

# The Founder

The Monthly Newsletter For VFW Post 1 Members

JOHN S. STEWART POST 1



**"THE FIRST POST"**



August 2013

Issue No. 6

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## ***Meeting Update***

### **Upcoming Meeting - Thursday August 8th 7pm**

Post 2461 will host our upcoming meeting. The address for the Post is:

***1350 South Broadway Blvd.  
Denver, CO 80210***

### **New Members**

Matthew Burgess, Matthew Palmer, James Dinette, Justin Cook, Evan Stratton, Sarah Taylor & Ronie Huddleston Jr.

### **In Memoriam**

Cletus Baumhover, Don Miller, and Daniel Schaffer

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## ***Inside Post 1 - News and Events***

### **Commander's Corner**

By Michael Mitchel

A lot has happened in the last month. Where do I start? This week I met and presented a challenge coin to Former Senator Gary Hart and Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. DaVita had invited the Secretary to their Denver headquarters as part of their ongoing Speakers Series.

I would like to congratulate DaVita for recently being awarded the ESGR's Freedom Award for their commitment of Reserve Service members. DaVita will receive this nationally recognized award from the Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel in September.

Quick update on the new building search: 4300 Pecos property is listed as "For Sale" on the commercial market. John Keene, Cameron Cook and I have looked at several properties, met with local community leaders, leading developers and others for the purpose of identifying potential buildings or getting leads on property before they go on the open market.

Further, we are working with the Denver Office of Economic Development for options. This process will take some time, but that's fine- we are looking for the right solution, not any solution.

The biggest news to come out of the National Convention is the \$10.00 annual membership dues increase. This will NOT affect Lifetime memberships. But if you are an annual dues member, starting January 1, 2014, the \$10.00 increase takes effect. I encourage all annual members to either renew before then or become a Life Member.

I realize this is a big jump from the current annual dues of \$25.00, but keep in mind that nationally, the dues have not increased for over ten years. The \$10.00 will go to National to support the Service efforts.

I would like to thank all those who attended last month's pre-meeting picnic at Post 3971. It was a little challenging to get to due to the Evans exit construction closure. However, it was well attended, and a great opportunity to enjoy the summer together in the park next to the Post.



Pre-Meeting Picnic. Photo by Alan Norton

I would like to give a shout out to Post Commander James Sinkhorn who made us

feel at home. I am particularly proud of our members who passed the hat to contribute to the "repair the roof fund", over \$130 was collected and given to Commander Sinkhorn.

Another quick shout out to Pete Aragon for all the work that he, Alan Norton and team do for the Poppy Program. It's been the same folks for the last year or so and they really could use an additional body or two to help share the load. They do an important job being out there on a Saturday with the Poppies. Let's help pitch in and give a couple of them a break. If it's the same four or five folks, they will get burned out. Let's share the load. It's a marathon, not a sprint.

One of our members was recently in the hospital, so Izzy and I went to visit him. As we were walking in, we noticed a double leg amputee with prosthetics preparing to get into his car. We stopped and chatted with this SEAL who was still on active duty and getting ready to head back up to Winter Park. He is still extremely active outdoors and had a very positive attitude.

I mention this because I have witnessed this time and again, and while there are many Veterans out there in the news and in the community who do have hardships, there are just as many untold stories of Veterans who return to a civilian society with that can-do spirit that we all get from our active duty service, and that our communities and country will be richer for their upcoming contributions.

And just as I am encouraged by meeting Veterans like this SEAL, I am even more encouraged by meeting Veterans like John Holland, Brenda Smull, Phillip Eggers, Lou Berrier, Norm Frickey, Ron Deardorf, Ray Starkey, Joe Riggs, Alan Jaffe, Leanne Wheeler and all the other VFW members who extend that same can-do spirit with their own unique way of contribution to Veterans who benefit from the camaraderie and comradeship of never being alone.

Together as a whole, you are what makes Post 1 the best Post in the country. Thank you.

Michael  
[michael@vfwpost1.org](mailto:michael@vfwpost1.org)

## **SITREP from the VFW National Convention**

by John Holland

The VFW National Convention, held in Louisville ("Loo Vull") Kentucky from 20 -

25 July was a productive time for both the Parent Organization and the Ladies Auxiliary.

Both the VFW and Auxiliary voted not to merge the Ladies and Men's Auxiliaries.

The VFW voted the \$10.00 dues increase for Annual Members by more than the required 2/3 majority. This increase takes effect 1 January, 2014. Save yourselves \$10.00 by paying your dues early!

Pete Buchanan, the Department Junior Vice Commander of Post 1771 in Lafayette, was elected as the VFW Surgeon General. Pete, a Navy Corpsman who served in the Vietnam War, gives Colorado a second vote on the National Council of Administration. States with much larger Veteran populations, such as California, have only one vote.

A very welcome addition to the Colorado Delegation was our own John Keene, who got to meet many of the "movers and shakers" both at the Department and National level.

The dues increase was primarily aimed at continuing funding of our outstanding Service Officers. As with many programs in government, business, and our Veterans Service Organizations, funding of vital programs has been cut. This increase will not completely cover the cuts that are coming, but it helps.

Welcome Home.

## **Jr. Vice Commander's First National Convention**

by John Keene

I attended my first National Convention this year, and my first impression was: "this is nothing like Post 1."

I just turned 45 last month and, as I looked around the convention center, I only saw a handful of my contemporaries.

That experience really drove home the fact that Post 1, while we are the face of the Founders, is also the face of the new VFW. The high percentage of current conflict veterans that actively participate in our Post must be an example to others on how to ensure this organization is around for another 114+ years.

Unfortunately, my time at the convention was split between work and being an attendee. But from the meetings that I was able to attend, and from my time in the exhibit hall, I can say that there was an overwhelming sense of camaraderie (with

a fair amount of good-natured competition).

Just like veterans from various branches enjoy teasing each other, the members from various Districts seem to take great pleasure in bragging about their home State. This was most evident while visiting the various hospitality rooms, where you could enjoy everything from Maine lobster to Alaskan reindeer sausage.

But business was also conducted in Louisville. For example, I attended the Western Region meeting, which was enlightening in several ways. It was interesting to see how the regional elections were held and to participate in the caucusing and voting.

Likewise, it was during this meeting that the camaraderie was again on full display as we stood and welcomed the steering committees from the other regions. They would march into the room and introduce themselves and we were able to listen to their candidates for national office. We then unanimously endorsed their candidates, as they did ours.

It seemed to be a very efficient way of advancing nominees to the various positions, but not at all like a rubber stamp. I felt like we were building on the trust we have in one another as veterans and comrades in this organization.

I look forward to participating in future conventions and would encourage anyone from Post 1 to consider doing so as well.

## **Business After Hours (BAH) Event in Golden**

by Michael Mitchel

Post 1 was well-represented to the business community at the Denver Chamber's July Business After Hours (BAH) networking event in Golden.

We met several Veterans, worked our recruiting magic, and continued to brand Post 1 as the Founding Post of the VFW.

Events like these highlight our professionalism, expertise on veterans issues, and help to



Kevin Dennehy, Brenda Smull, Michael Mitchel, Lou Berrier, John Toth

educate the community on who makes up today's VFW.

## ***Post 1 Member Profiles***

### **Elizabeth O'Herrin - Iraq War veteran, experienced advocate, coffee lover**

Elizabeth O'Herrin deployed three times with the Air National Guard, worked as a veterans advocate and policy expert on the national level, and is a regional leader of Team Rubicon.

She also loves coffee, and works for a small business importing quality products from farmers in South America.

"The military was never really on my radar," she said, recalling her time growing up in Marshall Wisconsin, a small town outside of Madison.

"Growing up I learned a lot of stuff very hands on. I could read whatever I wanted. My parents were very intense about living within our means, so we pretty much ate and killed whatever we needed."

During her junior year of high school, her best friend Katie graduated from Air Force basic training. Elizabeth attended the ceremony and liked what she saw. Katie's father was the Command Chief Master Sergeant at the local Air National Guard base, and he encouraged the girls to consider joining up.

"I just viewed it as a way to give back to the community," she said.

She envisioned her time in the Air National Guard spent cleaning up after natural disasters, attending sporadic training, and earning money to pay for college.

The first week of September, 2001, she was due to swear in. When the paperwork wasn't ready, the recruiters told her to return the following Thursday.

Before she could enlist, the World Trade Center was destroyed.

"I remember wandering through the high school hallways," she said. "People were



Elizabeth O'Herrin

like, 'Aren't you joining the military? World War III is about to happen. You can get out of it!'

Elizabeth knew that wasn't an option.

"At that point I probably could have gotten out of it, because I didn't raise my right hand yet," she said. "My grandfather served in World War II as a Marine in the Pacific, and did three assault landings on Japanese held-territory. It wouldn't have been honorable to turn around and not do anything."

On September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2001, she enlisted in the Air National Guard as a munitions tech.

It wasn't until 2004 that she deployed to a country in Southwest Asia in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I walked off the plane, got blasted by that hot air dryer of diesel fuel and 130 degree flight line, and got put in with a bunch of people I didn't know," she said. "I had never worked with most of the weapons that we were using, so it was definitely a pretty steep learning curve, because I had to learn all these new bombs and missiles."

Her first deployment was largely uneventful, but she still had a difficult time readjusting to civilian life.

In 2005 returned home to attend the University of Wisconsin.

"I came home on a Friday, and classes for the new semester started that next Monday."

At the time, National Guard units received no demobilization training.

"No one told me that it was going to be hard to come home," she said.

"Sitting with me in class were all these people - the Middle East wasn't even on their radar at all," she said.

"All these people don't know where Iraq and Afghanistan is on a map. They have no idea of the billions of dollars that we're pouring into these operations and how it's affecting everything at home. Nobody's drawing those connections. People are dying all over the place, and life at home is going on completely uninterrupted. That really got to me."

She remained in the Air National Guard, deploying to Balad, Iraq in 2006 and 2008.

She spent her time running munitions out to the flight line, and volunteering with

the doctors and medics when she was off-duty.

Working in the base hospital, she saw wounded Americans and Iraqis alike.

After coming home, she moved to Washington, D.C., where she co-founded the Student Veterans of America. She also helped lobby for the new G.I. Bill, and published papers and designed programs for an association of college presidents to help them deal with the influx of current-conflict veterans.

While she is proud of her work in D.C., she recalls growing frustrated with the politics of the city. She wanted to find a career where she could have a more personal impact in the lives of veterans.

Seeing the value of working in a small business, Elizabeth took a job with the family-owned Novo Coffee, which distributes coffee and runs small shops in Denver.

Elizabeth continues her work with and on behalf of military veterans. When she's not working at Novo, she works as a regional coordinator for Team Rubicon, and is involved with the Pat Tillman Foundation. Still, it's her lower-profile work that gives her the greatest sense of satisfaction.

"We have 4,000 nonprofits that have grown enormously since the wars, and yet people are still killing themselves, people are still struggling with issues like alcoholism, self-medicating, unemployment - there's an emptiness, and we're not reaching them. I think one of the best way we can reach people is by being part of their everyday lives."

[Editor's Note - Elizabeth appeared in a viral video, "\$#!t civilians say to veterans," which is a humorous send up of civilian-veteran interactions. As you can imagine, there is some foul language. Personally, I think it's hilarious. The video can [be found here.](#)]

**John Holland - Vietnam Veteran, dedicated leader in the VFW**

by Michael Mitchel

John Holland hails from Cleveland, OH, and when he was 18, realizing that he was about to be drafted into the Army, he enlisted in the Marine Corps for four years.

While serving as an air traffic controller in Vietnam, one of the helo squadrons that he interacted with was call sign Scarface, the same squadron that George Caulkins (Past Post Commander) served with during the first Gulf War.

John settled in Denver so he could attend college. Initially, John joined the VFW in 1984 for business networking purposes. He joined Post 6616.

Unfortunately, like many Vietnam Vets, he didn't feel welcome at that Post, so he moved to Post 1 in 1992 to be with highly motivated Vietnam Veterans. Post 1 has been extremely fortunate for this, because John has been unmatched in his commitment and service to Post 1 and to Veterans nationally.

The roles and duties read like a drumbeat of dedication. After two meetings at Post 1 he was elected Jr Vice Commander; he served as Post 1 Commander for 1993-94 and 1995-96. In 1998 John became State Chaplain, then served as State Commander off and on.

Since 2008, he has served as the National Military Service Chairman. During 2011 - 2012 John Holland was the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Chaplain.

Additionally, he held various internal administrative roles at the State and National level.

John is proudest of being the National Military Service Chairman. This is an important role/function that has significant impact on an individual. As an example, John helped a returning Veteran who came home to a wife who threw him and his son out after she trashed the house. John helped him put the house back together and worked with the Veteran to get his life on track and move forward with dignity and support from his fellow vets.



Recruit Holland

As John puts it, he's buried a lot of friends and married a few. John Holland and Marsha Harrison (who is the current President of Post 1 Ladies Auxiliary) just celebrated 20 years together and recently returned from the National Convention.

On behalf of a grateful Post, I thank you John, for your service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 1 and to the countless Veterans you have helped.



John and Marsha in the old 901 Bannock Post 1 building

## ***In The Community***

**Another example of Post 1 helping fellow veterans**

by Izzy Abbass

I recently had a call from Heather at Project Sanctuary who was looking for help for one of her Vets on a retreat - Matt Burgess.

Matt's wife Robyn was in an ATV accident, and the help he received proved to be a prime example of how our network here in Colorado does work to help out a veteran when in trouble.

While his wife was in the hospital, Heather gave me a call to ask what could be done to get him a hotel room so he didn't have to sleep in a chair in her room. We at Post 1 offered to cover the cost at the very least while we worked on other solutions.

Post 1 Commander Michael Mitchel called the hotel and got the rate lowered to \$69 a night (half the standard rate). Melanie Starkman (Fisher House Board President) said that they would cover the cost since that's what they do, even though they didn't have hotel vouchers for that part of town.

Joy Weyna-King (also of Fisher House) worked with the hotel to get the charges (after day three) charged to the Fisher House. Paul Fisher (Post 1 and Colorado Bar Association - Military & Veteran Committee) and I went over to visit Matt and Robyn in the hospital to provide some moral support.

Two volunteers (Vicky and Larry Daub) at Project Sanctuary mobilized their church (Bethany Lutheran) to cover the cost of a car since they had to drive back to GA rather than fly due to the nature of the accident.

**This is exactly what I love about our veteran community here in Colorado.** We had multiple folks and organizations involved to support a fellow veteran - all of which started on a Saturday afternoon.

## **New online portal to services is free to all Colorado veterans**

Veterans Passport to Hope has just launched a new online resource portal for Colorado veterans. The website at <http://www.veteransresourceportal.com> offers an exhaustive list of veteran-focused resources, including community activities and local mental and physical health services.

The list is continually updated. It is free for all Colorado veterans and their families.

Veterans Passport to Hope's Executive Director, Shane Schmutz, is a Post 1 member. More information about his organization can be found at their

website, [Veterans Passport To Hope](#).



## **Team Rubicon Region VIII headquartered in Denver**

Elizabeth O'Herrin, the subject of this month's member profile, also works as the Region VIII Communications Manager for Team Rubicon.

Elizabeth spends her volunteered time coming up with volunteer engagement events, managing social media, and handling communications to the volunteers of Region VIII.

"Team Rubicon is an organization that takes military veterans and first responders on a volunteer basis, and uses them to respond to natural and manmade disasters quickly and effectively," she said.

Veterans often possess a unique skill set that they otherwise might not use in an everyday environment. Team Rubicon actively seeks out veterans to help out with disaster relief efforts all across the country.

Team Rubicon was founded by two Marines who were moved by the destruction in Haiti several years ago.

After unsuccessfully attempting to volunteer with other aid organizations, the former Marines took initiative and went to the earthquake-ravaged country. There they helped distribute food and deliver medical care and supplies to the population.

Since that time, they've organized volunteers across the country to respond to natural and man made disasters. Recent examples of Team Rubicon's work include a response to Hurricane Sandy in New York and New Jersey, the flooding in Illinois, and the F-5 tornado in Moore, Oklahoma.

Team Rubicon stands apart from other disaster relief organizations because of two main strengths: it can mobilize and deploy volunteers faster, and the unique skill set of its military veterans and first responders is well-suited for disaster relief.

"We've done things like set up security perimeters, or managed ad hoc groups of people to accomplish tasks," Elizabeth said, speaking to the experience of military

veterans. "Because we have these skill sets, and most veterans have honed those skill sets while under fire, responding to the aftermath here isn't as stressful, because there isn't any incoming fire."

Veterans also have an ingrained respect for a chain of command, structure, and flexibility in working with diverse groups of people.

Team Rubicon is structured to mirror FEMA. Like the federal organization, it has ten regions. Region VIII is headquartered in Denver, and its area of responsibility includes Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

At the beginning of 2012, there were 700 volunteers with completed profiles registered with Team Rubicon. Currently, around 10,500 volunteers have signed up.

The organization is always looking for relevant disaster response or military experience and skills, including carpentry, construction, and heavy machine operation experience.

Those interested in volunteering for the disaster relief mission can create a profile through [TeamRubiconUSA.org](http://TeamRubiconUSA.org).



## **Annual Women Veterans Conference to be held in Aurora**

The Women Veterans of Colorado (WVOC), founded by Post 1 Member Kathryn Wirkus, is hosting the 3rd Annual Colorado Women Veterans Conference on Sept. 14, 2013 in Aurora, CO.

The conference theme is "Moving Forward: Transition, Education and Employment".

Registration is free and open to all veterans.

See website and flyer details:

<http://www.cowomenveteransconference.org>



## **2013 Colorado Women Veterans Conference**

### **MOVING FORWARD: Transition, Education & Employment**

Saturday, September 14, 2013 | 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
The Potter's House, 9495 E. Florida Ave., Denver CO 80427

#### **All Day Conference Sessions**

Transitioning from Soldier to Civilian  
Women's Health | Veteran Benefits | Career Issues | Resume Review  
Employer Resources & Exhibition



#### **REGISTER NOW!**

For more information and to register online,  
visit [www.cowomenveteransconference.org](http://www.cowomenveteransconference.org)

 Find us on  
Facebook @ <https://www.facebook.com/ColoradoWomenVeteransConference>

## **Leadville hosts Third Annual Veterans in Higher Education Summit**

by Izzy Abbass

The Third Annual Veterans in Higher Education Summit took place at Colorado Mountain College in Leadville on August 2nd and 3rd.

Post 1 once again served as the fiscal agent for this great event which brought together 61 student veterans and higher education administrators from across the state to share success stories and best practices.

Several Post 1 members participated in panel discussions and helped to organize this fun and great event.

One of the highlights was the MRE Cook Off Challenge where teams consisting of a mix of students and administrators were given two MREs and part of a care package from home to come up with three dishes. It was a lot of fun and a great ice-breaker for the two groups.

Panel discussions throughout the day consisted of topics such as making your campus veteran friendly, finding employment after graduation and creating partnerships with community counseling centers to serve veterans on campus.

The 2014 Summit will be held at Auraria Campus and be sponsored by all three colleges on the campus.



## **Colorado Veterans in Higher Education needs your support**

I was recently selected as a Beanstalk Foundation Leader (folks who do a lot in the community) and I have a challenge that just went live today to build a website for Colorado Veterans in Higher Education. Please visit this link and make whatever donation you can - \$5 or \$10 would be great. None of this money comes to me but goes to the actual companies doing the work to build this site.

Thank you so much in advance for your help and I'm hoping with your help we can get this knocked out pretty quickly.

-Izzy

[Beanstalk Foundation - Veterans In Higher Ed Challenge](#)

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## ***Ladies Auxiliary Update***

The Department and National conventions have concluded, and now is the time to begin our 2013 - 2014 year under the new Department President Linda Stahly.

The first Council of Administration meeting is fast approaching, we will receive the program information at that time. Your 2013 - 2014 officers are:

President Marsha Harrison  
Senior Vice President Gina Ciccone  
Junior Vice President Sherry Wing  
Secretary Gina Ciccone  
Treasurer Jean Jaffe  
Chaplain Elaine Ciccone  
Conductress Viola Stafford  
Guard Dyanna Aragon  
Trustee #1 Susan Herr  
Trustee #2 Jill Canzona  
Trustee #3 Elaine Ciccone



We welcome new members Michelle Mallin, Margaret Olson, Maureen Keene, Diana Slobodnik, Sheila Rucki, and Mikayla Lauridsen.

The dues notices and Cancer insurance premium notices have been sent out, and we hope the cover letter was helpful and informative.

With the new year beginning, I would like to share the breakdown of your dues payment:

Dues \$30.00: Department & National dues (10.00), Cancer insurance (5.00)  
Cancer aid & research (2.00) Health & Happiness fund (.10) Hospital fund (.50)  
Relief fund (.40) = \$12.00 left to our Auxiliary treasury.

The Auxiliary has chosen National Military Services as the benefactor of our individual fundraising program. Any member that attends a meeting will be given their own marked container to accumulate funds through the whole year. The idea is that each member on an individual basis can control her own contributions. We will still continue to collect cancer aid & research funds at each meeting.

The Post will be doing a hard copy mailing of the Founder in September. Like many other organizations the goal is to get the information out to the members electronically so email addresses will be requested. The web site is also being updated.

The planning of the annual Founder's Day banquet is moving along. Watch upcoming issues for updates; this year the Ladies Auxiliary will be recognized for 100 years of service. There have been some special people invited to attend this event which will be held on Sunday, 1 December 2013, so save the date!

Many thanks go out to Pete and Dyanna Aragon for keeping the Poppy drives going, our relief fund has grown because of this. The next drive is on 31 August at the King Soopers located at Hampden & University. Come on down and join the fun.

Until next time, blessing to all and keep those dues coming in!

Loyally,

Marsha A. Harrison  
President

Visit our website [here](#), or:

Follow us on  **twitter**

Like us on  **Facebook**

### Post 1 Officers

Commander - Michael Mitchel   Sr. Vice Commander - Cameron Cook   Jr. Vice Commander - John Keene

Quartermaster - Mort Anderson   Chaplain - Ray Starkey   Surgeon - Norm Frickey

Service Officer - Mort Anderson   Judge Advocate - John Holland   Adjutant - Philipp Theune

Public Affairs Officer - Brenda Smull

### Committee Chairs

Women Veterans - Kathryn Wirkus   Current Conflict - Patrick Browne

Suicide Prevention - Rebecca Nordin   Military Liaison - Eryth Zecher

Homeless Veterans - Dana Niemela   Camaraderie Officer - Charity Zalasar

Student Veterans - Cameron Cook   Buddy Poppy - Pete Arragon

Youth Activities - David Perez   Managing Editor - Jonathan Raab

### Trustees

Izzy Abbass (1 year),  
Kristen Luevanos (2 year), George Caulkins (3 year)

