



American Legion William J. Hocking Post 91 Wharton



For God and Country, we associate ourselves together....

Volume 2—Issue 1

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Commander's Message



No more snow! As we, hopefully, begin to thaw out from this winter's cold, I hope that you will all recommit yourselves to support our Post. We are in the process of organizing several fundraisers to support our veteran and community programs as well as making much needed repairs to our Post home. We need EVERYONE'S support and participation to be successful. I hope that I can depend on YOUR support.

Daniel Zullo, Post Commander

Post Officers

Commander*: Daniel Zullo
Sr Vice Cmdr*: Leon Stickle
Jr Vice Cmdr*: Midge Grant
Vice Commander: Rob Grant
Adjutant*: Edward Brice
Asst. Adjutant*: Amery Vasso
Finance Officer*: Walter E. Ward
Chaplin: Kevin Finnegan
Sgt-At-Arms: John Ruppell
Service Officer: Sara Vasso
Judge Advocate: James B. Smith
Historian: Patricia Wilson
* Regular Member of Executive Board

Executive Board

Member-At-Large: James B. Smith
Member-At-Large: John Ruppell
Member-At-Large: Dennis Miller
Member-At-Large: Rob Grant
Member-At-Large: Frank Dulfer

Newsletter

Frank Dulfer : fwdulfer@verizon.net

SGT Bowe Bergdahl Update

Associated Press | Jan 16, 2014 | by John Miller and Lolita C. Baldor



The family of U.S. Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who was captured more than four years ago in Afghanistan, says a new video of the soldier believed to have been taken in the last month has bolstered its resolve to bring him home safely to Idaho.

U.S. officials confirmed Wednesday they'd received the video several days ago. They said it shows Bergdahl, now 27, in poorer health than previous footage taken in the years since he went missing in Afghanistan on June 30, 2009.

Bergdahl, from Hailey in central Idaho, is believed held by a group affiliated with the Taliban somewhere in Pakistan.

Irregular releases like this showing Bergdahl and his captors have offered hope for his parents their son will eventually be freed. This latest footage is no different, Bob and Jani Bergdahl said in a statement Wednesday.

"Naturally, this is very important to us and our resolve to continue our efforts to bring Bowe home as soon as possible," their statement said. "As we have done so many times over the past four and a half years, we request his captors to release him safely so that our only son can be reunited with his mother and father."

Bergdahl's parents have dedicated themselves full-time to doing what they can from thousands of miles away to secure his freedom.

For instance, Bob Bergdahl has grown a long, thick beard and sought to learn Pashto, the language spoken by his captors.

And though he has largely shunned interviews with the media, he has become a frequent presence on Internet social media sites including Twitter, where he has posted hundreds of entries on issues connected to the U.S. war in Afghanistan, drone strikes in the region - and his son, including a tweet Wednesday afternoon.

"If you see this, continue to remain strong through patience," Bob Bergdahl wrote. "Your endurance will carry you to the finish line. Breathe!"

Bergdahl's family has been forced to remain patient, too.

So far, nothing has come of the Taliban's proposal last June to free him in exchange for several of their most senior operatives now being detained at the U.S. detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

That offer lost steam after the Taliban only weeks later shuttered its newly opened office in the Gulf state of Qatar, abandoning a diplomatic approach while renewing its vow to fight Afghan President Hamid Karzai's government.

Even so, residents of Hailey, where Bowe Bergdahl spent most of his first 23 years before enlisting in the Army, continue to adorn the resort town's trees and utility poles with yellow ribbons, to keep him on their minds.

The U.S. officials who confirmed the video footage Wednesday were not authorized to publicly discuss the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Coming Events

Feb 26—Auxiliary Meeting
Feb 27—Legion Meeting
Mar 12—SAL Meeting
Mar 13—Exec Board Meeting
Mar 14—Legion Riders Meeting
Mar 15—ALR Corned Beef Dinner
Mar 26—Auxiliary Meeting
Mar 27—Legion Meeting
Apr 9—SAL Meeting
Apr 10—Exec Board Meeting
Apr 11—Legion Riders Meeting
Apr 16 Post 91 Founded 1928
Apr 23 Auxiliary Meeting
Apr 24 Legion Meeting

Legion Riders Fundraiser

Looking For Travel Buddies

Attention

American Legion Riders
 Post 91
 99 North Main St
 Wharton NJ
 973-366-2458



March 15 4pm-8pm,
 Corned Beef and
 Cabbage Dinner
 Dinner \$12.00
 Sandwiches \$8.00

Tickets Available at the Bar!!
 No Door Sales




ALL INCLUSIVE
 PUNTA CANA
 DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
 TRAVEL BUDDIES WANTED

Spots available for a group trip
 Leaving Newark Airport October 13, 2014
 Returning Newark Airport October 18, 2014

INTERESTED?
 For more information please contact
 Troy & Dara Vanderhoof
 Home: 973-366-0103
 Email: tvanderhoof3@optimum.net




Hall Available For Rental

The Post hall is available for social, family or corporate functions.
 Rental available to the general public. Members receive a discounted rate.



For more information or to find out availability stop by or call the Post on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM.

973-366-2458

American Legion Membership

Remember; it is not the price you pay to be a member,
 Rather, it is the price you paid to become eligible.
 RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY

Legion Baseball Alum In Hall Of Fame

Greg Maddux, the 1994 American Legion Baseball Graduate of the Year, has been elected into Major League Baseball's Hall of Fame. Maddux played Legion Baseball for Post 8 in Las Vegas, and then went on to win 355 games for the Braves, Cubs, Padres and Dodgers.

Maddux was elected with Frank Thomas and former teammate Tom Glavine and will be inducted into the Hall July 27 in Cooperstown, N.Y.

"This is a very humbling experience," Maddux told MLB.com. "It's a tremendous honor to be included in this. I can't wait to meet some of the guys who are already in the Hall of Fame. To share this moment with Glav and Frank is pretty special, as well. It's a tremendous honor."

Maddux won consecutive Cy Young Awards from 1992 to 1995, one of only two players in MLB history to win the award four straight times.

Five other Legion Baseball alums were on the ballot but weren't voted into the Hall: Roger Clemens, Jeff Kent, Don Mattingly, Fred McGriff and Alan Trammell.



Paid Up For Life Program

By now you are familiar with the vast benefits of being a member of The American Legion. Today, I am not reminding you about the importance and value of membership. You already know that. Instead, I am here to encourage you to consider joining the [Paid Up For Life program](#) so you will always be a proud Legionnaire, along with me and the other 200,000 members who are paid up for life.

Why join the Paid Up For Life program?

First off, once you do, you will no longer receive annual renewal notices or be subject to any possible future dues increases. You will also receive a lifetime subscription to *The American Legion Magazine*.

To join the program, just head to the online enrollment page at www.legion.org/join/pu. Once you identify yourself using your member ID number you will be shown your personalized Paid Up For Life offer and can see why PUFL is an affordable choice. You will also be able to print out a copy of your offer to mail in if you prefer.

Each PUFL member receives a permanent plastic card, as well as an annual paper card to verify continuing membership in The American Legion. The annual card is mailed in July of each year.

Thank you for considering joining the Paid Up For Life program. If you have questions, please contact customer service at 800-433-3318. From there you can enroll in the program and pay in full or select 12 monthly installments.

Contact Your Senators And Representatives : Pass S. 944

The Putting Our Veterans Back to Work Act of 2013, or S. 944, sponsored by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and co-sponsored by Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C., contains language honoring career service in the National Guard and Reserve.

Section 807 of S. 944 would honor as veterans "any person who is entitled under chapter 1223 of title 10, United States Code, to retired pay for nonregular service or, but for age, would be entitled under such chapter to retired pay for non-regular service."

This cost-neutral provision would not bestow any benefits other than the honor of claiming veteran status for nearly 300,000 who honorably served and sacrificed as career reserve-component members.

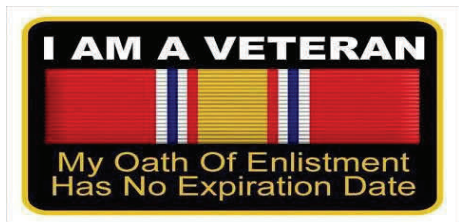
Currently, the Veterans Code, Title 38, excludes from the definition of veteran career reserve-component members who have not served on Title 10 active duty for other than training purposes. Drill training, annual training, active duty for training and Title 32 duty are not qualifying service for veteran status.

S. 944 has multiple other provisions to improve the lives of our veterans. They include establishing a process that would require state recognition of military experience in issuing licenses and credentials, something NGAUS has also long pursued.

The bill awaits a floor vote in the Senate before moving to the House. The active support of your senators and representatives for S. 944 will make a difference.

Meetings, Events, Holidays, Etc.

FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
Friday—7 Legion Riders Meeting	Sunday—9 Daylight Savings Time SAL/Aux Breakfast	Wednesday—9 SAL Meeting	Monday—5 Cinco de Mayo
Sunday—9 SAL / Aux Breakfast	Wednesday—12 SAL Meeting	Thursday—10 Legion Exec Board Meeting	Thursday—8 Legion Exec Board Meeting
Wednesday—12 Lincoln’s Birthday SAL Meeting	Thursday—13 Legion Exec Board Meeting	Friday—11 Legion Riders Meeting	Friday—9 Legion Riders Meeting
Friday—14 Valentine’s Day	Friday—14 Legion Riders Meeting	Sunday—13 SAL/Aux Breakfast Palm Sunday	Sunday—11 SAL/Aux Breakfast Mother’s Day
Thursday—13 Legion Exec Board Meeting	Saturday—15 Merchant Marine Birthday	Tuesday—15 Passover	Wednesday—14 SAL Meeting
Monday—17 Washington’s Birthday President’s Day	Sunday—15 Legion Riders Corned Beef Dinner	Wednesday—16 POST 91 FOUNDED 1928	Saturday—17 Armed Forces Day
Wednesday—26 Auxiliary Meeting	Monday—17 St Patrick’s Day	Friday—18 Good Friday	Monday—19 Assist Boy Scouts With Cemetery Flags
Thursday—27 Post 91 Meeting	Wednesday—26 Auxiliary Meeting	Sunday—20 Easter	Thursday—22 National Maritime Day Post 91 Meeting
	Thursday—27 Post 91 Meeting	Wednesday—23 Auxiliary Meeting	Monday—26 Memorial Day
		Thursday—20 Post 91 Meeting	Wednesday—28 Auxiliary Meeting



Airport Military Expedited Screening Extended To Reservist

A program allowing service members to go through an expedited airport screening process is expanding to include reservists and more airports in December. The Pre Check program allows service members to keep on their shoes, light outerwear and belts during the security-screening process. Also, service members can keep laptops and approved liquid bags in their carry-on luggage. All service members are eligible to participate in the program. To participate, service members enter their DoD ID number on the back of their common access card into the Known Traveler Number section when making reservations. Participants are not required to be on official travel or in uniform. For a list of participating airports and airlines, visit the Transportation Security Administration website at this TSA website <http://www.tsa.gov/tsa-precheck>.

94-Year-Old Widow Receiving Her Husband's Remains



Andrew Renneisen / Los Angeles Times / Pool / Getty Images

Clara Gantt, the 94-year-old widow of U.S. Army Sgt. Joseph Gantt, weeps in front of her husband's casket after it was lowered from the plane before dawn on the tarmac at Los Angeles International Airport in Los Angeles, California Dec. 20.

After six decades, 94-year-old Clara Gantt's wait to be reunited with her husband is finally over.

Instead of welcoming him with open arms, however, Gantt was greeted Friday with a flag-draped coffin.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Gantt died as a prisoner of war in 1951 during the Korean War. He was presumed dead for more than 60 years until his remains were identified at the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and forensics labs in Honolulu, according to NBC Los Angeles.

Despite the immeasurable pain, Clara said she was grateful to finally be together again.

"I am so happy that I was living to accept him," she said.

CBO Studies Removing Retirees From Tricare Prime

Barring working-age military retirees from TRICARE Prime would be the most cost-effective way of slowing the growth of Defense Department health care expenses that have jumped 130 percent from 2000-2012, according to a Congressional Budget Office analysis.

The non-partisan CBO explored various options to include changing the eligibility for TRICARE Prime which would produce the biggest savings in the Pentagon's health care budget -- nearly \$90 billion over 10 years, the CBO report estimated.

The CBO analysis, released last week, was prepared at the request of Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., chairman of the House Budget Committee.

Current health care costs for DoD amount to about \$52 billion annually, the CBO said, and only a formula involving increased cost-sharing for retirees who use TRICARE "has the potential to generate significant savings for DoD," the CBO said.

All other approaches, such as better management and eliminating waste, "would not address the primary drivers of health care costs for DoD," the CBO said.

The biggest savings would come from changes in current programs to "make working-age retirees and their families ineligible for TRICARE Prime, the most costly program for DoD, but allow them to continue using other TRICARE plans after paying an annual fee," the CBO said.

"Shifting current cost-sharing arrangements so that beneficiaries pay a greater percentage of their health care costs would reduce DoD's spending significantly, primarily by encouraging people to leave TRICARE in favor of other providers," the CBO said. "It also would encourage those who continued to participate in TRICARE to use fewer services."

The proposed TRICARE changes were expected to generate major opposition from veterans service organizations.

Joe Davis, a spokesman for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, questioned the CBO numbers but said the report following on other major program initiatives advocated by DoD indicated that "the Pentagon is opening up a new front in the war on retirees. This is a threat to the all-volunteer force," Davis said.

The VFW and other service organizations are currently battling cuts to the cost-of-living adjustment for working-age military retirees under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 worked out by Ryan and Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.



AT THE NEXT MEETING

Legion To VA: Protect Veterans Personal Information

The American Legion is challenging the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to take whatever measures are necessary to protect veterans personal information after a [recent software defect](#) on its eBenefits website exposed the online accounts of about 5,000 veterans to unauthorized users.

American Legion National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger wonders why such data breaches continue to plague the department.

"We've seen VA expose sensitive information about veterans before," Dellinger said. "Now it has happened with the relatively new eBenefits website. How can VA expect our veterans to file for benefits online when they may be risking identity theft by doing so?"

The defective software allowed veterans and servicemembers logged onto eBenefits to view account information of other users. After discovering the problem, VA shut down the system and switched over to an earlier version of the software.

VA's Data Breach Core Team (DBCT) is reviewing the eBenefits failure. According to a statement is-

sued by VA, once the DBCT determines the individual veterans affected, "VA will take the appropriate response, which may include free credit monitoring for the affected individuals, consistent with VA's standard practice."

"There should be no 'may' in that statement," Dellinger said. "We want VA to guarantee credit monitoring services for every individual whose personal information may have been breached. That is the least VA can do to atone for its latest compromise of data."

Dellinger credited VA for informing the public about the eBenefits failure and for taking immediate action to minimize the damage. "But these data breaches need to stop," he said. "VA can't continue to expose our veterans to identity theft. VA needs to take care of defective software before rolling out any online system."

The American Legion encourages any veteran who wants to file for benefits to contact an accredited American Legion service officer. Find a service officer in your state by visiting www.legion.org/serviceofficers

Legion Mobile App Available

Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,

If you are like me, you are amazed by the seemingly nonstop changes in technology. It wasn't that long ago when the phone was mounted to the wall. The calculator was in a desk drawer, and the roadmap belonged in the glove box. Now, you can make a call, do calculations, find directions and innumerable other things all from your smartphone. The phone has become a shopping center, arcade, jukebox, video store and library.

Now you can find The American Legion on your smartphone. A searchable, mapped directory of local Legion posts is among many helpful features of the new [American Legion mobile app](#), available for free through iTunes and the Google Play Store. The app, which can be used on smartphones or tablets, is available at www.legion.org/mobileapps.

The mobile app can be used as a recruiting tool, offering an easy portal to join, renew a membership or donate to one of the Legion's great programs. The new app joins our popular Claims Coach app that assists veterans filing VA benefits claims and one that provides information about the National Convention. More than 10,000 veterans have already downloaded the Claims Coach app.

Here are some features of the new Legion app:

- The "About Us" section is an easy way for those unfamiliar with the organization to learn about its role in advocating for veterans, assisting our troops, and spearheading programs that benefit America's youth and communities.
- A post locator feature allows the user to search either by ZIP code or by simply allowing your phone to find your current location. American Legion post addresses, maps and directions are presented, as well as phone numbers and websites.
- The app offers easy access to The American Legion Charities mobile giving page and the ability to make fast, secure, tax-deductible donations.

I hope you will join me in downloading this exciting new app. Share it with current members, potential members and anyone else who wants to support our mission.

Dan Dellinger, National Commander

Ask A Service Officer: Affordable Care Act

Cajun Comeau, Department Service Officer for North Carolina

Q. As a veteran, do I need to sign up for the Affordable Care Act?

A. If you are enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health-care program, including VA's health care, Civilian Health and Medical and Spina Bifida Health Care, you have coverage under the standards of the health-care law and do not need to take further action. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) does not change your VA benefits or out-of-pocket costs.

Veterans enrolled in VA's health-care system will receive this information through the mail. The letter from VA is another means to inform you that there is no need to take any additional steps to obtain health insurance to comply

with the health care law coverage standards going into effect in January 2014.

It is important to note that if you are in Priority Group 8E/G, you are not enrolled in VA's health-care system. Therefore you must take steps to gain health coverage that meet minimum requirements under the ACA. Sub-priority group 8E and 8G are Veterans with gross household incomes above the VA national income threshold and the geographically-adjusted income threshold for their resident location and are either zero percent, non-compensable service-connected or not service-connected at any rate.

Legion Assistant Director For Health Care Testifies Before The House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee

The American Legion

The Legion's testimony was presented by its assistant director for health care, Roscoe Butler, before the House Veterans' Affairs subcommittee on oversight and investigations.

"There are several problems with VHA policies and implementation of implant medicine healthcare," Butler told the subcommittee. "Most of these problems could be fixed with clear written directions from (VA) Central Office, and better oversight and consequences to enforce compliance."

The American Legion believes that VA still has a problem tracking surgical implants, and until it is fixed veterans remain at risk. An audit made by VA's Office of Inspector general two years ago identified expired surgical devices on VA supply shelves. The Government Accountability Office has also indicated that VA has an inaccurate tracking capability in recording the serial numbers of implant surgical devices.

"The grave concern to The American Legion is that, in addition to having expired products on the shelves, veterans potentially could be walking around today with expired surgical implants," Butler said.

The American Legion is urging Congress to require VA to implement an automated tracking system that (1) initially records the serial number of a surgical implant device when procured and placed into VA's inventory, (2) records the expiration date and (3) alerts VA staff when the product is near its expiration date. The Legion wants VA to accelerate its timeline for implementing a new Prosthetic Inventory System that includes these components; it also wants VA to verify that no veterans

currently have expired surgical implants.

The Legion remains concerned that VA does not have an official policy on the presence of vendors in its operating rooms (ORs). While having vendors in ORs to provide technical advice may be medically necessary, it needs to be made clear that veterans have consented to their presence, and have received full disclosure that strictly adheres to a clearly delineated VA policy.

VA has admitted that they do not have a specific policy regarding vendors in ORs, but has indicated that the pres-



ence of vendors in the operating room is a common practice in U.S. health care when there are broadly accepted professional ethics standards pertaining to a particular practice,

"VA does not typically reiterate those standards in VA policy," Butler said. "Rather, it was buried in VA's Consent Form - 10-0431a - under the vague heading, '15. Additional Information,' which states, in part, the (vendor) representative may provide technical advice but not participate in the procedure."

Responding to a question of whether vendors who touch patients in ORs should have their contracts terminated,

Butler said that, if there aren't any provisions that address such an instance, "there needs to be something, because that's a violation of what the veteran consents (to). Based upon the current consent form, the veterans (does) not consent for the vendor to participate in the surgery. So, clearly, that's a violation of the agreement between the veteran and the clinician."

The Legion also expressed its concern about VHA making a regular practice of circumventing the Federal Supply Schedule, which exists for good reason. Vendors on the schedule have been carefully vetted, and many of them have important contracts with veteran and/or service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.

While the Legion recognizes the need to go off schedule in rare circumstances for the medical interests of the patients, it has become increasingly concerned that off-schedule purchases seem to be more the norm than the exception.

The medical health of the veteran is the single most important factor in any decision about health care in the VA system. The Legion's System Worth Saving site visits to VA medical centers have identified doctors who chose to go off schedule to order stints for heart surgery, because they were uncomfortable with the durability and safety of the stints on the schedule.

"If doctors are constantly going off schedule," Butler said, "then either the schedule needs to be reformed or the process reformed. No system that is based on circumventing its own processes can be considered in anyone's best interest."

Veterans Hotlines

Benefit Hotline: **1-888-8NJ-VETS** Counseling Hotline: 1-866-VETS-NJ4

Church Ordered To Remove 'Support Our Troops' Sign

UPI | Dec 31, 2013

A California church has been ordered to remove a "Support Our Troops" sign because it failed to obtain a proper permit, officials said.

Members of Simple Truth Church in Nevada County, near Sacramento painted the simple message on a rundown 20-foot-by-8-foot billboard on Highway 49.

"Nevada County is a very patriotic county, they love our troops," the Rev. Jeff Alaways told KTXL-TV, Sacramento.

County officials said they took no umbrage with the patriotic message -- but noted they had told church leaders they would not be allowed to paint the sign without applying for a sign permit first.

When church leaders went ahead with the plan, Nevada County Planning Director Brian Foss sent Alaways a letter instructing him to take down the billboard until the group had applied for and obtained a permit.

"We look forward to meeting with the church and getting everything legalized," Foss said, noting it takes about 30 days for the permit process to be completed.



GI Bill 'Complaint Center' To launch

The American Legion

A Legion-promoted, government-administered program designed to help resolve difficulties that GI Bill students may have with institutions of higher learning is being launched on Jan. 26. The program, dubbed the "Complaint Center", will act as a clearing house for grievances lodged by student veterans.

According to Steve Gonzalez, director of the Legion's Veterans Employment & Education Division, the Center will deal with allegations by student veterans of schools' false and misleading advertising, questionable recruiting practices, "predatory" student loan programs, the issuance of underperforming academic credentials and related issues. Gonzalez says the Center will coordinate information sharing, investigative, and - if needed - prosecution and enforcement activities among the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, Justice and Education as well as the Federal Trade Commission. More specific information about



the Center and consumer access to it will be forthcoming.

Creation of the new Complaint Center is an outcome of President Obama's April 2012 Executive Order establishing "Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members." It also reflects passage of H.R. 4057, the "Improving Transparency of Education Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2012." Both came in the wake of reports of questionable practices by a few schools that seemingly victimized or took financial advantage of servicemembers, veterans and their families.

In August, 2012, Legion leadership adopted **Resolution No.303: Support Regulation of For-Profit Schools and State Approving Agencies** in response to reports of overly aggressive recruitment of servicemembers and veterans by some underperforming for-profit schools.

Gonzalez says that over the past 18 months, the Complaint Center initiative has been championed primarily by the Legion and the VFW with both veterans service organizations contributing congressional testimony on issues facing student veterans.

40% of New York City Vets Going Hungry

TREA / Bugle Blast January



According to a report by CBS News in New York City, veterans who are returning to New York City after leaving the service are relying on soup kitchens and pantries to get the food they need.

The president and CEO of the Food Bank for New York City, Margarette Purvis, used the occasion of Veterans Day to emphasize the plight of these veterans. In a statement, she said that 95,000 veterans, or 40 percent of New York City's veteran population are going hungry. "That is not a guesstimate; that is a fact," she said. She added that with the \$5 billion cut in funding for the federal government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) the situation will only get worse.

Navy Cross for Marines Killed In ‘Insider Attack’

Military.com/Richard Sisk



The father of a Marine captain killed by an “insider attack” in Afghanistan said Friday that his son’s love and respect for the Afghan people inspired his mission

to train and advise the locals to stand up to the Taliban.

“He really thought he was making a difference there,” Socrates “Pete” Manoukian said of his son, Special Operations Capt. Matthew P. Manoukian. “He loved the Marine Corps, loved what he was doing. He loved the Afghans.”

The elder Manoukian spoke on the eve of a ceremony at Camp Pendleton, Calif., for the posthumous award of the Navy Cross, the nation’s second highest award for valor, to Capt. Manoukian and Staff Sgt. Sky R. Mote, both members of Marine Special Operations Team 8133.

Manoukian, 29, of Los Altos Hills, Calif.; Mote, 27, of El Dorado, Calif.; and Gunnery Sgt. Ryan Jeschke, 31, of Herndon, Va., were shot to death on Aug. 10, 2012 by a rogue Afghan national police officer in the volatile Sangin district of southwestern Helmand province.

Jeschke, a 12-year Marine veteran, was quoted in the book “Generation Kill,” by Rolling Stone reporter Evan Wright, and was later portrayed in the “Generation Kill” HBO series on the Marines during the Iraq invasion.

It was the worst day of the war for the Marines in Afghanistan in terms of insider, or “green on blue,” attacks by Afghan police and soldiers, or infiltrators wearing their uniforms.

In a separate insider attack on Marines in the Sangin district on Aug. 10, 2012, Lance Cpl. Gregory T. Buckley, 21, of Oceanside, N.Y.; Staff Sgt. Scott E. Dickinson, 29, of San Diego; and Cpl. Richard A. Rivera, 20, of Ventura, Calif., were also killed.

Prior to his death, Capt. Manoukian, a veteran of four combat tours in Afghanistan and Iraq, had been accepted into law school in hopes of following the example set by his parents, both judges in the California court system.

“He took care of his friends, took care

of people. He was just a great kid,” Socrates Manoukian said.

In a statement announcing the Navy Cross awards ceremony, the Marines said that Mote, an explosive ordnance disposal technician, “courageously exposed himself to a hail of gunfire drawing attention away from others and halting the shooter’s pursuit of his comrades.”

“In his final act of bravery, he boldly remained in the open and engaged the shooter, no less than five meters in front of him,” the statement said. “He courageously pressed the assault on the enemy until he received further wounds and fell mortally wounded.”

Manoukian was in the Tactical Opera-



tions Center when the attack by the gunman with an AK-47 rifle began and shots ripped through the walls and partitions.

“He immediately exposed himself to further enemy fire and commanded his Marines to maneuver to safety as he engaged the enemy,” the statement said. “Manoukian courageously drew heavy fire upon himself, disrupting the enemy pursuit of his comrades and providing them the security needed to get to safety, ultimately saving their lives.”

Socrates Manoukian said he learned later from the Marines that the gunman was an Afghan national police officer who had tried to enter a meeting Manoukian was conducting with the Afghan local police. Capt. Manoukian told the individual that he would have to coordinate first with the local police.

Gunnery Sgt. Jeschke was escorting the Afghan national police officer to another part of the base when the officer turned and shot Jeschke in the back. He then began spraying the TOC with rapid fire from his AK-47. Capt. Manoukian returned fire through the

walls with his sidearm, Socrates Manoukian said.

The gunman fled and reportedly was captured a few days later, but Socrates Manoukian said that turned out to be a case of “mistaken identity.”

The father said he tries not to think about his son’s killer being free somewhere in Afghanistan.

“I’ve developed the feeling that I’m not going to stress about it,” Socrates Manoukian said. “He (the gunman) is not worth it to me.”

The deaths of Manoukian and the other Marines on Aug. 10, 2012, came at the height of the insider attacks that were a factor in driving American support for the war to its lowest levels.

Insider attacks peaked in 2012, when the International Security Assistance Force recorded 46 separate insider attacks that killed a total of 62 coalition troops, compared to 21 attacks in 2011 that killed 35.

In 2013, there were 16 deaths coalition deaths in 10 separate insider attacks. Marine Gen. Joseph Osterman, ISAF director of operations, gave credit for the decline to the Afghan National Security Forces.

“They put in much more robust screening processes, education processes, and at the local level, just awareness of soldiers who were potential ‘green-on-blue’ perpetrators,” Osterman said.

The insider attacks are also part of the current dispute between the U.S. and Afghan President Hamid Karzai on signing a new Bilateral Security Agreement to allow a follow-on U.S. and coalition force to remain in Afghanistan at the end of 2014, when all coalition combat forces are scheduled to withdraw.

Over the heated objections of the U.S., Karzai earlier this month ordered the release of 72 detainees who were part of a group of more than 3,000 prisoners turned over by the U.S. last year to Afghan jurisdiction.

At least seven of the 72 detainees are prime suspects in insider attacks that killed U.S. and coalition troops, Col. Dave Lapan, a spokesman for ISAF commander Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, said last week

A Moment In Time: Gen. John J. Pershing, Honorary National Commander

The American Legion

Gen. John J. Pershing facilitated the creation of The American Legion by permitting Lt. Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., and three other line officers of the American Expeditionary Forces to call upon their comrades to gather in Paris in March 1919 to consider ways to improve morale among troops still stationed there, months after the armistice that ended World War I.

Pershing whittled a list of 40 to 20 for a February 1919 meeting to discuss the morale issue, which led to the calling of the Paris Caucus in March of that year. One of history's most celebrated military leaders, Pershing proved to be one of The American Legion's earliest and most stalwart supporters, not merely because of the caucus he authorized but also due to the spirit behind it.

His words appeared on the cover of the first issue of The American Legion Magazine, published on July 4, 1919. "The Legion is destined to be of tremendous value in fostering the ideals and purposes for which we fought, and in spreading among our people the lessons learned in the war period."

At the eighth American Legion National Convention in Philadelphia, Pershing received a rare honor. He was named an honorary national commander of the organization. Not normally willing to speak extemporaneously before crowds, the general made an exception, as Legionnaires cheered his name, a band played, and he was called forward.

you all to know you can always count on me as one of you, as standing shoulder to shoulder, as we did together during the war," he told the crowd. "We are not a political organization, but political affairs must interest Legionnaires because they stand for the things that are right, they stand for good environment everywhere. But it is especially important that you interest yourselves in your local communities to see that your representatives are fine, upstanding, alert, honest men, intelligent and efficient, and not slackers nor demagogues."

American Legion Resolution No. 334, passed by the eighth National Convention of The American Legion in 1926, conferred upon Pershing, commander-in-chief of the AEF, the title of "Honorary Commander of The American Legion."



Vietnam Veteran Combat Chopper Pilot Retires

The State (Columbia, S.C.) | Jan 06, 2014 | by John Monk



Warrant Officer Eric Seymore, who with 43 years in the military, is the last Vietnam War combat helicopter pilot in the S.C. National Guard.

Seymore was a legend both to his superiors, who depended on his multiple expertises, and to those who served under him, who regarded him as an inspiration and a mentor, said speakers at the hour-plus ceremony at the Guard's headquarters off Bluff Road.

Seymore, 61, was one of those "who would do extra of whatever was required of them," the Guard's No. 2 commanding officer, Maj. Gen. Les Eisner said in a speech.

Sunday's tributes to Seymore included an affectionate mix of homage to his wife of 40 years, Peggy, who endured numerous separations while he was on military duty, praise for Seymore's work ethic and mentoring abilities, and jokes about Clemson (he graduated in 1976) and age (few serve into their 60s as Seymore did),

Seymore was also given three statuettes -- of an American Revolutionary War Minute Man, a bald eagle and golden eagle.

"I appreciate the awards. but really I didn't earn them -- these good people did," Seymore said to the crowd, referring to those he served with over the years.

"One thing these men and women had in common -- they had character, and they had honor -- and if you have to ask what those words mean, you don't have it," he said.

In 1970 -- "43 years and seven months ago," Seymore told the crowd, he enlisted in the U.S. Army, went to helicopter flight school and then on to Vietnam, where he flew 900 hours -- involving hundreds of missions in both Huey troop transport helicopters and Cobra helicopter gunships, the two Army air war workhorses in that era.

In Vietnam, his helicopters made forced landings three times after being hit by enemy fire, he said in an interview. But, he said, in that world, such landings were no big deal -- others endured far more, he said. "I didn't crash in a ball of fire or anything like that," he said.

Seymore's military service involved a mix of part-time National Guard duty and full-time Army and National Guard duty.

In the past few years, he has been Chief Command Warrant Officer at National Guard headquarters, meaning he was the top warrant officer among all 232 warrant officers in the state's National Guard.

Warrant officers are a class of soldier between sergeants and officers such as lieutenants and higher ranks. A warrant officer is generally a career specialist in one field, such as being a helicopter pilot or a military intelligence officer.