to travel across this great country, attending meetings and conferences.

The highlight of my year was a visit to Korea, to provide VA assistance to the young men and women who serve in the armed forces. By addressing their concerns now, we will go a long way toward attracting new members and strengthening our organization in the future.

We must continue our support toward all veterans and reach out to all men and women on military installations. The future of our organization depends on how we recruit these young men and women and our willingness to accept change. Our organization must continue to be the veterans advocate for rights and entitlements.

I also want to take a moment to thank all the comrades and sisters for the many courtesies I have received during my travels. You truly make this the greatest organization in the world. Let us never forget that this organization belongs to each of you.

In closing I want to extend my best wishes to Sr. Vice Commander-in-Chief James Nier and Jr. Vice Commander-in-Chief John Moon for continued success and safe travel.

Inspector General

Leroy Williams, Jr.

It has been a privilege and an honor to serve the VFW as Inspector General. I sincerely thank Commander-in-Chief Paul A. Spera for the opportunity to gain a greater knowledge of our organization. It has been one of the most rewarding and outstanding experiences of my life.

The opportunity to travel and represent the VFW and our great Commander-in-Chief has been a most gratifying experience. I have had the honor and pleasure of visiting all the conferences and several Departments, making new friends and renewing old friendships. The many courtesies and gracious hospitality extended to me throughout the year will be cherished forever.

The knowledge I have gained from the many briefings received from the State Department, Pentagon, JTF-FA and CIL-HI will assist me in my work with the VFW for years to come.

I would like to thank all the national officers and the staffs in both Kansas City, Washington, and the President of the Ladies Auxiliary, Helen Lenehan, and her staff for their support and friendship.

Serving under Commander-in-Chief Spera, an inspiration to us all, is a privilege that comes once in a lifetime. I am honored to have had the opportunity to serve on the Call to Duty team. Thank you for a dream come true.

Adjutant General

Larry W. Rivers

America's war veterans will soon enter a new century. But they also face the dawn of a new age. It is an age in which their service and sacrifice will be remembered and appreciated by far fewer of their fellow citizens.

Society's changing mindset will demand that the VFW adapt to a different set of assumptions. Essentially, we can no longer assume that the public understands veterans needs or respects their opinions on issues of national and international importance.

Now is the time to evaluate our position as an advocate for veterans. It is clear that we must balance our demand for entitlements not directly related to war with corresponding contributions to the nation as a whole.

Veterans, and the VFW in particular, have a clearly defined role in three areas: care for war casualties, defense policy and community service. The first is legitimately self-serving; the latter two provide immense opportunities for continuing to serve America in other capacities.

LOBBYING FOR THE DESERVING

Few Americans challenge the right of disabled war veterans to top-notch medical care or pensions to the families of those killed while serving their country. And the vast majority of citizens favor special benefits (GI Bill, VA home loans, for example) for anyone willing to delay his education or career to defend the country in wartime.

So protecting benefits for disabled veterans, getting the best deal in any national health insurance program (if one is created) and battling for a reasonable piece of the budget pie will always be primary aims. Under the U.S. political system, legislative lobbying for deserving groups is part of a

time-honored tradition.

Yet as an organization, we should not be content with simply successfully lobbying for benefits - no matter how deserving the recipients. If we are to retain the respect and support of the American people at a time when only a fraction of families have a direct link to the armed forces, then we must do more.

DEFENDING THE NATION BY EXTENSION

If any group has a vested interest in national defense, veterans do. Having been on the receiving end of foreign policies gone wrong, they have e every right to help spare another generation the horror of war. Some might say it is their duty. Most vets agree.

This natural concern focuses on troop welfare and morale and military interventions. Far too much time is spent debating "defense spending" - a subject with two very distinct faces. Exposing the right face is where VFW comes in.

Simply more "spending" is not the answer to superior defense. Sophisticated weapons systems are useless without people to operate them. And wars, despite computer technology, have to be won by humans risking their lives.

Veterans can play a key role in generating interest in people-oriented spending on "quality of life" issues. This means adequate pay and the best equipment available for those who have to actually face the enemy in battle. Veterans have a personal stake in this aspect of defense because often their children carry the burden for the next generation.

In the same vein, veterans should speak out on overseas military interventions. From firsthand experience, they can assess the human price of committing troops to combat. Someone who has been there carries immense credibility. The public, largely ignorant of this price, has to be educated by those who know.

Morale is of prime consideration if an intervention occurs. Here is where the VFW can mobilize and lead the public in supporting the troops. Posts are ideally suited to launch mail drives and adopt units for the receipt of packages.

Probably most critical, though, is assuring that the public "separates the war from the warrior." Never should a generation of veterans be held accountable for a policy not of their making. And when veterans return, their welcome home must be unequivocal.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Beyond the spotlight of national social and defense policy is the local community. Perhaps this is where veterans have always had the most impact. Every day, without making headlines, individual veterans make a difference in the lives of their families and neighbors.

As citizens first, and veterans second, Americans who have worn a uniform have a role to play in the political process, education, public safety

and community betterment. Either as professionals or volunteers, veterans can make immense contributions in these and other fields.

Active and involved voters set the example for the young. Voting is as much a civic obligation as answering the call to arms. Casting a ballot is an act of patriotism akin to donning a uniform. What can be more important than charting the course of your country's future?

Positively influencing the minds of children is a noble undertaking. Clarifying the portrayal of warriors and veterans in American history is one way. Encouraging pride in the nation's achievements in general is another. Veterans have a role in the classroom.

Public safety is an additional veterans arena. Fighting crime, and drugs specifically, defends society. Countless veterans have served as law enforcement officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians. Others lend their time and talents to volunteer efforts.

Improving your community is personally gratifying. This may mean an investment in the physical betterment of a town or its youth through special programs such as sponsoring sports. Either way, veterans serve as role models when they are needed most.

Veterans, indeed, have a role to play in all facets of American society. We will win public support in the new age by our continuing contributions. And the VFW can facilitate giving something back to America in all of the areas outlined above. Veterans will be measured and respected not so much for what they did in the past as for what they do today.

Quartermaster General

Joe L. Ridgley

The national by-laws impose upon the Quartermaster General an important and exacting task - the custody and management of all of the VFW's financial resources. A major cornerstone of the growth and success of the organization during the nearly 100 years of its existence has been the sound fiscal policies and firm financial guidance of my predecessors in the office of Quartermaster General. I have endeavored to continue those policies and provide responsible financial leadership that can carry this organization into the 21st century on firm footing.

To assure that we are ready for that time, the organization must operate efficiently, eliminate waste, keep expenses to a minimum, maintain a high quality work force and provide members with benefits and services that will encourage growth.

It will also require that we look closely at our sources of revenue, anticipate changing economic conditions and act to implement income producing plans that will expand VFW's new and existing programs to carry out the purposes of this great organization.

Finally, it is critical that the existing assets of the organization be prudently used and invested so that they will be preserved and available to meet the challenges ahead.

The Quartermaster General's staff in Kansas City has not only been fully

involved in conducting its ongoing programs, but it has been actively engaged in planning for the financial future of the organization. I can assure you those efforts will continue.

OPERATIONS OVERVIEW

Most of the revenue producing programs and operations managed by the Quartermaster General's staff have continued to remain strong and contribute substantially to the financial needs of the organization.

Budgeted income from the Emblem and Supply department, group insurance programs and interest on investment income totals $7,239,000.

In addition, the annual dues payment from the Life Membership program, managed by the Quartermaster General's staff, accounts for another $4,540,000.

The buildings in Kansas City and Washington house the organization's operations at very low cost, due in large measure to offsetting rental income from tenants.

Our financial statements as of May 31, located on pages 46-50, help us project a surplus by year's end. Our actual financial status on August 31 cannot be accurately predicted at this time, but unless unforeseen expenses arise, we expect to remain within the budget.

QUALITY PEOPLE

It is not possible to have a quality organization without quality people. In order to attract and retain the high quality employees necessary for an effective, efficient operation, it is important to offer competitive benefits. With a great deal of effort, we continue to maintain and administer an excellent employee benefit package at a reasonable cost. We work very hard to assure that the plans are fair, properly administered and not abused. I believe we have been successful in those efforts.

The quality of our people at all levels is one of the main reasons for the VFW's long-term success. While I work diligently as your Quartermaster General to preserve the financial integrity of the VFW, I could not do so were it not for the hardworking, quality staff I am privileged to have with me in both Kansas City and Washington.

Likewise, the contributions of other dedicated people, from the Adjutant General's staff, to the Departments and grass-roots members, provide the needed ingredients for success. My sincere thanks go to this year's national officers, National Council of Administration and Budget & Finance Committee, all of whom have contributed to making this another very fine year.

I want to express appreciation for my election to the Office of Quartermaster General. It is an honor to serve you. As we move toward the 21st century together, we must stay financially sound to sustain the power and preeminent position of this great organization. With your help, I am confident we can do so.

Assistant Adjutant General - Administration

John J. Senk, Jr.

The Assistant Adjutant General - Administration -assists the Adjutant General in conducting and managing the administrative and executive functions of the VFW. His responsibilities include supervision of Administrative Services, General Services and Post Services and the Buddy Poppy departments at National Headquarters.

Diverse Functions

The functions of this office are wide-ranging and include such diverse tasks as:

• monitoring and reviewing Department budgets and financial reports;

• reviewing by-laws and incorporation documents of subordinate units for compliance with the national by-laws;

• preparation of administrative pamphlets and forms required for internal and external use;

• composition and preparation of national awards, citations and letters of commendation;

• publication, annually, of the VFW Congressional Charter, By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual following the national convention;

• filing of statutory congressional and state reports;

• validation of requests for surplus military equipment;

• maintenance of historical and legal files;

• dissemination of summaries and preservation of proceedings of the national convention and Council of Administration meetings;

• establishment and maintenance of eligibility files of national officers;

• ensuring the proper recording of names and addresses of national, Department and Post officers; and

• all other established and administrative functions required for the proper and efficient operation of the organization.

SOUND MONEY MANAGEMENT

Department quartermasters have been observant in forwarding quarterly and annual financial reports and budgets required by the national by-laws. All reports are carefully reviewed and monitored by the administrative staff of the Adjutant General. Every effort is made to clarify any financial matters perceived to be unclear and to provide on-site assistance to quartermasters who request or need help.

Records show that most Departments have adopted sound money-management procedures and policies. Also, we are pleased to note that most quartermasters fulfill their responsibility to keep their councils of administration informed of their Department's financial status as the by-laws require.

Special briefings are conducted by the administrative staff at National Headquarters for beginning Department adjutants/quartermasters.

POLICY MATTERS

As statutory requirements of doing business increase in complexity, the need for maintaining records and up-to-date reviewed by-laws at every level becomes increasingly urgent. The Commander-in-Chief's Statement of Policy for the operation, management and control of Post canteens/clubs addresses these concerns and VFW requirements for such operations.

The wide acceptance of this policy has served to strengthen canteen/club operations. As financial responsibility laws become more restrictive, there is a compelling need for subordinate units to ensure that articles of incorporation have been submitted through channels to the Adjutant General. There they are reviewed by the Commander-in-Chief in accordance with the national by-laws and then properly recorded with the appropriate state authority.

Approved by-laws serve to smooth out internal Post operations, while articles of incorporation provide for the corporate entity of the Post and afford individual members protection from legal obligations of the Post. All Posts should have current by-laws and valid articles of incorporation reviewed by the Commander-in-Chief and filed with the secretary of state of their respective states.

ADDITIONAL DUTIES

Other administrative matters under the supervision of this office include the resolution of questions concerning membership eligibility, review of disciplinary hearings and appeals, research in the preparation of Commander-in-Chief rulings, handling questions concerning emblematic matters and the unauthorized reproduction and/or use of the VFW name and emblem and membership lists.

Credentials for the national convention, resolutions and proposed amendments to the National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual submitted by national officers and Department conventions also are processed, printed and disseminated by this office.

My special thanks go to Commander-in-Chief Paul A. Spera with whom it has been a pleasure to work. Also, let me extend my thanks to Adjutant General Larry W. Rivers, Quartermaster General Joe L. Ridgley, as well as to the national and Department officers with whom I have worked this past year.

Administrative Services

Director Lawrence LeFebvre

Responsibilities assigned to Administration Services continue to diversify in an ever—changing environment.

ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRITY

Currently, the Administrative Services director's duties include assistance in reviewing and processing the by-laws and articles of incorporation for all levels of the organization. This is done to ensure compliance with the Congressional Charter, By-Laws, Manual of Procedure & Ritual of the VFW.

The needs of subordinate units are varied and complex. They call for greater administrative oversight and coordination at all levels. The ever-present threat of litigation mandates the need for Posts, Districts and Departments to take appropriate measures to protect their membership and the organization from such actions.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

All units are urged to maintain adequate liability insurance coverage and to adopt by-laws, and incorporate in compliance with the national by-laws, as well as state incorporation laws.

Emblematic matters are also handled by this office. Cease and desist orders for the unauthorized use of the VFW name and emblem are processed and issued as required.

Removal orders for ineligibility originate here, too.

MISCELLANEOUS RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition, Administrative Services reviews, resolves and refers complaints and problems concerning subordinate units, their officers and members. On behalf of the Adjutant General and Commander-in-Chief, correspondence is prepared on such matters.

Other essential functions include: compiling, publishing and maintaining records and proceedings of all National Council of Administration meetings; and maintaining certificates of compliance from the Departments requesting membership mailing lists for Department publications.

Besides minding the daily nuts and bolts operations of the organization, Administrative Services plays a vital role in serving as a link between National Headquarters and individual members in the field.

Speaking directly to officers and members on organizational, as well as more general veterans issues, is the primary means of doing so.

POINT MAN ON ELIGIBILITY ISSUES

And no issue is more important to the long-term future of the VFW than eligibility. By now, everyone is familiar with the demographics of our organization: Simply put, our members are rapidly aging. National attrition is increasingly cutting into our ranks. Projections regarding the potential pool of recruits among the WWII generation are not encouraging.

On the other hand, there is still vast potential in other sectors of the veterans community.

The congressional charter of the VFW was amended to allow veterans of Korea who did not receive a campaign medal, but served in Korea for 30 consecutive or 60 nonconsecutive days, anytime after June 30, 1949, to be

eligible for the VFW.

In addition to Korean War-and Vietnam War-eligible veterans numbering in the millions, let's not forget those who are eligible as a result of the 24 campaigns recognized by the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; the 10 operations under the Marine Corps/Navy Expeditionary Medal since WWII; and the 657,000 who earned the Southwest Asia Service Medal.

Buddy Poppy

Chairman Tom Myette
Director James R. Rowoldt

To assist worthy comrades; to perpetuate the memory and history of our dead, and to assist their widows and orphans.

Carrying out the intent of VFW's objectives, found in Article I of the constitution of the VFW, together with the sale of Buddy Poppies, have allowed us to build a proud heritage of service to the disabled and needy veterans through our nationwide system of service officers.

The memory and history of the dead is perpetuated through the proud display of the Buddy Poppy on our lapel, while their widows and orphans are aided by the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, Mich.

DEPARTMENT WINNERS

The Department of Illinois led in sales this year with 1,049,000 Poppies. Also joining in the Over One Million Sales Club are California and Texas.

DIVISION WINNERS

Division 1, Department of Minnesota and its Ladies Auxiliary; Division 2, Department of Montana and its Ladies Auxiliary; Division 3, Department of Kansas and its Ladies Auxiliary; Division 4, Department of New Hampshire and its Ladies Auxiliary; Division 5, Department of Oregon and its Ladies Auxiliary; Division 6, Department of Massachusetts and its Ladies Auxiliary; Division 7, Department of Arizona and its Ladies Auxiliary; Division 8, Department of Mississippi and its Ladies Auxiliary; and Division 9, Department of Pacific Areas.

TIRELESS EFFORTS

The achievements of this past year would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our grassroots members - the comrades and sisters who diligently worked in the field. To all of you we say "Thank you."

The National Buddy Poppy Committee members who worked exceptionally hard to promote this year's Buddy Poppy Program are: W. Tom Myette, Chairman, Vermont; Western Conference, Gilbert LaMontagne, Arizona; Eastern Conference, John J. Gistedt, Maryland; Southern

Conference, Billy Ray White, Mississippi; Big Ten Conference, Bill Radigan, South Dakota; and Buddy Poppy Director, Ladies Auxiliary, A. Grace Godfrey, Georgia. As members of the Call to Duty team, each performed with dedication and diligence throughout the year.

Marketing Services

Director Ron Browning
Assistant Director Mark Idel

Created several years ago, Marketing Services is one of the newest offices within National Headquarters. The establishment of this department represents a continued commitment by the VFW's leadership to meet the issues of the future and demands of today.

As the marketplace changes, we need to develop programs and strategies which allow for long-term success. This new office is an important first step in meeting the future in a way that translates into opportunities.

A staff is being developed to provide an effective level of service. Existing programs and projects have been integrated into the daily operations of the office. Projects critical to the future of the organization have been identified and, in many cases, implementation is well on the way.

Here is a brief outline of some of the current projects now under the direction of Marketing Services:

NON-MEMBER PROMOTIONS

Projects are used to educate non-members about VFW programs and raise funds for Veterans Service and other programs.

DEPARTMENT COOPERATIVE FUND-RAISING PROGRAM

A cooperative program designed to improve the profitability of traditional fund-raisers for VFW Departments and Auxiliaries has been a well-received success since it started. More than 60 Departments and Auxiliaries have now joined the program.

NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE FUND

A host of projects that include: Veterans Service Fund and Past Commanders Club.

COORDINATED FUND-RAISING

More effective and coordinated fund-raising communicates the importance of projects and the reason for promotions. The result should yield improved returns with better understanding by the membership.

CONTINUITY IN COMMUNICATIONS

Developing member and non-member communications provides a consistency of message, creating a strong and more relevant story.

NEW PROMOTIONAL PROGRAMS

Development of new and more effective promotional vehicles for fundraising is vital.

As the future unfolds, these issues will change. Yet, they offer the organization a starting point from which to move forward.

With your help and continued support, this department will succeed.

VFW Foundation

Director Robbie Fazen Marchant

Successful programs serving veterans, families and communities have been the bedrock of the VFW and Auxiliary for almost 100 years. The Veterans of Foreign Wars Foundation is an extension of that commitment and an indication of the long-term support of these programs.

THE MISSION

The mission of the VFW Foundation is to provide support for programs that increase the awareness of the sacrifices of veterans. It promotes citizenship education, volunteerism and positive youth programs and facilitates aid for veterans and their families in need of medical, rehabilitative, educational and employment services. The VFW Foundation obtains funding from estate gifts, corporations, foundations and the Combined Federal Campaign.

PROJECTS

The VFW Foundation created Freedom Circle to recognize those who have already remembered VFW programs in their wills and to educate members about setting up a will or trust. Freedom Circle is a select group of loyal friends of the VFW who have chosen - by including the VFW Foundation in their will or trust - to continue their commitment to America's veterans.

Through their dedication and foresight, these patriotic individuals help sustain the valuable programs which aid veterans, their families and communities, and protect our proud American heritage.

Anyone can join Freedom Circle, simply by remembering the VFW Foundation in their will or trust. Individuals who would like to join but do not have a will or trust, should know that these documents are some of the most important estate planning tools, both for the individual and the family.

The VFW Foundation can provide a planning kit to organize information to make meetings with an estate planning attorney more productive. To request this kit, please send a note to VFW Foundation, VFW Building, 406 W. 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111.

The responsibility for veterans, families and communities does not rely on the support of the VFW and Auxiliary members alone. The VFW Foundation will request support from corporations and foundations. The VFW Foundation's goal is to educate organizations about the important roles the VFW and Auxiliary have in community, family and veterans issues.

The needs our programs address require long term commitment, the long term commitment that the founders of the VFW had when they formed the organization. By supporting the VFW Foundation you can help secure VFW programs for our descendants.

Post Services

Director James R. Rowoldt

The volume and scope of duties and responsibilities assigned to Post Services are ever-expanding and changing. These include assisting the adjutant general and assistant adjutant general, administration in the day-to-day administrative functions of the organization.

POST CHARTERS

One of the most important historical documents of a post is its official charter. Once a post is instituted, it becomes the responsibility of Post Services to correspond with the newly formed post to ensure that the official charter is engrossed correctly and issued as expeditiously as possible.

Complete and accurate records are maintained on microfilm and magnetic optical disk to facilitate the preparation of a replacement charter should the original become lost or destroyed.

Section 209 of the National By-Laws provides the authority and procedure for two or more posts to consolidate. When this occurs, Post Services initiates the necessary paperwork to correct the records at national headquarters to reflect the consolidation, and a Certificate of Charter is engrossed and issued reciting the facts of the consolidation.

Post Services is also responsible for issuing the Life Membership Perpetual Charter once the membership records are reviewed to verify that the post has the requisite 25 life members. Once the membership figures are verified, the Life Membership Perpetual Charter is prepared and mailed to Department headquarters for presentation.

Post Services has been assigned the responsibility of processing requests, preparing applicable orders and maintaining permanent files for the adjutant general on all suspension and cancellation actions. It is Post Services' duty to keep the adjutant general apprised of any and all corrective action taken during periods of suspension to return the post to good working order.

In addition, the office of Post Services is charged with the responsibility for the collection, recording, maintenance and storage of the official records of over 10,600 posts.

POST ELECTION REPORT

The annual Post Election Report is the primary source of information from which the post officers' files are constituted and from which the roster of post officers and the amount of annual dues for each post are compiled and stored in electronic data processing.

The importance of the Post Election Report in the maintenance of the officer file is paramount. Without the information provided in the annual report of election, it is impossible for the Department or the national organization to communicate with the post.

The Post Officer File is one of the most frequently used at national headquarters so it is absolutely essential that the maintenance of the file be current at all times and that special attention be given to accuracy in storing and updating the records in data processing.

The data processing file contains the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the commander and quartermaster, the amount of annual dues, the name, location, date of muster and status of each of our over 10,600 posts.

Annual dues notices cannot be mailed until the election report is received because of the need to know the name and address of the Post quartermaster and the amount of the post dues.

As the reports of election of Post officers for the 1996-97 year are received and processed, computer-generated acknowledgements will be sent to the Post quartermaster-elect to confirm the names and addresses of the Post commander and Post quartermaster and the amount of annual dues. Copies of these acknowledgements and any subsequent changes are sent to the respective Departments.

The acknowledgement is made on a preaddressed and prepaid return postcard with space provided for corrections and/or changes in any of the information shown on the card. If the information is correct, the post retains the card for use during the 1996-97 administrative year to report any changes in the amount of post dues and/or in the offices of Post commander and Post quartermaster.

As corrections and changes are reported and made, these too are acknowledged so the Post quartermaster always has a return postcard in his possession to report changes during the year.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Other matters falling within the area of the responsibility of the director of Post Services include the preparation and dissemination of the Post Adjutant/Post Quartermaster Operations Manual, the Leadership Manual, the Quartermaster Tax and Dues Kit, Special Orders, and the monthly issuance of General Orders and the National Headquarters Bulletin.

As our Call to Duty, the goal in Post Services is to ensure that the needs of our membership are better served.

Assistant Adjutant General - Programs

W. Benny Bachand

As we prepare for the opening of the 97th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we need to look back on this year to examine our record of success and determine what course of action will be taken in the future to move our organization forward.

In changing times there is a set of principles and core values that you never want to change, and in changing times the same set of beliefs and strategies that have gotten the VFW to where it is now will not get it to where it wants to go.

In the national headquarters departments that I work with, we are examining strategies to see if we can improve service to members and the veterans of this country.

NATIONAL CONVENTION

Over the past year we have eliminated one day of our convention and reduced the number of banquets in an effort to cut expenses for delegates. We replaced the parade with the Patriotic Rally, which has been well received by members.

This year, the U.S. Army Soldier Show, an entertainment showcase that tours the world under the direction of the United States Army Community and Family Support Center, will be featured at the rally.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

By the time of this convention, more than 10 million people will have seen the VFW Senior Championship golf tournament on ESPN. This nationally televised event gives VFW the opportunity to tell the American people who we are and what we have done and continue to do for our country.

Additionally, VFW is the title sponsor of the U.S. Army Soldier Show. This dynamic show will tour 44 continental U.S. locations (three at the Olympics) and other bases in Europe.

More than 100,000 servicemen and women, civilians and their families will attend these performances. Sponsorship will continue VFW's commitment to active-duty personnel to assist in promoting morale, welfare and recreation.

VFW PROGRAMS

VFW's commitment to the youth of this country continued this year with one of the strongest Voice of Democracy programs ever. VFW Posts and Auxiliaries contributed more than 2.6 million dollars in scholarships and prizes.

The inaugural year for the Youth Essay contest has been met with exceptional support and the future of each of these programs is bright.

VFW works hard to defeat homelessness, and we are searching for ways

the organization can make a difference in veterans employment, as well. As usual, the number of community service projects and money spent in support of community betterment is in the millions. While our volunteer base continues to decline, the mission and focus is on the future.

MEMBERSHIP

This Call to Duty year has been one of challenge and opportunity. It goes without saying that we could have done better, as there are millions of eligible veterans who have not joined and become part of this effort.

We continue to see a decline in personal recruiting, but a high interest in the VFW is evident in the growth of our member-at-large ranks. The direct mail program will result in over 10,000 new and/or reinstated members this year.

The message that veterans are sending to us is that they will join if they are asked. We need to explore every available option in finding the solution to recruitment problems.

The results of the past four years have led to much evaluation and analysis of all of the programs that report to this office. We believe that the best chance for future success is to make significant changes now.

We recognize that what we are doing is not working and that we need to let go of the old and find solutions to problems. I am confident that we have the people and resources to move the VFW Above and Beyond in 1997.

Americanism

Chairman Fredrick DiPietro
Director Mike Gormalley

Across America, VFW members with the help of our Ladies Auxiliary continue the never-ending task of ensuring the continuation of our American way of life.

Emphasizing our Americanism projects- is one of the best ways of accomplishing that task. Passing out patriotic literature, conducting patriotic ceremonies and parades, holding flag presentations - all of these are ways of ensuring the proper education of the American people. They also are investments in keeping our nation strong. In addition, the personal satisfaction gained makes all the effort, time and trouble worthwhile.

Throughout the United States, Americans are concerned about protecting their flag from any act of disrespect. The VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary supported these concerns by petitioning Congress to propose a constitutional amendment protecting the U.S. flag from desecration. However, the U.S. Senate voted not to change the Constitution.

Citizenship education programs in our schools and communities are important tools in protecting the U.S. flag.

Many of our Posts and Auxiliaries have conducted flag education programs for schools and youth groups. Posts and Auxiliaries are using the VFW Citizenship Education Programs to conduct an organized program.

A Get Out the Vote in '96 program booklet was sent in mid-January to

all Post, District, County Council and Department commanders and presidents to give to their chairmen.

Post and Auxiliary Americanism chairmen should contact their election boards to request voter registration materials to promote voting in the primaries and November 1996 elections.

The VFW National Americanism program has been progressing throughout the nation. This year we have 20 100% Departments.

In the conference race, the Western Conference leads with 96.9%. The Big Ten Conference is second with 96.8%. They are followed by the Southern Conference with 92.9%. The Eastern Conference is enjoying a good year with 88.5%. The overall average of the Americanism program reporting is 93.4%.

The VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary have always been among the leaders in supporting a strong Americanism program that educates the general public. Our support of this program has been very important during this Call to Duty year.

Community Activities

Chairman Johnnie A. Baugh
Director Mike Gormalley

The changing character of our communities has created many ways in which Americans express concern for the needs of their fellow citizens. Volunteer efforts, most studies show, continue to increase and are widespread around our great nation. According to recent estimates, approximately 89 million Americans engage in some form of volunteer activity on a regular basis.

Working side-by-side with the Ladies Auxiliary, VFW members promote community projects that assist others and improve towns and cities.

Hundreds of Posts and Auxiliaries participated in the national community service, Make A Difference Day, on October 28, sponsored by USA Weekend and The Points of Light Foundation. Many Posts and Auxiliaries were highlighted in local newspapers for their projects. As part of the Make A Difference Program, VFW and Auxiliary units from Tucson, Ariz., Department of Indiana and Post 9430 in Seattle, Wash., were honored as part of the top sixty projects in the country.

In 1995-1996, there were over 984,700 community service projects reported that accounted for 13.6 million volunteer hours and $53.9 million in donated monies. Yet, the most important and frequently overlooked feature of these volunteer efforts is that the VFW's relationship with local communities has given it better visibility and an image of caring.

Community Activities reporting has been very good this year. There are 25 100% Departments.

In the Conference race, the Big Ten Conference leads with 98.4%. The Western Conference is second with 97.7%. They are followed by the

Southern Conference with 94.2%. The Eastern Conference is enjoying a good year with 90.5%. The overall average of the Community Activities program reporting is 97.7%.

In communities all around the nation, VFW Posts and Auxiliaries are considered valuable and highly desirable assets. VFW Posts and Auxiliaries are interested in and take an active part in the needs of their communities.

Continuing support of community service programs by the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary is an excellent example of the Call to Duty theme.

National Homeless Veterans Committee

Vice Chairmen Patrick Bohmer, Joseph Caouette, Earl Lord, Boyd Winterton
Coordinator Mike Gormalley

The National Homeless Veterans Committee, formed in 1994, consists of three staff members representing Community Activities, Employment and Veterans Service; a vice chairman representing each conference; a representative from the National Ladies Auxiliary and a chairman from each Department. The committee is responsible for coordinating VFW and Auxiliary efforts with VA programs, state and local community-based events such as "Stand Downs" and developing resource materials for Department and Post use. (A Post Guide to Homeless Veterans Service Programs has been sent to all Post commanders and Auxiliary presidents.)

An important community-based volunteer effort is a Stand Down. A Stand Down gives homeless veterans and their families a weekend of safety and security during which they can sleep in barracks-style tents and receive nutritious meals, health care, clothing, substance abuse and job counseling, legal assistance and a wide range of other supportive services.

During the Call to Duty year, many departments reported VFW and Auxiliary involvement with the Stand Downs in their areas. Approximately 8,000 veterans were assisted at these programs.

VFW and Auxiliary units must participate in local community action planning meetings that address the services needed by homeless veterans and their families. Programs providing a "continuum of care" services (i.e., job training/employment referral, homelessness prevention, permanent housing and substance abuse treatment, etc.) should be supported by VFW volunteers.

Also, many Departments reported that their members are supporting local community based programs by volunteering and donating food, clothing items and making monetary donations.

The National Homeless Veterans Committee is grateful for the supportive volunteer work that was completed by VFW and Auxiliary members in assisting our homeless veterans.

Safety

Chairman Monte D. Hanson
Director Gordon R. Thorson

Chairman Monte D. Hanson and Director Gordon R. Thorson would like to thank all members of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary who actively participated in this year's Safety Program. We have had another outstanding year, thanks to the many hours of volunteer effort by the comrades and sisters throughout this great nation.

Interest in the National Safety Citation has grown to an extraordinary level. Thousands of Posts/Auxiliaries have qualified for the annual award by completing a project in each of the six categories.

The VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary have, for several years, supported, participated in and developed programs or events that promote safety.

Members have involved themselves in a variety of safety efforts that cover virtually every possible activity. This expanding and growing program interest deserves proper credit and national recognition.

The procedure used to report Safety Program activities will remain the same - completion of the VFW National Programs Report Form will be the accepted method of reporting activities. Please take note of the six-category system for reporting safety. This reorganization of the Safety Program allows for expanded reporting of individual Post/Auxiliary activities.

Basically, safety activities fall somewhere within six major categories:

Category 1 - Pedestrian Safety
Category 2 - Drug Awareness
Category 3 - Recreational Safety
Category 4 - Highway Safety
Category 5 - Home/Fire Safety
Category 6 - Recognition/Other

These general categories are listed on the VFW National Programs Report Form followed by a line to name (describe) the actual activity that qualifies the Post/Auxiliary within that particular category. For example:

- If a Post/Auxiliary sponsors a Lite-a-Tike program, it would report this activity under the Pedestrian Safety category.
- If a Post/Auxiliary conducts a Drive to Survive program, it would report this activity under the Highway Safety category.
- If a Post/Auxiliary officially presents a Life Saving Award (certificate) to honor someone in the community, it would report this activity under the Recognition/Other category.
- If a Post/Auxiliary actually sponsors a "DARE" program in its local school, they should report this activity under the Drug Awareness category.

Virtually any legitimate Safety Program activity conducted by a Post/Auxiliary can be reported somewhere within the six categories. Credit is given in only one of the six safety categories for each activity. The Post

safety chairman should determine which one category best reflects the activity performed, and then complete the National Programs Report Form.

NATIONAL SAFETY CITATION

Once a Post/Auxiliary has performed at least one legitimate activity within each of the six categories, that Post/Auxiliary will then qualify for a national citation, recognizing its outstanding effort (deadline for reporting is May 1 of each program year).

The six categories and a small sampling of the numerous possible activities within each are listed below. The listing is provided to help chairmen determine which one category is best suited for the activity performed:

SAFETY PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Safety Program Activities
Category 1 - Pedestrian Safety
Activity Ideas:
- Lite-A-Tike
- Bicycle Safety
- Lite-A-Bike
- Any legitimate highway safety activity

Category 2 - Drug Awareness
Activity Ideas:
- Veterans Against Drugs
- DARE
- National Crime Prevention Council's "McGruff" campaign
- There are numerous other opportunities and programs

Category 3 - Recreational Safety
Activity Ideas:
- Hunter Safety
- Water Safety
- Outdoor Safety (camping, etc.)
- Roller Safety (skateboards, outdoor roller blades)
- Numerous other recreational safety activities exist

Category 4 - Highway Safety
Activity Ideas:
- Drive to Survive
- 55 Alive/Mature Driving
- Buddy System™
- State approved driving course
- Any legitimate highway safety activity

Category 5 - Home/Fire Safety
Activity Ideas:
- Home Protection (safety & security)
- Fire Prevention (outdoor & indoor)
- Any activity that protects homes or prevents fires

Category 6 - Recognition/Other
Activity Ideas:

- Life Saving Awards
- Firefighter Awards
- Police/Sheriff Awards
- Distribution of brochures
- Recognize an outstanding safety effort and gain credit

Please note that this Safety Program reporting procedure is more thoroughly described in the Safety Chairman's Guidebook. (The guidebook is available to Post, District and Department chairmen.)

Voice of Democracy

Chairman Alan Winter
Director Gordon R. Thorson

Voice of Democracy is an audio-essay scholarship competition designed to give high school students the opportunity to express their thoughts on a patriotic theme, promote citizenship, and convey their message via the broadcasting medium to America.

Students in grades 10 through 12 in public, parochial and private schools are eligible to compete.

This year's theme - Answering America's Call - focused on American achievements and pride in what this country represents.

More than 117,000 students participated nationwide. More than 5,200 Posts and over 4,200 Auxiliaries sponsored the program in more than 7,900 high schools.

Scholarships, savings bonds and other awards totaled more than $2.6 million on the Post, District, County Council and Department levels. National scholarships contributed another $118,000 for a grand total of over $2.7 million.

The contest is conducted in cooperation with the National Association of Broadcasters and its state affiliates.

State winners received, in addition to their scholarships, an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. While there, they visited national monuments, the U.S. Capitol Building and met with Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio).

State winners, sponsored by their respective Departments, also attended the American Academy of Achievement's Salute to Excellence weekend in Sun Valley, Idaho.

Each winner received the Academy's Golden Scroll Award and was enrolled in the Academy's Hall of Fame for America's Young Captains of Achievement. The first place national winner received the Academy's Golden Eagle Award for the Promise of Greatness.

Please remember that the new deadlines for the 1996-97 program year are as follows: Student entry - Nov. 1; District - Dec. 1; Department - Dec. 15.

Top Ten 1995-96 National Voice of Democracy Scholarship Winners

Place	Winner	Sponsoring Post	Location	Amount	Award
1	Aaron Pickering	1733	Knoxville, Tenn.	$20,000	VFW T. C. Selman Memorial Scholarship
2	Elizabeth Silvia	8214	Manchester, N.H.	$15,000	VFW Scholarship
3	Matthew Lasher	1114	Evansville, Ind.	$10,000	VFW Scholarship
4	Peter Lakes	1523	Putnam, Conn.	$6,000	VFW Scholarship
5	Jon Thomas	1326	Bismarck, N.D.	$5,000	VFW Scholarship
6	Daniel Riedl	9943	Mansfield, Ohio	$4,000	Minnesota Scholarship
7	Jonathan Bayat	1810	Brentwood, Pa.	$3,000	Dept. of Indiana and its Ladies Auxiliary Scholarship
8	William Dean	5250	Tifton, Ga.	$2,500	Daniel Sean Wallace Memorial Scholarship
9	Michael Simpson	577	Tulsa, Okla.	$2,500	Joseph O. Hansen Memorial Scholarship
10	Shay Hitchcock	7057	Gosnell, Ark.	$2,000	Jesse A. Lewis Memorial Scholarship

Youth Activities

Chairman Ralph Stump
Director Gordon R. Thorson

VFW recognizes the importance of shaping America's youth. Providing wholesome activities that stress fair play and good citizenship has been the goal and guiding principle of the National Youth Activities Committee.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary have traditionally supported and developed programs and events that benefit our nation's youth. This long-standing commitment to youth has grown through the years to include almost every possible program or event associated with young people.

This expanding and growing involvement deserves proper credit and national recognition.

YOUTH ACTIVITY REPORTING

The procedure used to report youth activities will remain the same - completion of the *VFW National Programs Report Form* will be the accepted method of reporting activities. Please take note of the six-category system for reporting youth activities. This reorganization of Youth Activities allows for expanded reporting of individual Post/Auxiliary efforts.

Basically, all youth activities fall somewhere within six major categories:

Category 1 - Sports/Athletics
Category 2 - Scouting/Organizations

Category 3 - Contests/Special Events
Category 4 - Education/Instruction
Category 5 - Recognition
Category 6 - Projects/Other

These general categories are listed on the *VFW National Programs Report Form* followed by a line to describe the actual activity that qualifies the Post/Auxiliary within that particular category. For example:

• If a Post/Auxiliary sponsors a Youth Essay competition, it would report this activity under the Education/Instruction category.

• If a Post/Auxiliary conducts a Child ID/Missing Children program, it would report this activity under the Education/Instruction category.

• If a Post/Auxiliary presents an Eagle Scout Award (certificate) to honor Scouts in the community, it would report this activity under the Recognition category.

• However, if a Post/Auxiliary actually sponsors a Scouting Unit it should report this activity under the Scouting/Organizations category.

Virtually any legitimate youth activity conducted by a Post/Auxiliary can be reported somewhere within the six categories. Credit is given in only one of the six youth categories for each activity performed. The Post chairman should determine which one category best reflects the activity performed and then complete the *Programs Report Form.*

NATIONAL YOUTH ACTIVITIES CITATION

Once a Post/Auxiliary has performed at least one legitimate activity within each of the six categories, that Post/Auxiliary will then qualify for a national citation, recognizing its outstanding effort (deadline for reporting is May 1 of each program year).

The six categories and a small sampling of the numerous possible activities within each category are listed at right. The listing is provided to help the chairmen determine which one category is best suited for the activity performed.

Youth Activities Program Activities

CATEGORY 1 - SPORTS/ATHLETICS

Activity Ideas:

• Track • Basketball • Softball • Baseball
• Soccer • Swimming
• Bowling • Special Olympics • Hockey
• Any sport or athletic sponsorship

CATEGORY 2 - SCOUTING/ORGANIZATIONS

Activity Ideas:

• Boy Scouts/Explorers/Eagle, etc.
• Girl Scouts • Cub Scouts

- Fellowship of Christian Athletes
- Boys and Girls Clubs of America
- Naval Sea Cadets • Sons of the VFW
- Future Farmers of America
- 4-H
- Any legitimate youth organization sponsorship

CATEGORY 3 - CONTESTS/SPECIAL EVENTS
Activity Ideas:
- Parades • Talent shows • Picnics
- Dance • Fishing derbies • Walk-a-Thon
- Rifle/pistol competition • Bike-a-Thon
- Be creative, support the youth in your community

CATEGORY 4 - EDUCATION/INSTRUCTION
Activity Ideas:
- Ceramics • Stamp collecting • Model building
- Leather craft • Missing Children (Child ID) • Youth Essay
- Develop a youth education program

CATEGORY 5 - RECOGNITION
Activity Ideas:
- ROTC Achievement Award (medal and citation)
- JROTC Achievement Award (medal and citation)
- Eagle Scout Award (certificate)
- Honor certificate for students
- Trophy/plaque presentation ceremony
- Any youth recognition

CATEGORY 6 - PROJECTS/OTHER
Activity Ideas:
- Build or repair baseball diamonds, soccer fields, playgrounds
- Donate equipment • National Home contribution
- Use your imagination

Please note that this Youth Activities reporting procedure is more thoroughly described in the *Youth Chairman's Guidebook.* (The guidebook is available to Post, District and Department chairmen.)

Membership

Director Thomas L. Kissell
Assistant Director Robert Crider

The quest to recruit new and reinstated members is still the number one

priority. However, to continue to grow as an organization, we must aggressively pursue younger veterans, and this means we must develop new recruiting methods.

For years our recruiting philosophy has been influenced by a "back to the basics" approach. It included a lot of knocking on doors and collecting dues. This worked fine to keep continuous members, but did nothing to attract new ones. Currently, our pool of eligible veterans is shrinking, and we must target a younger generation.

Today's young veterans are mainly interested in finding employment after leaving the military, while education possibilities and VA benefits are secondary.

Persian Gulf, Somalia and Haiti veterans are obviously at different stages and have different concerns in their lives than WWII, Korea or Vietnam veterans. With more diversions and leisure activities available, it will be increasingly difficult to obtain the same level of commitment from younger veterans.

As always, we are the veterans advocate for rights and entitlements, but we must expand our objectives to deal with the needs and desires of this new generation.

By addressing these concerns, we will attract new members and strengthen the VFW.

ACTIVE DUTY PERSONNEL

These differences were especially apparent when we spoke with active duty personnel on recent trips to Korea.

Supporting themselves and their families after returning to civilian life was their number one concern. A network of job-placement services extending from the national level on down to the Posts could alleviate some of these concerns.

We also determined after visiting Korea that we have some shortcomings in communicating with active duty personnel. Many there were not even aware that they were eligible for membership.

It is our intention to aggressively use membership development teams, recruiting stations, information booths, sponsorship of the 1996 U.S. Army Soldier Show and *VFW* magazine to reach the men and women on military installations and explain the benefits of VFW membership.

Understanding the generational differences between our current and potential members, and changing our recruiting methods accordingly will be the key to our organization's growth.

NEW INITIATIVES

For this reason, we are excited about the opportunity to present the right image to the nation through the VFW Senior Championship. Our commercials will give us tremendous exposure and a chance to communicate with an audience that may have only limited knowledge of the VFW.

We're also evaluating the use of telemarketing, direct mail and new

recruiting incentives in order to help the Departments maintain and increase their membership. The bottom line is that we must reach more people, with more information through more modern means.

National headquarters staff needs help, though. We need a commitment from the Posts to do more than just collect dues. We need creative recruiters on the local level, trying new ways to sign up new members.

The primary responsibility to stop the back-door loss of continuous members and the recruitment of new and reinstated members still rests with the Posts and Departments. We need active participation from everyone to attract these new members.

MEMBER-AT-LARGE SURVEY

Recruiting state and national at-large members through mass marketing efforts will continue into next year. Current at-large members were surveyed in early 1996 to assess their satisfaction with programs and benefits. The survey was also designed to identify areas in which additional programs and benefits might be developed.

The response rate was 23.75%. The bulk of respondents enlisted in the 1940s. Approximately half had been on active duty four years or less; nearly 30% were active 20 years or more. The average length of national VFW membership was 7.45 years and state membership was 6.67 years; nearly two-thirds had been members three years or less, and almost 15% for six years or more.

Overall, members were well satisfied with their membership, rating it an average of 4 on a scale of 1 (dissatisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied). Vietnam-era veterans were slightly less satisfied. More than two-thirds of members-at-large had never been affiliated with a local VFW Post. This trend was more pronounced (80%) with Vietnam-era veterans.

VFW magazine was ranked highest, both as an incentive for membership and in terms of usefulness. Other publications and Legislative Services were second.

There were a number of areas about which members would like to receive additional information. Legislative activities and information about national VFW leaders' perspectives were among the highest-rated categories.

RECOGNIZING ALL AMERICAN COMMANDERS

We want to make sure that we reward this participation. And this year's national convention will honor the distinguished Department commanders who have earned the distinction as "All American."

Their outstanding leadership enabled the Posts in their states to achieve new membership and program activity levels. Of course, the same goes for the commendable job performed by District, Post and County Council commanders earning All American honors.

These trendsetters are a rich source of inspiration to all VFW members, because we're all, in a sense, recruiters for the organization. We must fol-

low their example of hard work to remain an effective champion for veterans rights, benefits and entitlements.

Of course, the commanders don't succeed alone. Tribute should be paid to all the members committed to their Post's programs, activities and recruiting. They should be praised for their outstanding efforts in the 1995-96 membership year. This spirit of sacrifice is what makes us strong, and it will enable us to achieve our goals.

The membership department is ready for the challenges that lay ahead. We are going to refocus our efforts to keep up with the direction and future mission of the VFW. This will ensure our success into the 21st century.

Public Affairs

Chairman David F. Butters
Director Steve Van Buskirk *Assistant Director* Vern Pall
Director, VFW Washington Office William G. Smith

The only thing that keeps that VFW Post going is "cheap beer and bingo!"

Have you ever heard someone say that? Was it true?

Although few Posts fall into that category, stereotypes like that damage our image and limit our effectiveness and ability to recruit new members. We must seek ways to kill that stereotype and enhance the VFW's image. A good image ensures support for us as we support America's veterans.

IMPROVING OUR IMAGE

Your leaders, assisted by VFW national headquarters, are committed to enhancing the VFW image. Together we are finding new ways to dispel the "cheap beer and bingo" myth.

The VFW Senior Championship golf tournament was televised on ESPN. During the broadcast, millions of Americans viewed the new VFW commercials.

Some saw, for the first time, that the VFW is active and involved with America's youth. They saw that VFW members are serving their communities when national disaster strikes. They watched veterans helping veterans deal with the ravages of war. And they were reminded of the debt each of them owes to America's veterans.

MILITARY CONTACTS

Over the past year, you may have become aware that the VFW is increasingly concerned about and involved with the young men and women who serve in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Reserve and National Guard units.

In the coming years, the majority of our new members will come from their ranks. For this reason, they must understand who we are, what we do

and how we can help them and their families.

INCREASED COMMUNITY RELATIONS

You have heard VFW Public Affairs and your national officers encouraging you to reach out to organizations in your community. When leaders visit your area, they will be asking you to arrange speaking and interview opportunities outside the VFW. Groups like the Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Chamber of Commerce and even other veterans groups.

These groups provide an opportunity to take the VFW message to potential supporters and even eligible veterans who share our concerns and values.

MORE VISIBILITY

It is becoming increasingly important that our national officers reach a larger audience. As a national spokesman for the VFW, your Commander-in-Chief can accomplish more for veterans on a talk show, reaching thousands, than speaking at a Post luncheon or breakfast.

Don't be surprised if he chooses to pass up a Post visit in favor of a local talk show or a visit with your newspaper's editorial board.

What is the purpose of these new approaches? It's all about dispelling the myth of "cheap beer and bingo" - showing America an involved and active VFW.

To continue as a viable and growing advocate for veterans, the VFW must reach outside the Post - we must be a major player in every community.

KEEPING THE VFW STRONG

To grow and garner the support of our communities and non-members, we must reach out and foster relationships with other groups who share our concern for this nation. We must establish alliances which promote patriotism, community service, American and family values.

When more Americans know the VFW, more Americans will support the VFW. When more Americans support the VFW, they will be proud of the VFW as we "honor the dead by helping the living."

Publications

Director Richard K. Kolb

The editorial staff has the obligation to set journalistic standards, uphold the magazine's credibility and preserve the editorial integrity of its articles. Part of this custodial responsibility entails judgment calls by the staff with regard to content, based on expertise in this field.

Decisions regarding what goes into the magazine are based on the quality of writing, timeliness and potential interest to readers.

Direction is taken from members as expressed in readership surveys,

letters to the editor and resolutions on national issues. Membership interests, as well as journalistic integrity guide content.

VFW magazine's editorial mission statement is as follows:

It is the mission of VFW magazine to offer fresh and varied perspectives, examine controversial issues and provide an open forum for balanced member opinions. At the same time, the magazine will report on veterans concerns, promote the VFW's positive image and serve as a vehicle for dissemination of VFW policy.

No endorsement of views of authors should be inferred unless specifically identified as the official policy of the VFW. A free exchange of ideas is intended to generate reader involvement and enhance the magazine's vitality.

In striving to inform, influence and interest readers, VFW magazine will protect, preserve, promote, recognize, remember and respect all things sacred to veterans. This means a special focus on and coverage of four major subject areas: veterans rights/benefits, defense/foreign affairs, patriotism/volunteerism, and recognition/remembrance of military service abroad.

In order to accomplish these goals, VFW magazine must have the unfettered ability to communicate so as to compete in the advertising marketplace. Since raising revenues to support the organization's primary means of communication - the magazine - is a major function, projecting a professional journalistic image is essential.

VFW LAUNCHES NEW PUBLICATION

In keeping with the mandate to change, VFW's Publications Department will begin distributing its new internal periodical - *Checkpoint* - in September.

Checkpoint combines the *Washington Action Reporter* and the *Communicator*. It will be issued bi-monthly and contain brand new features. Among them are Leadership Perspectives, Reader Forum, news from the Administration Department and several other areas of the organization.

Though published less frequently, issues updates will be presented in digest form for quick reference. On the other hand, in-depth analysis will be offered when important legislation is on the agenda or when a VFW initiative is being announced. Authorities both in and out of the VFW will be quoted to give credibility to all news items.

With a completely revitalized look, *Checkpoint* will be a more effective means of communication between VFW National Headquarters and you, the leader of the grassroots. Moreover, it will present a fuller picture of the VFW - ranging from legislative issues to the organization's community contributions. To readers on Capitol Hill, the VFW will be seen as a well-rounded, full-service organization.

After it debuts in the fall, we hope you will write and offer your suggestions on how it can be improved from the reader's perspective.

NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS CONTEST TOP WINNERS

Department Publications
The California Veteran, Oren D. Robinson, Editor

District and County Council Publications
LETTERPRESS/OFFSET
The Chatter, District 6 (Ohio), E.M. "Woody" Russell, Editor
MIMEOGRAPH
News Bytes, District 1 (Maryland), Harold"Hap" Harris, Editor

Post Publications
LETTERPRESS/OFFSET
Post-Guardian, VFW Post 1391 (Wisconsin), Robert E. Albrecht, Editor
MIMEOGRAPH
William B. Pate Newsletter, VFW Post 7401 (Arizona)
Geraldine Colins, Editor

Washington Office

Executive Director William G. Smith

The most impressive accomplishment lately of the VFW Washington Office is prevailing upon Congress to act on significant eligibility reform legislation.

The VFW initiative would reform the rules governing access to VA health care, along with providing it additional sources of funding so it might properly care for veterans now and in the future. VFW Commander-in-Chief Paul A. Spera drove home the need for such legislation while testifying before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees in early March of this year.

You should know, however, that the Washington Office had already initiated, and has maintained action on this vital initiative.

The National Legislative Service (NLS), the National Veterans Service (NVS), the Public Affairs Office, and the VFW Action Corps have also played a pivotal role in advancing legislation to reform the rules governing VA health care. The combined effort is exemplary of the Washington Office's multi-faceted, carefully planned and strongly proactive legislative campaigns.

In this way we have accomplished the daunting task of drafting legislation conforming to the VFW's views on VA health care eligibility reform, *H.R. 3119* in the House and *S. 1563* in the Senate, drafted and introduced. We are now pushing hard and fast to see this legislation enacted into law.

PROVIDING NEEDED CARE

It must be noted here that *H.R. 3118,* the legislation addressing health care reform that stands the best chance of becoming law in this Congress, does not satisfactorily fulfill all VFW requirements.

Even so, it does answer one of the organization's key objectives: enabling VA, within appropriations, to provide all needed hospital care and medical services to eligible veterans. This includes all necessary outpatient care services, including preventive care and home health care to the extent that funding allows.

H.R. 3118 - which is only moving along thanks to our efforts on behalf of *H.R. 3119* and *S. 1563* - also provides for expanded operational flexibility, and will allow VA to collect and retain monies from health plans for care furnished to CHAMPUS-covered individuals.

While *H.R. 3118* is not everything we are after, it does represent a major step in the right direction.

ADVANCING OBJECTIVES

Our Kansas City Headquarters is also playing an increasingly important role in advancing the organization's legislative objectives. The Action Corps, working with the Information Technology Group in Kansas, has established a direct computer-to-computer connection which allows for virtually immediate transfer of computerized data that would otherwise take days or weeks.

This office's ability to target and communicate with VFW members in specific congressional districts depends on this direct computer connection as well. The mainframe computer in Kansas City contains and operates the congressional districting software.

The combination of technology and a stronger, more coordinated approach to advocacy allows us to achieve legislative victories even in trying fiscal times. And while this office's primary emphasis is on legislative issues, there are many other areas of accomplishment as well.

Via NVS, the VFW is co-sponsoring with the Department of Veterans Affairs the Golden Age Games. This highly successful and rapidly expanding program involves disabled veterans age 55 and older.

NVS is also facilitating the VFW's leadership role on the Homeless Veterans Council. This council gets the word out in support of homeless veteran programs in communities throughout the country. Along with the VAVS program, NVS is responsible for the VFW Community Volunteer Program. This program acknowledges and supports those volunteers who serve veterans at non-VA health care facilities.

Another key component of the VFW's Washington Office is National Security and Foreign Affairs (NSFA). This office plays a vital role in pressing the organization's pro-national defense, pro-military agenda before both the Department of Defense and Congress. While all of its areas of concern are far too extensive and sensitive to be discussed here, I mention one specific area of current involvement.

POW/MIA EFFORT

NSFA is now carrying out the VFW's Vietnam Initiative. This initiative is directed toward achieving the fullest possible accounting of all our MIAs in Vietnam. Toward this end, the initiative has solicited information from American Vietnam veterans throughout the country regarding Vietnamese missing in Vietnam. This is to encourage greater cooperation from the Vietnamese in establishing the fates, as well as recovering the remains of all American MIAs and POWs.

Time and space do not allow me to enumerate this office's myriad areas of involvement and accomplishments. I will only say that this office's achievements are numerous and undeniable. It is a record in which I take considerable and, I believe, appropriate pride.

I can assure you, the Washington Office's success lies in taking a strong, proactive approach in every endeavor. This is only possible because of the close communication and coordination taking place among all offices. Our respective areas of involvement are numerous, varied and often markedly different. Nevertheless, we succeed by working together. It is my intention to continue in this vein, and make an already superlative example of cooperation even better.

National Veterans Employment

Chairman John A. Bucci
Director Sidney Daniels

Many times in the recent past, we have noted a trend on the part of Congress and the Administration to treat veterans preference as if it is a commodity that has outlasted its shelf life. If activities of the legislative and executive branches over the past year are any indication, it is clear that veterans preference is in for a rough time ahead.

Veterans preference, which for years has played a key role in allowing veterans to pursue productive careers through the federal civil service, has for all intents and purposes lost its punch in 1996. As federal agencies-continue to downsize in an effort to become smaller, more efficient and cost-effective, abuses of veterans preference continue to mount.

Although there continues to be concern about the number of veterans being hired, there is equal concern that many agency reduction-in-force plans are in direct violation of the 1944 Veterans Preference Act.

REDUCTIONS-IN-FORCE

Reduction-in-force (RIF) procedures are comprehensive in nature, in that they detail the permissible actions of an agency as well as explain the rights of employees affected by a large lay-off. When an agency decides that a RIF is necessary, it must follow specific guidelines to determine which employees will be affected. Employees compete for retention on the basis of four factors:

- type of appointment [tenure];
- veterans preference;
- total length of civilian and creditable military services; and
- performance ratings.

This is the way the process is suppose to work. The truth is that the RIF process has not worked very well for veterans since the infamous U.S. Postal Service "reorganization" in 1992-93. In that fiasco, the Postal Service conducted an illegal RIF that resulted in the discharge of nearly 50,000 workers.

Although some of the ill-effects of that illegal RIF were subsequently corrected, the Postal Service's biggest victory was in showing other agencies how to circumvent veterans preference law and procedures and not pay a heavy penalty.

Equipped with this knowledge, agencies have succeeded in developing and implementing RIF plans that violate the spirit if not the letter of the law. These agencies include the General Accounting Office (GAO) and the Departments of Defense, State and Interior.

Both Congress and the Administration have demonstrated a reluctance to take corrective action although both assert their support for veterans preference. During the current and past legislative year, for example, veterans service organizations have met on a regular basis with members of Congress, their staffs and with various White House and executive agency officials.

The purpose of these meetings is to discuss the violations taking place against veterans' preference and actions that are needed in order to stop the illegal practices.

POLITICS AS USUAL

Although interest in the problems confronting veterans in federal employment appears to be on the rise in recent months, experienced observers are quick to point out that this newfound interest has more to do with the fact 1996 is a major election year.

It has little to do with concern over the current lack of effectiveness of federal RIF procedures, which many veterans have come to conclude is a bad joke.

If this was not politics as usual, there would be sufficient funding for the Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) and the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) personnel to perform their jobs at the maximum level.

As it is, these employment specialists who find jobs for veterans are themselves being laid-off. Other veterans programs seriously damaged as a result of congressional and Administration lack of interest, include SMOCTA and the national Veterans Training Institute (NVTI).

SMOCTA, the Service Members Occupational Conversion Training Act program, was designed to provide job training for service members separated due to downsizing, particularly those who only six years ago partici-

pated in *Desert Storm.* In any event, no monies have been recommended or approved for SMOCTA in FY '97.

Finally, no funding has been recommended or approved for NVTI, which provides state-of-the-art training for state and federal veterans employment staff and managers.

Experienced Washington observers are quick to point out that there are often disparities between what elected officials profess to support and how they actually vote on those same issues.

In view of this reality, it is extremely important that members be informed and vigilant on those issues that are so critical to the survival of veterans programs. Accordingly, it is important that we not hesitate during the present political year to express to elected officials VFW's support for the programs we believe in.

National Legislative Service

Chairman Melvin Garrett
Director James N. Magill

For 82 years, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has maintained a legislative service for the purposes of promoting legislation which is beneficial to veterans, their dependents and survivors, and monitoring congressional activity on Capitol Hill.

From its inception, the National Legislative Service (NLS) has been a leader in the veteran's arena in Washington, D.C., and is currently respected and admired for its advocacy role on behalf of America's veterans.

Despite the high-profile, media-conscious environment in which it functions, the operation of the NLS is possibly not as well understood by the general membership as might be expected. This is greatly attributable to the fact that likely 90 percent of its accomplishments are achieved in the form of old-fashioned hard work performed behind the scenes and away from the limelight.

Not since the GI Bill of Rights immediately following World War II has there been such a broad expansion of veterans legislation addressed and approved by Congress during the last several years.

INFORMED MEMBERSHIP

Because of the complexities involved in the function of NLS, it is important that VFW members have a solid knowledge of the operation of this essential component of our national organization. It is only through better understanding by our membership that we may develop greater strength and effectiveness.

Even though the NLS is relatively small compared to its counterparts in other major veterans organizations, it is also one of the most highly regarded and sought out by members of Congress and their staffs when the welfare of America's veterans is at stake.

NLS has established the VFW Action Corps in an effort to better inform our membership and involve them in the legislative process at the grass roots level. To complement the Action Corps, NLS has acquired a computer system that will enable us to target individual members of Congress for mass mailing campaigns by political party, committee assignment, or congressional district and state.

It is becoming more and more apparent that individual contact by our members with their elected officials is the key to getting things done in Washington.

LIAISON TO CONGRESS

Probably the most visible aspect of NLS's job on Capitol Hill is our testifying before committees and subcommittees of Congress with respect to pending legislation.

It is extremely important that our concerns, as mandated by resolutions passed by the voting delegates at our most recent national convention, are articulated and acknowledged in congressional hearings where they become part of the public record.

With the many diverse issues members of Congress must face, they may not always be aware of the nature or the impact an individual bill would have on their veteran-constituents.

Because of the good working relationship we have established with Congress, NLS is constantly being sought out for advice and counsel and encouraged to contact congressional staffs on varied veteran legislation. This is particularly true of members of Congress who do not serve on the Veterans Affairs Committees.

NLS also makes "informal" recommendations to the appropriate committees of Congress concerning veterans issues. This involves working on a day-to-day basis with the Veterans Affairs, Budget, Appropriations and Labor committees, to name a few. Of course, we will appear before any congressional committee that is addressing an issue that is veteran-related.

VOICE OF VETERANS

Another essential NLS function is keeping the VFW membership informed of the activities of Congress and its efforts and progress in working with their elected representatives in Washington. In the final analysis, it is only the active participation of the strong, committed and well-informed VFW membership that has allowed for our numerous legislative victories for veterans on Capitol Hill.

NLS communicates with the membership through *VFW* magazine, the *Washington Action Reporter,* special publications and direct correspondence with individual VFW members.

The NLS staffers work for you - the member. They bring many years of hard work and legislative experience to bear as they fight for the good of veterans and the nation. But they do not stand alone.

There has been in the past a strong and vital partnership between the

NLS staff and the VFW membership and this must continue. We must all stand together, united, ever vigilant and committed in implementing the principles of our great organization-to serve veterans and the nation.

National Security and Foreign Affairs

National Security Chairman Theodore Eaton
National POW/MIA Chairman Ronald Rusakiewicz
Director Kenneth A. Steadman

The year 1995-1996, has been active for VFW's National Security and National POW/MIA committees. Armed with resolutions adopted at the 96th National Convention, the committees have been involved in a wide range of issues affecting national security and our priority POW/MIA effort.

BOSNIA MISSION

The civil war in the former Yugoslavia had reached unprecedented levels of brutality and savagery that has shocked world audiences. VFW has watched this developing situation out of concern that while no vital U.S. national interests were at risk, the civil war imperiled the peace and stability of eastern Europe. Throughout this tragic war and in the peace conference that followed, VFW cautioned against committing U.S. forces.

When it was announced that U.S. troops might be needed to implement a peace settlement, Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera addressed VFW concerns: "We are opposed to any direct U.S. military role in the former Yugoslavia where we have no U.S. vital interests at stake. Any commitment of U.S. military forces risks drawing the United States deeper into this prolonged conflict. The VFW does not support the employment of our military to such an inconclusive mission."

While opposing the policy, the Chief led the call to support U.S. troops. VFW staff met with representatives of the military services to develop a program to show support for the troops and their families.

VFW then teamed up with AT&T to provide prepaid telephone cards to servicemen and women who were being transported through Hungary over the Christmas holidays.

VFW also publicized the Army's Family Liaison Office Information Hotline to help Army members and their families with questions about the Bosnia deployment.

(Mindful of troops stationed in other dangerous regions, VFW co-sponsored the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders on a holiday tour of bases in the Republic of Korea and the U.S. Army Soldier Show in the Spring.)

Spera went to Hungary and Bosnia in June. He visited troops at their operational bases and discussed living conditions with their commanders.

VIETNAM MIA INITIATIVE

The POW/MIA issue remains a priority concern of VFW. After taking office, Chief Spera rededicated the VFW to the fullest possible accounting of missing men. He took VFW's concerns about progress in the search for the missing in Vietnam to the President and renewed VFW's efforts to recover the MIAs from the Korean War.

He sought new opportunities to reach our goal of the fullest possible accounting. Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Moon travelled with a presidentially designated delegation to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to pursue unilateral and joint efforts to recover U.S. servicemen.

In January 1996, VFW began a major program to help recover POW/MIAs from Southeast Asia. As outlined in a resolution adopted by the delegates to the 96th National Convention, VFW wants to show the Vietnamese how important POW/MIAs are to all Americans by collecting and returning to the Vietnamese any information about their MIAs.

The Chief announced the POW/MIA Initiative in an open letter to VFW's Vietnam veterans and to all VFW national and Department officers and national committeemen. The program seeks to gain the goodwill and cooperation of the Vietnamese people in assisting U.S. MIA teams by providing information about Vietnamese missing from the war.

During a May visit to Vietnam, the Chief turned over information and artifacts about nearly 900 of their casualties. Vietnamese government and veteran officials clearly were moved by the effort, expressed their thanks and pledged their continued cooperation with VFW effort to reach the fullest possible accounting.

The VFW POW/MIA Initiative was praised by the U.S. Embassy and *Joint Task Force-Full Accounting* as invaluable in developing goodwill among the Vietnamese.

KOREAN WAR MIAS

At last summer's dedication of the Korean War Memorial, VFW emphasized Korean War POWs/MIAs. VFW leaders and staff met with White House, State and Defense Department officials to urge new efforts be undertaken. Contact with North Korean diplomats has been maintained, urging them to reopen the POW/MIA issue. The May agreement with the North Koreans on joint operations to recover our Korean War missing was welcome news to VFW. It was an indication VFW efforts could lead to significant results in the future.

DEFENSE ISSUES

In other defense areas, VFW's opposition to placing U.S. forces under foreign or U.N. command was successful in ensuring the troops in Bosnia remained under U.S. officers.

VFW achieved some success when the Defense appropriations bill passed. Its passage helped to improve national defense, increased priority for an anti-missile defense and added more B-2 bombers to the strategic

arsenal.

Other security actions increased the pressure on Castro; stemmed service member increases to the Montgomery GI Bill; supported the Republic of China on Taiwan; and fought for COLA equity for military retirees.

Finally, the VFW expressed outrage over the bombing of the U.S. barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia and the loss of 19 American airmen.

Such actions demonstrate what VFW can do when 2.1 million members respond to a *Call To Duty* and reaffirm VFW's commitment to our country, its security and to those who serve.

National Veterans Service

Chairman Robert E. Wallace
Director Frederico Juarbe, Jr.

You established our mandate to "Honor the Dead by Helping the Living." The mission of the National Veterans Service (NVS) staff, and our nationwide service network, is to carry out that pledge in your name. A VFW service arm blankets the country, standing ready to serve you and others you may refer to us for help

A highly visible sign of your service program is the *VFW Guide for Service Officers.* We take great pride in this publication. No other veterans service organization can look back to half a century of continuous publication of such a valued reference.

Often the first point of contact with our VFW service program is the Post Service Officer (PSO). Armed with the *VFW Guide for Service Officers,* and in possession of a few basic government forms, the PSO can provide valuable assistance toward claiming an entitlement. This important volunteer then hands the issue over to the VFW Department Service Officer (DSO) for further development. It is a team effort.

HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY

The work of your DSO is never done. The DSO assumes a heavy burden in terms of responsibility toward veterans, their dependents or survivors. He is at once a counselor, advisor and advocate.

His world involves considerations of due process, protection of privacy and suspense dates associated with appeals. His tools of the trade are *Title 38, United States Code,* and the *Code of Federal Regulations.*

To keep current, DSOs join the NVS staff twice annually to participate in a demanding week-long training session. This training sharpens collective skills and improves qualifications to act on your behalf in seeking possible entitlements.

Your NVS staff continues to assist in the preparation and presentation of formal and informal appeals, initiated by veteran claimants before the VA Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA). They have available to them the services

of a VFW medical and legal consultant.

Their final product takes the form of a written presentation to the BVA on the claimant's behalf, or they accompany the claimant to a personal hearing before the Board and the transcript of that hearing becomes the official record.

WORTHWHILE APPEALS

The VFW also continues to prepare and present briefs on potentially meritorious claims to the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals (CVA). Because this is a purely adversarial process, we must be cautious and not accept for representation appeals for that court which are frivolous.

Neither can we practically represent appeals which fail to raise an appropriate point in law which would be acceptable for review by the court in accordance with the rules it has set for itself.

The military claims consultants of your NVS staff continue to appear routinely with ex-servicemen and women before discharge review boards of each of the armed forces. Also, each of the military services has a board empowered to correct inequities in military records. We are in continuous contact with these boards on behalf of veterans and active duty personnel who walk in, write to us and call us daily.

RATING HOSPITALS

Field representatives of your NVS staff continue their round of surveys of VA medical facilities and regional offices, with emphasis on the VA health care delivery system. The VFW is one of only two veterans service organizations performing this important function.

We have altered our approach to the conduct of VA medical facility surveys to try to ferret out the "hot spots."

Therefore, we rely increasingly on you, our membership, and others who may avail themselves of VA medical treatment to let us know when a problem is brewing. We will try to follow up every lead for you and keep the leadership of the VFW out front.

A simple telephone call or a short letter to the VFW Washington Office, to tip us off to medical facilities where things are not going well, will cause us to go into action. This is a cooperative effort which requires the attention of us all.

As the VA continues to struggle with reductions in personnel, your NVS staff will remain vigilant that the needs of veterans are not compromised.

To this end, all personnel in VFW service work need to double their efforts to ensure that every eligible veteran, dependent, and surviving spouse is made aware of, and assisted to obtain any benefits for which they may be eligible.

A trained, dedicated and hard-working cadre of VFW service officers remain the cornerstone of the VFW's commitment to service.

Quartermaster General

Quartermaster General Joe L. Ridgley
Assistant Quartermaster General Lawrence M. Maher

REVENUE/EXPENSES

At the beginning of this fiscal year, I submitted a tentative balanced budget to the Commander-in-Chief and the National Budget and Finance Committee. On October 8, 1995, the budget was approved by the National Council of Administration.

Budgeted net revenue for the fiscal year ending August 31, 1996 is $34,144,493. The schedule below shows the proportionate composition of this year's budgeted income and expenses by department.

OVERVIEW OF OPERATIONS

Some brief comments concerning the current status and activities of Quartermaster General staff departments:

Emblem and Supply: Activity has remained high and the department continues to provide members with quality merchandise, excellent services and reasonable prices. Increased attention must be paid to the illegal and unauthorized use of VFW's emblems and trademarks to protect those valuable assets.

Insurance, Receipts Processing and Member Benefits: Although insurance revenues have declined in recent years, several new insurance products will soon be available that should stabilize income. The insurance program offered to our members remains one of the best available. The receipts processing operation is very efficiently run and permits us to avoid the use of expensive outside contractors for this activity.

Life Membership and Member Dues Processing: Life Membership is an attractive alternative for many members and, thus, life membership has continued to grow at an exceptional rate. Because of declining interest rates, it has become increasingly difficult to obtain the level of return on investments that the Life Membership Fund previously enjoyed. Additionally, it is clear that Posts, Departments and the National Organization will need additional funding from the Life Membership Fund in the future. For those reasons, the life membership fees will be increased effective September 1, 1996.

VFW Properties: VFW's buildings in both Kansas City and in Washington are in good condition and provide excellent facilities for the conduct of the Organization's business. We continue to enjoy success in leasing space not being used by the VFW in both facilities, which helps to reduce the cost of operating the buildings. The current occupancy rate is over 85%, which we believe is excellent in today's real estate market.

Accounting, Human Resources and Purchasing: An often overlooked, but essential function of the Quartermaster General's office is accounting which, as the result of increased VFW activities as well as significantly more

onerous accounting and tax rules, has become much more complicated. Additionally, changing times have dictated that we devote more effort to employment-related matters. As a result, I have reorganized departments to place accounting, human resources and purchasing under a single Director. This will facilitate better coordination and utilize the strengths of our staff more effectively.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Expenses continue to increase, in part, due to inflation. However, some expenses have increased at a faster rate than inflation, notably professional fees and costs of technology and marketing consultants.

These increased expenditures are necessary to avoid problems that have plagued other organizations and diverted leaderships' attention away from the organizations' purposes. We must also assure that VFW can operate as effectively and efficiently as possible in today's competitive environment and get VFW's message out into the marketplace of ideas.

Another factor that continues to affect our financial operations is the relatively low interest rates in recent years. Those rates have reduced our income from investments. That means that less income is available from investments to meet current expenses. We continue to carefully monitor investments to ensure maximum returns consistent with a prudent, conservative investment policy. We are committed to maintaining that investment policy.

I hope this report gives you some understanding of the financial status of your VFW National Headquarters. A solid financial base is essential to support the VFW goals that are common to units at all levels.

ESTIMATED NET REVENUE FOR THE YEAR ENDING AUGUST 31, 1996

	REVENUE	% OF TOTAL	EXPENSES	% OF TOTAL
National Events & Administration	$ 374,200	1.1	$ 3,283,203	9.6
Commander-in-Chief National Officers		.0	977,980	2.9
Adjutant General Marketing Services, Publications	9,710,500	28.5	10,349,916	30.3
Assistant Adjutant General–Washington	281,289	.8	5,888,464	17.3
Assistant Adjutant General–Programs Membership	11,277,943	33.0	5,570,757	16.3
Assistant Adjutant General–Administration	505,000	1.5	1,710,251	5.0
Quartermaster General Departments	11,995,561	35.1	6,356,755	18.6
Total Revenue	$34,144,493	100.0		
Total Expenses			$34,137,326	100.0
Budget Surplus				$ 7,167

In addition, $3,698,149.67 is budgeted as the portion of 1996 dues applicable to the 1996-97 fiscal year, and $7,700,000 is budgeted as collection of life membership fees. Pursuant to the national by-laws, these funds are not available for operation in the 1995-96 fiscal year.

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Emblem and Supply Department

Director Bud Cale

The Emblem and Supply department operates both a direct sale and mail order business from the VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City. Twenty VFW National Headquarters employees process over 100,000 orders each year from VFW members, Posts, County Councils, Districts and Departments. Patriotic products are also sold to the general public, businesses and government offices.

In addition to its ongoing order processing and shipping function, the department obtains competitive bids from suppliers and negotiates purchase contracts, issues purchase orders, designs and coordinates artwork and specifications for new and updated products, monitors and maintains an inventory in excess of $800,000 and manages both an accounts payable and an accounts receivable system.

The 72-page VFW Emblem and Supply Catalog contains over 1,500 items, purchased from a network of over 200 suppliers from all parts of the

United States. For over 80 years, the department has provided office and accounting forms, By-Laws, Rituals, Service Officer Guides, eligibility guides, cards, stationery, banners and other products for VFW organizations at all levels. For the member, the department provides official caps, uniforms, a wide variety of membership and officer pins, badges, patches and medals. Members are also offered a full array of jackets, shirts, ball caps, athletic shoes and other personal products. Many of the official and personal products are available with the member's name or Post information.

The catalog also includes a full range of certificates, plaques and trophies. In-house engraving services afford the ability to personalize trophies and plaques, as well as the capability to manufacture plastic name tags and magnetic auto signs.

This department, in conjunction with the Program Directors, provides products to support VFW National Programs. Parts of the catalog are devoted to each of the following VFW National Programs: Life Membership, Americanism, Safety, Buddy Poppy, Youth Activities and Voice of Democracy.

As one of the nation's largest distributors of U.S. Flags, flag poles and related products, the Emblem and Supply department is able to offer top quality products at a discount from the oldest and largest U.S. Flag manufacturer. We believe it is important that an Organization steeped in patriotism be able to offer this symbol of our country to our members and affiliated organizations, as well as businesses and government.

Special events are another of the department's activities. In past years the department has offered products at events welcoming military troops back from overseas, commemorating the 50th Anniversary of World War II and at the National Convention. This year the department operated the official tournament products tent at the VFW Senior Championship.

This department is a revenue producing and sharing department. Ten percent of the net income of the department goes back to the states from which the sales originate. In the last fiscal year, we refunded over $180,000 to the 54 Departments and contributed over $1.6 million to the VFW National Headquarters General Fund.

Most of the items sold by the department bear the VFW Emblem, logos or name, and are protected by registered trademarks. Unauthorized use violates the Trademarks Act, Federal criminal statutes and the VFW By-Laws. The emblem and other VFW logos and names are very valuable to the Organization and use of any of these marks, without the express written permission described in Section 803 of the VFW Manual of procedure, is prohibited.

Each year a new catalog goes into effect on September 1. Commanders and Post Quartermasters are mailed a free copy of the catalog in late August. Members and others may purchase the catalog by sending $2.50 in check or money order to: VFW Emblem & Supply Department, 406 W. 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111. A coupon worth $2.50 on a purchase of $10.00 or more is included with purchased catalogs, which makes the

catalog free to those who use it.

Insurance, Receipts Processing and Member Benefits

Director Robert W. Crow
Assistant Director William P. Sullivan

INSURANCE

The Insurance department is responsible for all nationally sponsored insurance programs. Operating in Kansas City, the department has 12 employees. Their duties range from handling approximately 60,000 telephone calls per year, through processing insurance applications and claims, to complex negotiations with underwriting insurance companies to ensure that good products are offered to the membership and that those products are marketed in an effective manner.

For over 30 years, the VFW Insurance department has been a substantial source of revenue to support the Veterans Service and Community Activities efforts of the Organization, while providing a variety of supplementary life, health and accident coverages to the membership. Since its institution in 1962, VFW insurance programs have generated almost $60,000,000 which has been used primarily for National Veterans Service. Additionally, since 1971, VFW Departments have received almost $3,000,000 from the National Life Insurance Plan's administrative fee. Thus, insurance purchased through the VFW helps to fund some very important programs that directly benefit our country's veterans.

However, the Insurance department's primary goal is to provide an alternative source of quality insurance to meet the needs of our members. To date, more than $320,000,000 in benefits has been paid to insured members and their beneficiaries. In order to maintain a high quality program, it is necessary to research proposed new products carefully to assure that they are compatible with membership needs.

It is also important to affiliate with an insurance company experienced in providing an associational insurance program that can meet the unique needs of our membership. Most of our policies are underwritten by Union Fidelity Life Insurance Company, an A+ AM Best rated company.

In 1992, the Insurance department expanded on its traditional coverages and began offering automotive, truck and recreational vehicle insurance and home owners insurance through National General Insurance, a General Motors company.

We continue to look for new opportunities to provide good insurance products to our members at reasonable rates. We value the input and suggestions of our members concerning our programs and the service we provide. Your support is crucial to our continued success.

RECEIPTS PROCESSING

The Receipts Processing department was established in 1990 in order to reduce the costly processing expenses associated with many types of mailings. The department has 12 full-time employees, and temporary employees are used at periods of peak demand. In addition to processing member and non-member solicitation returns and insurance premiums, the department also processes Shot-Gun mailings, direct dues, member-at-large, PAC and partnership mailings. The department has saved VFW substantial sums of money that would otherwise be paid to outside contractors and has become a very efficient operation.

MEMBER BENEFITS

National Headquarters offers what we believe to be the most comprehensive voluntary member benefit package available in a veterans organization. VFW members have the opportunity to take advantage of excellent services and benefits such as the Travel Service, Merchandise Buying Service, Eye Wear Program, VFW Visa® or Visa Gold® Cards, Moving Service and AMOCO Motor Club. The *Member Benefit Handbook* briefly outlines those voluntary member benefits and provides a telephone number or address to contact. This handbook is enclosed in each year's dues kit and is also available from your Post Quartermaster.

The Insurance department receives and evaluates proposals from numerous companies to offer products and services as part of the VFW benefit package. Some earn VFW's endorsement; most do not. Only those that meet VFW's standards for quality, fair pricing and service after the sale are permitted to participate.

To obtain additional free information on any VFW-sponsored insurance program or member benefit, write to: *Director, VFW Insurance and Member Benefits, 406 W 34th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64111;* or call toll free *1-800-821-2606* (in Kansas City, call 561-2338). Hours are 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM Central Time, any business day.

Life Membership and Member Dues Processing

Director Gary Housknecht

Life Membership in the VFW continues to be a popular option for both new members and continuous members. There are presently over 900,000 Life Members constituting approximately 43% of VFW's total membership. Using the recent growth rate in Life Membership, there should be more than one million active Life Members by 1999.

Life Membership fees are paid into the Life Membership Fund and invested to assure the Fund's viability over the long term. Approximately $14 million is distributed annually to Posts, Departments and National Headquarters. Professional actuaries examine the Fund at least annually to

determine the amount that can prudently be distributed as annual dues and still assure adequate funds are available to pay the anticipated lifetime dues of all Life Members. It may become necessary to adjust those distributions from time to time to reflect projected returns on investments and actuarial calculations.

Twenty years have passed since the last Life Membership fee increase. Because of prudent management of the Fund over the years and several years of favorable interest rates, frequent fee increases have been avoided. Enhancing the ability of the Life Membership Fund to pay adequate annual dues for Life Members is the only reason fees have ever been increased. Fees will be increased effective September 1, 1996. Called Plan "D", this increase is only the third since the inception of the program in 1950. The Plan D fees have been established to enable the Fund to pay out $7.00 annually to Posts and Departments on new life members.

Life Membership benefits everyone. The member saves money and enjoys extra pride because of a lifelong commitment to the VFW. Posts, Departments and the National Organization benefit from Life Memberships, in part because less time and fewer resources are required to retain continuous members, permitting the expenditure of more time and greater resources on the important matters facing veterans and their families.

The Organization benefits in intangible ways as well. That nearly a million life members have chosen to indicate their strong support for the principles and purposes of the VFW, sends a strong message that our membership is committed to the Organization, to its worthy causes and to its continued viability and strength. It is a powerful signal that our members are in for the long haul and that our position on vital issues must be heard and considered.

The Life Membership Program continues to evolve and change along with our members' requirements. Optional payment methods have been introduced to make it easy for anyone to purchase a life membership, such as the Installment Plan and the use of Visa, Mastercard and Discover credit cards. For more information on the Life Membership Program, see your Post Quartermaster or contact National Headquarters.

MEMBER DUES PROCESSING

The Member Dues Processing department, with a staff of three full time employees and frequent use of temporary help, handles all dues money sent to National Headquarters by members, Posts and Departments. Over $11 million is processed and recorded annually. In addition, approximately 10,000 refunds are processed by this department each year. The new Direct Dues program and receipts from Member-at-Large mailings are recent challenges that the department has been required to meet and it has done so while maintaining high standards for speed and accuracy.

The Member Dues Processing department is also tasked with maintaining an accurate, up to the minute tabulation of VFW membership strength.

This data is critical to many other aspects of the Organization's operations. One of the most important documents prepared is the DP-2 form, which is mailed monthly to Posts and Departments. The DP-2 lists paid members and the category in which they have been counted, and includes a mail activity report that provides address changes and other information the Member Dues Processing department has received.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP FUND - MAY 31, 1996

Fees Collected Jan. 1, 1951 through May 31, 1996		$136,171,069
Total dues paid to Posts, Departments and National	$144,708,908	
Administrative expenses since Jan. 1, 1951	4,430,254	
	149,139,162	
Income from Investments (Includes gains/losses from sale of securities)	127,962,450	
Excess of Disbursements over Income		(21,176,712)
Reserve for Future Dues Payments and Expenses		$114,994,357
Total Investments in Trust Fund		$110,893,201
Other Assets		4,101,156
Total Investments and Other Assets		$114,994,357

Note: *The estimated Dues Payment due 8-31-96 is $14,047,545.*

BENEFITS OF A LIFE MEMBERSHIP

- Never have to pay annual dues.
- Never a dues reminder
- Savings in membership dues
- Permanent embossed Life Membership card
- Uninterrupted subscription to VFW magazine
- Lifetime accidental insurance policy
- Continuous support of VFW programs
- Protection of veterans benefits
- Protection of member services and benefits
- Convenience of payment of Life Membership fee by MasterCard, Visa, Discover or the new Life Membership Installment plan

Information Technology Department

Manager Don Spielman

The VFW took its initial steps into the information age in 1964 by ordering its first computer system to maintain names and addresses of members. Although that move was driven by a postal service decision to add zip codes to mailing requirements, VFW leadership at that time had the foresight to see the importance of technology in serving the needs of a growing membership. In the intervening years our mission, like the organization itself, has dramatically expanded. Among the changes that have occurred to

meet this expanding role:

STAFF

In addition to the manager, the Information Technology (I.T.) department has grown to three programmers, three local area network (LAN) technicians, and six computer operators. The computer is routinely operational on a three-shift, five-day a week basis.

MEMBERSHIP DATABASE

The membership database is now on-line. Uses of the database have grown to include balancing and recording of membership dues, recording and accounting life membership data, preparation of labels to support Department publications, dues notices and many other needs involving membership name and address information. A recent enhancement permits use of seasonal addresses. This should improve our service to our highly mobile membership.

EMBLEM AND SUPPLY DEPARTMENT

In 1968 the first Supply department computer system was created. This system has been improved as new and better tools became available. It now provides order processing, inventory control, invoice clearing and creates shipping tickets, purchase orders and other documents required to operate that department. That system is served by the I.T. department.

MARKETING SERVICES

In support of fund-raising efforts from non-member sources, a database larger than our membership database has been created. Using this base, records concerning solicitations, responses, contributions received, and other pertinent data are recorded. This database permits the Organization to target its solicitation efforts in a more efficient manner, resulting in substantial cost savings.

OTHER SERVICES

The I.T. department is involved in many other aspects of the Headquarters operation as well. It provides a database and the capability for in-house processing of several insurance programs and works closely with the Receipts Processing department in connection with retention of data. VFW payroll and employee benefits data are maintained on the mainframe as well. In addition, the department provides the Ladies Auxiliary with many of the same services provided to the VFW.

THE FUTURE

Under the direction of then Assistant Quartermaster General Joe Ridgley, the I. T. department undertook the creation of a LAN to tie the various Headquarters offices together so that important information could be shared and made quickly available to Headquarters staff. We have con-

nected the LAN with an AS/400 computer and the mainframe system to provide access to appropriate databases. As the LAN is fully implemented, it will facilitate increased efficiency and more responsive service at National Headquarters. We are exploring the potential for a Wide Area Network (WAN) linking Departments and, perhaps, Posts to National Headquarters.

VFW Properties Department

Director Billy R. Weissend

VFW owns and operates two substantial properties which provide office and work space for most of the Organization's almost 300 employees and the Ladies Auxiliary. The National Headquarters in Kansas City consists of a 12-story office building, totaling 104,000 square feet and providing office space for most of the Kansas City staff, and an adjacent two story, 33,000 square foot annex housing the Emblem and Supply department, the General Services department and a parking garage. A nearby, one-story building is used by both the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary. The Washington, D.C. office, located on Capitol Hill directly across the street from the Hart Senate Office Building, is a five-story building, including 37,000 square feet of space. It houses most of the Washington staff.

Although VFW operations occupy the majority of the space at both facilities, unused space is leased to businesses and, in many instances, other non-profit organizations. Rent receipts provide income that helps defray maintenance and operating costs of the buildings, reducing VFW's expense. Both buildings have remained at an almost 100% occupancy rate.

Five people are employed in the Properties department at the Kansas City facility. They perform all maintenance and repair functions and assist in all construction and remodeling work. In addition, there is a full-time staff of five that provides twenty-four hour security protection. Eight people are employed in the Properties department at the Washington, D.C. facility. Maintenance, repair and custodial duties are performed by those personnel.

Although both buildings are older structures, the hard work and dedication of the employees at both Kansas City and Washington have permitted VFW to maintain the buildings in first class condition, afford a good working environment for its employees and provide an attractive office space for tenants. Management functions for the two facilities are handled by a single director in Kansas City.

In the last several years, substantial projects have been undertaken at both facilities to upgrade energy efficiency, address environmental requirements and make the buildings more accessible to the disabled. In addition to continuing those projects, we expect to embark on a major heating and air conditioning project and install a new alarm system in Kansas City as well as other projects to keep the buildings in first class condition. The facilities have served VFW well for many years and will, we hope, continue to

do so for many more.

Finance and Human Resources

Director Bob Greene

In an effort to be more responsive to financial and employment matters, the accounting, human resources and purchasing functions have been consolidated under one directorship which has been titled Finance and Human Resources. The department's role is service. It provides a wide range of services for a wide range of requirements affecting National Headquarters' operation.

ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT

Because of the dramatically increased workload occasioned by the Organization's new programs, the Accounting Department has added a manager. The manager will be directly involved with the day to day operations as well as assisting in the implementation of new financial accounting requirements for not-for-profit organizations.

With a staff of seven people, the Accounting Department provides financial reporting services to all levels of the Organization. The department processes approximately $60 million in deposits from such areas as membership dues, marketing service receipts, insurance program premium receipts and Emblem & Supply sales. In addition, nearly 40,000 documents are originated and/or processed in connection with the disbursements of over $25 million authorized in VFW's annual budget.

HUMAN RESOURCES

In today's work environment, what you are is who you are. Put another way, it is the performance of individual employees, doing their jobs in a competent and professional manner, that determines the overall performance of the Organization. Thus, it is vital that VFW attract and keep quality people. To do this, VFW must offer an acceptable work environment and competitive benefits. It is the responsibility of the Human Resources department to monitor the VFW benefit package to insure that it is up to date and cost efficient, as well as to implement the benefits and keep employees informed. The department is also responsible for payroll administration.

The VFW employs approximately 180 people in the Kansas City office and 80 in the Washington office. Three people administer the Human Resources department as well as the retirement program for the VFW National Headquarters, Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW and over 20 State Departments.

PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

VFW spends millions of dollars each year on goods and services from

suppliers all over the country. It is critical to the financial well-being of the Organization that it obtain the best products at the best possible prices. Moreover, it is often important that the products be available at the right time, in the right place and in the right quantities. The Purchasing department is charged with seeing that the Organization's needs are met.

Careful attention is given to reviewing requests for purchases to determine the requirements that the products must meet. An investigation is made to identify products meeting those requirements and suppliers that can deliver them.

Most importantly, the Purchasing department works to get the best possible price on those products. Effective procurement is important to efficient management and the Purchasing department plays an important role in this effort.

Audit Report

The financial statements for the nine months ending May 31, 1996, and the Independent Auditor's Report relating thereto, are presented as a part of this report on the following four pages. Audited financial statements for the year ending Aug. 31, 1996, will be mailed to the National Council of Administration and the Department Commanders as soon as they are available.

Independent Auditors' Report

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

We have audited the accompanying consolidated balance sheet and consolidated statement of Council-designated and undesignated and temporarily restricted net assets of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Foundation (collectively, the "Organization") as of May 31, 1996 and the related consolidated statements of activities and of cash flows for the nine months then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Organization's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a

reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, such consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Organization as of May 31, 1996, and the results of its operations and cash flows for the nine months then ended in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

As discussed in Note 2 to the financial statements, effective September 1, 1995 the Organization changed its method of accounting for contributions received to conform with Statement of Financial Accounting Standards ("SFAS") No. 116, changed its financial statement presentation to conform with SFAS No. 117 and changed its method of accounting for investments to conform with SFAS No. 124.

Kansas City, Missouri
July 15, 1996

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET
MAY 31, 1996

	Unrestricted				Temporarily Restricted	
ASSETS	**National Headquarters, National Publication, Community & Veteran's Service Funds**	**Life Membership Fund**	**Other Funds-Council-Designated**	**Total Unrestricted Funds**	**Voice of Democracy And Other Funds**	**Total**
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	$ 1,941,112		$ 200,000	$ 2,141,112		$ 2,141,112
INVESTMENTS	35,580,969	$110,893,201	810,582	147,284,752	$ 656,999	147,941,751
RECEIVABLES:						
Accounts receivable	977,175			977,175		977,175
Accrued interest receivable	516,276	1,926,797		2,443,073		2,443,073
Miscellaneous receivables	711,749			711,749		711,749
Total	2,205,200	1,926,797		4,131,997		4,131,997
INVENTORY:						
Supply department resale merchandise	871,031			871,031		871,031
Stationery and postage	306,131			306,131		306,131
Buddy Poppy department	816,335			816,335		816,335
Miscellaneous	47,576			47,576		47,576
Total	2,041,073			2,041,073		2,041,073
AMOUNTS DUE FROM OTHER FUNDS		2,174,359	4,281,461	6,455,820	124,303	6,580,123
FURNITURE, FIXTURES AND EQUIPMENT, less accumulated depreciation of $4,149,346	1,967,533			1,967,533		1,967,533
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS PROPERTY-KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI:						
Land	1,085,703			1,085,703		1,085,703
Buildings and improvements, less accumulated depreciation of $2,924,421	1,358,332			1,358,332		1,358,332
Other improvements	1,241,855			1,241,855		1,241,855
Total	3,685,890			3,685,890		3,685,890
NATIONAL MEMORIAL BUILDING PROPERTY-WASHINGTON, D.C.:						
Land	349,960			349,960		349,960
Buildings and improvements	1,532,466			1,532,466		1,532,466
Other improvements	114,296			114,296		114,296
Total	1,996,722			1,996,722		1,996,722
PREPAID AND DEFERRED EXPENSES	2,154,095			2,154,095		2,154,095
TOTAL ASSETS	$ 51,572,594	$114,994,357	$ 5,292,043	$171,858,994	$ 781,302	$172,640,296

(Continued)

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET
MAY 31, 1996

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	Unrestricted: National Headquarters, National Publication, Community & Veteran's Service Funds	Unrestricted: Life Membership Fund	Unrestricted: Other Funds-Council-Designated	Unrestricted: Total Unrestricted Funds	Temporarily Restricted: Voice of Democracy And Other Funds	Total
ACCOUNTS PAYABLE:						
Payable to affiliated state departments	$ 38,563			$ 38,563		$ 38,563
Payable to group insurance carrier	1,095,827			1,095,827		1,095,827
Other	520,088			520,088		520,088
Total	1,654,478			1,654,478		1,654,478
ACCRUED LIABILITIES	1,352,723			1,352,723		1,352,723
OTHER LIABILITIES:						
Supply department	295,776			295,776		295,776
Life member fees		$ 76,686,387		76,686,387		76,686,387
Miscellaneous	1,593,541			1,593,541		1,593,541
Total	1,889,317	76,686,387		78,575,704		78,575,704
AMOUNTS DUE TO OTHER FUNDS	6,580,123			6,580,123		6,580,123
DEFERRED REVENUE:						
Life and annual member fees	6,459,851	38,307,970		44,767,821		44,767,821
Insurance program	308,659			308,659		308,659
Total	6,768,510	38,307,970		45,076,480		45,076,480
Total liabilities	18,245,151	114,994,357		133,239,508		133,239,508
NET ASSETS:						
Unrestricted net assets	33,327,443		$ 5,292,043	38,619,486		38,619,486
Temporarily restricted net assets					$ 781,302	781,302
Total net assets	33,327,443		5,292,043	38,619,486	781,302	39,400,788
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	$ 51,572,594	$114,994,357	$ 5,292,043	$171,858,994	$ 781,302	$172,640,296

See notes to consolidated financial statements. (Concluded)

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
NINE MONTHS ENDED MAY 31, 1996

	Unrestricted: National Headquarters, National Publication, Community & Veteran's Service Funds	Unrestricted: Life Membership Fund	Unrestricted: Other Funds-Council-Designated	Unrestricted: Total Unrestricted Funds	Temporarily Restricted: Voice of Democracy And Other Funds	Total
SUPPORT, REVENUE AND GAINS:						
Contributions and gifts	$ 18,567,610			$ 18,567,610	$ 41,632	$ 18,609,242
Membership dues	3,784,102	$ 4,540,393		8,324,495		8,324,495
Life member dues transferred	4,540,393	(4,540,393)				
Buddy Poppy sales	1,023,313			1,023,313		1,023,313
VFW magazine advertising	2,614,014			2,614,014		2,614,014
Supply department	3,895,623			3,895,623		3,895,623
National insurance program	3,065,229			3,065,229		3,065,229
Other revenue	3,627,647	210,761	$ 91,586	3,929,994		3,929,994
Investment income, net	1,162,568		10,582	1,173,150	42,278	1,215,428
Restrictions satisfied by payments	21,902			21,902	(21,902)	
TOTAL SUPPORT, REVENUE AND GAINS	42,302,401	210,761	102,168	42,615,330	62,008	42,677,338
EXPENSES:						
Program Services:						
Educational and informative activities	5,180,427		151,962	5,332,389		5,332,389
Veterans service activities	3,404,342		11,294	3,415,636		3,415,636
National legislative service activities	1,690,750			1,690,750		1,690,750
Community service and patriotic activities	6,807,236		115,555	6,922,791		6,922,791
Department and local post activities	1,201,278			1,201,278		1,201,278
Supporting services:						
Buddy Poppy costs	658,485			658,485		658,485
Supply department costs	3,052,297			3,052,297		3,052,297
National insurance costs	961,893			961,893		961,893
Marketing services expenses	1,141,645			1,141,645		1,141,645
Membership maintenance and promotion costs	6,276,149		38,632	6,314,781		6,314,781
Fund raising activities	6,147,978			6,147,978		6,147,978
Management and general expenses	4,388,143	210,761	257,448	4,856,352		4,856,352
TOTAL EXPENSES	40,910,623	210,761	574,891	41,696,275		41,696,275
INCREASE (DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS BEFORE FUND TRANSFERS	1,391,778		(472,723)	919,055	62,008	981,063
FUND TRANSFERS	(45,280)		45,280			
INCREASE (DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS	1,346,498		(427,443)	919,055	62,008	981,063
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF PERIOD - As restated	31,980,945		5,719,486	37,700,431	719,294	38,419,725
NET ASSETS AT MAY 31, 1996	$ 33,327,443	$	$ 5,292,043	$ 38,619,486	$ 781,302	$ 39,400,788

See notes to consolidated financial statements.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COUNCIL-DESIGNATED AND UNDESIGNATED AND TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS
MAY 31, 1996

UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS:	
Council-designated:	
Advertising and Promotion Fund	$ 2,695,554
Voice of Democracy Scholarship Fund	810,582
100th Anniversary Fund	589,630
Foundation Fund	448,847
Property Maintenance and Improvement Fund	281,578
Veterans Service and Washington Office Automation Fund	262,909
Korean Initiative Fund	141,129
Emergency Relief Fund	58,417
Charitable Contributions Fund	3,397
Total Council-designated net assets	5,292,043
Undesignated net assets	33,327,443
Total unrestricted net assets	38,619,486
TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS	781,302
TOTAL NET ASSETS	$39,400,788

See notes to consolidated financial statements.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
NINE MONTHS ENDED MAY 31, 1996

CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:	
Increase in net assets	$ 981,063
Adjustments to reconcile net assets to net cash provided by operating activities:	
Net realized and unrealized losses on investments	481,853
Depreciation	892,443
Gain on sale of property and equipment	(4,898)
Changes in:	
Receivables	(1,586,680)
Inventory	188,403
Prepaid and deferred expenses	916,497
Accounts payable	(679,725)
Accrued liabilities	747,024
Other liabilities	(3,673,108)
Deferred revenue	888,802
Net cash used in operating activities	(848,326)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:	
Property and equipment additions	(811,744)
Proceeds from sale of property and equipment	8,034
Purchase of investments	(76,075,082)
Proceeds from sales of investments	32,117,305
Maturities of investments	45,397,386
Net cash provided by investing activities	635,899
NET DECREASE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	(212,427)
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS, September 1, 1995	2,353,539
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS, May 31, 1996	$ 2,141,112

See notes to consolidated financial statements.

NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

NINE MONTHS ENDED MAY 31, 1996

1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (the "VFW") and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Foundation (the "Foundation") (collectively, the "Organization"). The VFW was incorporated in 1914 and chartered by Congress in 1936 for fraternal, patriotic, historical and educational purposes and is exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Foundation was incorporated in 1996 as a public benefit corporation to assist disabled veterans and their families, promote public attention to the sacrifices and needs of veterans, active and reserve military personnel and their families, assist veterans with respect to employment and to promote and assist in funding programs sponsored by the VFW, its affiliates and other non-profit groups. The Foundation has filed for exemption from Federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The financial statements of the Organization exclude the financial statements of the various State Departments and Local Posts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as the VFW neither controls nor has an economic interest in such entities.

Basis of Accounting - The financial statements of the Organization have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting and, accordingly, reflect all significant receivables, payables and other liabilities.

Basis of Presentation - The financial statement presentation is in accordance with Statement of Financial Accounting Standards ("SFAS") No. 117, *Financial Statements of Not-for-Profit Organizations*. In accordance with SFAS No. 117, the Organization is required to report information regarding its financial position and activities according to three classes of net assets: unrestricted net assets, temporarily restricted net assets, and permanently restricted net assets, as applicable.

Cash and Cash Equivalents - The Organization considers all unrestricted highly liquid investments with an initial maturity of three months or less to be cash equivalents.

Inventories - Inventories are stated at the lower of cost or market determined using the first-in, first-out method.

Investments - Investments consist primarily of marketable debt securities which are carried at fair value with gains and losses, which are available for current operations, included in the statement of activities. See Note 4 regarding Life Membership. Fair values are based on quoted market prices or dealer quotes, if available. If a quoted market price is not available, fair

value is estimated using quoted market prices for similar securities.

Property and Equipment - Property and equipment are valued at cost and depreciated or amortized over the estimated useful life of the assets using the straight-line method. The National Memorial building is not depreciated as the intent of the Organization is to perpetually preserve the historical value of the building.

Deferred Revenue - Income from membership dues and subscription fees is deferred and recognized over the periods to which the dues and fees relate.

Contributions and Member Dues - Contributions received are recorded as unrestricted, temporarily restricted, or permanently restricted support, depending on the existence and/or nature of donor restrictions, if any.

Contributions that are restricted by the donor are reported as an increase in unrestricted net assets if the restriction expires in the reporting period in which the contribution is recognized. All other donor-restricted support is reported as an increase in temporarily or permanently restricted net assets, depending on the nature of the restriction. When a restriction expires (that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or purpose restriction is accomplished), temporarily restricted net assets are reclassified to unrestricted net assets and reported in the statement of activities as net assets released from restrictions.

A portion of the Organization's revenue is derived from annual dues paid by its members or life membership dues. Annual dues are collected on a calendar year basis and are reflected in revenue ratably over the year. Unearned portions of dues are deferred. As discussed in Note 4, annual dues allocable to the National Headquarters are transferred from the Life Membership Fund annually on a per capita basis.

Expense Allocation - The costs of providing various programs and other activities have been summarized on a functional basis in the statement of activities. All costs incurred by the Organization are either identified directly as, or allocated to, program or supporting services. Accordingly, certain costs have been allocated among the programs and supporting services benefited based on management's judgment. The use of different allocation methodologies could significantly affect such estimates.

For the nine months ended May 31, 1996, the Organization incurred joint costs of $10,384,000 for informational materials and activities that included fund-raising appeals. A significant portion of these costs relate to the acquisition and development of mailing lists for solicitations. The portion of these costs that are judged by management to be educational and

informative, veterans service or community service and patriotic activities are allocated to program services. Of those costs, $6,170,000 was allocated to program services, $3,864,000 was allocated to fund raising activities and $350,000 was allocated to management and general expenses.

Management Estimates - The preparation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of support and revenue and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

2. CHANGE IN ACCOUNTING PRINCIPLES

The Organization adopted SFAS No. 116, *Accounting for Contributions Received and Contributions Made*, effective September 1, 1995. In accordance with SFAS No. 116, contributions received are recorded as unrestricted, temporarily restricted, or permanently restricted support, depending on the existence and/or nature of any donor restrictions. As permitted by SFAS No. 116, the Organization has retroactively applied the provisions of this new Statement by restating net assets as of August 31, 1995. The cumulative effect of adoption of SFAS No. 116 was to increase net assets by $719,000 as of August 31, 1995. The adoption of SFAS No. 116 increased the change in net assets by $62,000 for the nine months ended May 31, 1996.

Effective September 1, 1995, the Organization also adopted SFAS No. 117. Under SFAS No. 117, the Organization is required to report information regarding its financial position and activities according to three classes of net assets: unrestricted net assets, temporarily restricted net assets, and permanently restricted net assets. As permitted by this statement, the Organization has discontinued its use of fund accounting and has, accordingly, reclassified its financial statements to present the three classes of net assets required. The Organization does not have any permanently restricted net assets. As a result of the adoption of SFAS No. 117, the Life Membership Fund balance of $115,303,000 at August 31, 1995 was restated and allocated to a liability to the State Departments and Local Posts ($76,869,000) and to deferred revenue ($38,434,000). The adoption of SFAS No. 117 increased the change in net assets by $4,462,000 for the nine months ended May 31, 1996.

In November 1995, the Financial Accounting Standards Board issued SFAS No. 124, *Accounting for Certain Investments Held by Not-for-Profit Organizations,* which requires that investments in equity securities with readily determinable fair values and all investments in debt securities be

reported at fair value with gains and losses reported in the statement of activities. This statement also requires the disclosure of investment income, net realized gains and losses on investments reported at other than fair value, and net gains or losses on investments reported at fair value, the basis for determining the carrying amount for investments and the aggregate carrying amount of investments by major type. As permitted by SFAS No. 124, the Organization has retroactively applied the provisions of this new statement by restating net assets as of August 31, 1995. Such restatement increased net assets of the National Headquarters, National Publication, Community and Veterans Service funds by $490,000 at August 31, 1995. The adoption of SFAS No. 124 decreased the change in net assets by $669,000 for the nine months ended May 31, 1996. Additionally, such restatement also increased the carrying value of investments held in the Life Membership Fund by $4,152,700 at August 31, 1995 and $1,993,000 at May 31, 1996. See Note 4.

3. INVESTMENTS

Investments at fair value (carrying amount) and amortized cost at May 31, 1996 are as follows:

	Amortized Cost	Fair Value
Equity securities	$5,625,207	$5,947,588
Government obligations	113,463,129	114,859,164
Nongovernment obligations	246,755	238,335
Cash and securities due in one year	26,625,593	26,896,664
Total	$145,960,684	$147,941,751

Investments by fund at May 31, 1996 are as follows:

	Amortized Cost	Fair Value
National Headquarters, National Publications, Community and Veteran's Service Fund	$35,581,433	$35,580,969
Life Membership Fund	108,900,608	110,893,201
Other Funds - Council designated	815,876	810,582
Total unrestricted funds	145,297,917	147,284,752
Temporarily restricted - Voice of Democracy and Other Funds	662,767	656,999

Total	$145,960,684	$147,941,751

Interest and dividend income of $ 1,746,992 and net losses (including unrealized gains and losses) of $531,564 are included in investment income, net in the statement of activities for the nine months ended May 31, 1996. Additionally, interest and dividend income of $ 5,724,606 and net losses (including unrealized gains and losses) of $2,099,801 are applicable to the Life Membership Fund for the nine months ended May 31, 1996. See Note 4.

4. LIFE MEMBERSHIP

The Life Membership Fund includes investment income and the unexpended fees received from life members of the Organization for future distribution of membership dues. All life member fees and all income earned from the investment of such fees are to be used solely for the payment of annual amounts to National Headquarters, State Departments, and Local Posts on behalf of life members and the administrative expenses of the Fund. Accordingly, a significant portion of the Life Membership Fund is ultimately a future obligation to the State Departments and Local Posts whose financial statements and operations are not controlled by or reflected in the financial statements of the Organization and, accordingly, such amounts are included in liabilities in the accompanying balance sheet. Life Membership funds which are allocable to the payment of future annual National Headquarters dues are included in deferred revenue. A portion of the dues of life members to be received by the National Headquarters Fund is required to be used for magazine publishing costs.

The actuarially determined amount, using a discount rate of 7.5%, required to fund the current annual dues payout set by the Life Membership committee of $5 per member to each of National Headquarters, State Departments and Local Posts for life members, determined as of May 31, 1996, was approximately $119,000,000.

The following summary represents the changes in the Life Membership fund during the nine months ended May 31, 1996:

	Total	Life Membership Obbligation to State Departments and Local Posts	Deferred Revenue
Balance, August 31, 1995	$119,456,083	$79,637,389	$39,818,694
Additions:			
Life membership fees received	5,675,045	3,783,390	1,891,655
Investment income	3,624,805	2,416,537	1,208,268
Total	9,299,850	6,199,927	3,099,923
Distributions and expenses:			
Distribution of membership dues:			
National Headquarters	4,540,393		4,540,393
State Departments	4,526,718	4,526,718	
Local Posts	4,483,704	4,483,704	
Management and general expenses	210,761	140,507	70,254
Total	13,761,576	9,150,929	4,610,647
Balance, May 31, 1996	$114,994,357	$76,686,387	$38,307,970

5. DESIGNATED NET ASSETS

The National Headquarters and National Publication Funds are resources of the Organization that provide the funds necessary to operate the Organization and publish the VFW Magazine. The Community and Veterans Service Fund consists of net revenues of the National insurance programs and the Buddy Poppy department and expenses of the Organization's various community and veteran service activities.

Additionally, certain unrestricted net assets have been designated by the National Council of Administration (the "Council") for specific purposes and are included in the statement of net assets. Such designated funds include the Advertising and Promotion Fund which was established during fiscal year 1995 with a $4,000,000 transfer from the National Headquarters Fund. This fund represents internally restricted funds to be used during fiscal years 1995 through 1997 to cover costs associated with the Organization's title sponsorship of the *VFW Senior Championship* golf tournament. Unexpended Council-designated funds will be transferred back to the National Headquarters Fund when the Council determines that the funds are no longer needed.

6. EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLANS

The Organization has a defined benefit pension plan covering substantially all of its employees who have completed certain minimum service requirements. The Organization's funding policy is to contribute at least the amount required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act. Employees of several VFW State Departments and the Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW also participate in the plan.

Contributions of $623,295 have been made to the plan for the nine months ended May 31, 1996. The following table sets forth the plan's funded status and amounts recognized in the Organization's financial statements at the measurement date, May 31, 1996:

Actuarial present value of benefit obligations -	
Accumulated benefit obligation,	
including vested benefits of	$11,606,000
	$13,629,000
Projected benefit obligation for service rendered to date	$ 17,297,000
Plan assets at fair value as of May 31, 1996	19,627,000
Plan assets in excess of projected benefit obligation	2,330,000
Unrecognized net gain from past experience	
different from that assumed	(1,384,000)
Unamortized prior service cost not yet recognized in pension cost	1,484,000
Unrecognized net asset as of June 1, 1987	
being recognized over 15 years	(845,000)
Prepaid pension cost included in prepaid and deferred expenses	$ 1,585,000
Net periodic pension cost for 1996 included the following components:	
Service cost - benefits earned during the period	$ 816,000
Prior service cost	
Interest cost on projected benefit obligation	1,159,000
Actual return on plan assets	(1,510,000)
Net amortization and deferral	(21,000)
Net periodic pension cost	$ 444,000

The weighted-average discount rate and rate of increase in future compensation levels used in determining the actuarial present value of the projected benefit obligation were 7.5 percent and 5.0 percent, respectively. The expected long-term rate of return on assets was 8.5 percent.

The Organization also has a plan which provides medical and dental benefits for retired employees. No benefits are provided for spouses or dependents. Retirees are eligible for the plan if they have at least fifteen years of employment service (service with at least 1,000 hours annually), the employee is eligible for retirement under the requirements of the VFW Retirement Plan, and the retiree moves directly from active to retired status. Employees who retired prior to November 1, 1994 will only be provided the medical portion of the benefits. The amount provided to the plan by the Organization is limited to an amount equal to 80% of the 1995 premiums.

The following sets forth the plan's funded status at May 31, 1996 and the amounts recognized in the Organization's financial statements using the plan's measurement date, August 31, 1995:

Actuarial present value of benefit obligations -		
Accumulated benefit obligation,		
including vested benefits of	$321,483	$ 1,018,367

Net periodic post-retirement benefit cost for 1996 included the following

components:	
Service cost - benefits earned during the period	$ 54,048
Interest cost	74,246
Amortization of prior service cost	67,616
Net periodic post-retirement cost	$ 195,910
Fair value of plan assets at August 31, 1995	$ 1,066,077

The weighted average discount rate used in determining the actuarial present value of the accumulated benefit obligation was 7.5 percent. During fiscal year 1995, the Organization deposited $1,066,077 in a separate bank account, pending establishment of a formal trust. Accordingly, such asset and liability are not reflected in the financial statements.

The Organization has a severance pay plan which provides benefits to employees, upon termination, who have been employed for at least ten years. The estimated liability for such benefits (vested and non-vested) is $824,000. During 1995, the Organization deposited $537,707 in a separate bank account to fund the vested portion of such liability, pending establishment of a formal trust. The unfunded amount is reflected as a liability in the financial statements.

The Organization also has a contributory savings plan (a 401(k) plan) available to employees. The Organization makes contributions to the plan based upon guidelines set forth in the plan. Total contributions made by the Organization for the nine months ended May 31, 1996 were $246,382.

7. POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Delegates to the 80th National Convention established the Veterans of Foreign Wars Political Action Committee ("PAC"). Contributions from Posts and Auxiliaries from inception to May 31, 1996 for payment of administrative expenses of the PAC totaled $1,689,269. Expenditures for administrative expenses from inception to May 31, 1996 totaled $1,746,249. The excess of expenditures over contributions received of $56,980 is included in miscellaneous receivables of the National Headquarters Fund.

Contributions from individuals are recorded in the records of the PAC, rather than the records of the Office of the Quartermaster General.

8. COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENCIES

In connection with its Buddy Poppy program, the Organization has entered into a contract with a manufacturing company to purchase a specified amount of raw material each year at a fixed price through 1999. The estimated total commitment at May 31, 1996 is $1,276,000 payable in approximately equal annual installments through 1999.

The Organization has been named as a defendant in several legal actions. Management of the Organization, based in part on advice from the Organization's legal counsel, believes that all such matters will be resolved with no material adverse effect to the financial statements.