

Down by the Riverside:
A History of American Legion
Memorial Post 243
Oviedo, Florida
1946-2006

by Richard Adicks
Post Historian



Gonna lay down my sword and shield
Down by the riverside.
Ain't gonna study war no more.

DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE

History
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From all over America, communities sent most of their young men into the Second World War. (See "Honor Roll of World War II" in the appendix) When more than a hundred men came back to Oviedo after the war in late 1945 and early 1946, they were starting families and working at new jobs, but at the same time they saw many needs in their community, and they had the spirit and the energy to band together to serve Oviedo as they had served the nation.

Several veterans of the First World War from Oviedo--Ralph King, Jack King, Charles Lee, Joe Leinhart, and James (Doc) Malcolm--were already members of Post 53 in Sanford. Others--Joseph I. Boston, Joe Lee, Ernest Ingram, and Clarence Ashe--belonged to Post 207-C in Sanford. (See appendix, History of Post 237) Now, with younger men ready to start a new veterans' organization, the older veterans welcomed the convenience of having a post closer to home, and they helped start posts of the American Legion. The Legion, founded in 1919, at the end of World War I, is open to veterans who have served on U. S. soil as well as on foreign duty, whereas the older Veterans of Foreign Wars, which traces its origins back to the Spanish-American War, limits membership to those who have served outside of the United States.

Some forty-five veterans met in the second-floor auditorium at the Oviedo school (now T. W. Lawton Elementary School) on November 15, 1946, to draft an application for the post. Frank Wheeler chaired the meeting. Others present were George Means, Paul Mikler, Emmett Kelsey, T. L. (Bo) Lingo, and Philip Packard. Doc Malcolm was elected Commander of the new post and George C. Means Adjutant.

"Application for Post of the American Legion," dated November 15, 1946, listed forty-six prospective members, and requested the post number 243. The number 243 is the same as the number of the Oviedo Masonic Lodge, and the veterans probably chose it because some of them were members of the Lodge, which had been founded in the 1890s and had acquired its number in 1917.*

The application of Post 243 was approved by the Department of Florida and submitted to the American Legion National Headquarters, Indianapolis, Indiana, where it was endorsed on November 21, 1946, by National Adjutant Donald G. Glascoff.

*It's curious that the number 243 meant so much in Oviedo. Later, when a Boy Scout troop was formed under the sponsorship of the First Methodist Church, it was given the same number, which was not retired until BSA Troop 243 became inactive about 1980. The identity of numbers would cause confusion. When land transfers took place between Post 243 and Masonic Lodge 243, one public official thought they were the same organization.

A Preliminary Charter issued to the Post was recorded at Seminole County on May 18, 1948, listing the following officers:

Commander	Philip Packard
Vice Commander	J. Merritt Staley
Finance Officer	J. G. Kasell
Adjutant	Henry Wolcott
Historian	W. H. Martin
Chaplain	Joe I. Beasley
Sergeant at Arms	T. L. Lingo, Jr.
Service Officer	J. W. Evans

Philip Packard, the first veteran of World War II to serve as commander, was a big, authoritative man who had served as an infantry master sergeant in the D-Day invasion.

The new post was named the "Oviedo Memorial Post Number 243" in memory of four Oviedo men who gave their lives in defense of our country:

JAMES ARTHUR PARTIN, Pfc., U. S. Marine Corps, was wounded in action on 22 June 1944 on Saipan, the Marianas Islands, and died on 6 July 1944. Four years later, on June 6, 1948, the Legionnaires of Post 243 met together for Arthur Partin's funeral at the Chuluota Cemetery.*

WALTER EUGENE OLLIFF, U. S. Army, was killed in action on 22 September 1944, at Schevenhote, Germany, Sergeant Walter Olliff lies at the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery in Henri-Chapelle, Belgium.

GORDON W. JOHNSON, JR.: U. S. Army Air Corps. A member of the 70th Staging Squadron, 20th Ferrying Group, Nashville, Tennessee, Gordon Johnson died in an air crash on 29 December 1944 in Nigeria.

ARTHUR RILES HUNTER; U. S. Navy, was lost at sea on 30 July 1945 in the sinking of the USS *Indianapolis* during the 1945 Leyte Gulf Operation, Philippine Islands.

A post committee was appointed in 1948 to consider placing a memorial marker somewhere in town for the four men from Oviedo, but this plan never was put into effect, because the town of Oviedo had another memorial in mind. It is recorded in the Oviedo city council minutes for January 1946 that "Some time back it was suggested that the town build a memorial building in honor of those boys who had lost their lives in the war, and [this building], built by public subscription, was to contain a town office, a jail, garage for fire equipment and an auditorium for the American Legion unit, and the second floor was to be used by the Masonic Lodge for their meetings."

*Details of the application and charter of the Post are based on a short summary of the organizational documents written by Robert S. Rains, Post Adjutant, in January 1994, supplemented by information from Post Minutes Books, 1946-1965. Except where noted otherwise, this history is based on the same minutes books. Most records between 1965 and 1994 have been lost.

Work did not start on the Memorial Building until after Lee Gary became mayor in 1949. Mayor Gary called the Memorial Building "the accomplishment that I'm proudest of." While it was under construction in 1950, the Post considered placing a marble block in the wall or near the building, but in the end they presented a framed testimonial to be hung on an inside wall. The building became the home of the town government in January 1951, but it never became a regular meeting place for either Post 243 or the Masonic Lodge.*

An application for a Permanent Charter was submitted by Post Commander J. E. Kelsey on July 10, 1952, and a Permanent Post Charter was issued on September 8, 1952 (Registration number 20,104). The new charter listed the following officers:

Commander	Leon Chester Olliff
Vice Commander	Henry A. Wolcott
Adjutant	James E. Pearson
Finance Officer	John Wesley Evans
Chaplain	George C. Means
Sergeant at Arms	Paul Mikler
Historian	William Henry Martin
Service Officer	B. F. Wheeler, Jr.
Americanism Chair	Paul Mikler
Membership Chair	Henry A. Wolcott

J. E. Kelsey signed as outgoing commander.**

In that year (1952) there were 35 registered members, and they had accumulated a building fund of \$850.

These young men wanted to build a better community, meet the need for better fire protection, improve recreation for their young families, help neighbors in need, and have a good time together.

An early concern was the practical one of protecting homes and businesses from fire. The Wheeler Fertilizer Company plant burned in 1947. On February 6, 1947, Commander Doc Malcolm proposed that the Post urge the City Council to buy "some sort of fire equipment for the town of Oviedo." Up until that time the town had been using a Model T truck equipped with a tank. It was kept in a tin barn in back of the city jail on Station Street. The first person on the scene would drive the truck to the fire. The city then bought a '46 Ford "cowl and chassis" to which they added a tank and a pump. Post 243 discussed organizing a volunteer fire department, and on November 18, 1948, the Post recommended to the City Council that Roy Clonts be appointed fire chief and Lyle Millican

*Richard Adicks and Donna Neely, *Oviedo: Biography of a Town*, 2d ed. (Oviedo, 1992), pp. 105-106.

**Incorporation came nearly four decades later. The Post was incorporated on October 20, 1989, as "Oviedo Memorial Post No. 243, The American Legion, Department of Florida," with James E. Pearson, Paul Mikler, and Thomas G. Moon, Sr., signing as incorporators. Officers were listed as Commander James E. Jones; Adjutant James E. Pearson; Vice Commander Charles W. Robertson; Vice Commander Andrew Aulin, Jr.; Vice Commander Tommy D. Rose; Finance Officer Thomas G. Moon, Sr.; Chaplain Paul Mikler; Historian William R. Clonts; and Service Officer Frank Wheeler, Jr.

assistant chief. Emmett Kelsey, who ran a Gulf Oil station at 19 East Broadway, near the intersection with Central, set up an electric fire whistle at his station that was infrequently used to summon the volunteer fire fighters.*

Fire safety was a concern eight years later. On September 15, 1955, Merritt Staley brought up the issue, and Roy Clonts, Jim Partin, Emmett Kelsey, Bob Slavik, and Phil Packard were appointed to meet with the City Council "at Emmett's station" about fire department issues. By and large, the Post left the matter in the hands of the City Council. The volunteer department was to serve the town for three decades, and it was not until the late 1970s, when the Lake Charm Fruit Company was consumed in its second big fire, that Oviedo began to edge toward a paid fire department.

Sweetwater Park and the Swimming Pool

Merritt Staley, a past commander, said of those early years that "the most exciting thing we did was to clean up Sweetwater Park." The park had been created in the 1930s by a WPA (Works Projects Administration) crew provided by the Federal government. "When we first started the project," said Staley, "it was to open a swimming pool. There was a swimming pool there, and it was to buy the equipment necessary to chlorinate it. Before the war there was a swimming pool filled with water and you got in it and swam when you wanted to, and about every week they changed the water. So they put in the proper things to chlorinate it, and it was a place where the kids, all of our kids, enjoyed so much."**

The work on Sweetwater Park started in September 1947 when Frank Wheeler, then Vice-Commander, was appointed to purchase "a pump and all necessary equipment" for the pool. The Legionnaires must have decided that the gasoline motor was too noisy or too troublesome or both, because after one summer of operating the pool, on May 5, 1949, the members voted to replace the gasoline motor with a ten-horse electric motor.

Probably the Post financed these expenditures by taking up a collection, but before long they hit on the idea of a Fourth of July barbeque. The first one was in 1949. Tom Staley was appointed on June 16, 1949, to write a letter to "Cracker Jim," who wrote a column of folksy chat in the *Orlando Evening Star*, to get him to publicize the barbeque and the swimming pool, and a 4th of July committee was appointed.

"We put on a barbeque every year," says Merritt Staley. "We dug down in the park. The pit was about a hundred feet long, and it was covered with chicken wire, and a fire was built. We spent six months, I guess, collecting the timber to burn, off and on. That was our project. We would have a politician speak.

"The first year we did it we gave a car away, a brand new car. You couldn't hardly get a new car. It was a Studebaker, and somebody from--nobody had ever heard of--from off far yonder, won the thing. We had hoped that somebody in the neighborhood would win it."

* Ben Wheeler, interviewed on November 7, 2006.

** James Merritt Staley, charter member and past commander, interviewed on March 22, 2004

In spite of the vets' disappointment at having to see that new Studebaker roll out of Oviedo forever, they could report at the July 21, 1949, meeting that they had made \$991.04 on the barbeque. That profit boosted their treasury to \$1,426.51.

The park was enough of a success for the Post to make big plans. They voted on July 14, 1949, to install a 40' x 50' dance floor, and planned to pour the footing right away. The next month they discussed hiring the Ellis Band to play for dances at the park, splitting the proceeds 50/50, and they asked the Oviedo Woman's Club to provide a piano for the dances. They also agreed to close the pool on September 5 (Labor Day), after having opened it on June 1. On September 15, the members were optimistic enough to plan for charging outside groups to use the dance floor. They planned to charge out-of-towners \$10, but to let local groups use it for nothing.

By the following year, however, enthusiasm had waned. Maybe the park was just too much work and responsibility. On April 20, 1950, a motion carried to ask the Woman's Club and the Lions Club to "join the Legion in operating the swimming pool one month in the summer of 1950." On May 15, Tommy Moon, Sr., agreed to operate the pool, as he had done the year before, and the members appropriated \$10 to clean the grounds. They made it through the 1950 season, but on May 20, 1951, "Leon Olliff moved and Phil Packard seconded to return the care and operation of the pool to the City. Motion carried."

That ended the years of the pool operation by the Post, but the Post continued to be involved with Sweetwater Park. On April 15, 1954, George Means was appointed by Commander Hollis Cox to approach the City Council about providing playground equipment for the park.

The annual 4th of July barbeque at Sweetwater Park was a lot of fun. "The barbequing starts at ten o'clock the first morning," said Merritt Staley, "and goes on to noon the next day. We cooked for 24 hours. The year that I was commander [1950], I had been down there, as the commander thought he ought to be, I guess, I had been to the swimming pool, and there was always a bunch of laughter, joking, making fun of this and that, and I went home about eleven o'clock and went to bed. And about one o'clock--one or two o'clock in the morning-- somebody was rapping on my front door. It startled me. And it was Mr. Boyd Clonts, that lived up on Graham Street beyond me. He had come by there, and was knocking on the door. I got to the front door. He said, "Merritt! You had better get down yonder and see about that meat." He said, "Those people cooking, they got drunk and they burnt it all up." Man, that nearly scared me to death. Mr. Clonts was a man that--he was a brother to Roy Clonts here then--and he was a man who would never do a thing like that, to joke with anybody. Well, when I got down there, there wasn't a thing wrong. Nobody had done anything. The meat was cooked beautifully. I was laughed at many a time for getting caught into that trick. I know it didn't offend me. I enjoyed it. But that was the attitude they had in the Legion, in 243. That was the good side to the Legion. Everybody was loose and free and did like they wanted to. Everybody was lookin' forward to the next meetin'. We were just country boys having a get-together out in the country."

A Place to Meet

For their first decade as a Post, the Oviedo veterans had an even closer involvement with Sweetwater Park. On Feb. 6, 1947, Commander James (Doc) Malcolm said that he would request permission for the post to use the "former Boy Scout

Lodge as a meeting place." This log cabin, which had stood since WPA days at the park, became their meeting place until 1957.

One night Emmett Kelsey said, "We ought to have our own meeting place." So the members kicked the idea around for months. Henry Wolcott got tired of hearing about it on October 6, 1949, and moved that the Post drop plans for a "Legion home." But the motion died for lack of a second. If Wolcott wanted to jolt the Post into action, the strategy worked. Frank Wheeler moved, and Roy Clonts seconded, to aim for a building fund of \$5,000 in the treasury before attempting to build, and that passed. Then T. L. Lingo moved, with Leon Olliff seconding, that 75% of the Post's income go into the building fund. That passed, too.

The Legionnaires continued to have "lively discussions" about the issue of the "Legion home." On January 17, 1952, Jim Partin offered some lots for a site, but they were not accepted. Later that year, Commander Leon Olliff appointed Phil Packard and Hollis Cox "to investigate and secure the approximate cost of a fifty by seventy-five foot concrete block structure with pine flooring." Months later, on September 17, 1953, T. L. Lingo moved, with Merritt Staley seconding, to get estimates on a building 24 by 40 feet in size. Lingo, Staley, and Emmett Kelsey pledged \$100 to be paid as soon as construction began.

By November 19, 1953, they had their eyes on a specific property. "Emmett Kelsey and T. L. Lingo, both being members of the Masonic Lodge, were appointed to go before that body and find out if there is a possibility of the American Legion getting the Dick Mitchell Property on a 99-year lease. Commander [Hollis] Cox is going to get more details and a sketch of the building we want."

The Legionnaires were setting in motion a series of events that would make the Louisiana Purchase look like a transaction at the dime store. The Dick Mitchell property that they meant was Lot 1, Block D, of "H. L. Mitchell's [1886] Addition to Oviedo," which had been part of the tract acquired in the 1860s by Orrin Clinton (Dick) Mitchell's grandfather, Joseph B. Watts. Watts had retreated to central Florida with his daughter, Henrietta, and son-in-law, John F. J. Mitchell, near the outset of the War Between the States, and soon after his overseer had been brutally murdered by several of his slaves.** He filed to homestead 80 acres in 1867, and subsequently bought another 160 acres from the state. On this tract now sit Oviedo High School, the First United Methodist Church of Oviedo, the Oviedo cemetery, and other adjacent properties.* The only one of their four children who survived into old age, Dick Mitchell, inherited the property. In 1943 Mitchell deeded Lot 1, Block D, between King Street and West Broadway, to Ben H. Jones. The Oviedo Masons say that either Ben Jones or Dick Mitchell respected Masons because a Mason saved the life of a kinsman of his. Maybe this is why Ben Jones and his wife Louise gave Lots 1, 2, and 3 to the Oviedo Masonic Lodge in 1950, with the approval of Dick Mitchell, all three of them stipulating in a quit claim deed that "this property cannot be transferred, sold, or used for any purpose except for the benefit of the Masonic Lodge."

* James M. Denham, *Rogues in Paradise: Crime and Punishment in Ante-Bellum Florida* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 1997), pp. 135-136.

** *Oviedo: Biography of a Town*, pp. 8-9.

The Masons, who were meeting then at a little building at 48 Central Avenue, across from the Memorial Building, were not doing anything about construction on the Mitchell property. Yet there was still some talking back and forth on the question. On April 15, 1954, the Post Adjutant was instructed to write to Masonic Lodge 243 about the property. But at the next meeting, on May 20, the Adjutant reported that he had received a "no" from the Masons. The Legionnaires continued to consider other properties, and on March 10, 1955, Commander Jim Pearson, observing that there were only eleven members present (which had been about the average attendance for several years), said that he thought more members would attend if they had a new building.

On November 15, 1956, Rex Clonts, presiding at his first meeting as the new commander, stated that "the project for this year will be the procurement of a piece of property for building purposes." He appointed Emmett Kelsey, T. L. Lingo, Jr., and Jim Partin to a committee to carry out the plan. A month later, Adjutant John Courier recorded in the minutes that "Masonic Lodge had deeded the Dick Mitchell property consisting of approximately six acres to this Post for building purposes. A vote of thanks was given to Emmett and his committee for their good work."* No money changed hands, and Ben and Louise Jones signed deeds relinquishing their 1950 restriction that the property be used only by Masons. Later, in 1967, the Masons would give four acres (Lots 2 and 3) to the South Seminole Athletic Association for a playing field, which eventually became John Courier Field.**

So after a decade of looking for a home, Post 243 had a place to build. At that same December 1956 meeting, Commander Rex Clonts appointed a planning committee consisting of Emmett Kelsey, chair; T. L. Lingo, Jr.; Jim Partin; Thomas Moon; B. F. Wheeler, Jr.; Milton Gore; and Phil Packard to make preliminary plans for a building and a shelter with tables and outdoor cooking facilities. Merritt Staley and Ben Ward agreed to clean up the new property. The Legionnaires rolled up their sleeves and spent the spring and summer of 1957 doing all the work themselves. "We built it," said Frank Wheeler. "Fifteen or twenty members worked on the building--wiring, kitchen, plumbing. Nobody knew how to build trusses. Rex got his Daddy. Mr. Clonts laid out a truss and cut it to fit, with all the braces. He said, 'This is the pattern. Use it every time.' Bo Lingo was right in the middle of it, was nailing each truss on. Emmett Kelsey, Jim Partin, most all of us. All of a sudden, one of the boys said, 'This one don't fit. It's not square.' Mr. Clonts came over and said, 'You let the pattern get away.' We had to lay aside another truss as a pattern. The original pattern got nailed up and we got off center. There's a lesson of life in that."***

When Oviedo Masonic Lodge 243 decided several years later to build a new lodge hall, they learned that there was some confusion about the land transfers involving Lot 1, Block D. Post 243, having enjoyed the use of the whole property for ten years, decided on June 17, 1965, to appoint Merritt Staley, Robert Ward, and Frank Wheeler to a committee "to assist Masons where to select a site to build." The result was that Post 243 deeded back to the Masons the north half of the lot (about three acres), and Lodge 243 built its hall facing King Street.

*Four officers of the Lodge--A. G. Allen, John D. Thomas, Robert A. Cameron, and Floyd Land--deeded the property to the Legion post. (Seminole County Deed Book 105, page 480)

**The football field was transferred to the Seminole County School Board in 1980.

*** Frank Wheeler, Jr., charter member, interview on September 10, 2006.

By 1995 the Legion hall needed repair. To get the money that they needed, Post 243 authorized Commander Robert Rains and Finance Officer Thomas G. Moon, Sr., to sell the east 170 feet of the Post property to D and B Enterprises for \$75,000. The sale was closed on August 30, 1995. In the same year the Post completely refurbished the building, putting on a new roof, installing dry wall on ceiling and walls, replacing windows and doors, rewiring, installing air conditioning and heating, laying new vinyl tile on the floor, installing a new water heater, a refrigerator, and a kitchen sink, pressure cleaning the outside, painting inside and outside, installing new vinyl soffit, fascia, and gable end, insulating the attic, and building a new storage shed. Charles Pratt did the work at a cost of \$33,349.59.

The balance of the selling price--about \$40,000--was put into certificates of deposit, the interest from which has helped to sustain the Post for several years.

Another significant improvement came in the summer of 2002, when Clint Cain, son of Legionnaire Ralph Cain and Laurie Cain, as his Eagle Scout project in BSA Troop 787, organized his fellow scouts and their parents to paint the outside of the Post hall.*

American Legion Auxiliary/ Sons of the American Legion

The issue of whether or not to organize a Legion auxiliary for their wives came up soon after the Post was organized. On May 20, 1948, the members discussed it, but tabled a motion on the subject. But the following month, on June 3, they voted against having an auxiliary. The minutes do not say why.

However, they must have changed their minds after a few years. Minutes of the Post refer several times to an Auxiliary in 1953 and 1954. From time to time the women of the Auxiliary served coffee and cake at Legion meetings, and in May 1954, when Leon Olliff was Commander, the Legion and the Auxiliary produced a play that provided a lot of laughs for the community, with men dressed as women. That play brought \$98.75 into the Post treasury. However, the Auxiliary disbanded some time in the 1950s.

Although the Post never organized a Sons of the American Legion chapter, they did put together a "Junior Legion" baseball team in 1949, with Paul Mikler as the coach. The Post contributed to help them buy bats and balls.

Lettin' the good times roll

The Legionnaires of Post 243 were robust young family men who liked to have a good time, with one another and with their families. Now and then the ladies would urge them to put on a square dance, and during the summers the dance floor at Sweetwater Park would resound with dance and music.

They ate a lot of meals together. Sometimes they would invite other posts, such as those in Sanford or Longwood, to join them for a "feed," and when the new Town House

*Letter from Cmdr Tom Moon, Jr., to Clint Cain, December 11, 2002.

Restaurant opened in October 1965, Kirby Buckelew and John Courier moved to "eat at the new restaurant." Fish fries were popular, and the Fourth of July barbeque was always a big occasion for the town, usually accompanied by a raffle. In 1949 the Adjutant was instructed to write directly to Governor Fuller Warren to ask permission to hold the raffle. (Evidently the Post members wanted to be securely protected in case somebody invoked anti-gambling law against them, and permission from the Governor would assure them the protection they wanted.)

The Post sanctioned raffles, but they drew the line at the drinking of alcoholic beverages on Post property. That long-established tradition continues to this day, setting Post 243 apart from many other Legion posts.

Nothing that they did was more regular than the annual turkey shoot. The tradition started about 1952, and was held a week or two before Thanksgiving until at least 1965. At the edge of an orange grove on the Chuluota Road (SR 419) near what is now the intersection of Broadway and Bishop Avenue, the air would fill with gunsmoke as Oviedo marksmen competed for Thanksgiving turkeys. All ages were on the firing line. Tom Moon, Jr., later to be a commander of Post 243, won a turkey there when he was thirteen. In 1953 a rumor spread that there would be a second turkey shoot in December. So the Legionnaires, not wanting to disappoint their many patrons, agreeably set up the targets again.

Some of the fun came from rough-humored jokes at one another's expense. A favorite target was Emmett Kelsey. On November 4, 1948, an anonymous member who was taking minutes recorded: "Comrade Kelsey gave a hap-hazard report on the [Legion Department of Florida] Convention. Couldn't remember too much."

As Merritt Staley said, they were "just country boys having a get-together out in the country."

Sports and Boys State

Service to the youth of the community has been a hallmark for Post 243. So sports and Boys State were activities that they supported from the beginning.

As young fathers, the Legionnaires wanted their sons to take part in sports teams. On December 16, 1948, they put \$50 into an athletic fund for basketball teams, and the next year they voted to sponsor a town baseball team and to select a manager-director. About 1949 Paul Mikler started to coach a "Junior Legion" baseball team, with the support of the Post. The Legionnaires voted on April 28, 1949, to build bleachers at the ball park that had been donated to the South Seminole Athletic League by Masonic Lodge 243 (now John Courier Field). When the Athletic League started the first Oviedo football team about 1962, they depended for support on the Legionnaires of Post 243.*

One of the Post's longest-lasting traditions has been the sponsorship of boys from Oviedo High School to attend Boys State in Tallahassee. The Boys State program was started by the national American Legion in 1935 and by the Florida Department in 1945. Every year, in June, some 200 boys who are rising high-school seniors are chosen by Legion posts all over the state to travel to Tallahassee and take part in mock city, county,

*Interview, Tom Moon, Jr., December 2006.

and state offices, some of them debating their own bills in the chambers of the Florida Legislature. In May 1949 Post 243 considered sponsoring a boy, but there is no record of who was sponsored that year. In 1950 they appropriated \$25 to send a boy to Tallahassee, and they continued to sponsor boys down to the present day. Boys representing Oviedo included Johnnie Jones (1954), Myron Willis (1955), Billy Mikler (1965), Rex Clonts, Jr. (1966), Mark Howell and Keith Wooldridge (1984), Timothy Whitaker (1987), Christopher Cogle (1989), Marc Messer (1994), Greg Maze and Josh Jordan (1999), Tim Spielmann and Aaron Valentine (2004), Tyler Olson and Adam Ezell (2005), Logan Malmberg and Francis Fink (2006), and Matt Luxon and Gabe Limonta (2007).

For many of those years, Paul Mikler, a coach and history teacher at Oviedo High School, was the Post chairman for Boys State. Succeeding him in that job have been Wilbur Chancy, Richard Challis, and Ralph Cain.*

Helping Neighbors In Need

The members of Post 243 have been alert to the needs of their neighbors. Every year, just before Christmas, the Post put Christmas baskets in local stores to collect money for widows or for families who needed help. In November 1947 a committee was appointed to provide for the children of a local man who apparently was neglecting his family. From time to time they would pass the hat or donate from the treasury to help a member pay for an operation or buy a wheelchair. Not all efforts to help were successful. In 1949 they gave up on helping one family and passed a motion to "turn the papers on [this family] back . . . and the Legion Post have nothing else to do with it."

But nothing hit them harder than when a tragedy occurred to one of their own. On April 9, 1954, a man who had a personal grievance against the Oviedo police chief forced his way into the police chief's home while the chief was away and threatened the chief's wife. Legionnaire John Courier, who lived next door, went to her aid and was shot by the intruder. Courier was paralyzed.** The Post rallied to assist John and Dorothy Courier and their four small children. At a meeting on April 15, there was a discussion about whether to give immediately to the John Courier Fund or to provide a TV for John when he came home from Bay Pines VA Hospital. John Evans headed a blood drive for John. Later the Post built a wheelchair ramp at the Courier home.

John Courier served for several years as Post adjutant until his death in an automobile accident. . .

It was this kind of brotherhood that enabled Post Commander James Pearson in 1955 to proudly report these achievements to the 6th District Commander:

1. Sponsored a boy from local school and paid all expenses to Boys State.
2. Presented "School Awards" to boy and girl of high school graduating class.
3. Sponsored and gave necessary financial support to Junior Baseball Team.
4. Sponsored "Thanksgiving Turkey Shoot" to benefit Post Building Fund.

*Post minutes and Boys State yearbooks at Florida Department Headquarters

** *Oviedo: Biography of a Town*, pp. 110-111.

5. Distributed food baskets to four needy families at Christmas.
6. Built flagstone patio at home of paralyzed comrade.
7. Paid for construction of concrete ramp at home of paralyzed comrade.
8. Joined with volunteer fire department in putting on fried chicken supper honoring school basketball team.
9. Contributed \$25.00 to PTA to assist in financing dental survey in local school.*

By 1977 the membership of Post 243 had dwindled to only 17, but it grew again in the 1980s and 1990s, reaching 63 by 2005. In spite of the increase in enrollment, declining membership remained a problem in the 1990s. Post leaders worried that the deaths of World War II veterans would result in enrollment shrinking so much that the Florida Department of the Legion would take over the property. George C. Means took it on himself to recruit life memberships as a means of insuring that the Florida Department would allow the post to remain in operation. By 2005, the Post had about fifteen life members and more than fifty members paying annual dues.

Tom Moon, Jr., held the office of Commander for six of seven years after first being elected on June 18, 1998. His father, Tom Moon, Sr., had been Post commander from 1982 to 1984. They are the only father and son to command the post. The Post adjutant, John Tannehill, has served in his position since July 17, 1998, when he was elected to succeed long-time adjutant Matt Long, who had moved to Maryland. His son, John Scott Tannehill, a Navy reservist, is the only Legionnaire of Post 243 to be called back to active duty, and returned in March 2007 from service in the Persian Gulf. Another officer of long standing, and the only woman to hold an office in the Post, is Glenna Stoner, a World War II veteran of the Army Nurse Corps, who was the Post financial officer for several years.

The sixtieth year of the Post's history, 2006, could not pass unobserved. At the March 2006 meeting, members talked about celebrating the anniversary at a special ceremony to be held on November 16. At subsequent meetings, the Post historian presented names of veterans to be honored. Added to the Post Everlasting board were plaques memorializing Legionnaires who had died during the past several years. It was decided that because Post 243 has named itself a Memorial Post, it would be appropriate for the Post to commemorate all persons from the general Oviedo area--Oviedo, Geneva, Chuluota, Jamestown, Winter Springs, and Slavia--who died in combat since 1941. The original list of four men from Oviedo who died in World War II--Arthur Riles Hunter, Gordon Wright Johnson, Walter Eugene Olliff, James Arthur Partin--was extended by the addition of Wiley Wilber Tillis of Geneva, who died in the invasion of Italy in 1944.

Research by the Post historian resulted in the compiling of a list of six others who gave their lives in subsequent conflicts. We could not find that anyone from the area was lost in Korea, but one from Oviedo, Henry Arnold Shiver, died in Viet Nam, as did two from Geneva: Earl Phillip Summersill and Gordon Michael (Mike) Johnson. Earl Phillip Summersill was the son of a deceased former Legionnaire in Post 243, Earl Pershing Summersill; and Gordon Michael Johnson was the nephew of Gordon Wright Johnson, who had earlier been recognized as one of those lost during World War II.

The first person from our area to die in the Iraq war was Lt. Col. Charles Buehring of Winter Springs. Later, Sgt. Alwyn Cashe of Oviedo lost his life in Samarra, Iraq, in a heroic action to save men under his command. In 2006 Luis Melendez Sanchez, who claimed Oviedo, his wife's home town, as his home, perished in a helicopter operation in Djibouti, on the horn of Africa.

The Post hall was filled by over a hundred on the evening of November 16, with guests standing along the walls. It was said to be the largest attendance ever at a Post event. Families of the eleven to be memorialized had been invited, and an announcement had been made to the general public. The memorial celebration was opened by Commander Tom Moon and Chaplain Earl Morris, and Adjutant John Tannehill led the singing of "America the Beautiful." Adjutant Tannehill and Commander Moon recognized two charter members who were present, Leon Olliff and Tom Staley, and then presented World War II Victory Medals to Olliff and Staley and to five other veterans of that war. About twenty other veterans who were present were called upon to stand and tell where they had served. The Post historian read a condensed history of the Post's sixty years.

There were emotional moments when Commander Moon called relatives of the war dead to come forward, escorted by Sergeant at Arms Ralph Cain, and receive plaques honoring their family members. The son of Earl Philip Summersill turned to the audience and said, "I have never been in a gathering like this one, and I am glad that my children can be here to see it."

The program ended with "Taps," a recording of which Sergeant at Arms Cain synchronized perfectly, and the audience joined in singing "The Star-Spangled Banner." Members and guests shared food and soft drinks while renewing old acquaintances and meeting new friends.

So Post 243 ended the year with celebrating the past, and looking forward toward the challenges of the years to come.

Oviedo, Florida--May 2007

* James Pearson, letter to District 6 Commander O. E. Weaver, 10 May 1955.

American Legion George Washington Carver Post 237

The veterans of World War II served in racially segregated armed services, and they came home to towns and cities that were as segregated as they had been before the war. The American Legion perpetuated the practice even after the Armed Forces were desegregated by executive order in 1948. Post 243 enrolled only white veterans, but black veterans established their posts, too. A Legion post in Sanford was designated as 207-C, the "C" identifying it as a "colored" post under the auspices of the Colored War Veterans Association until 1952, when it received an American Legion charter. Until 1968 the Legion registered all posts of black veterans in its District 11.* As for Post 207 in Sanford, it struggled along, declining in membership, until its charter was cancelled in 1985 because of low enrollment.

On September 5, 1946, black veterans in Oviedo founded George Washington Carver Post 237. Among those active in the Post were Joseph I. Boston, Ernest Ingram, Morse Ashe, Joe Lee, Clarence Ashe (commander in 1950), W. L. Hamilton (adjutant in 1950 and from 1962 to 1968), Spencer Stevens (finance officer in 1950), Stanley T. Muller (commander in 1963 and 1964), and Ester C. McGee (commander from 1966 to 1968)

On February 6, 1950, officers of Post 237--Clarence Ashe, W. L. Hamilton, and Spencer Stevens--sent the commander of Post 243 a letter expressing their concern "about the inadequate school plant and facilities that are provided here for our children," and appealing for the cooperation of Post 243 in "striving to have the situation remedied by the time that school is ready to open for the term of 1950-51." They pointed out that "land is available in a very good location and is extremely cheap."

Commander Merritt Staley distributed copies of the letter to Post 243 in order to encourage them to support their fellow Legionnaires in Post 237.. Cooperation between the posts was the genesis of the community effort that resulted in a new school being built for black students in grades one through eight on Academy Drive. Now that school is called Jackson Heights Middle School.

By 1968, Post 237 reported fifteen members, about the same number that it had maintained for ten years. Nevertheless, its charter was cancelled on December 7, 1968.

(See in the Appendix the flyer that Post 237 zzzdistributed as part of its "Good Citizenship Campaign.")

*I am indebted to Adjutant Henry Clayton of American Legion Post 171 in Ft. Pierce, Florida, for informing me about the Colored War Veterans Association and District 11. There is no mention of either in Thomas A. Rumer's *The American Legion: An Official History, 1919-1989*.

APPENDIX

CHARTER MEMBERS OF POST 243

<p>Charles W. Aulin Theodore Aulin, Jr. Earl Beasley Joe I. Beasley M. Ferrell Beasley William D. Brown Ponce de Leon Burnsed Wm. Hollis Cox William H. Durbin John Wesley Evans Dewey D. Gammage Robert George John Daniel Gore Milton Gore Raymond B. Gore James F. Guynn Basil E. Guynn J. G. Kasell James Emmett Kelsey Theodore Kimble Thad Lee Lingo, Jr Bart A. Malcolm Jack E. Malcolm James L. Malcolm</p>	<p>Henry F. McGowan, Jr William Henry Martin George C. Means Lionel E. Metcalf Paul Mikler Carl T. Miller Leon Chester Olliff Philip Packard James Partin James E. Pearson Nathaniel S. Quarterman Jacob W. Shuman Riley W. Slater Robert L. Slavik R. C. Smith James Merritt Staley Thomas A. Staley John A. Wahlgren W. A. Ward, Jr. B. F. Wheeler, Jr. Henry A. Wolcott Alfred C. Wright</p>
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Post Officers, 1951 to present

Year	Commander	Adjutant
1946	James (Doc) Malcolm	George C. Means
1947	James (Doc) Malcolm	George C. Means
	Frank Wheeler, Vice-Comdr	
1948	Philip Packard	Henry Wolcott
1949	Philip Packard	Henry Wolcott
1950	J. Merritt Staley	Thomas G. Moon
1951	Thomas G. Moon	Henry A. Wolcott
1952	J. Emmett Kelsey	Philip M. Packard
1953	Leon Chester Olliff	James E. Pearson
1954	William H. Cox	Henry A. Wolcott
1955	James A. Pearson	W. C. Schumacher
1956	T. L. Lingo, Jr.	J. W. Abell / Theodore Aulin, Jr.
1957	W. R. Clonts	Philip M. Packard / John E. Courier, Jr.
1958	John E. Courier	John E. Courier, Jr.
1959	James Partin	John E. Courier, Jr.
1960	W. A. Ward, Jr.	Leon C. Olliff
1961	[not reported]	[not reported]

1962	C. E. Minter	W. R. Clonts, Jr.
1963	Robert L. Ward	William R. Clonts
1964	Emmett Kelsey	W. R. Clonts
1965	J. Emmett Kelsey	Theodore Aulin, Jr.
1966	B. A. Johnson	Theodore Aulin, Jr. - deceased 5/3/66
1967	B. A. Johnson	J. E. Kelsey, Acting
1968	Haywood E. Burch	William Morgan
1969	H. Earl Burch	William L. Morgan
1970	Thomas G. Moon	William L. Morgan
1971	Wesley T. Place	James E. Pearson
1972	Wesley T. Place	James E. Pearson
1973	Irvin O. Claxton	Thomas Moon, Jr.
1974		
1975	Paul M. Mikler	Thomas G. Moon, Jr.
1976	Paul M. Mikler	Thomas G. Moon, Jr.
1977	C. Reese Moon	Thomas G. Moon, Jr.
1978	Emmett J. Waltz	Thomas G. Moon, Jr.
1979	J. Emmett Kelsey	Thomas G. Moon, Jr.
1980	Robert L. Ragsdale	Harold D. Jordan
1981	Paul Mikler	Harold Jordan
1982	Thomas Moon, Sr.	Harold Jordan
1983	Thomas Moon, Sr.	Harold Jordan
1984	Thomas Moon, Sr.	Harold D. Jordan
1985	George C. Means	Harold D. Jordan
1986	George C. Means	Harold D. Jordan
1987	Wilber V. Chancy	Harold D. Jordan
1988	Wilber V. Chancy	James E. Pearson
1989	James E. Pearson	John C. Carlson
1990	James M. Jones	James E. Pearson
1991	James M. Jones	James E. Pearson
1992	James M. Jones	David C. Murray
1993	Charles W. Robertson	David C. Murray
1994	Charles W. Robertson	Robert S. Rains
1995	Robert S. Rains	Earl F. Morris, Jr. / Matthew Long
1996	Thom H. Doran	Matthew J. Long
1997	Thom H. Doran	Matthew J. Long
1998	Thom H. Doran	Matthew J. Long
1999	Thomas G. Moon, Jr.	Matthew Long / John M. Tannehill
2000	Thomas G. Moon, Jr.	John M. Tannehill
2001	Thomas G. Moon, Jr.	John M. Tannehill
2002	John Tannehill	Thomas G. Moon
2003	Thomas G. Moon	John M. Tannehill
2004	Thomas Moon	John M. Tannehill
2005	Thomas Moon	John M. Tannehill
2006	Thomas Moon	John M. Tannehill
2007	Thom Doran	John M. Tannehill

HONOR ROLL OF WORLD WAR
OVIEDO, CHULUOTA, GENEVA, AND SNOW HILL, FLORIDA

LEX ABELL	ALBERT (PARCH) HILL	CHARLES METCALF
CLEMENT ALEXANDER	LEONARD HILL	ANDREW MIKLER
EUGENE ALLEN	ALLEN HUNT	PAUL MIKLER
CHARLES AULIN	ELMER HUNT	REESE MOON
THEODORE AULIN	ROBERT HUNT	THOMAS MOON
BUDDY BANKS	RUSSELL HUNT	H. C. MORGAN
EARL BEASLEY	*ARTHUR HUNTER	STANLEY MULLER
FERRELL BEASLEY	OLIVER JACOBS	NOAH NEWTON
JOSEPH BEASLEY	GEORGE JAKUBCIN	CHARLES OLLIFF
THEDO BELL	*GORDON JOHNSON	*EUGENE OLLIFF
MARION BOGARD	HOWARD JOHNSON	LEON OLLIFF
KELLIS BOOKER	EDWARD JORDAN	EDWARD PARKER
HARRY BOSTON	CLARENCE KELSEY	ROBERT PARKER
JAMES BOSTON, JR.	HARVEY KELSEY	DONALD PARQART
JAMES BOSTON, SR.	JAMES EMMET KELSEY	*ARTHUR PARTIN
RALPH BOSTON	JOHNNIE KELSEY	JAMES PARTIN
ROBERT BOSTON	BENNETT KIMBLE	WILLIAM RAINES
DERYL BROWN	CAMBY KIMBLE	ALFONSO ROSE
SIDNEY CARRAWAY	THEODORE KIMBLE	CHARLES ROSE
JAMES A. CARTER	JACK KING	PAUL SAPP
CARL CARTER	RALPH KING	PRINCE SAPP
CHARLES CARTER	JAMES KNIGHT	TOM W. SAPP
REX CLONTS	JOHN LAWTON	MERRITT STALEY
ROY CLONTS	JOSEPH LAWTON	THOMAS STALEY
JAMES COOPER	WILLINGHAM LAWTON	GEORGE TALBOTT
CHARLES COSKAYNE	ALEC LEE	*WILBER TILLIS
EDMOND COSKAYNE	CHARLES LEE	LOWELL TRIPP
HOLLIS COX	JIMMIE LEE	MORGAN TRIPP
OLIVER CROMWELL	LEWIS LEE	FLOYD WAGNER
EDWARD DAUL	ROBERT LEE	ALBION WAHLGREN
JAMES DAVIS	DONALD LEINHART	A. D. WALL
BILL DURBIN	THAD L. LINGO, Jr.	WILLIAM A. WARD, Jr.
JIM FIELD	MARLOWE LINK	WILLIAM WEST
DEWEY GAMMAGE	M. M. LORD	FRANK WHEELER
ROBERT GEORGE	MONROE LOVETT	GEORGE B. WILLIAMS
DANIEL GORE	DANIEL LUKAS	JAMES WILLIAMS
MILTON GORE	MILTON LUKAS	J. O. WILLIAMS
DAVID GREER	JACK MALCOLM	MARSHALL WILLIAMS
OLAN GREER	JAMES MALCOLM	BRONZELL WILSON
LELLO GRIFFIN	LADDIE MARINER	WILLIE C. WILSON
NEIL GRIFFIN	WILLIAM H. MARTIN	HENRY WOLCOTT
ROOSEVELT GRIFFIN	JIMMIE McGOWAN	ALFRED WRIGHT
EDWARD HAMIL	ARTHUR METCALF	JOHNNIE WRIGHT

*MEN WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR OUR COUNTRY

Names of white veterans are from a list, written in the late 1940s, saved in the Post 243 files, and names of black veterans were collected by Russell Boston of Oviedo in 2007.

Watch Your Conduct- Others Do

Do You Know That--

1. A Well Behaved Citizen--

- a. Never talks in public--in theatres, churches?
- b. Never talks loud on buses, trains, in cafes and on streets late at night?
- c. Appears in public clean and properly dressed?
- d. Does not drink whiskey on the street or appear drunk in public?
- e. Is always orderly in public places--removes his hat in theatres and when sitting indoors in the presence of ladies?
- f. Does not create disorder in public and business places?

2. A Good Citizen--

- a. Keeps his children off the streets at night?
- b. Sees that his children are neat and clean when they go out?
- c. Sends his children to school and keeps them there until they finish their education?
- d. Is courteous and respectful to women and men?
- e. Sends or carries his children to Sunday School and Church?
- f. Goes to orderly places for recreation and keeps out of disorderly ones?
- g. Does not use profanity, curse or swear in public?
- h. Keeps his house and yard clean and beautiful?

3. The Well-mannered Citizen--

- a. Keeps out of crowds on street corners and on sidewalks?
- b. Respects the rights of others?
- c. Parks his car at the curb when talking with friends and not in the middle of the street?

4. A Thrifty Citizen--

- a. Holds a job rather than looks for one?
- b. Saves his money and spends it wisely?

**Go to Church.. You Won't Get
Arrested There**

GOOD CITIZENSHIP CAMPAIGN OF
GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER POST No. 237
AMERICAN LEGION
Oviedo, Florida

This flyer, probably distributed in the 1950s, was saved in the files of B. Frank Wheeler, a Legionnaire in Post 243.