

The Founder

The Monthly Newsletter For VFW Post 1 Members

JOHN S. STEWART POST 1



"THE FIRST POST"



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Meeting Update

Next Post 1 Meeting - July 11th at Post 3971

Don't forget, we are meeting at Post 3971 this month.

We've sent out two reminders. Our meeting starts at the usual time of 7 pm, but we are having a potluck starting at 5:30 pm.

The Post is next to Platte River and a city park. It's a great opportunity to enjoy a little bit of summer together. I've met the Post Commander, and they couldn't be more welcoming. They have a spacious bar area and a pool table.

You can find the [Post here](#).

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone there.

-Michael Mitchel, Post 1 Commander

New Members

Dustin Charopata, Jennifer Sitzmann, Matt Hyde, Robbie Robinson, Theresa Schenck and Freddie Sprankel

In Memoriam

Robert C. Paoli

Member Profiles

Cameron Cook, Sr. Vice Commander of Post 1

Cameron Cook was born and raised in Salina, Kansas. After graduating high school in 1994, he lived in Fort Collins, Colorado; Long Island, New York; and Dallas, Texas.

On September 11th, 2001, Mr. Cook joined the United States Marine Corps where he served until 2005 as an Aviation Weapons Systems Technician in Camp Pendleton, California, Okinawa, Japan and Al Asad, Iraq, separating at the rank of Sergeant.

He achieved Associates Degrees in Fire Science and Liberal Arts from Palomar College in San Diego, California, graduated from Metropolitan State College of Denver with a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science with an emphasis in Public Administration, and earned a Master's Degree in Creative Writing at the University of Denver.

Mr. Cook has several years of experience serving the veteran population, including San Diego County Veteran Services, Metropolitan State College Veterans Upward Bound, and has been Director of Veteran Student Services at the University of Colorado Denver since February 2010.

At his current position at CU Denver, he works to aid nearly 1,000 military-related students in their transition into college life, then on to a career, by creating innovative and unique services including a veteran student mentor program, the UCD Veteran Student Center and the Boots to Suits program.

He is also the co-founder of the Education Committees of the Colorado State Board of Veterans Affairs and the United Veterans Committee of Colorado.

He has been a member of VFW Post I since 2010, joining because he appreciates and respects the active nature of the organization as well as the quest to bring in an era of a younger and modern VFW.



Cameron, training with the Marines

John Keene, Jr. Vice Commander

John Keene was born in Connecticut but finished High School in Arizona, where he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps Reserve in 1986. After becoming a Hollywood Marine, John served as a combat engineer with the 6th Engineer Support Battalion in Phoenix.

After marrying his wife, Maureen, John moved to Chicago and completed his time in the reserves with the 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines.

It was while a member of 2/24 that John was activated for Operation Desert Storm. While in Saudi Arabia and Iraq, John initially served as a fire team leader, guarding an airbase and ammo depot, later becoming Corporal of the Guard for the Battalion Command Operations Center.



John was Honorably Discharged from the Reserves in 1997 with the rank of Sergeant.

Shortly after Desert Storm, like many Marines, John became a police officer. First serving in a suburb of Chicago, then with the Chicago Police Department. He also was an International Police Officer, working for DynCorp for two years in support of the United Nations Mission In Kosovo (UNMIK).

In 2005, John's daughter Mia was born and shortly after, he and his family moved to Denver. Since 2006 John has been a realtor and he currently works for Perry & Co.

John originally joined the VFW in 1991, but the Post he belonged to ended up losing it's building and his membership lapsed. When John moved to Colorado, he reinstated his membership (becoming a life member) but was a member-at-large.

A chance meeting with Phil Eggers brought him to Post #1. John transferred his membership to Post #1 just over a year ago, and now he is proud to serve as the Post's Junior Vice Commander.

He, like all veterans, has a deep desire to serve and give back to the community. John recognizes the outstanding work that has been done by Post #1 over the years and hopes to carry on that tradition.

With his background in real estate, John is currently working with a committee of our comrades to find Post #1 a permanent home. Additionally, he is interested in working with other veterans to establish a veteran's court in Denver.



John, home from deployment

Inside Post 1 - News and Events

Commander's Corner

by Michael Mitchel

On the Fourth of July morning, I was fortunate enough to be the Commander of Ceremony for the Raising of the Flag at the VA's new facility Valor Point in Lakewood.

The grand opening is on July 15th, but the Vets got together and insisted that the flag had to be up on the 4th of July. This state of the art facility is designed to give Vets the tools and counseling needed to get back on their feet.



Raising of the flag

Dorms, on-site counseling, therapy, nursing staff, a nutritionist, and a caring staff are all available. I was able to get a peek at the art center and I was impressed with the talent in the drawings and paintings.

The Ladies Auxiliary is approaching 100 years old! Established in 1914, the Ladies Auxiliary has been an amazing organization for Post 1. I can remember back to some dark days of Post 1 as we were working hard to restore the Charter and we didn't have enough members at a meeting for quorum.

But who kept us going with service achievement? Veteran outreach? Community service? Poppies? The Ladies Auxiliary.

It's simple. If it wasn't for them, the Post very likely wouldn't have survived. I encourage the spouses of members to join the Post 1 Ladies Auxiliary, and for all of the female members to join as well. Just by joining and paying your dues, you are helping to support a vital part of the VFW and Post 1.



Post 1 Scrapbook circa 1955

While going through the archives, I saw some old scrapbooks. Great idea, even in this digital age. We need to continue a record of Post 1 for the next generation. A couple of Posts brought their scrapbooks to the State Convention. A great tradition to continue... Anyone interested in doing this? Photos and mementos will be contributed by members of the Post. We just need someone to manage the scrapbook.

2013 VFW State Convention

By Michael Mitchel

This was my first year attending the state convention. The most pressing issue on the floor was a national increase of annual dues by \$10.00 a year. Evidently, it had been in the works for two years.

The first time I heard about it was at the District Elections. So during the State Convention, I asked a lot of questions. The National Adjutant General was present to help sell this motion to the convention floor. I stood up and questioned the value of raising the dues by 50% while so much waste occurs with recruiting pins, tie clips, hats, money clips etc. I explained that Post 1 members recruit because we are proud of the services that we do in the community, and that drives our recruitment. Not pins, ball caps and the such. The measure sailed through to approval. Hopefully more will question this issue at the National convention.



Former Post 1 Commander Izzy Abbass receives the All American Post White Hat

Post 1 received several awards for our service to Veterans. Past Post Commander Izzy Abbass received his White Hat for Post 1 achieving All American Post. I was present to accept on behalf of Post 1, the Outstanding Achievement in Americanism trophy.

Outgoing State Commander Bruce Dolan is now the State Quartermaster. Outgoing QM Dick Wellensiek is retiring from service as a State officer. Post 1 give a heart felt thanks to Dick for his many years of service and support for Veterans and the Posts of Colorado. Thank you Dick.

The incoming State Commander is Kirk Rosa. Previously he served as the State JVC. I've had the pleasure to get to know Kirk over the last few months and I'm looking forward to working with him. Not just because he's former Navy either! When you see Kirk, be sure to say hello and congratulate him.



Michael accepts the trophy for Americanism on behalf of Post 1 from State Commander Bruce Dolan

Post 1 Leads the Way with Buddy Poppies

Kudos to our Post 1 and Auxiliary Buddy Poppy committee for their dedication and commitment to this important VFW tradition while raising funds via donations, all of which are deposited into our Post Relief Fund.

Projected funding recipients are the Voice of Democracy (VOD), Patriots Pen, JROTC awards packet, Operation Holiday Heroes and other veteran related programs.

The Buddy Poppy team includes: Pete Aragon (Chairman), Dyanna Aragon, Marsha Harrison, Jean Jaffe, Alan Jaffe, Alan Norton, John Holland, Leroy Montoya, George Caulkins and our very own Poppy Queen, Sarah Caulkins.

We are by far the most active Post in the area when it comes to frequency of campaign drives and the number of Poppies purchased each year (4,000 current year). Our team has conducted 7 poppy campaigns YTD and have 4 more scheduled.

Each Buddy Poppy campaign is an excellent opportunity to promote Veterans awareness, Post 1 and the VFW while sharing experiences with fellow veterans and their families.

Here are the impressive results so far this year:

- 1,500 poppies distributed
- \$1,468 in donations
- 99.5 hours onsite and drive time
- 10 members applications received

- 12 flags presented
- Numerous Welcome Home coins given

In addition, Post 1's Poppy Queen contest was featured in the July edition of the Ladies Auxiliary magazine. The article was titled " Veteran Revives Poppy Queen Tradition" and pictured our 2013 Poppy Queen, Sarah Caulkins, with her father George Caulkins, former Post 1 Commander.



John Holland, Pete Aragon, Marsha Harrison and Alan Norton at the latest Post 1 Buddy Poppy Drive



Buddy Poppy Queen

20 LADIES AUXILIARY VFW MAGAZINE



Veteran Revives Poppy Queen Tradition

In Denver, Colorado, Brenda Smull watched a bright yellow convertible drive past in the 2012 Veteran's Day Parade. It carried the newly crowned Buddy Poppy Queen from VFW Post and Auxiliary 1, where Smull is a member of both.

That moment also carried Smull back 32 years to when she perched atop a red dune buggy as Buddy Poppy Queen in a parade through the streets of her hometown of Spotswood, N.J. Her father, Bill Nason, a WWII veteran and Commander of Post 4589, proudly marched beside her. "I just remember him being very supportive and excited that I won," Smull said. Just 10 years later, she would deploy to Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Storm, where she was an Army Platoon Leader in the 1st Cav. Division.

Recently, Smull decided to revive the Buddy Poppy Queen contest at Post 1. She announced contest eligibility requirements and dates last summer. By the fall of 2012, four contestants, relatives of Post or Auxiliary members, were answering interview questions before a judging committee composed of both Post and Auxiliary members. The Queen was crowned, given her wand and a basket of Buddy Poppies. A real sash

made by Auxiliary members was bestowed upon the Poppy Princess.

The Poppy Queen tradition was an important tradition when she was a child, Smull said. Her father was Post Commander and her mother an active Ladies Auxiliary member. She remembers vividly the selection process she went through in 1980. "It was competitive. It was fun," she said.

"I created the whole contest from my memory of what I did when I was in the contest," she added. That included some important interview questions such as: "Where would you go to distribute Buddy Poppies?" and "What is the meaning of the Buddy Poppy?"

The Poppy Queen and the other contestants will be expected to participate in at least one Buddy Poppy Drive, the Veterans Day Parade and Memorial Day services, Smull asked the girls to spread the message of the Buddy Poppy among other students their age. "You are now the champions of the Buddy Poppy," she told them. "Let people know. Educate them."

"Keeping this great tradition alive and active in the minds of our younger generation is important to me as both a veteran and former Poppy Queen," she said. "I look forward to the next Buddy Poppy drive when I'll proudly join forces with the new 2013 Post 1 Poppy Queen as we spread the word on the importance of remembering the sacrifices of our servicemen and women throughout the year." **MS**

Opposite Page Top: Brenda Nason Smull, 1980 Buddy Poppy Queen, with her father, VFW Post 4589 Commander Bill Nason.

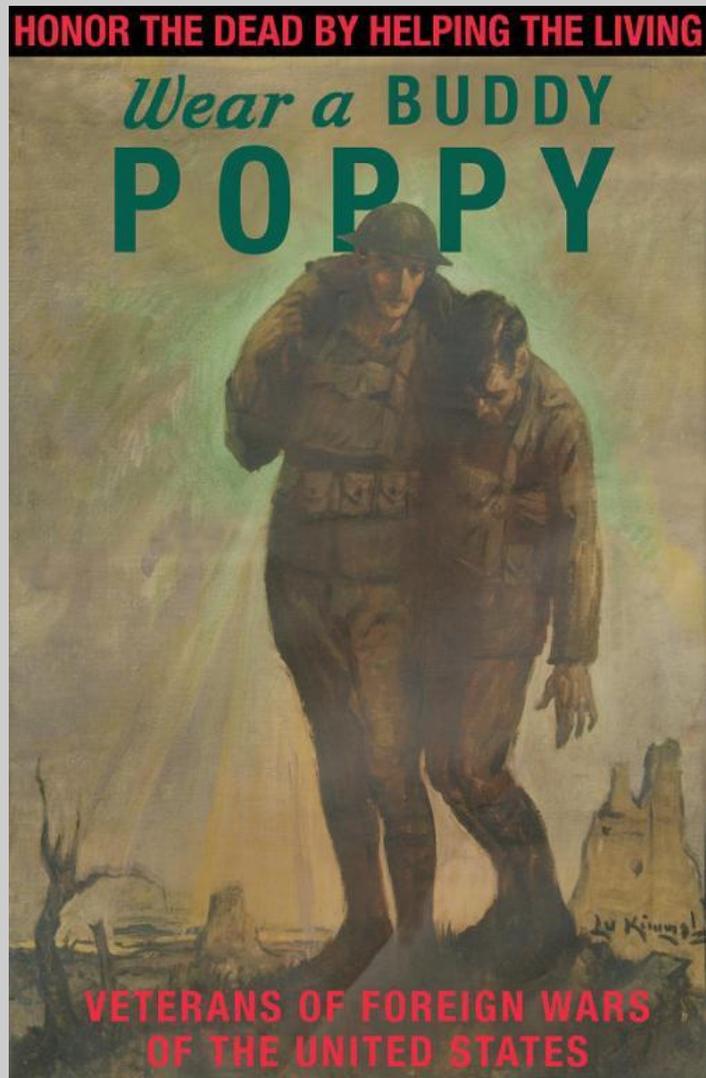
Opposite Page Bottom: VFW Post 1 Buddy Poppy Queen 2012 Sarah Caulkins with her father, former Post Commander George Caulkins.

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Our reigning Poppy Queen, featured in the Ladies Auxiliary Magazine

Brenda Smull, our Public Affairs Officer and member of the Ladies Auxiliary, was also shown in her Poppy Queen crown with her father, a WWII veteran and former commander of VFW Post 4589 in NJ.

Applications for contestants for the 2014 Post 1 Poppy Queen contest will open on August 15th and the contest will be held in mid October. Please contact our PAO at Brenda@vfwpost1.org for information and details.



USMC Active Duty Post 1 Member Promoted

Post 1 lifemember, Porfirio Aragon Jr., who has been on active duty with United States Marine Corps for the past 7 years, was promoted to Staff Sergeant on July 01, 2013.

He is in the Logistics and Procurement field. Staff Sergeant Aragon has deployed twice to the Middle East, and is looking forward to a possible 3rd deployment in October.

He is the son of Post 1 lifemember MSG. Porfirio "Pete" Aragon (Ret.) U.S. Army, and Post 1 Ladies Auxiliary member Dyanna Aragon.

On behalf of the Aragon family, we would like to share his achievements and promotion in the USMC with the Post 1 membership.

Job well done son. And as always, keep your head low and your powder dry,

- Mom and Dad

In The Community

Denver-area vet co-founds the War Writers' Campaign

Derek Porter joined the Marine Corps in 2001. His first deployment took him to Iraq in the early years of the war. At that time, heavy combat was the norm for his unit.

Upon returning home, he sought mental health treatment, as the trauma from his experiences haunted him.

"Going through therapy initially, I was told by a couple of different psychologists that if you're into writing, that if that's an outlet for you, that you should move forward with that as a form of communication, a form of therapy," Derek said.

"Even if it's just an audience of one, even if you're the only one that reads it, it can be therapeutic to put your woes down onto the keyboard, or pen and paper."

Derek found that process helpful. His writing quickly took on a life of its own, and he soon had a book-length memoir about his time overseas.

Derek's good friend from the service, Ryan Weemer, also found writing to be a positive outlet. The two former Marines soon realized that other veterans might benefit from the writing process. Together, they founded the War Writers' Campaign.

"Our mission - our mantra, so to speak - is 'The Power of Therapy Through Communication,' Derek said. "We're trying to promote a social change and raise awareness of veterans' issues through the literary word."

The idea developed out of their desire to see literary works about war and the veteran experience used to raise money for veterans' mental health programs.

"We noticed there are a lot of veteran writers who have been through a lot of heavy



fighting, or just served in general, or people who just support veterans," Derek said. "They are firm believers in the aspect of communication through written awareness. That's something we're really promoting."

Writers - veterans and non-veterans alike - whose work deals with the war and veteran experiences can submit their fiction, memoir, or poetry to the campaign. The work will then be developed, edited, and published, either as stand alone online releases or in print books.

The majority of the proceeds will go to fund organizations and programs that support veteran mental health treatment.

"There are a couple of nonprofits out there like the Wounded Warrior Project, and they're really hitting the gap where physical disabilities came into play," Derek said. "They're also hitting the gap where the mental disabilities come into play as well, the PTSD, the TBI, and so forth. However we're seeing a lot of their money move forward with the physical aspects. And that's great. But they mostly tackle the Post-9/11 generation and beyond, whereas we wanted to be open to all generations."

Derek and Ryan are both publishing their combat memoirs through the Campaign. Their books will be the vanguard of veteran-generated content.

Officially, the Campaign launches on July 15th, and is already partnered to provide the proceeds from its initial book sales to Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

Derek said that they will be looking to expand their partnerships to other organizations, and may even begin to develop its own mental health programs. He sees the possibility of setting up a center in Denver that provides mental health programs for veterans of every era.

"We see it as a win-win situation. The readers get a great story, and the individual, the veteran themselves, they get a chance to write - the power of therapy through communication - and the money goes to a great cause."

For more information, you can visit the War Writers' Campaign at <http://warwriterscampaign.org/>.

"The American Soldier" exhibit featured at the History Colorado Center

THE AMERICAN SOLDIER
FROM THE CIVIL WAR TO THE WAR IN IRAQ
A PHOTOGRAPHIC TRIBUTE
MAY 25–SEPTEMBER 2, 2013

The History Colorado Center is featuring an extensive photographic exhibit on the American war experience, from the Civil War to the Iraq War.

The exhibit runs until September 2nd of this year.

Active duty, National Guard, and Reserve members of the military and their immediate families all receive free admission to the exhibit. They must present a valid CAC card or DD Form 1173 military ID card at the admissions desk.

For museum times, admission prices, and location, visit the History Colorado Center's website [here](#).

Ladies Auxiliary Update

The month of June has passed and with that we begin a new year for the Post and Auxiliary.

The Auxiliary would first like to congratulate the Post for their accomplishments in the 2012 - 2013 year, concluding with the All State honors to the Commander and Quartermaster and All American honors for all!

The Auxiliary was represented at the State Convention by Jean Jaffe, Elaine Ciccone, Gina Ciccone and myself.

Thanks ladies, it was FUN! We also were recognized with awards such as 3rd place Americanism, 3rd place Achievement, 3rd place Veterans & Family Support, 2nd place Membership. Thank you all.

The highlight was our participation in the Buddy Poppy hat parade. We wore our Buddy Poppy "Happy Hats", marched to the music and received the 1st place trophy for most patriotic hats. We have our creators, Pam Dougherty and Sue Herr, to thank for this. We never run out of hats.



The new year is upon us, dues notices will be going out soon, and the next poppy distribution is July 27th. These distributions have brought us much needed funds for our relief account. Thank you Pete and Dyanna for arranging these events.

Next up will be the National Convention in Louisville, KY, I will be in search of 100th Anniversary items for the Auxiliary.

Great job ladies!

Marsha Harrison
President

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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 Zalar

Student Veterans - Cameron Cook Buddy Poppy - Pete Arragon

Youth Activities - David Perez Managing Editor - Jonathan Raab

Trustees

Larry Monson Kristen Luevanos George Caulkins

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