

# THE POST SCRIPT

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WAR OF THE UNITED STATES

EDWARD J. KEARNS POST 6024

P.O.BOX 4457

MISSION VIEJO, CALIFORNIA 92690-4457

[vfwpost6024.org](http://vfwpost6024.org)

VOL. XXXVIII, NO. 2

FEBRUARY 2026

EDITOR: GALE GOODALL

*In memory of Tom Goodall*

[tommyg0910@aol.com](mailto:tommyg0910@aol.com)

## 2025-2026 POST AND AUXILIARY OFFICERS

### POST

|                                                  |                |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <u>Commander:</u> Harry Steelman                 | 422-8325       |
| <u>Sr. Vice Commander:</u> Rene Macare           | 306-3185       |
| <u>Jr. Vice Commander:</u> Ned Costa             | (562) 682-3100 |
| <u>Quartermaster:</u> Harshu Sharma              | (818) 879-3120 |
| <u>Adjutant:</u> Jackie Yencer                   | 228-2744       |
| <u>Officer of the Day:</u> Gary Heald            | 466-4225       |
| <u>Chaplain:</u> Robert Casillas                 | 468-8135       |
| <u>Advocate:</u> Casey Kleindienst               | 306-6133       |
| <u>Surgeons:</u> Clark Courtney & Dr. James Asch |                |
| <u>Guard:</u> Gary Portas                        | 292-7119       |
| <u>Benefits Advisor:</u> Bob Franzwa             | (858) 229-4306 |
| <u>Trustee 3 Year :</u> Russ Johnson             | 244-9895       |
| <u>Trustee 2 Year:</u> Robert Carey              | 280-5845       |
| <u>Trustee 1 Year:</u> Norm Lipin                | (714) 743-6950 |
| <u>Honor Guard Leader:</u> Robert Carey          | 280-5845       |

### AUXILIARY

|                                        |                |
|----------------------------------------|----------------|
| <u>President:</u> Jackie Heddlesten    | 484-3801       |
| <u>Sr. Vice President:</u> Renee Fulk  | (714) 469-9938 |
| <u>Jr. Vice President:</u> Lisa Moncur | (951) 445-2679 |
| <u>Secretary:</u> Kerry Velasquez      | 678-9134       |
| <u>Treasurer:</u> Mary Lombard         | 683-0106       |
| <u>Chaplain:</u> Martha Steelman       | 309-1863       |
| <u>Conductor:</u> Maryrose Kakuschke   | 322-6003       |
| <u>Guard:</u> Alma Macare              | (714) 510-6382 |
| <u>Trustee #1:</u> Rene Fulk           | (714) 469-9938 |
| <u>Trustee #2:</u> Katherine Holman    | 370-0926       |
| <u>Trustee #3:</u> Alma Macare         | (714) 510-6382 |

NOTE: All area codes not noted are (949)

### NEXT MEETING

POST: Monday, March 9, 2026, 1900 hrs. - Norman Murray Center

AUXILIARY: Monday, March 9, 2026, 1900 hrs. - Norman Murray Center

### POST SCRIPT BOOSTERS

Carol Rigg in memory of Gene Rigg (10/26), Burton J. Rounds (in perpetuity), Dick Vaughn (5/28), Stuart Evans (4/28), Joe Goff (9/26), Al Ramirez (11/26), Fred Egeler (11/27), Clark Courtney (6/30), Robert Carey (7/26), Frank McLeary (11/28), Herbert Nakasone (2/28), Robert Casillas (12/28), Julie Hammeras in memory of Samuel Bussell (11/27), Michael Burnett (5/27), John Summa (6/26), Roger Clinch (6/27), Dave Berutich (2/26), Rene Macare (6/30), Jackie Heddlesten (11/29), Terry Pfeil (7/26), Ned Costa (8/26), Casey Kleindienst (6/28), Steve Valderrama in memory of Emmanuel G. Valderrama (12/37), Harry Steelman (11/26), Carson Day (12/32), John Nicsinger (3/27), Jackie Yencer (12/26), Ed Rice (10/29)

*(NOTE: A donation of at least \$15.00 allows you to be a Post Script Booster for one year. The date after your name indicates your donation expiration. Our Boosters help offset the costs for mailing and printing this newsletter.)*

### COMMANDER'S CORNER

#### **58 Years Ago -- The Battle of Khe Sanh: Courage Under Siege**

The Battle of Khe Sanh remains one of the most intense and defining engagements of the Vietnam War. Beginning on January 21, 1968, North Vietnamese forces launched a massive artillery assault on the U.S. Marine garrison at Khe Sanh, a remote outpost in the rugged hills of Quảng Trị Province near the Laotian border. For 77 days, roughly 6,000 Marines and South Vietnamese allies held their ground against an estimated 20,000–30,000 North Vietnamese troops in one of the longest sieges in modern U.S. military history.

Khe Sanh's strategic importance was undeniable. Positioned along Route 9—the key corridor between South Vietnam and Laos—the base threatened the Ho Chi Minh Trail and served as a forward position for monitoring enemy movement. U.S. commanders believed the North Vietnamese sought a

symbolic victory reminiscent of Dien Bien Phu, hoping to break American resolve and gain leverage before future negotiations.

The Marines endured relentless artillery, mortar fire, and ground probes. Early in the siege, enemy fire destroyed much of the base’s ammunition supply, forcing defenders to rely heavily on air support. In response, the U.S. launched Operation Niagara, one of the most concentrated aerial bombardments of the war, with thousands of tactical aircraft and B52 sorties targeting enemy positions around the base.

Despite overwhelming pressure, the defenders held firm. Resupply missions—often flown under fire—kept the garrison alive. Hilltop outposts such as Hills 861 and 881 saw fierce close quarters fighting as Marines repelled repeated assaults. Their determination prevented the North Vietnamese from overrunning the base, even as the broader Tet Offensive erupted across South Vietnam.

Relief finally came in early April with Operation Pegasus, the long planned ground rescue. The operation was led by the U.S. Army’s 1st Air Cavalry Division, whose brigades spearheaded the advance along Route 9. Their push included attached mechanized elements—M48 tanks and M113 armored personnel carriers—that provided the armored punch needed to reopen the road. Working in coordination with Marine units attacking from the west, the 1st Air Cav broke through to Khe Sanh on April 8, officially ending the siege.

Although the U.S. ultimately withdrew from Khe Sanh that July, the courage, endurance, and sacrifice displayed there remain a testament to the fighting spirit of the American service member. Casualties were heavy on both sides, with U.S. losses in the hundreds and North Vietnamese losses estimated in the thousands.

For veterans, Khe Sanh is remembered not only as a battle of strategic significance but as a symbol of unwavering resolve under the harshest conditions. The Marines, soldiers, and South Vietnamese allies who fought there upheld the highest traditions of military service—standing their ground, supporting one another, and refusing to yield.

To those who were there—Welcome Home.

To those who didn’t make it back—We Remember.

*Commander, Harry Steelman*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Po\$ Script Boo\$ter\$:** No new Boosters for several months. Please consider contributing to support this Publication.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Patriot’s Pen Essay Awards:** Youth Activity Committee members Richard Vaughn, Al Hicks, and Gale Goodall present First Place awards to Stoneybrooke Christian School students, Erika Kerrane (left) and Sadie Bojorquez.



\*\*\*\*\*

**Young Marines Present the Colors:**

Cpl Connor T. Hurn (left) and LCpl Acelin Thomas from the MCAS Tustin Young Marines presented the colors at the beginning of our February 9 Post Meeting. They were accompanied by Unit Commander, JT Hurn.

We look forward to their participation during our Memorial Day Buddy Poppy campaign.



**Little Known First Black Naval Officer:** Lieutenant (junior grade) William Lloyd Garrison Payne was awarded the Navy Cross for the hazardous duty of commanding the submarine chaser USS SC-83 in 1918, a rare and dangerous assignment for any officer, and virtually unheard of for a Black man in that era.



Ensign Payne, right, on the bridge of USS SC-83

Payne represents the countless Black service members whose achievements were overlooked or intentionally obscured. Lt. Payne stands as one of the most remarkable yet least recognized figures in U.S. naval history.

Born in 1881 to a White Indiana woman and a Black father, Payne entered the Navy abt. 1900 when opportunities for Black service members were very limited.

Throughout his career, Payne occupied a unique and often uncomfortable position. The Navy did not want Black sailors supervising White personnel, yet Payne's expertise made him indispensable. He likely served as the only Black officer in the Navy for his entire career, a testament both to his extraordinary capability and to the military's deep resistance to racial integration.

His commissioning made him the first Black naval officer in U.S. history, yet the Navy's segregationist culture meant his achievement was never publicly acknowledged. Light skinned and navigating a system hostile to Black advancement, Payne appears to have "transitioned" racially on paper—self identifying as White on marriage licenses and appearing in records without racial designation, a common survival strategy for some Black Americans of the time.

Even after completing forty years of service by 1940, Payne volunteered again during World War II. Meanwhile, the Navy continued to restrict Black sailors until President Truman's 1948 desegregation order began dismantling the old system. Too late for Payne, and it would still be decades before more than a handful of Black officers appeared in the Navy's ranks.

Payne's career was remarkable not only for its longevity but for the barriers he broke. In an era when the Navy restricted Black sailors almost exclusively to menial roles. Payne's talent and leadership were undeniable earning him the respect of peers and superiors. Receiving a commission was an achievement so unprecedented that the Navy often obscured his racial identity to avoid backlash.

Lieutenant William Lloyd Garrison Payne is not just the Navy's first Black commissioned officer; he is a symbol of the many trailblazers whose contributions shaped the nation long before they were acknowledged. His legacy offers a powerful and fitting tribute for Black History Month.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Laguna Café:** Join us for our weekly breakfast meetings on Fridays at 7:30 am. 24310 Moulton Pkwy, Laguna Woods. **All Veterans Welcome.**

In addition, the "Flashback" band entertains on the patio the 3rd Sunday of every month from 11:00 am—2:30 pm **All donations go to the VFW**



\*\*\*\*\*

**MONTHLY POWER QUOTES:** For Black History Month

*"We must never forget that Black history is American history. The achievements of African Americans have contributed to our nation's greatness."* ————— Gen. Colin Powell

*"I had to keep going...because if I stopped then those who came after me might never start."*  
————— Lt. Gen. Frank E. Petersen, Jr. first Black USMC aviator and general

*"I'm not concerned with you liking me, all I ask is that you respect me as a human being."*  
————— Jackie Robinson, US Army Veteran



**Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.  
Edward J. Kearns Post 6024  
P.O. Box 4457  
Mission Viejo, CA 92690-4457**

**RETURN SERVICE  
REQUESTED**

**NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
MISSION VIEJO, CA  
PERMIT NO. 591**



## **THE POST SCRIPT**



### **UPCOMING AND HISTORICAL EVENTS**

**March 9, 2026 ———Post and Auxiliary Meetings 1900 hrs., Norman Murray Center  
March 18, 2026 ——— St. Patrick's Day Potluck Dinner 1730-2000 hrs., Norman Murray Center  
March 28, 2026 ——— Marine Lake Day 1000—1500 hrs., Lake Mission Viejo**

***February 19, 1942——— Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt issues Exec Order 9066 authorizing internment  
of Japanese Americans***

***February 23, 1945 —— Historic flag raising on Mt. Suribachi during Battle of Iwo Jima***

***February 27, 1991 —— Coalition Forces liberate Kuwait***

***March 5, 1770 —— Boston Massacre — the killing of 5 Colonists by British soldiers sparks American  
Revolution***