

The 1889 Land Run

Department of Oklahoma

American Legion Newsletter

32nd Edition, February 25, 2025

Fellow Legionaires,

On behalf of the Oklahoma Department, I extend my sincere gratitude to all my fellow Legionnaires for your unwavering dedication and service throughout this year. I look forward to the coming months as your Commander.

As we approach the holiday season, please remember to prioritize safety. If you choose to consume alcohol, do so responsibly. Let's uphold the values instilled in us through our military training.

I hope to see each one of you at our Midwinter Convention at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Norman OK on January 16th, 17th, and 18th. To ensure your attendance, please plan your holiday season accordingly.

As we gather with loved ones this Thanksgiving, let us express gratitude for the blessings in our lives. Let's also support one another as we navigate the upcoming holiday season and beyond.

I hope everyone has diligently completed their Buddy Checks. It's essential to look out for our fellow members, friends, and neighbors, especially those who have served alongside us.

Our primary goals for the Department remain steadfast: increasing our membership to strengthen our organization and enhancing our capabilities through rigorous training. I urge you to maintain your faith in your leadership, your officers, and one another.

Hayden Woods

Commander

Department of Oklahoma

talokcommander@gmail.com



Team Oklahoma, You're Invited! We are thrilled to invite you to the 106th Summer Convention at the Grand Casino and Hotel in Shawnee, Oklahoma!

When: July 10–13, 2025

Where: Grand Casino and Hotel, Shawnee, OK



Space Left for Submissions from:

American Legion Riders

Greetings,

I hope this finds you well. First would again like to thank all members of the American Family that attended the Riders Meeting at the Mid-Winter Conference. We discussed the upcoming Officer elections at the Summer Convention. I am stepping down as Director and I am looking forward to someone else taking this leadership position. Commander Bobby Bryant appointed me as the ALR Director at the 2015 Summer Convention. My goal was to organize the ALR Chapters in the Department and to accomplish that a Department Constitution and Bylaws was written. Having accomplished my goals, it now time to turn the reins over to new blood. If you are a member of the OKALR and wish to serve in some capacity at the Department level please send me your resume and position you are interested in 60 days before the Summer Convention. Planning has started for our OKALR State Legacy Run. The dates this year are May 16-18. Maybe it will be cooler than our July rides in the past. If you're interested in helping out in the planning or your post would like sponsor one of the stops please contact Bryan Robinson, bryanrobinson48@gmail.com or Rex Warlick, rexwarlick@outlook.com. Your Post can also help raise awareness and money for the cause. The cause is the Veterans & Children Fund. The American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation provides vital support for military and veteran parents in unexpected financial crises and support for service officers in their tireless efforts to obtain care and due benefits and opportunities of disabled veterans and families. Thank you in advance for your support,

Mike Marxen
Director OKALR

American Legion Department Senior- Commander Department Vice Commander – East

Congratulations to American Legion Department of Oklahoma Vice-Commander East and Post 64 Chandler Commander Patricia Mathes-Kerr was selected as American Legion VA Healthcare Provider of the Year and was presented with official plaque and pin at American Legion 65th Washington Conference in Washington, DC February 24, 2025.

Department NEC Charlie O'Leary and Oklahoma Legion & Auxiliary delegation were in attendance.

National Commander James LaCoursiere, National VA&R Chairman Jay Bowen and new VA Director Doug Collins made the presentation.



Department Vice Commander – West

From Vice West Commander:

Greetings from Western Oklahoma. As I am writing this, we are expecting extremely cold weather. I realize that this won't be received before the cold weather hits but hope that everyone is prepared and stays safe and warm.

Over 34% of our Posts in the state have met the 85% goal for membership. Congratulations on making that goal. Keep up the good work. Over 19% are within 10% or less of obtaining the 85% goal. Great! We need to reach out to those who haven't renewed - phone call, postcard, email, or text. I know that there are memberships being processed at National, and that National is taking approximately 3 weeks to get them processed and updated in the system. As National gets those pending memberships processed our numbers will increase.

Let's help each other out. If you have a special letter that you send out that gets a positive response, please share with others that may be struggling with their numbers. If a phone call works, let us know what you are saying that appeals to them. Everyone is different and responds differently. If we continue to try multiple ways of saying "We need you"; we will find the right saying for each person.

We must remember that we are a team and must work together to accomplish the mission of taking care of Veterans. We can do this together to benefit everyone.

Respectfully,
Shirley May
Vice West Commander
God, Country, and Service

National Executive (NEC) Committeeman



Greetings Legionnaires!

One of the most important presentations to come out of the previous National Convention in New Orleans was the Columbia Suicide Questionnaire shown in the attachment.

This is a handout you can print off and make copies of that tells you the questions to ask a fellow veteran or anyone who calls or talks personally to you about committing suicide.

You ask them the six questions on the handout. If they answer yes to the questions in red, you call 911 and get them to where they can get help.

This information can save lives and is part of the Legion's "Be the One" program.

Copies of this handout can be made and distributed to everyone in your post plus family members and acquaintances.

<https://www.columbiapsychiatry.org/news/simple-set-6-questions-screen-suicide>

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

CHARLES S O'LEARY
National Executive Committeeman 2023-2025
Past Department Commander 2021-2022
American Legion Department of Oklahoma

WE NEED YOU TO JOIN ANAVICTUS!

ANAVICTUS is a unit of the Canadian veteran's organization ANAVETS that is made up of Army, Navy, and Air Force veterans from the United States and Canada.

ANAVICTUS membership is by invitation only and is made up of former national commanders and other distinguished members of The American Legion.

This organization was formed to honor the shared service of American and Canadian soldiers in WWI, WWII and in Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts. I myself served three months in Afghanistan attached to a Canadian Army Hospital there. The Canadian Unit that was there was from Quebec and just spoke French, so they told me I could see English-speaking Canadians [from central and western Canada], Americans and "other aliens", soldiers from the NATO-ISAF units and others. I lived in a B-hut with Mongolian officers and only one spoke English.

Ten years ago, when I was a new Department Commander, I was told by a PDC from our Department that membership in ANAVICTUS was a yearly waste of \$35.00. Nothing could be further from the truth.

What does ANAVICTUS do?

Scholarships

ANAVICTUS presents ten scholarships each year in memory of a distinguished ANAVICTUS member. Your membership money goes toward funding these scholarships.

Memorial

ANAVICTUS established and funded a memorial to Harry W. Colmery, the author of the original GI Bill, at the American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis. TAL HQ.

Meetings

New members are inducted at the national convention and the Washington Conference, which are held twice a year. There is an ANAVICTUS breakfast during the Washington and National Conference and the induction of new members takes place at that time. Members are presented with a unique royal purple cover with the ANAVICTUS emblem on one side and UNITED STATES UNIT embroidered on the other side. It is an honor to be selected for membership and to receive this special cover, ANAVICTUS membership medal and lapel pin.

The National Executive Committeeman [NEC] for each Department handles ANAVICTUS membership in their respective Departments.

To be eligible you must be a Legionnaire in good standing, men and women veterans are equally welcome. You will need to step up at your Post and District and become involved in Post Committee and service activities, run for District Office or volunteer for District Vice Commander appointment. National Committee selectees are eligible. If you work with Boys State and are a Legionnaire you are eligible. If you are a VSO at the Department and higher level, you are eligible. Department Officers, past and present, are automatically eligible.

If you are interested in this program and want to step up to assist your fellow veterans in your location and across the State and Nation, please contact your District leadership and have them forward your contact information to me. I will also be reaching out to “quiet leaders” across the State who deserve to be recognized also.

Selectees will need to fill out the Legion 2025 Prominent Legionnaire Biographical Form, plus your resume or curriculum vitae and email both to me at: coleary9130@gmail.com and I will forward your nomination to the ANAVICTUS coordinator at TAL HQ in Indianapolis.

There the ANAVICTUS selection process will make final decisions and selectees will be notified in the mail.

At the last National Convention there were zero inductees from the Department of Oklahoma. We will have one inductee at the Washington Conference. My goal is to not let this happen again. We are better than zero and one in Oklahoma!

Alternate National Executive (ANEC) Committeeman

Michael Taylor

Past Department Commander's Corner

Brett Martin, PDC 2024-2025



The True Measure of an Oklahoma American Legion Department Officer

Serving as a department officer in the Oklahoma American Legion is not just about holding a title or wearing a hat—it is about embodying the very principles that the American Legion stands for. It requires dedication, leadership, and a relentless commitment to the organization's core values. Those who aspire to these positions must do so with a servant's heart, understanding that their role is to support and strengthen the Legion, its members, and the communities they serve.

Embodying the Four Pillars of the American Legion

A true American Legion department officer must stand firm on all four pillars of the organization:

- **Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation** – Advocating for the well-being of veterans, ensuring they receive the benefits, healthcare, and support they have earned.
- **National Security** – Supporting a strong national defense, advocating for military service members, and ensuring a prepared and well-supported force.
- **Americanism** – Promoting patriotism, respect for the flag, and active citizenship through programs and initiatives.
- **Children & Youth** – Protecting and nurturing the next generation, ensuring they have the resources and guidance to become responsible citizens.

A department officer must not simply acknowledge these pillars—they must actively uphold and promote them in every aspect of their service. This means being an advocate, an educator, and an organizer, ensuring that these foundational principles remain strong and vibrant.

Effective Communication and Presence

Leadership is not merely about holding a position; it is about being present and engaged. An effective department officer must be willing and able to communicate clearly and efficiently. This requires possessing the tools to reach fellow Legionnaires, whether through speeches, meetings, social media, or written correspondence. A good leader does not operate in a vacuum but instead ensures that the voices of Legion members are heard and respected.

More than just communication, an officer must dedicate time and effort to visiting local posts, attending roundtable discussions, participating in meetings, and representing the American Legion at events. They must be seen raising the flag, standing for veterans, and engaging with the community—not just when it is convenient but as a true calling.

Integrity, Leadership, and Discipline

Integrity is the bedrock of any great leader. A department officer should be upright and honest, making decisions based on what is best for the American Legion and the veterans it serves, rather than for personal gain or prestige. Leadership is not about seeking recognition but about serving with honor, commitment, and discipline.

Discipline in leadership means maintaining order, setting high standards, and leading by example. A department officer should be professional, dependable, and willing to hold others accountable while maintaining respect and camaraderie. They must be unwavering in their dedication to the organization's mission, even when faced with challenges.

If you say you are going to do something, then do it. Your words matter. A strong leader follows through on their commitments and understands that trust is built on actions, not just promises. Being reliable and standing by your word is a fundamental part of earning the respect and confidence of those you lead. If you make a statement about doing something or making something, then you have to follow through. Your words matter, and you are only as good as your word.

A Call for True Leaders

The Oklahoma American Legion does not need officers who seek titles for status alone. It needs true leaders—those willing to give their time, energy, and passion to furthering the mission of the Legion. The role is not easy, nor should it be taken lightly. It requires sacrifice, commitment, and a genuine love for fellow veterans and the principles that define the American Legion.

For those who seek this path, ask yourself: Do I have the dedication to uphold the four pillars? Do I have the time and tools to effectively communicate and engage with members? Am I in this for the right reasons—to serve rather than to be served?

If the answer is yes, then step forward. The American Legion needs strong, honorable, and disciplined leaders who will carry its mission forward with pride and integrity.

Department Adjutant Rick Redden

It is my pleasure to introduce you to an upcoming event in Oklahoma. Could you please make your Legionnaires aware of this award-winning documentary, *Brothers After War*. *Brothers After War* is a follow-up to the 2013 movie *Brothers At War*. The new movie follows up with the Service Members (now veterans) from the original filming in Iraq and stateside. Director Jake Rademacher reconnects with his brothers, elite Soldiers, & Marines he embedded with during the Iraq War. Intercutting footage past and present, he leads us on an insightful, humorous, & moving journey as we watch warfighters explore loss, meaning, & hope on their path from warfighter to veteran.

The Chair of the American Legion Be The One, Waco Hoover, has been working with Jake for over half a year to get the word out to all veterans. Here is what Veterans are saying about the film:

“An emotional roller coaster in the best possible way.”

“I love raw, unscripted videos of my brothers. It is who we are.”

“In the media, Veterans are all broken. We are not. Loved the emphasis on families. They serve too.”

Jake’s BROTHERS AT WAR RESILIENCY PROGRAM has been conducting resiliency workshops to over 20,000 service members returning from deployment since his first movie, *Brothers At War*, was released in 2013. This PROGRAM evolved from the real world experience of screening the documentary for numerous groups of returning American Service Members and their families and prevented suicides. Jake is now moving his focus from active-duty personnel to veterans.

Here is the theater which will be showing *Brothers After War* starting February 28th:

Regal Warren Broken Arrow	Broken Arrow	OK	1700 W. Aspen Creek Dr
Regal Bridgeport Village		Tigard	OR

Attached is additional information on the film. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Jake or Waco.

Jake Rademacher
 Director & Producer
 BROTHERS AFTER WAR
 Perseverance Productions
[8055 West Manchester Avenue](#)
[Suite 503](#)
[Playa del Rey, CA 90293](#)
 O. 310-574-9800
 C. 323-383-2221
[BrothersAfterWar.com](#)
 Waco Hoover
 Chair, Be The One
 American Legion
[Whoover@legion.org](#)
 917-655-0818

Commissioner OK Veterans Commission

Team Department of Oklahoma American Legion, please mark Your Calendars –
 The Inaugural Meeting of the Oklahoma Veterans Advisory Forum (OVAF)
 This isn't just another calendar invite—it's a call to action for every nonprofit dedicated to serving Oklahoma's veterans. The Oklahoma Veterans Advisory Forum (OVAF) is your direct line to shaping policies, solving real issues, and making a lasting impact on the lives of veterans across our state.

Why You Need to Be There:

OVAF isn't just a discussion group—it's where solutions are forged. This is your opportunity to: Unite with other veterans-focused organizations.

Advocate directly to the Oklahoma Veterans Commission (OVC) and the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA).

Solve the pressing issues affecting Oklahoma's veterans and their families.

Ensure your voice is heard at the highest level without red tape or bureaucracy.

First Meeting Details

Location: ODVA Headquarters, 2132 NE 36th St., Oklahoma City

Date: March 26, 2024

Time: 10:00 AM

Mandatory Attendees Include:

A member of the OVC Executive Committee

The ODVA Chief Counsel

The ODVA Executive Director (or designated representative)

Who Else Needs to Be in the Room?

Every nonprofit serving Oklahoma's veterans. If you care about making a difference, this is where it happens. No dues. No fluff. Just action.

Don't let this be another meeting you "meant to attend." This is the moment to step up, show up, and make a real impact.

Join us in working for GOD, Country, and Service.

Brett Martin, Chairman, Oklahoma Veterans Commission



Sons of the American Legion News

Boys State Update - Registration is OPEN!!



Hello Legion Family:

With the turn of the calendar to March, we are just over two months away from the 2025 Session of Oklahoma American Legion Boys State! We are already off to a great start and are well ahead of where we stood at this time last year. For this month, we wanted to send you a few updates on the program this year.

1. Session Details: As you know, our session will be held again at Rogers State University in Claremore May 24 to May 31, 2025.

2. Legion Night: While more details will follow later, please go ahead and mark your calendar for Legion Night on Tuesday, May 27, 2025. We are continuing to work to make that more than just a two-hour event for you, so more information will be pushed out in April about the events and times that we will have. It is great for the delegates to get to see each and every one of you, so the more that can attend, the better.

3. Delegate Sponsorships: Thanks to all of you that have already started having delegates register and sponsor them. We are continuing to reach out to schools across the state about the program and recommending that they reach out to local Legion Posts to inquire about sponsorship opportunities. We wanted to mention this to you in case you get calls.

4. Recruiting Materials: As previously noted in the Post Packets, we have flyers, brochures, videos, and photos we can share if you would like to use them for recruiting. If you need this material, please email us at contact@okboysstate.com or call the Boys State Hotline at (405) 578-4627.

With your help and continued support, we think this could be a huge year of growth for your Boys State Program. The more delegates we have at each session, the more lives we can impact with the Legion ideals of 'For God and Country'. We aim to train the next generation of great leaders and we can only do that if they are on campus with us.

Please reach out to our team at the contact information above if you have any questions or need any assistance. We greatly appreciate your support of this life-changing program!

For God and Country,
Sen. Corey D. Brooks, Ret.
Director, Oklahoma American Legion Boys State

BE THE ONE

AWARDS

The links below should give your Posts all the information they need to nominate deserving individuals. There are a few very important things that have to happen along the way. The nominations for the individual awards have to have an endorsement of some type from the nominee's Department Chief before the nomination can be considered. If the Fire Chief, Police Chief, City Manager or VA Department Director say no, it stops right there. Don't argue, don't alienate the Department Head. We don't have to like it, but we do have to respect their decision.

The Deadline for ALL Award Nominations is April 30th. May 1st the Awards Committee starts the selection process. May 1 Nominations cease.

If a post wants to be considered for a Pillars Award or the Post of the Year Awards a hard copy of the Post's, Consolidated Post Report (CPR), must be mailed to the Department Headquarters. The Department does not have the capability to download CPR that are filed electronically. I'm sorry but that is the way it has to be. If your Post wants to be considered for Pillars Awards and Post of the Year recognition, you have to mail a hard copy of your CPR to the Department before their suspense date.

LEO: https://www.legion.org/documents/legion/pdf/ns_officerofyear.pdf

Firefighter: https://www.legion.org/documents/legion/pdf/firefighter_award.pdf

Healthcare Provider:

https://www.legion.org/documents/legion/pdf/health_care_provider_year.pdf

Physician: https://www.legion.org/documents/legion/pdf/physician_year.pdf

Employer of Veterans:

<https://www.legion.org/sites/legion.org/files/legion/documents/Awards%20Forms.pdf>

Legionnaire of the Year is a short narrative as to why someone who doesn't know them should vote for them.

I can be reached at any of the contact points in my signature block.

Paul Ray: Awards Committee Chair

plainoldpaul@yahoo.com

awards@mustangpost353.org

405-921-5819

Women's Veteran Counsel

Legion News

Post Everlasting is placed after 8B,
please forward me your obituaries.

District 1A

Susan Engstrom and Karen Ritter attended the 91st Abraham Lincoln Pilgrimage in Springfield, Illinois February 11-12, 2025. Below you will see pictures of us with the National Commander James LaCoursierre, National President Trish Ward, and SAL National Commander Joseph Navarette. The following 2 pictures are from when the wreaths were laid at President Abraham Lincoln's tomb on his birthday February 12th. Susan and Karen laid the Department of Oklahoma's wreath. The last picture is of us on a tour of the Abraham Lincoln Museum.





District 1B

District 2A

District 2B

District 3A

District 3B

District 4

District 5A

Oklahoma Military Hall of Honor Inaugural Banquet: A Night of Celebration and Recognition

On January 31st, 2024, history was made as Post 12 proudly hosted the inaugural banquet honoring the Oklahoma Military Hall of Honor. The event, held in a packed venue with a sold-out attendance of 150 guests, was a remarkable tribute to the courage, dedication, and service of our esteemed veterans.

The evening was filled with heartfelt recognition, camaraderie, and deep appreciation for the five distinguished inductees who have demonstrated extraordinary service to our nation. Their unwavering commitment to duty and sacrifice for our country was honored in a ceremony that will be remembered for years to come. The following outstanding individuals were inducted into the Hall of Honor:

- **1stSgt Stewart Cady, U.S. Marine Corps**
- **SGT Jill Castilla, U.S. Army**
- **Tec4 Gilbert Charleston, U.S. Army**
- **LT George Kokendoffer, U.S. Army**
- **MSgt Danny M. Thomas, U.S. Marine Corps**

Each of these individuals exemplifies the highest ideals of military service, and their induction into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Honor serves as a testament to their enduring legacy.

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce that our second induction ceremony will take place on **January 30, 2025**. The Oklahoma West Metro Chapter will continue its mission of recognizing and celebrating deserving veterans, ensuring their stories of valor and sacrifice live on for generations. With each passing year, we hope to see these honored individuals progress from the Hall of Honor to the prestigious Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame.

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who attended and supported this momentous occasion. Your presence and commitment to honoring our military heroes made the event truly special. As we prepare for next year's ceremony, we invite all members of the community to join us in recognizing and celebrating those who have served our country with distinction.

Let us continue to uphold the spirit of gratitude and recognition for our veterans, ensuring their contributions to our nation are never forgotten.

For GOD, Country, and Service



District 5B

District 6A



Mustang resident George Kokendoffer was inducted into the Oklahoma Military Heritage Foundation's Hall of Honors on Friday, January 31 at the American legion Post 12 in Warr Acres. Kokendoffer served in the United States Army as a helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War. During his service Kokendoffer was awarded the Army Air Medal for Valor 17 times during his service in Vietnam. Kokendoffer is a member of the Mustang American Legion Post 353 and has assisted the Post Honor Guard in performing Military Honors approximately 400 Veterans Funerals.

District 6B

District 7

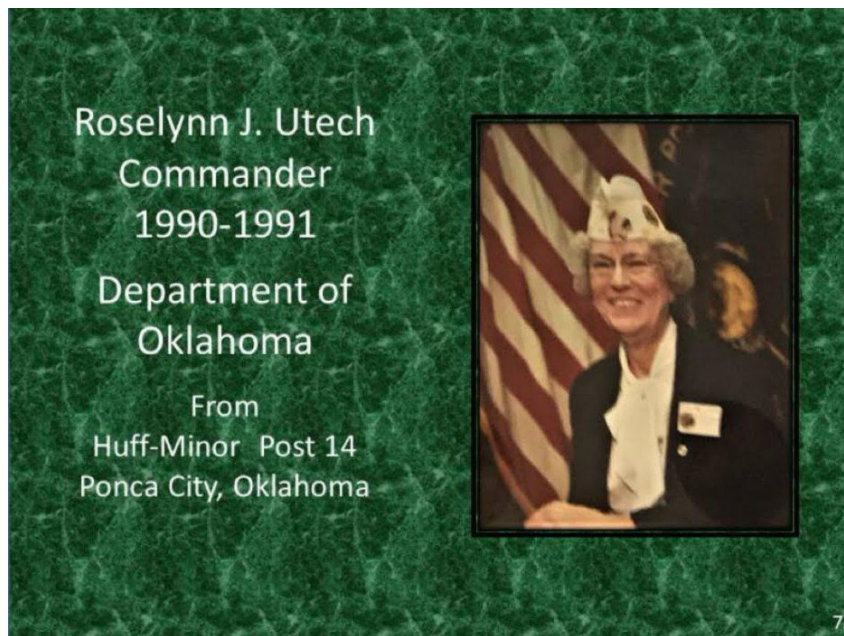


Elmo May had the privilege to go to Hobart Post 117 and swear in the new post commander, Everett Faulkner. Everett came to a special meeting that was held and said he wanted to join The American Legion and help get Post 117 on the rights track and having meetings. I believe with his drive we can make it happen.

Post 121 in Mangum has very successful blood drive this past weekend.

District 8A

The first woman from Oklahoma inducted into ANAVICUS was Roselyn J. Utrecht, PDC 1990-91 from Post 14 in Ponca City.



Path Finder Friends previously known as Camp Fire, came to visit the American Legion Post 53 during their regular monthly meeting and delivered Valentines Day candy bags. Earlier in the day, they presented the Veterans at Green Valley Nursing Home with Valentine wreaths. Since 1986 Betty Dillon has been one of 12 adults keeping kids interested in the outdoors, others, and themselves. Monthly activities help kids find their path to be productive in the community. They are currently in their last step to attain their 501c3 organizational status. Pictured L to R:

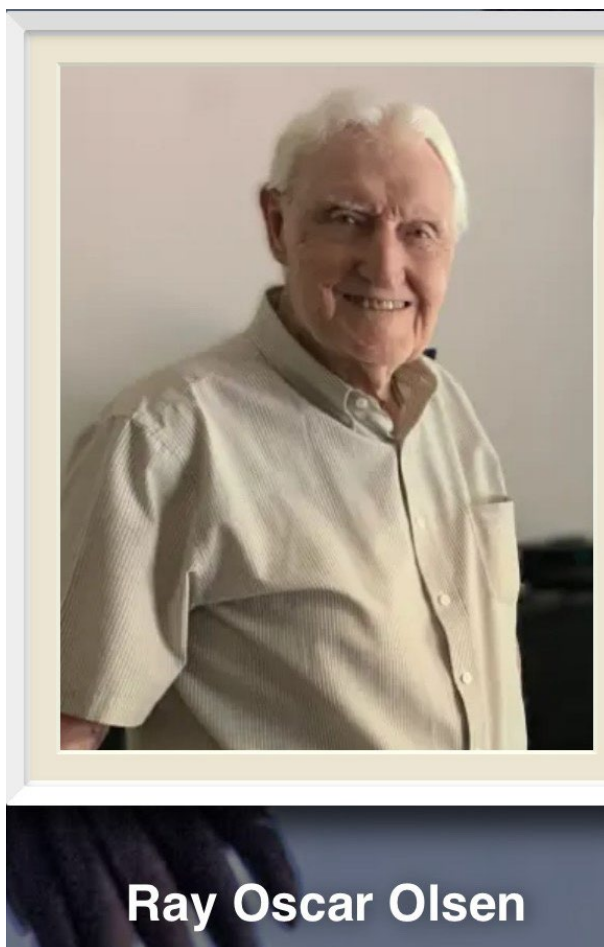
Commander Tina Kilmer, Jaxson Dillon, Ellie Dillon, Betty Dillon, Bentley, Austin Walton, Maria Mack, Embry Lemons and Bryan Mack

District 8B

PLEASE SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS TO TALOK1889@GMAIL.COM

POST EVERLASTING





<https://www.moorefuneralcremation.com/obituaries/Ray-Oscar-Olsen?obId=34285975>



<https://www.brumley-millsfuneralhome.com/obituary/donald-groves>



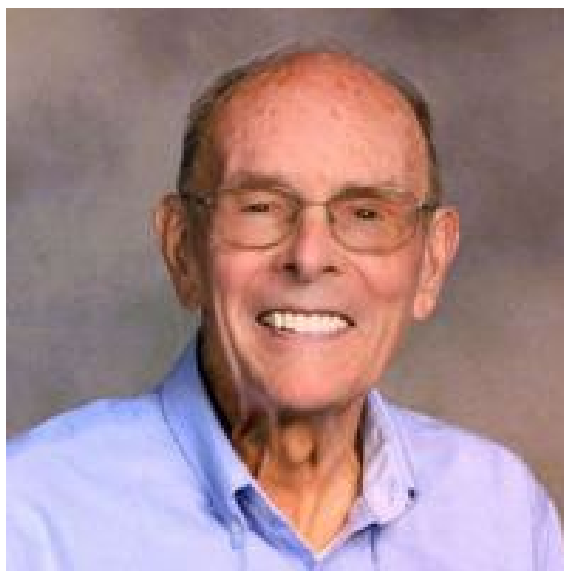
<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/donald-foreman-obituary?id=38405989>



<https://www.yandaandsonfuneralhome.com/obituary/dennis-haxton#:~:text=Dennis%20Doyle%20Haxton%2C%2092%2C%20of,Gary%2C%20Camy%2C%20and%20Cindy>



<https://buchananfuneralservice.com/obituary/verle-glenn-coslett/>



<https://www.midwestfuneralservices.com/obituary/jim-lightfoot>



<https://www.shipmanfuneralhomes.com/pages/service-information.asp?sid=centenne>