

# THE 1889 LAND RUN



DEPARTMENT  
OF  
OKLAHOMA





# American Legion Newsletter

43rd Edition, February 1, 2026

## American Legion Department Commander

Oklahoma fellow Legionnaires,

Legion Family, the calendar has changed to 2026, and I hope you all have started the New Year in a good way. I look forward to this next half year as we are preparing to celebrate our Nations Semi-Quincentennial and continue all the positive momentum across the Department.

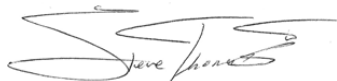
As you know we have had a busy January here in Oklahoma as we held our Mid-Winter that was a great time for us to get together and handle business. I hope you all found the time informative and were able to find time to enjoy camaraderie with our Brothers and Sisters. I also hope you found the new format beneficial. The last few days ANEC Mr. Taylor and I spent time touring Oklahoma City with the National Convention Commission personnel as well as the Chamber and Tourism folks hoping to sway them to award us the 2032 National Convention. It was an amazing time, and everything went perfectly with the small uncontrollable snafus caused by our recent snowstorm but we pushed through to show them all OKC has to offer. I also appreciate all the Oklahoma Delegation that was able to make the trip up for the events that were held.

Not to be repetitive or sound like a broken record but I want to send applause to all of our membership on an amazing run with getting our members involved and keeping them committed to the mission. As we have continued to hit or surpassed every monthly National goal so far. Let's continue that march to us hitting our first 100% membership year in over a decade. We just passed the 85% mark 3 weeks ahead of schedule and passed the 10,000 member mark the other day which I congratulate you all on the hard work getting out and talking to our members and Veterans. We have slipped back a bit in National ranking but not because of our lack of effort but because every other Department is also outperforming expectation. With that we still are within 1% of Top 10 and less than 2% from Top 3 so it would just take us doing a hard push between now and March to jump our way up the leader board. Remember the Big12 National Competition has us needing 93.12 by March 11th and if Kentucky doesn't make their 94%, we win that.

I want to send kudos also to our Family organizations as President McInnis and the Oklahoma Auxiliary is up in the Top 6 and only missed Top 5 Membership by 3 hundredths of a percent on the latest report. Our Legion Riders continue to grow in members and Chapters, and I had the honor to present a new Charter with Director Martin at Mid-Winter as well as we received another application. Commander Sherbourne and our Sons who finished #1 in all the Organization last year is ahead of last year's mark in percentage which is huge but we have started a rivalry now because even though we were ahead of last year's mark we were down in standings as every other Detachment is out to knock us off the top but I know our Detachment

has the competitive spirit. I have all the confidence that we Oklahoma Legion Family can all finish in the Top 10 or better.

Public involvement goes a long way to our mission. Stay engaged with our community events or create your own. With 2026 being the year of our semi-quincentennial as a country I again encourage you to create events based around this celebration. Events themed around 1776 or 250 will greatly help us spread our mission while we celebrate.



Steve Thomas  
Department Commander

---

### Campaign for Department Commander



A little bit of information about me. I have been married to Elmo for 48+ years, we have four children, 11 grandchildren, and at the present time 7 great grandchildren with two more on the way. I enjoy spending time with my family, cooking, crocheting, and working outside. I recently retired from the Clinton Veterans Center, where I was a nurse manager and the infection control nurse. I continue to visit the Veterans Center to converse with the Veterans who live there. Now that I have retired, I enjoy spending more time with family and doing some traveling.

I joined the Navy Reserves in 1988 and stayed there for one year. The Army Reserve offered me a direct commission, so I transferred in Dec 1989. I went to Officer Basic in the summer of 1990 before receiving orders to go to Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield/Operation Desert Storm. We went to Ft. Sill in November 1990 prior to leaving for Saudi Arabia the 2nd of Jan 1991. My position was an emergency nurse or critical care nurse in the 44th EVAC Hospital. I returned home in May of 1991 but stayed on active duty due to an injury. While at Ft. Sill, I was assigned to help out-process other Reserve and National Guard Soldiers. By November 1991, I was back to my Reserve Unit making plans to attend Officer Advanced in San Antonio.

I felt that I wanted to expand my career in the military and do something different. I was given the chance to move to a Drill Sergeant training Battalion, so I became the Company Commander at the 3/378th, 95<sup>th</sup> Training Division. As the Commander, I saw individuals come into the military and witnessed their transformation to becoming Soldiers. I continued with my military education throughout this time frame. After moving up in the Battalion, I eventually transferred to the Division Headquarters where I worked with the Surgeon. In 1995, I was again placed on active duty to help prepare and ensure the Soldiers that were being sent overseas from the 95th Division were medically and mentally prepared to help support ongoing operations for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. When our Soldiers returned, I then assisted the Soldiers with obtaining any medical or mental health support that they needed. I spent 9 years on Active Duty during this time frame. In December 2015, I retired from the Military.

My civilian career of nursing started in 1988. I worked primarily in the Emergency Department or Intensive Care Unit before going into Correctional Nursing. As a nurse, it was always important to listen to the patient and their family so that I could convey their concerns to the doctor. I thoroughly enjoyed being a nurse and continue to stay current on medical innovations.

I want to work with the Legion members in Oklahoma to bring our Department to the forefront in our communities and state. As Legion members we can do so much together. I have worked with members from all over our state trying to increase membership, helping to exchange ideas among the different Posts, and just being there to listen to you when needed. My service to my country didn't stop when I retired. Now I can focus on helping other Veterans, their families, and the youth in our community.

During my time with the American Legion, I have held several positions at the Post level – Vice Commander, Commander, Historian, and am currently the Adjutant. I have also been the District Commander for District 7, Vice West Commander, and currently serve as the Senior Vice Commander. With each of these positions I diligently worked to serve Veterans when they sought assistance or guidance.

My level of understanding of the American Legion and the Four Pillars has progressed with the various positions. I was in the first Oklahoma Legion College class where I was able to learn more about Oklahoma and the Legion. Most recently, I attended the National American Legion College where we focused on servant leadership and serving others. I feel that both my military and civilian careers have been connected to servant leadership and serving/helping others.

As Senior Vice, I was able to help and assist multiple Posts across the state with membership numbers, answer questions regarding Posts concerns, and assisted Posts with

training and mentorship. I am willing to continue to help throughout the state as your Commander if elected.

"Be The One"

Respectfully,

Shirley May- Candidate for the Department of Oklahoma Commander

## **American Legion Department-Senior Vice Commander**

Hello Legionnaires!

Mid-Winter Conference was held earlier this month. There was a lot of good training and camaraderie throughout the weekend. Sunday morning proved to be interesting with the loss of electricity for approximately 3 hours. As Veterans, we found a way to work around it with the facilities generators.

We will soon start the District Spring Conferences. I am again looking forward to going to the conferences and visiting with fellow Legion members across the state. I hope that you can take some time to attend your District Conference.

I pray that everyone survived the extreme cold temperatures and the snow. Although, I don't think winter weather is over yet, so this may be one of a few storms that we have this year. Continue to reach out to your members and Veterans in your community to make sure they are warm and safe. Visit with them to find out if they have the resources they need for the rest of the winter months.

Membership is going great. We are at the brink of crossing over the 10,000 member mark as of 1-27-26. Hopefully we will be over 85% by the end of January. We will need 90% before the first of March. We have met each of the goals set by National so far this year. Contact your members who have yet to renew. Send a text or an email, or even a personal phone call. When visiting with them, find out what they enjoy doing and see what they would like to become involved in at the Post.

Keep your communities informed of your Legion and Post activities. Community involvement is a great way to let other non-member Veterans know about the Legion and what you do. Thank you for all you do for the Legion.

"Be The One"

Respectfully,

Shirley May

Senior Vice Commander

---



## Campaign for Senior Vice Commander



I am **Patricia Mathes -Kerr** of Matheny-Burt-Parrot Post 64 in Chandler, Oklahoma. I am a candidate for the Department of Oklahoma **Senior Vice Commander**, and I would love your support and vote!

Why am I the candidate for you? I believe that with support there is success, which significantly improves veteran resilience. I have seen this concept repeatedly in the 12 years I have been a practicing Mental Health provider in the military and now at VA. Support provides connectedness vital to build, maintain, and sustain resilience. Veteran resilience is the key to improved quality of life, throughout all stages of the life span. This touches the American Legion family. It takes a village, and that village is the American legion Family.

Dolphins are a great representation of the concept of support=success. They travel in pods and consistently work together through the storms, waves, and calm waters contributing to their resilience and survival. The American Legion Family very much resembles dolphins in this way. This is the support I want to foster in our family from the post level, all the way through the national community.

This is a part of what I bring to you as a candidate for Senior Vice Commander, improved quality of life through support.

**Support=success 4 veteran resilience.**

Thank you for your support and vote!



Veterans serving Veterans, their Families and the Community

**For GOD and Country**

---

## Department Vice Commander – East

### Greetings Legion Family,

As we wrap up the **Mid-Winter Conference**, I want to thank everyone who took the time to attend, participate, and bring that information back to your Posts. The training, conversations, and shared ideas are vital as we move into the next phase of the year. With that momentum behind us, we now turn our focus toward the upcoming **Spring District Conferences**, which provide another opportunity to learn, connect, and strengthen our organization at the local level. I would also like to recognize the **15 Posts on the East side (and 14 on the West side)** that met the **December 31 deadline to earn the Honor Ribbon**. This achievement reflects dedication, organization, and a commitment to excellence. Congratulations to those Posts for setting the standard early in the year.

Looking ahead, spring is one of the busiest and most rewarding seasons for our programs. Posts should begin preparing now for key activities, including:

- **Boys State and Girls State**, investing in the leadership of our future
- **Oratorical**, supporting youth who are learning to speak confidently about the Constitution
- The **Four Chaplains Ceremony**, honoring faith, sacrifice, and unity
- **Awards Ceremonies**, recognizing individuals and groups who support veterans and our mission
- **Legion Family Day on April 25**, celebrating the strength of our Legionnaires, Auxiliary, and Sons working together

These programs are the heart of what we do. They connect us to our communities, highlight our mission, and remind others why the American Legion continues to matter.

As always, if your Post needs guidance, support, or encouragement, please reach out to your District or Department leadership. We are stronger when we work together and support one another.

Thank you for everything you do to serve veterans, families, and communities across the East.

**Be The One**

Karen Cruice  
Vice Commander East  
Department of Oklahoma

---

## Campaign for Vice Commander East

Dear Legion Family,

It has been an honor to serve as your **Vice Commander East** for the past year. Working alongside our Posts, District leadership, and Department team has been both humbling and inspiring, and I am grateful for the trust you have placed in me.

After much prayer, reflection, and encouragement from many of you, I am announcing my intention to **run for a second year as Vice Commander East**.

This past year has reinforced my belief in the strength of our Legion Family and the importance of recognition, training, and engagement at every level. I am proud of the progress we have made together—supporting Posts, celebrating achievements, strengthening programs, and keeping our focus on serving veterans, their families, and our communities.

If elected to continue serving, my commitment remains the same:

- to support our Posts and Districts
- to encourage leadership development and participation
- to recognize the hard work happening across the East
- to continue promoting *Be The One* in both words and action

There is still important work ahead, and I would be honored to continue serving alongside you as we move forward together.

Thank you for your continued support, dedication, and service to The American Legion.

**Be The One**

Karen Cruice

Candidate for the Department of Oklahoma Vice Commander-East

## Department Vice Commander – West

Hello to all the Legion family.

The new year started off and had a new event in Stillwater, OK called vet chat. So, on Jan. 3rd we got together and held this event which started in Midwest City 5 yrs. ago. The vet chat isn't part of The American Legion, but you can get so much valuable information while you attend one. Thursday Jan. 8th it was off to Midwest City Post 170, Senior-Vice, Vice-West, and District Commander attended Executive meeting and general membership meeting to lend advice on certain subjects. Jan. 12th took a trip to Yukon where they introduced the first two boys they will be sending to Boys State, and Mike Devenitch may I say Sir your post is a class act.

Jan. 15th come to Mid-Winter a day early to go out too Little Axe Post 274. The people at Little Axe were welcoming and was a great visit, now I did get a good laugh went into convenient store to ask about location of The American Legion and she kept saying AA. Mid-Winter Sunday morning I sat on the floor for a reason because at the end of the day I'm trying to help the posts. The vets that run things are blue hats, and now my question to you is would Department and National survive without posts?

No, they couldn't, no membership and other monies from posts gone. Now let us ask this same question another way: can post survive without Department and National? Yes, first of all you will save \$37 a yr. per. member, and then rename. So, why did I say this is because when you put on different color of hat you will be the same person as yesterday but with more



responsibilities. Being a Service Officer is who I truly am and I enjoy so much. At the Conference we found out we have a post in need of some help in Duncan. Let us see if we can get some people together for second Thursday of February if that fits in with you Rachel Bratcher. Jan. 28th unexpected visit to post 157 OKC but everything is all good and Jan. 30th been invited to Military Hall of Fame banquet. Talk more next month

Lance E. Larson  
Vice-Commander West

## **National Executive (NEC) Committeeman**

### **WHAT IS THE NEC?**

While running for office the past few years and from time to time when I visit Posts, the question comes up, "What is the NEC and what do they do?"

NEC stands for National Executive Committeeman and is the elected Department Representative to the National American Legion governing body, the National Executive Committee. The American Legion National Constitution authorizes this position as well as the ANEC, which stands for Alternate National Executive Committeeman, an individual elected who has no official function other than to fill the position of NEC at national meetings, if NEC is unable to attend.

The NEC must attend each National Executive Committee meeting that is held in Legion Headquarters in Indianapolis in the Spring and Fall and the two NEC meetings held during the National Convention and vote on issues presented. In addition, the NEC usually attends the Washington Conference in Washington, DC to meet with our State's national senators and national district representatives to encourage them to support legislation which helps veterans across our State and provide funding to the VA. The NEC, along with the Department National Legislative Committeeman are the head and point of contact for the Oklahoma delegation attending the Washington Conference.

Any Legion member in good standing can attend the Fall and Spring meetings as well as the National Convention and the Washington Conference at their own expense or if they represent a State Agency or other organization at their expense.

The Department of Oklahoma each year is authorized by National to have 25 National Committee appointments, such as Americanism, National Security, VA&R and others. These appointments are usually authorized for one year, but in some cases are for three-year appointments. The NEC makes recommendations of Department Legion members in good standing, usually those with Post, District or Department leadership experience or who have expressed an interest in a certain field, to National for National Committee appointments. These individuals are then presented to the National Committee on Committees at the Fall Meeting, where the applicants are reviewed by the Committee members, questions asked and answered and approved. These individuals are then presented to the NEC and voted on, yes or no, and sent to the National Commander who signs the appointment letters which are mailed to the National Committee appointees.

Department of Oklahoma is authorized 14 call-ins where a monetary stipend is given for attendance in person, for the National Convention, 6 call-ins for the Washington Conference and 2-each call-ins for the Fall and Spring meetings. Each meeting is restricted by different committees, determined by National who will be eligible to attend, The NEC selects the

individuals recommended for call-ins, and are approved or disapproved by the National Adjutant. The National Commander sometimes makes recommendations for call-in appointments from Departments also.

The NEC is a part of the Department Leadership Team, attends Department and District conventions and conferences and serves an advisory role to Department Officers and the leadership team. The NEC does not make State or District appointments but does offer counsel and recommendations based on experience and ability.

The NEC is the point of contact between Department and National regarding visiting National officials and National issues that may arise. The Department Commander and Adjutant are in frequent, sometimes daily, contact with National over issues such as membership, financial assistance, new and old Legion programs that are on-going, etc.

In the words of Past National Commander Gaither Keener from North Carolina, Chairman of the National Finance Committee and described by my predecessor as "smartest guy in the room", the biggest problem with NEC's has been lack of communication between with the NEC's and Blue Caps across each Department. That's why you will see me, visiting Posts across the State, attending District and Department meetings and putting something in the Department newsletter each month to improve communication with Post members.

I also see myself as a mentor to younger and new members who will be the future leaders of our Department.

If you have a question or concerns, feel free to contact me. I will get back to you even though I am still working full-time. Sometimes others in the room may not have the complete or correct information.

Let's work together to make things better for our veterans.

Charlie O'Leary  
NEC, Department of Oklahoma

---

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

To: **The American Legion**

**National Adjutant, National Commander and Past National Commanders**

From: Timothy W. Smith, Past Department Commander Oklahoma and Past NEC

A Resolution for me to be considered for National Commander was approved in 2020 from Department Of Oklahoma and received by the NEC in the same year. I am grateful for the support of many members and thank PNC Jake Comer for asking me in fall 2019 if would like to be National Commander.

I no longer want to be considered for the position of National Commander. I have other priorities and passions at this stage in life. This has been thoroughly discussed with my wife, family and Legion supporters.

Respectfully,

Timothy W. Smith

---

## Campaign for NEC



Greetings Legionnaires!

At the Mid-Winter Conference in January in Norman, I formally announced that I am running for another term as your National Executive Committeeman for the Department of Oklahoma. The NEC office is a two-year term and will end in August of 2026 when the National Convention in Louisville, KY adjourns.

The past eighteen months have been a learning journey for me, as I discovered many things I didn't know and have a new perspective on what National and Legion leadership thinks of us and expectations that I didn't know of when starting.

I have tried to get new and younger Legion leaders to step up and get involved, have had some success in that endeavor and would like to continue for another two years.

After that I will be stepping aside due to my age and the travel and involvement at National level but will still be involved actively at the Department level. I would appreciate your support in accomplishing this goal.

Remember the date: July 12, 2026, 9:00 AM at Department Summer Convention, NEC is the first vote of the day!

Respectfully,

Charlie O'Leary, NEC 2024-26, PDC 2021-22



No One Left Behind

---

## **Alternate National Executive (ANEC) Committeeman**

### **American Legion Riders**

Dear Department of Oklahoma American Legion Riders Family,

Team Oklahoma Riders,

It's been a great year so far and the momentum continues. I'm proud to share that four new American Legion Riders chapters are coming online across Oklahoma, with two additional posts actively exploring chapter formation. Growth like this doesn't happen by accident.

This progress is a direct reflection of you, your commitment, your visibility, and your unwavering, selfless service to veterans, our communities, and The American Legion mission. Because of your efforts, the Department of Oklahoma American Legion Riders continues to grow in all the right ways.

Please help spread the word about what an outstanding organization this is and the meaningful difference Riders make every single day.

Thank you for riding with purpose and serving with heart.

For God, Country, and Service,

Brett Martin

Director, Department of Oklahoma

American Legion Riders



**PROUD TO ANNOUNCE**  
 — THE FOLLOWING NEW —  
**AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS CHAPTERS**  
 — ACROSS OKLAHOMA —

*We ride in service to the mission – not for recognition.*

—•—  
*For God, Country, and Service* —•—

Clayton Chapter 68	—•—	Freedom Chapter 63
Bristow Chapter 126	—•—	Sayre Chapter 146

Introducing the 2026 Oklahoma In-State Legacy Ride Logo

This logo represents purpose, sacrifice, and the road ahead.

We ride not for recognition—but for impact.

Every mile supports our veterans, their families, and the mission we believe in through the Veterans & Children's Foundation.

Simple. Strong. Meaningful.

We ride for something bigger than ourselves.



Respectfully and gratefully,

Brett Martin

Director, Department of Oklahoma American Legion Riders

### **Past Department Commander's Corner**

Living the Four Pillars, Where It Matters Most

The four pillars of The American Legion are not abstract ideas reserved for speeches or ceremonies. They are meant to be lived, every day, at the Post level. When they are, the Post becomes more than a meeting place. It becomes the center of its community.

During training at Mid-Winter, I posed a simple but important question: If your Post locked its doors tomorrow, would your community even notice?

If the honest answer is no, that should give us pause. Not as criticism—but as a call to reflect and recommit.

Today, our responsibility is broader than ever. We must be aware of all veterans, not just the select few who already feel comfortable walking through our doors. Every veteran raised their hand and swore an oath. Every veteran served with honor. And every veteran deserves to know there is a place for them in The American Legion—whether that's in an existing Post or, when necessary, by helping start a new one.

No veteran should be left aside or excluded. Inclusion is not optional—it is foundational to who we are.

That leads directly to the second point: help and support, and the role of a Past Department Commander (PDC).

A Past Department Commander's role is simple in definition, but powerful in practice: to help wherever they can, however they can.

Imagine trying to move a group forward in 2026 without computer skills—no email, no online forms, no digital tools, yet still wanting to serve, organize, and belong. There are veterans facing exactly that reality. When a Past Department Commander steps in, not for authority, not for recognition, but simply to give time, knowledge, and experience so fellow veterans can succeed, that is selfless service in its purest form.

Many of us don't think twice about technology anymore. But for some veterans, it is a barrier, not a convenience. Leadership means meeting people where they are, not expecting them to catch up on their own.

No veteran should be left behind because they don't understand a computer, a form, or a process.

That's what service looks like.

That's what leadership looks like.

When we truly live the four pillars at the Post level, our communities notice. Veterans feel welcomed. And The American Legion continues to fulfill its purpose, not just in words, but in action.

For God, Country, and Service.

Brett Martin

Past Department Commander

### **Department Adjutant - Rick Redden**

CAM RAHN BAY AIR FORCE BASE- VIETNAM

REUNION - SEPTEMBER 10 - 13, 2026

"To all Cam Rahn Bay Air Base, Vietnam veterans. A reunion is now scheduled in Colorado Springs, CO for September 10 - 13, 2026". Information/registration can be found at: [dicancook@gmail.com](mailto:dicancook@gmail.com) or on CRB

Web Site at: 2026 Cam Rahn Bay Reunion Colorado Springs.

Any questions contact information below.

Sincerely,

Jimmy M. White, Co-coordinator  
Cam Rahn Bay Air Base Reunion  
PO Box 334  
Wadena, MN 56482-0334  
218-631-3211

## VA Burial Benefit Fact Sheet

**PLAN TODAY.  
HONOR FOREVER.**

**PLANNING AND SCHEDULING A BURIAL  
AT A VA NATIONAL CEMETERY**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) ensures those who served this nation are never forgotten. VA operates more than 155 national cemeteries and maintains more than 4 million graves to honor their service and sacrifice. Burial services at VA national cemeteries are provided at no cost to eligible Veterans, their spouses, and qualifying family members.

If you've lost a loved one and need to plan a burial at a VA national cemetery, we are here to guide you through the process. In many cases, we can schedule the burial with a single phone call.


- 1. Gather Information and Documents:** Collect personal information identifying the deceased\* and military documents showing the Veteran's qualifying service. If the Veteran's discharge documents are not readily available, do not delay calling the Scheduling Office; VA will get copies of them.
- 2. Decide on Burial Details:** Determine the cemetery location, type of burial, and whether you will be requesting military funeral honors. If you are using a funeral home, your funeral director will assist.
- 3. Contact the National Cemetery Administration:** Contact the National Cemetery Scheduling Office to schedule a burial. If you have a pre-need decision letter, VA will already have much of the required information.

\*A death certificate is not usually required but may be in some cases. A representative will explain if needed.

**National Cemetery Scheduling Office**  
To request a burial, call 800-635-1313 (TTS) 7/13  
Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. ET,  
and Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. ET.

Scan for more information on burial in a VA national cemetery.  
[www.va.gov/nca](https://www.va.gov/nca) veterans and families

**VA** |  Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



## Oklahoma Veterans Commission – Brett Martin

Dear Oklahoma American Legion Family,

Progress, Transparency, and What's Ahead for Oklahoma Veterans  
January 16 Oklahoma Veterans Commission Meeting

The January 16 meeting of the Oklahoma Veterans Commission was a strong and productive one, marked by thoughtful discussion, transparency, and a shared commitment to serving Oklahoma's veterans better every day.

The Commission worked through a full and substantive agenda, including Commission business, future meeting dates, Foundation bylaws, and key reports from Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA) leadership. The dialogue throughout the meeting was open, professional, and focused squarely on accountability, progress, and long-term impact.

We were also honored to welcome Senator Brenda Stanley and Taylor Poindexter as guests. Their time, interest, and engagement reflect the importance of collaboration and shared responsibility when it comes to supporting Oklahoma's veteran community.

One of the most encouraging highlights of the January 16 meeting was the financial update. ODVA is in the black for the first time in a very, very long time. This milestone reflects disciplined stewardship, hard work by the ODVA team, and a renewed focus on fiscal responsibility—progress that directly strengthens our ability to serve veterans and their families across the state.

In addition to Commission business, we continue to build momentum around the Veterans Forum, which has proven to be a valuable space for veterans to ask questions, raise concerns, and receive clear, straightforward information. Looking ahead, the next Veterans Forum will include representatives from the VA, who will be available to answer questions directly and help veterans better navigate benefits, services, and resources.

I'm grateful for the continued engagement and professionalism of my fellow Commissioners, Director Jay Bynum, the ODVA staff, and our guests. Showing up, doing the work the right way, and keeping veterans at the center of every decision remains our guiding principle.

Brett Martin  
Chairman, Oklahoma Veterans Commission



## **Sons of the American Legion**

### **Oklahoma Sons Detachment Continues Historic Growth**

Greetings, Oklahoma Legion Family!

The Oklahoma Sons of The American Legion Detachment continues to grow stronger every year, and the 2025 membership year proves it. We are proud to announce an all-time membership high of 1,526 members—a milestone made possible by the dedication and hard work of our entire Legion Family.

This success belongs to each and every one of you. Without your commitment, service, and passion, this achievement would not have been possible.

This past summer, the Detachment earned its first-ever Triple Nickel Award, a significant accomplishment that reflects outstanding effort across the state. To earn this award, we:

- ☐ Chartered five new Squadrons
- ☐ Achieved 105% membership
- ☐ Maintained an impressive 85% renewal rate

Even more exciting—we are currently on track to earn another Triple Nickel Award this year, but we need your continued support. Please submit your membership renewals and help recruit new members. When recruiting, remember to think family.

As we like to say, “Dual is Cool!” Whether it’s Auxiliary and Legion, Legion and Sons, or Sons and Auxiliary, dual members strengthen our organization. These members count on multiple reports, including the Consolidated Squadron Report, Consolidated Post Report, and Unit Impact Report.

And for those legendary Tri-members, the impact is even greater. If a Tri-member volunteers for two hours at an event, that service can count as up to six hours of credit—two hours for each membership. That’s triple the recognition for the same great work.

Which brings us to an important reminder: turn in your reports! Our Legion Family does incredible work for our communities and our veterans every day. One simple report ensures that those efforts are recognized and shared statewide.

Thank you for everything you do. Together, we are building a stronger Detachment, a stronger Legion Family, and a stronger future for our veterans and communities.

Chris Cook  
Detachment Adjutant

## **Women Veterans Outreach**

Last meeting at the Oklahoma Department Summer Convention discussed discrimination in the American Legion. Most women in the American Legion do not report any type of discrimination and they just deal with it on their own. The staff below our trusted people to report to and their cause is the reason for this committee.

The Women's Veterans Programs Staff at the VA are listed below:

Vanessa Meuniot – WV Medical Director /VA Eastern Oklahoma health care

Michele Reeves RN - WV Program Manager/VA Eastern Oklahoma health care

Patricia Byrd - WV Mental Health Program Director/VA Eastern Oklahoma health care

Makayla Clark RN – Women’s Health RN Navigator- Maternity Care, Pap, and Mammography Coordinator/VA Eastern Oklahoma health care

Stephanie Frink - Women’s Health Nurse Navigator/Mammography Coordinator/VA Eastern Oklahoma health care

Kellie Zimmerman – Women’s Veteran Inreach/Outreach Coordinator /VA Eastern Oklahoma health care

Kuma Kennedy LMFT – Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program Coordinator/VA Eastern Oklahoma health care

Jennifer Chafin-Van Dusen LCSW – Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Coordinator/ Therapist/VA Eastern Oklahoma health care

Gary Sweet – Reproductive and WV Mental Health Pharmacist/VA Eastern Oklahoma health care

Stephanie Geatches LCSW – Women’s Veteran Program Manager/VA Oklahoma City health Care

More information can be found at <https://oklahoma.gov/veterans/veterans-services/women-veterans.html>

During this meeting we discussed the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) the 75-year-old advisory committee servicing female service members and its disbanding on September 17, 2025. It was a short discussion, unfortunately most of the attendees were not aware of its existence.

Mustang Post 353 donated to the Norman VA hospital and noted that they will always take donations.

Michelle Reeves the Muskogee Woman's Coordinator will be opening the Women's Center on February 2nd, 2026.

Contact Karen Ritter at [RitterK4505@gmail.com](mailto:RitterK4505@gmail.com) or Tina Kilmer at [TKilmer2003@gmail.com](mailto:TKilmer2003@gmail.com) for suggestions.

## Child Well-Being Foundation

Established in 1954, The American Legion Child Well-being Foundation is to contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of children and youth; to aid progress in the field of child well-being; and to the sum total knowledge of children and youth through research, studies, surveys and projects, or in other ways, including but not limited to activities and programs benefiting the children and youth of this nation.

Banner Order Form

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1FktMBOH6aSTX8TXDstlW\\_FBhUsz1p3dI](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1FktMBOH6aSTX8TXDstlW_FBhUsz1p3dI)

2025-2026 Goal

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Cgqp7FOd6zwOIUcvG-D34KIoU72eYPBo8yk4qXXrBCM>

## American Legion Auxilliary

Our **Midwinter Conference** was outstanding, and the energy in the room said it all. We welcomed one of the largest groups we have seen in recent years, which speaks volumes about the commitment of our members and the momentum we are building across the department.

We were grateful to have **Judy and Mike from Oklahoma Veterans United** share their knowledge and passion. Judy led an impactful discussion on mental health challenges facing veterans and their families, a reminder that our support must extend beyond programs and into understanding, compassion, and advocacy. Mike followed with valuable information about **Stand Downs**, explaining what they are, why they matter, and how our units can get involved in meaningful, hands-on ways that directly support veterans in need.

I had the opportunity to share information on the **American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Grant Program**. To make it practical, we teamed up into small groups and completed a mock grant exercise. The response was encouraging, and the level of engagement was impressive. The activity helped take the intimidation out of the process, and it left me confident that several units may step forward and apply for a grant this year. That is exactly the kind of growth and confidence we want to see.

**Membership is going great.** We are just **50 members away from reaching our 85% goal**, which is the national requirement to remain eligible for the **Merit Medallion**. That is an incredible position to be in, and it reflects the dedication and hard work happening at the unit level every single day. Thank you to every unit that has stayed focused and kept memberships moving. Keep up the good work.

Please be watching for the upcoming **District Call to Conference letter**. We are looking forward to visiting with you and seeing firsthand the great work being done across Oklahoma. Your district meetings are always a highlight, and we cannot wait to be there with you.

Together, we are making a difference for veterans, their families, and our communities. In service,

**Kim McInnis**

Department President

American Legion Auxiliary Department of Oklahoma

## Veterans Service Officer

If you have interest in being a VSO email Jack Sikes for form.

VSO Corner.

NO VSO ZOOM on 31 Jan due to Oratorical.

Next Zoom 7 FEB 2026 0900 All invited

VSO's for the Department need any assistance You can provide..

District Commanders if You can schedule 1hr for VSO training at Your Caucus Please.

Plenty openings.

### **For prior 101-level training participants:**

The National Office would like to ensure you are aware of the upcoming online 201-level VSO training course scheduled for March. This course builds upon the 101-level curriculum and is a prerequisite for any higher-level training offered by the National Office.

The nomination period for the 201-level course will be open from February 20 through February 27. Participation in this course **requires nomination by your department leadership**. Eligible nominators include the Department Adjutant, Department Commander, or a Department DSO formally designated by the Adjutant or Commander. **Department leadership retains full discretion over all nominations**, and only nominations submitted directly by Department leadership will be accepted.

DSO

American Legion Oklahoma

Tool Box

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1N7SEJNiLaggXafRX5XBSTkd2stJrhDhK?usp=sharing>

Jack Sikes

[Jsikesokamlvso@gmail.com](mailto:Jsikesokamlvso@gmail.com)

443-271-5545

## **Legion News**

### **Awards**

It's Time To Get Busy. It is time to talk to your City Managers, your Police Chiefs, your Fire Chief. Ask them for a LEO and Firefighter of the Year nominee. It is time to talk to your VA Doctors, your VA Nurses, ask them if you can nominate them for the VA Physician or Healthcare Provider of the Year. It is time to look for an Employer of Veterans. It is time to nominate a Media Support Professional of the Year. It is time to nominate a Legionnaire of the Year from your Post. There are several more Awards that are available to deserving individuals. It is time for YOU, all of YOU Legionnaires to get busy.

The Department Awards are an excellent opportunity for you and your Post to bond with your community. Three of our "Four Pillars" are community centered.

Six of the 10 clauses in our Preamble require us to be out in the Community.

We cannot: uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America sitting in our Posts



We cannot: foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism sitting in our Posts  
 We cannot: inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation  
 sitting in our Post

We cannot: combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses sitting in our Post

We cannot: promote peace and goodwill on earth sitting in our Post

We cannot: safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and  
 democracy sitting in our Posts.

By recognizing and acknowledging the community through The American Legion awards  
 program we continuing to serve. We are living up to the oath we take when we recite the  
 Preamble. We are supporting the Four Pillars of our foundation. We are being Legionnaires

It is impossible for the Department of Oklahoma to present an award to someone who has  
 not been nominated. Don't be too concerned about their chances at the Department level.  
 Recognizing someone from your community in your community means a lot to them. Get out.  
 Get busy. Nominate someone.

Thank You for being Legionnaire

Paul Ray: 405-921-5819 plainoldpaul@yahoo.com [awards@mustangpost353.org](mailto:awards@mustangpost353.org)

---

## **Spring District Conferences**

**District 1--March 7-Post 182 Pryor**

**District 2--March 21-TBD**

**District 3—April 11-Post 188 Heavener**

**District 4—May 9-Post 126 Bristow**

**District 5—March 21-TBD with DEC 4 following**

**District 6—February 28- Post 176 Tuttle**

**District 7—February 21--Post 121 Mangum**

**District 8—April 11-Post 19 Woodward**

**If you have any updates to this list, please contact Adjutant Rick Redden.**

### **DD Form 214 Assistance**

A great tool and often a quick turnaround to assist a Veteran or loved one request their DD-214. Quicker than snail mail, as soon as the following day.

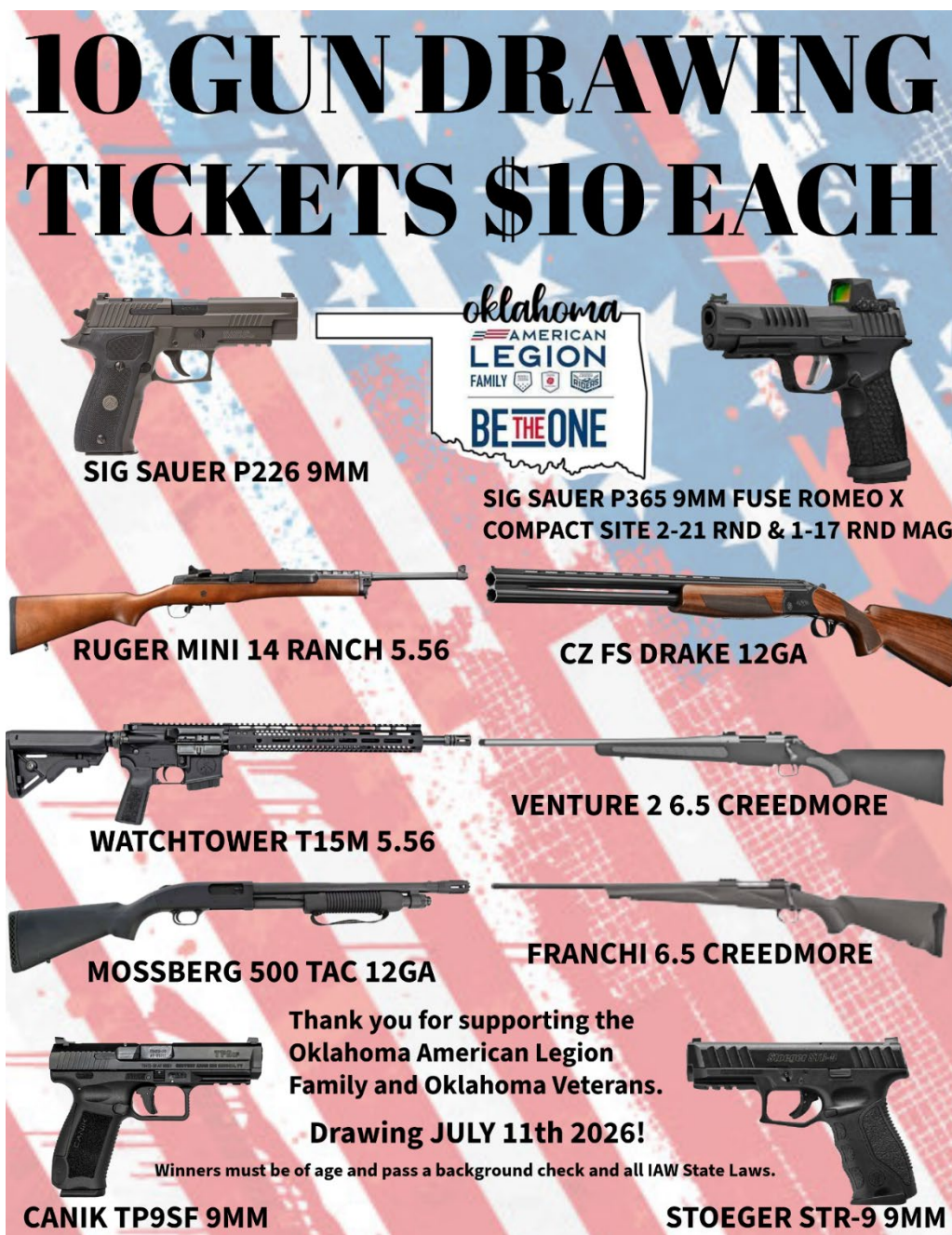
#### [Help with a Federal Agency - Senator James Lankford](#)

Senator Lankford's reps in the Tulsa office work with the National Archives. They have been extremely helpful in requesting and following up with any documents needed.

Very self-explanatory when completing, although I will share, if you are not a direct family member, they will ask for a document from the next-of-kin; Driver's License, Birth Certificate, Marriage Certificate, etc., which is easy enough to follow-up with.

## Department of Oklahoma Fundraising Committee

# 10 GUN DRAWING TICKETS \$10 EACH



**SIG SAUER P226 9MM**

**SIG SAUER P365 9MM FUSE ROMEO X  
COMPACT SITE 2-21 RND & 1-17 RND MAG**

**RUGER MINI 14 RANCH 5.56**

**CZ FS DRAKE 12GA**

**WATCHTOWER T15M 5.56**

**VENTURE 2 6.5 CREEDMORE**

**MOSSBERG 500 TAC 12GA**

**FRANCHI 6.5 CREEDMORE**

**CANIK TP9SF 9MM**

**STOEGE STR-9 9MM**

Thank you for supporting the  
Oklahoma American Legion  
Family and Oklahoma Veterans.

**Drawing JULY 11th 2026!**

Winners must be of age and pass a background check and all IAW State Laws.

Legion Family,

I hope everyone stayed warm and safe during the recent winter storm.

I want to take a few moments to clear up some rumors and questions surrounding the Department of Oklahoma's 10-Gun Drawing and to explain what your Department Fundraising Committee has been working on behind the scenes.

The Fundraising Committee was formed and approved by the Department DEC not only to raise funds, but to streamline and strengthen all Department fundraising efforts. Our goal is simple: maximize profits for the Department while ensuring accountability and transparency. We set achievable goals, focus on one or two projects at a time, and do not move forward until those goals are met—so nothing gets forgotten or pushed aside.

Because the 10-Gun Drawing is the Department's top fundraiser, it received a great deal of attention from the committee. During our review of previous years, we discovered some serious issues. First, there was no longer a reliable system to track how many tickets were distributed or which Posts had them. We also found multiple concerns (though no direct proof) that some Posts may have been selling tickets and not turning in stubs or the \$5 per ticket owed to the Department. This not only takes money out of your pocket as members, but it also potentially defrauds the public by selling tickets that were never entered into the drawing. We found this completely unacceptable.

We also discovered that four firearms from a drawing three years ago were never picked up. This again showed a lack of accountability and raised serious concerns. We attempted to contact the original winners and were able to reach one gentleman, who graciously donated the firearm back to the Department to be used in the current drawing.

That meant we already had 4 of the 10 guns needed. Several Posts stepped up and donated toward the remaining six, and we were able to get an excellent deal. In past years, the Department typically spent over \$10,000 on the firearms. This year, including the four recovered guns, we spent only \$4,800 — a savings of \$5,200.

Next, we looked at ticket costs. In the past, the Department paid around \$2,500 for 5,000 tickets. We found a new printer who could deliver within three days and printed the same 5,000 tickets for \$750 — a savings of \$1,750.

Altogether, before a single ticket is sold, your Fundraising Committee has already saved the Department \$6,950. Another way to look at it is that the potential profit from this year's drawing has already increased by \$6,950. That is a big win for the Department of Oklahoma.

Now that we have the guns and tickets, the next step is distribution to the Posts. Based on past issues and the repeated calls from members and DEC leadership for more accountability, we implemented a new system.

Every Post is now required to sign a 10-Gun Drawing Agreement Form for the tickets they receive. This ensures we know exactly which Post has which tickets and how many. The agreement states that any tickets—sold or unsold—that are not turned in will require the Post to pay the Department \$5 per ticket. If all tickets are returned (sold or unsold) by the first day of Department Convention in July 2026, there is nothing to worry about.

We also saved additional money by not printing posters this year. Instead, a flyer was designed at no cost for the Department and has been emailed out by the Department Adjutant to all Posts with email addresses on file.

The Department Fundraising Committee works for you, the members of the Department of Oklahoma, and we take that responsibility seriously. This is your money, your fundraiser, and your Department.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or our Chairwoman, Kayla Rector.



For God and Country,

Chris Sherbourne  
 Department Fundraising Committee Co-Chair  
 The American Legion, Department of Oklahoma



**92<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary (1935-2026)  
 Of the  
 Annual National American Legion Pilgrimage  
 To the**

**Tomb of Abraham Lincoln**

**Post 32 – OPEN HOUSE – 4:00pm to 1:00am**

**Wednesday, February 11, 2026**

**Springfield Post #32, The American Legion**

**1120 Sangamon Avenue, Springfield, Illinois – Phone 217/523-3415**

**Home of and originator of the National American Legion Pilgrimage to the  
 Tomb of Abraham Lincoln**

+++++

**Our Mess Hall Restaurant presents, from 4-9pm Wednesday, Feb 11<sup>th</sup>.**

**All you Can Eat Spaghetti or All you Can Eat Chilli Mac - \$10.95 + tax**

**Chicken Parmesan - \$13.95**

**the following salads will also be available:**

**Chicken Strip Salad w/choice of dressing \$9.95**

**Taco Salad \$9.95**

**Chef Salad w/choice of dressing \$9.95**

**Italian Dinner Salad or Dinner Salad w/choice of dressing**

**By itself \$3.95 – w/dinner - \$2.50**

**Reservations suggested 217/523-3415 or email us: [spfldpost32@outlook.com](mailto:spfldpost32@outlook.com)**

**Visit our website: [www.springfieldamericanlegion.com](http://www.springfieldamericanlegion.com)**

**--Free Juke Box 8:00pm to Midnight**

**Video Gaming & Complete Bar Service**

**FREE Shuttle Service to the hotel until 1:00am**

---

## **Department Blood Program Chair**

### **FROM THE DEPARTMENT BLOOD DONOR PROGRAM CHAIR**

As Blood Donor Committee Chair, I submitted a report at the Winter Convention and need your help to accomplish strong Department participation for 2025-2026. It was short but emphasized the ease each post could develop a strong Blood Donor Program even if few legionnaires were personally able to donate.

The American Legion has maintained a formal Blood Donor Program since 1942, as an element of the National Security Pillar and includes active encouragement for the donation of blood, platelets, and plasma to support national security and community health. The program works in partnership with organizations like the American Red Cross and Our Blood Institute to address chronic shortages, particularly during crises.

#### **Key Aspects of the American Legion Blood/Platelet/Plasma Program:**

- Resolution and Advocacy: The Legion encourages its posts to host drives and members to donate, often recognizing departments with the highest participation at their national convention.
- Significance of Platelets: The program highlights that platelets are essential for cancer patients and those with weakened immune systems, and they can be donated as frequently as every seven days (up to 24 times a year).
- Plasma Donation: Members are encouraged to donate plasma, particularly for initiatives like convalescent plasma (e.g., during the COVID-19 pandemic).
- Impact: In 2022-2023, American Legion posts held drives with over 59,800 donors contributing 100,784 pints of blood.

Only 66 of our 164 Oklahoma Posts submitted a 2025 Consolidated Post Report, used for Department histories and National reporting to Congress. And only 26 of our Posts claimed blood collections on their CPR. Nationally, 3422 Posts claimed blood collections for a total of 62,711 units, an average of 18.325 units. Wisconsin collected over 10,000. Minnesota collected over 11,000. Oklahoma collected 1,141 units. We can do better. I'll be glad to work with you to establish a Blood Collection Program that will require very little effort using Bloodmobile or a suitable collection site.

The American Red Cross (ARC) estimates that more than 44,000 blood donations are needed every day in the United States to meet the demand for blood. That equates to, roughly, one donation every two seconds.

Our Blood Institute (formerly Oklahoma Blood Institute) operates 10 dedicated donor centers across Oklahoma. Key locations include Ada, Ardmore, Broken Arrow, Central Oklahoma City, Edmond, Enid, Lawton, Norman, Northwest Oklahoma City, and Tulsa. These locations serve more than 95% of the state's hospitals and medical facilities. In addition to the 10 permanent centers, numerous mobile blood drives are held weekly at schools, businesses, and community locations, in all 77 counties of our state. These centers support over 160 hospitals and medical facilities in Oklahoma.

Both OBI and ARC provide collection service throughout state using their Bloodmobiles and can process 4 donors per collection hour. The Legion has no preference regarding what collection agency is used, only that we sponsor the collection via our support.

Legionnaires participate by giving blood and reporting it to their posts, which mark the donation on their annual Consolidated Post Reports (CPRs). Posts participate by hosting blood drives and listing the number of donors in attendance on their CPRs. Good ideas deserve sharing, stealing at times. The following is a link to Florida's 2025-2026 program and may provide inspiration for you. I intend to use it for my post to increase our success.

<https://www.floridalegion.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/25-26BloodDonorManual.pdf>

<https://ourbloodinstitute.org/>

Please see how you can use it to develop and increase your success. For comments, questions, concerns, contact me –

JOHN G. BISHOP

405-414-2515, [jbishop22@cox.net](mailto:jbishop22@cox.net)

DEPT OF OKLAHOMA BLOOD DONOR CHAIR 2025-2026

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

## District 1A

### Post 147 – Miami

We had a great breakfast today at Post 147 and we're lucky enough to have Drew Leathers from the Cherokee Nation Veterans Affairs and Nicole Allen from Home Instead with information for some of the help they offer for our Veterans.



## District 1B

### Post 95 – Jenks



### **Easton Deyoe with Post 95 Boys State Chairman Tom Sowell**

Over the holidays we got together for lunch with a young man that Post 95 sent to Boys State. The young man, Easton Deyoe, is now attending West Point and will graduate in May. Easton wanted to get in touch to thank us for the opportunity to go to Boys State.

Easton said that having attended Boys State was very important in his in getting into West Point. The fact that he went meant it placed him at the top of the 'leadership' category on his resume. It's like having been an Eagle Scout on the resume.

Easton was elected Mayor at Boys State and that also helped. Easton's major at West Point is International Affairs and his minor is in Portuguese. He already has been to Brazil and went through jungle training. When he graduates, Easton would like to get into the infantry ranger's school.

There are other advantages to going to Boys or Girls State. Just like it helped Easton get into West Point, it will also help others getting into the University of their choice. In the past I also heard from others that it helped build confidence in themselves and they met others that resulted in a lasting friendship with young men like Easton, our country is in good shape.

### **Post 1800 – Catoosa**



Lakey Cherokee American Legion Post 1800 in Catoosa has had a busy year. Our main project for 2026 was started in mid-2025, we are working with the City of Catoosa to obtain a piece of property for a Veterans Honor Park. After several meetings with the City Parks Department and the City Council, a piece of land next to City Hall on the original Route 66 has been selected. We are in the process of finalizing the paperwork and documentation needed to complete the project.





We also posted the Colors at every Catoosa High School home football game.



We have also been in contact with the Air Defense Artillery Museum at Ft. Sill to obtain a M42A1 Self-Propelled, Twin 40mm Gun Track, otherwise known as a “Duster”. It is a Korean War veteran with a very low serial number. Participated in Hometown Halloween, leading the Christmas Parade with the Colors, provided the Color Guard for the Chamber of Commerce Awards Gala, where one of our members, Daniel Spitzer, was chosen as Catoosa’s Citizen of the Year. We were also chosen, for the 10<sup>th</sup> year in a row, to provide the food preparation for the VIP area of the Folds of Honor Freedom Fest on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. We were also chosen to receive the Catoosa Chamber of Commerce’s Community Service Award. It was a very busy year!



## Post 131 – Skiatook



Resurfacing our stage.



Getting our kitchen upgrade done with a new vent hood with fire suppression system. We even have room to grow. Salute to our Skiatook Post 131 American Legion Family for all the help and support. It will be finished and inspected soon. We are going to be open for our Burgers and more on Thursday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. Doors open at 5pm. We start serving at 5:15pm.







Skiatook American Legion Post 131 had a Great Christmas Festival. Our Santa Cause and American Legion Grinch showed up and really brought out the Christmas Cheer. Salute to our Skiatook American Legion Post 131 Legion Family for all the help and support. Together we can make it work.

## District 2A

### Post 50 – Tahlequah



Thank you [Cherokee Nation](#) and to all of our sponsors and friends that helped us send 32 delegates to The [Oklahoma American Legion Boys State](#) for the 2025 Session!

If you are a High School Junior and interested in learning more about Boys State or Girls State, please reach out to us!

If you would like to sponsor a delegate that would help tremendously! Each delegate cost is roughly \$360.

Delegates spend the last week of May learning about Americanism, Patriotism, Governmental Functioning, earn college credit, scholarship opportunities and so much more!

The 2026 Session is underway and our goal is 400 delegates!

[Tahlequah High School](#)

[Sequoyah High School](#)

[City Of Hulbert](#)

[City of Tahlequah – Municipal Government](#)

[The American Legion Department of Oklahoma](#)

[American Legion Auxiliary Department of Oklahoma](#)

[ALA Oklahoma Girls State](#)



## District 2B

### Post 10 – Okmulgee



The Oklahoma Historical Society and State Historic Preservation Office have announced the National Register of Historic Places designation for the Haygood-Shepherd American Legion Post 103 in Okmulgee. Click the link to read the story. >>> <https://fox23.info/3KyjOuB>  
Photo courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society

## District 3A

## District 3B

### Post 39 – Durant



Mark your calendars for February 14<sup>th</sup> and join American Legion Green-Bryant Durant OK Post 039 at 113 W Arkansas St, Durant, for a romantic Valentine's Day dinner featuring prime rib, baked potato, and more, available for \$40 per couple or \$20 per person, starting promptly at 6pm. [American Legion Green-Bryant Durant OK Post 039](#)



## District 4

### Post 64 – Chandler



Janet Holloway delivers another 100 hand-crocheted stocking caps to the Oklahoma City Veteran's Infusion Clinic along with her husband, Kirk Holloway. Janet was treated at the infusion clinic for breast cancer during 2007-08.



District 4 Commander shovels out parking lot at ALA headquarters so injured Secretary could enter building safely.



Left to right Diana Murray, Junior member and Donna Snodgrass Dept 1st Vice from Unit 260 Tecumseh, Nellie Caldwell department historian from Chandler unit 64, Angie Wagstaff 2nd Vice from Chelsea Unit 60, Judy Odendahl from Unit 64 and District 4 President, Enmellen Allen from Unit 72 Ada and Department President Kim McInnis from Unit 1776 Tulsa spent time with our Veterans in Sulphur Veterans Center for a Christmas celebration.

## District 5A

Fellow Legionaries, SAL, and Auxiliary members,

I hope everyone had a safe and prosperous New Year.

As we enter the final stages of our year for 2025/2026 membership; our District is doing well and I am encouraged we will continue to do our best to reach our goals for each Post.

Commanders keep working on your retention and bringing our past members back into the American Legion. I stated at the beginning of this year, I think our retention will be the best way for us to reach our goals. If we can get our past members to renew their investment into the Legion I know we will have veterans in our communities join our individual posts to help reach all the other veterans in our communities.

I hope everyone is staying safe and warm as Old Man Winter continues to visit us in our great state of Oklahoma. Continue doing your buddy checks and reaching out to our veterans that may need our assistance.

For God & Country.

Respectfully,

Mike Harris

District 5A Commander



## Post 58 – Guthrie

TAL Post 58 Guthrie and community members are planning the 97<sup>th</sup> Annual '89er Days Celebration from April 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. The longest and oldest parade concludes the weeklong festivities on April 18<sup>th</sup>

Korean Recognition Ceremony with Intaek Choi, Consulate General of the Republic of Korea Houston, dept officers and Senator Lankford's representative, presented the Ambassador for Peace Medal to Veterans / family members.

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php/?story\\_fbid=821131804005267&id=100085606328247](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php/?story_fbid=821131804005267&id=100085606328247)

Post 58 welcomed a couple of Veterans to Oklahoma, quickly learning that they were in need of additional services. Legionnaires and Auxiliary members from across the department joined together to assist with housing needs. The OKC VA quickly responded to the call for action in navigating necessary steps to ensure affordable housing in a safe environment. Paul and Nancy O'Brien met while in service, married over 50 years, both Soldiers and then Paul continued his active service with the U.S. Navy. A rare moment as both temporarily resided in rehab together at Bradford Village Healthcare Center in Edmond, OK, where they took their final walk together. Paul took his last breath on January 11<sup>th</sup>.



James Heflin, Post 40 Vinita, was on an Honor Flight in Washington, D.C., and shared Commander Vincent's contact info with a couple strangers to process Ambassador for Peace Medal applications for their loved ones. Medals were mailed to Chandler, Ariz., for Dominic DiGiovanni's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday, and to the grandson of Capt. Charles Graham-Gibson, identified March 17, 2025, by DPAA (Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency), repatriated and laid to rest Oct. 11 at Fort Custer National Cemetery, Battle Creek, Michigan. His remains were part of the release of 55 boxes of remains by Kim Jong Un on Aug. 2, 2018; Capt. Charles was in box 48.

See attached story: <https://www.mlive.com/galleries/54BOTB3IX5C5FADBRQEPDBOZU4/>



Post 58 partnered with the Fraternal Order of Police for their Annual Christmas Shopping with a Cop Program. FOP President Officer Vasquez accepted a monetary donation during the Post's Christmas celebration. The Post also flew in Santa, Mrs. Claus and an Elf from the North Pole! Auxiliary members coordinated the mission; Christmas dinner and the children's craft table.



Auxiliary members organized the annual Christmas Food Baskets with 7 schools for a delivery of 16 ham dinner baskets to families identified by the school counselors & also delivered to a SAL member, providing for over 90 people.



The Guthrie JROTC, led by Ret Colonel Kyle Brede, Legionnaire and Chair, along with Co-Chair / Commander Vincent, and the City of Guthrie employees, offloaded over 1,200 wreaths for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Wreaths Across America Ceremony at Summit View Cemetery. Remember,

Honor, and Teach about the sacrifices made by Veterans. Post Commander (AKA Mrs. Claus) joined the Vaughn Family with their annual wreath donation/delivery to Veterans who reside at Golden Age Nursing Home.



Squadron 58 has an Opportunity Drawing for a custom Firepit Ring with the Legion Family cutouts as shown above – perfect for your backyard gatherings! Limited number of tickets available. Donation of \$10 / ticket. All proceeds support the Squadron's programs. Please contact the office at 405-282-2589 CashApp [https://cash.app/\\$TALnALALebron58](https://cash.app/$TALnALALebron58) Venmo <https://venmo.com/u/TALPost58Guthrie>



## District 5B

### Post 184 – Moore



American Legion Post 184 proudly participated in the Department Mid-Winter Session, where Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, Sons of The American Legion, and Riders came together with a shared purpose of advancing goals and strengthening the mission of the American Legion. The session provided valuable training, open discussion, and collaboration across all family programs, reinforcing unity and forward momentum at every level. During the event, Post 184 was honored to receive a plaque from the American Legion Child Well Being Foundation, recognizing the Post's continued commitment to supporting children, families, and the broader community.



American Legion Post 184 in Moore, Oklahoma kept the momentum rolling with another successful Poker Night, bringing together members for an evening of fun, friendly competition, and strong camaraderie. Laughter, good cards, and a competitive spirit filled the hall as veterans enjoyed time together in the true Legion tradition of fellowship. At the same time, Post 184 continued its commitment to service, with our Veteran Service Officers participating in the VSOTS (Veteran Service Officer Training Symposium). This valuable training, provided in partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, strengthened their knowledge and skills to better serve fellow veterans and their families. Post 184 remains proud to balance social connection with continuous education in support of those who served.

## Post 274 – Norman

# ALL YOU CAN EAT FISH FRY

**FEBRUARY 7, 2026**  
**5-7 PM**  
**LITTLE AXE AMERICAN LEGION POST 274**  
**2020 156TH AVE. NE. NORMAN, OK. 73026**



**\$15 ADULTS**  
**\$7 AGE 7-11**  
**6 & UNDER**  
**FREE**

**AUXILIARY  
DESSERTS  
\$1**

**MENU**  
**FISH**  
**FRENCH FRIES**  
**HUSHPUPIES**  
**FRIED OKRA**  
**ONION RINGS**  
  
**COLESLAW**  
**TEA**  
**LEMONADE**  
**WATER**

**HELD THE FIRST SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH**  
**BENEFITS VETERANS, MILITARY & THEIR FAMILIES**

**LIVE MUSIC**



## District 6A

### Post 353 – Mustang



Post 353 attends this event yearly with 6-10 members wearing legion apparel. Remaining aware of the interests and dealings of our local Oklahoma Senators and Representatives makes better citizens. While the Legion is non-political, we have a responsibility to vote and as private citizens in other forums to voice concerns that affect our community and state. Due to weather, breakfast is on Thursday, January 29<sup>th</sup>.

Following Christmas activities, January has been a slow month. Buddy Calls, calls to our sick and infirmed and planning for this last half of our 2025-2026 year has been the concern.

Several members attended the Winter Conference at the Norman Armed Forces Reserve Center. Department fellowship is always a good thing. Many presentations and reports were given to both inform and inspire our posts and members. District Conferences for the second half of the year were scheduled and are on the Department website. District 6A/B Spring Conference will be held February 28<sup>th</sup> at Post 176 Tuttle. Districts will elect their Commanders for the 2026-2028 term of office.

Ms. Rebecca Ras, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies Teacher at Horizon Intermediate School, was selected as winner of the White Americanism Grant for this year. She will be presented with a \$500 check in her classroom on February 11. . Congratulations, Ms. Ras!!

While “Toujours Pret”, our Honor Guard was not called upon for Funeral Honors or presentations this month.

### Post 160 – Yukon

James Albert Wheatley American Legion Post 160 released its 2025 Year in Review, highlighting a year of service focused on veterans, youth, and the Yukon community. Key efforts included organizing and fully funding the annual Memorial Day Ceremony at the Yukon Veterans Memorial, supporting local education initiatives, and conducting outreach to hospitalized veterans at the OKC VA Medical Center.

Throughout the year, Post 160 sponsored Boys State and Girls State participants, supported the American Legion Oratorical Constitutional Speech Contest—where a sponsored student placed third statewide—and partnered with local organizations such as the Daughters of

the American Revolution, Yukon Rotary Club, and Mabel C. Fry Public Library. The Post also maintained strong community visibility through events such as Czech Fest, Family Day at the Yukon Museum, and regular media contributions to The Yukon Progress.

In addition to programming, the Post completed major facility improvements, including a nearly \$90,000 roof replacement through insurance and front-entrance upgrades. Yukon American Legion Charities 501(c)(3) secured \$10,000 in Route 66 Centennial grant funding and distributed 120 American flags free to the community. Post leadership noted that 2025 reflected the Legion's ongoing commitment to service, honor, and civic responsibility in Yukon.

### **Already in 2026, Post 160 Move Ahead**

The post already has 2 juniors for Boys State and another in the works. Students come visit the post members before funding is approved. Pictured here at our January meeting.



### **6A District Oratorical**


**SPEECH WINNER ADVANCES TO STATE:** Yukon's Oratory winner, won at the district level, Mason will now compete at the Department level for huge scholarships. Special thanks to Jason Oliphant and Bob Bebrin for helping with the contest!





## District 6B

### Post 55 – Duncan



Dobbs-Adams American Legion  
Post 55 invite you to our Four  
Chaplain Ceremony

When: Tuesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026 at  
6:00 p.m.

Where: All Saints Episcopal Church  
809 W Cedar Ave, Duncan, OK 73533

American Legion Post 55 would like to invite you to the Four Chaplains Ceremony on Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. at All Saints Episcopal Church in Duncan, OK. Come on by and learn about why we celebrate these brave men! Hope to see you there!

---

### Post 306 – Fletcher



One of our Post members performed the Comanche Smoke Blessing Ceremony for our Post this evening. This ritual is to make sure our Post is inviting and welcoming to all veterans and friends as we start the New Year. The ceremony ended with the traditional Christian Holy Trinity phrase in Comanche and English.

What a positive way to start off the New Year!!



## **District 7**

There were some good classes at midwinter conference. The thing I saw the most was a lot of camaraderie, legionnaires visiting with each and having a good time.

I will be visiting posts in district 7 in February. District 7 spring conference will be 21 Feb at post 121 in Mangum. Looking forward to seeing everyone in Mangum.

I received a letter from Commander Bill Wanless in Post 30 in Granite, here is what the post has been doing the last few months.

OSR American Legion Post 0030 in Granite Oklahoma, is definitely not your typical American Legion Post. Though it is the second Post of its kind in the State of Oklahoma, it nevertheless has a somewhat distinctive membership. This Post is inside of the high granite walls of the Oklahoma State Reformatory.

Founded on April 14, 2025, the Post hit the ground running, literally, on Friday, April 25, the Post sponsored a 5k in memory of the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Murray Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Then on Friday, September 18, 2025 the Post held a second 5k, in honor of 9/11, but this time co-offering the run as a Be the One event. In fact, in order to better support the Legions Be the One project, in November 2025, the entire Post's membership earned certification in Mental Health First Aid.

The Post already has its two 5ks for 2026 scheduled for the Murray Building and 9/11 on April 17th and September 11th, respectively. They are also holding a Vet Fest, a yard-wide event featuring music and games on Tuesday April 14th, to celebrate the Posts first anniversary. They also have a second Vet Fest planned for Saturday July 4, 2026 as a USA 250 event.

I am so proud of the work this post is doing, even while being in the position they are in.  
Elmo May  
District 7 Commander

## **District 8A**

### **Post 53 – Perry**

State of our Post at our regular monthly meeting.

I would like to give thanks to the Auxiliary for all of their assistance throughout the past year. Thank you to all our members who have taken time out of their days to be part of the Honor Guard and show support to our fellow Veterans that have gone on. This year alone we have provided support at twenty-five services.

As a Post, we have had a busy past year. At the beginning of the year, we had ODVA come to our Post, and they were able to help nineteen veterans. Members of our Post assisted the Cherokee Strip Museum in getting a display setup for Veterans. We have been able to, throughout the year, assist multiple community organizations in their endeavors, and I hope we will be able to expand that this year. We have been able to welcome two new active members this year, Jim McIlvan and Ron Golliver. Also, before the end of 2025 Tina and Doyle were able to get the membership information of our veterans at Green Valley Nursing home and now, they are also among our ranks.

On Memorial Day, we listened to Rex Duncan (Col. – Ret.) speak as we remembered all of those that have gone on before us. For Flag Day, we held a Flag Retirement Ceremony at the Post; inviting the public to gather with us. The Post was able to wave and gather support from over twelve hundred passersby the morning of Patriot Day. During the 16th Celebration Parade, we passed out almost one thousand flags, helping our community to be more patriotic. For Veteran's Day, our Post was part of numerous programs recognizing fellow veterans in the County.

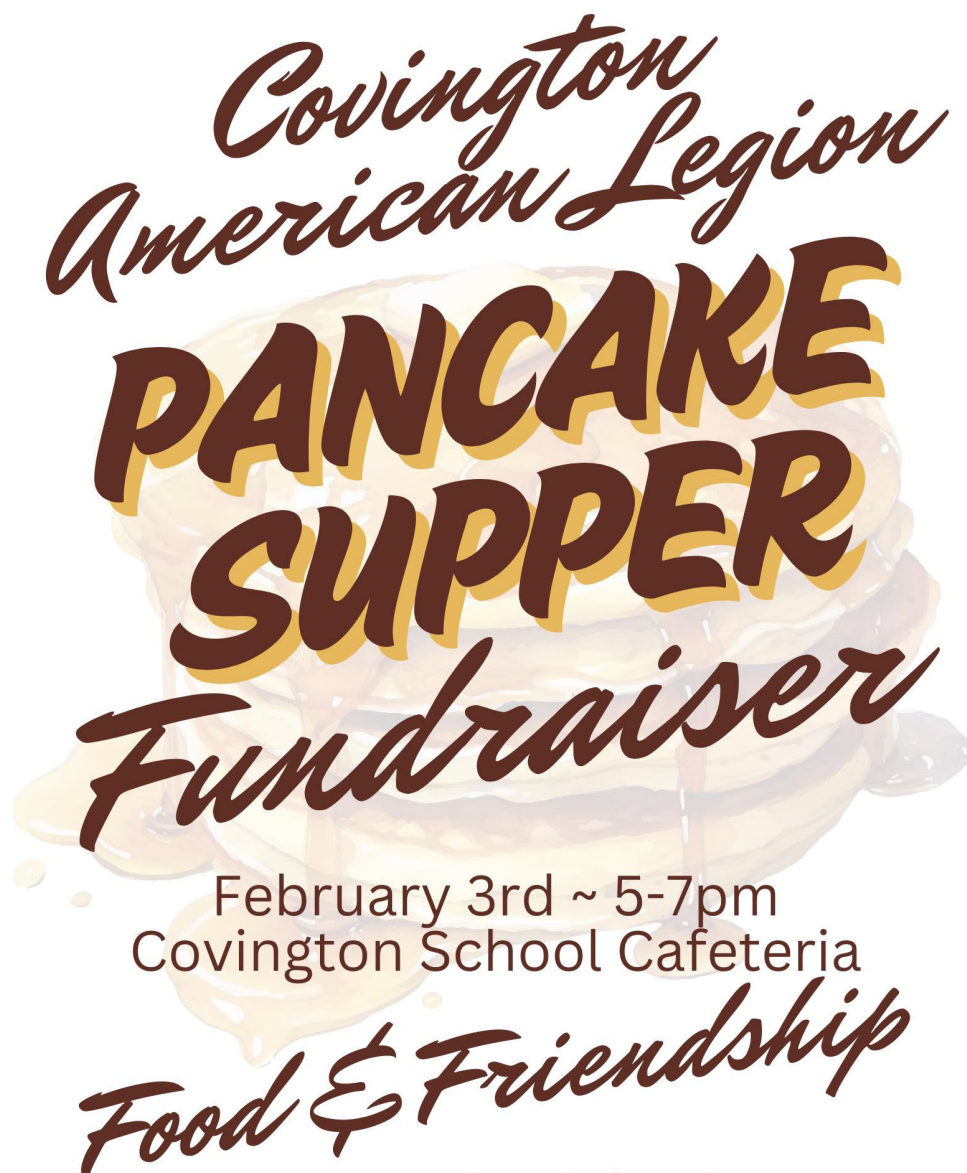
We have been working on updating our building, so we are able to host events open to the public, like our Pancake breakfast, Markets, and the numerous meals we host, and also to rent the building out for community use.

Being visible in the community and showing our support for the community will do its part in helping us grow and maintain this comradery that we have here at the Post. Some things I would like to see next year.

I think we have a great year ahead of us and many opportunities for people to serve their fellow veterans in this Post. In the months ahead we will be having elections again and I would like to see some new faces stepping up, because if we become stagnant then we will not grow.

Jeremy Hines  
Commander, Post 53 Perry

## Post 190 – Covington



Join us before the game.

We are having our annual pancake supper fundraiser on Feb. 3rd. All are welcome.

Also, I posted this on our local town's Facebook page. We lost our Lions Club group that usually paid for the big fireworks display. They donated the equipment to us; we just don't have the funds to buy the artillery shells plus restock the trailer to sell fireworks. If any posts would like to help, we would be grateful. Orders must be in to the fireworks dealer by the end of February.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP!!**

We would love to provide a 4th of July fireworks display this year for Americas 250th anniversary! We can't do it alone! We need funds and personnel to operate the equipment. The money we raised last year from the fireworks trailer will go back into restocking the trailer.

Please contact any post 190 American Legion member. We have an account at First Bank and Trust in Covington, and our address is PO Box 11 Covington, Ok 73730 if you'd like to send a donation.

Would any businesses or individuals be interested in donating specifically for the fireworks display this year? It will cost anywhere from \$5-\$6000 dollars just for the artillery. We will need to raise the money before the end of February to get the order in.

Melanie Kerr  
Commander Post 190

### **District 8B**

Greetings District 8B! We had the Department of Oklahoma Mid-Winter Convention this month. This district is leading the State in membership numbers, and I am grateful to every post in the district! As January comes to an end, remember that membership cards are officially expired.

District 8 Spring Conference is coming up on April 11, at High Plains Technology Center in Woodward, and I would like to see representatives from every post in attendance! District officer elections, training on MyLegion.com and how to process memberships, along with assistance on finding important information on the Department of Oklahoma and National American Legion Websites.

I will be making rounds, visiting posts and supporting the Post's as best as I can, soon! All Post Adjutants, and most Post Commanders, should have my phone number, so don't hesitate to call or text me!

Wayne Flowers,  
District 8B Commander  
District 8 SAL Commander

**PLEASE SEND ALL**  
**SUBMISSIONS TO**  
**TALOK1889@GMAIL.COM**

**NO LATER THAN 1800hrs**  
**on the 28<sup>TH</sup> OF THE MONTH**



# POST EVERLASTING



## **Billy Eric Jordan**



<https://www.cornerstoneofmuskogee.com/obituaries/billy-jordan-16/#!/Obituary>

## George Berthold Henschel



<https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/46463806/george-berthold-henschel>

## Jay Willis Morris



<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/mrt/name/jay-morris-obituary?id=60139407>



## Harold “Bud” Gray



<https://obituaries.stwnewspress.com/obituary/harold-gray-747535692>

## **John Martin Keller**



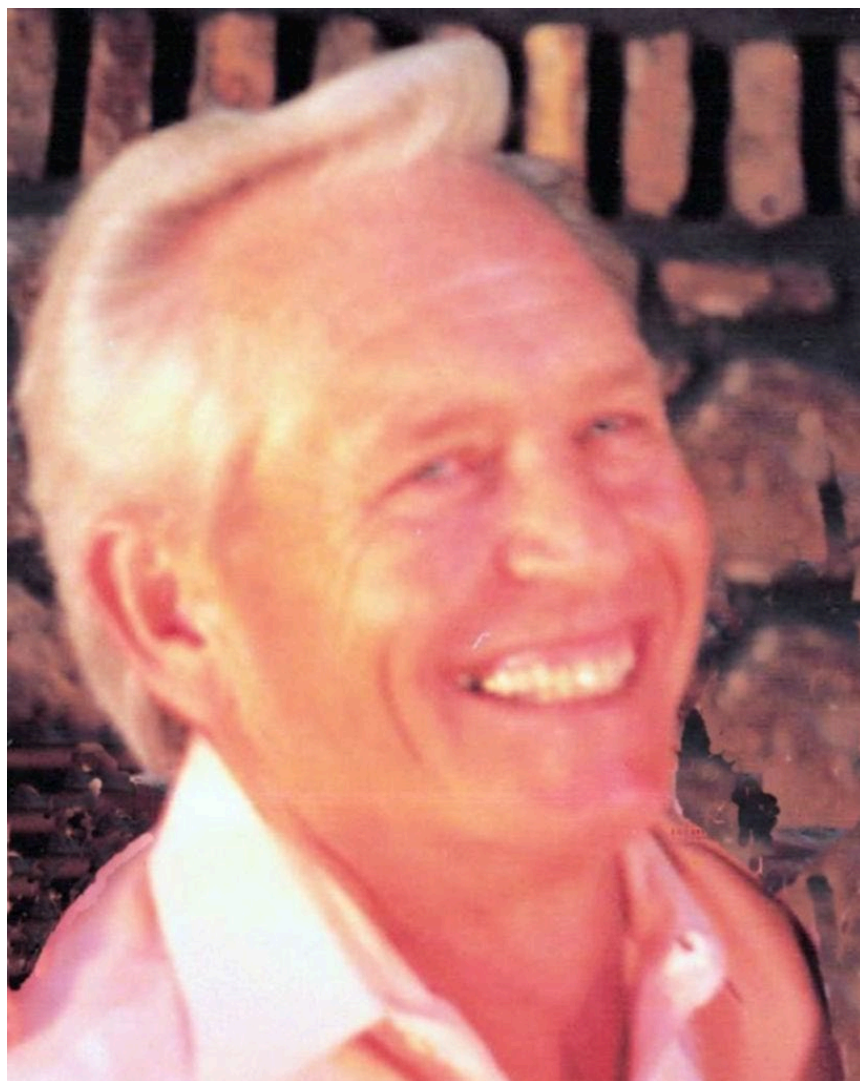
[https://www.smithgallo.com/obituary/johnny-keller?fh\\_id=11970](https://www.smithgallo.com/obituary/johnny-keller?fh_id=11970)

## **William Franklin Thorn**



<https://www.smithgallo.com/obituary/william-f-thorn>

## Floyd Virgil Percival



<https://www.matthewsfuneralhome.com/obituaries/floyd-percival#:~:text=Floyd%20Virgil%20Percival%2C%2087%20of,life%20was%20uniquely%20his%20own.>



## Vernon LaWayne Smith



<https://www.hayesfh.com/obituary/vernon-smith>

## Tommy Ray Sylvester



<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/tommy-sylvester-obituary?id=60632089>

## Jerry D. McLain



[https://www.wilkinsonfuneralservice.com/obituaries/jerry-mclain?fbclid=IwY2xjawPnbMRleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzkxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEebw1GznzuP1RocuyY-BfODiIMA9SYN77mB2todcZ\\_EFDoacI2S7VmGMuC5qY\\_aem\\_oXZTv5i5CdbtLPrrqNYQTA](https://www.wilkinsonfuneralservice.com/obituaries/jerry-mclain?fbclid=IwY2xjawPnbMRleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzkxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEebw1GznzuP1RocuyY-BfODiIMA9SYN77mB2todcZ_EFDoacI2S7VmGMuC5qY_aem_oXZTv5i5CdbtLPrrqNYQTA)