

The Founder

The Monthly Newsletter For VFW Post 1 Members

JOHN S. STEWART POST 1



"THE FIRST POST"



September 2013

Issue No. 7

In this issue:

Meeting Update
Inside Post 1
Member Profiles
In the Community
Ladies Auxiliary Update

Meeting Update

**Thursday, Sept 12th at 7pm
1350 South Broadway, Denver**

New Members

Alex Koch, Nathan Hahn, Jonathan Brown, Richard Taylor, Aaron Torres, Bryce Allen, Jon, DeCelles, Sujil Dixit, Trevor Wyer, Matthew Hall, Darrin Bradford, Dave Agrado, Dick Fulton, Eric Garcia, Leonel Madrigal, Brenton Hutson, Janelle Roach Ben Deda, Justin Cook, Eugene Villines, Jason Humphreys, Jeremiah Seymour, Juan Elenes, Matthew Robinson, Shae Flequeshia, Andy Proctor, Sylvester Darvila, Ronie Huddleston, Steve Davis, Michael Taylor, Jeremiah Seymour, Bryce Haskin, Michael Kindt, Abner Valenzuela, Brian Borges, James Bell, Robert Short, James Land, Daniel Case, Ericka Hall, Michael Maestas, Allison Trejo, James Franze

Inside Post 1 - News and Events

Commander's Corner

By Michael Mitchel

It's been a great month for Post 1.

In a two week span, Freddie Sprankel recruited three new members, Patrick Walsh and John Holland recruited five new members at a Yellow Ribbon event, and Mort Anderson, Dave Gruber and Charlie Garcia represented Post 1 at the Buckley Fun Fest Day and recruited 13 new members, including the Base Chaplain and the Medical Group Commander.

Last Tuesday at the Auraria Campus Veteran Resource Fair, Patrick Walsh, Kevin Moreno, Justin Cook, and I recruited 17 new members. We have over 40 new members in a two week period. That just might be a Post record. Job well done gentlemen!

And speaking of Freddie... he was not be able to attend the bowling fun on Thursday. He was driving to Bismark, North Dakota to represent Post 1 at the 44th Annual United Tribes International Pow Wow. (www.unitedtribespowwow.com). Freddie will brief the membership on the event on the 12th.

Our New Website is live! In case you missed the email announcement, the Website went live a little over two weeks ago. This project has been a long time coming. The website was done by Dave Fingers (who is on Shane's Passport to Hope Board) of Attitude Business Group (www.altitudebusinessgroup.com). Dave was extremely patient and professional with my many changes and questions. Thanks, Dave.

Brenda Smull is doing some amazing work uploading photos, writing additional content, and building the Ladies Aux section. Phase I of the site is done.

Past issues of The Founder for 2013 are uploaded as well. Phase II will have more content and photos of what we do in the community. Phase III will have a historical section of Past Commanders (a couple of Past Commanders need to get their Black and White headshots!).

As it is now, the website is sharp and represents where we are as a Post.

Last Thursday was the Post 1 Recreation Committee's first meet up: bowling and fun at Punch Bowl Social. Hats off to Justin Cook for spearheading this. It's our goal to start off doing a meet up once a month, with different events at different locations. It's a great opportunity to see each other outside of the monthly meetings and NOT talk shop... and just have fun. Brittany Bartges has joined the Recreation Committee as well. Bring the family and feel free to bring a fellow Vet who is not [yet] a member. Let them see us with our hair down.

Izzy Abbass (Past Post Commander) and Dana Niemela (Homeless Committee Chair) are at SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) Policy Academy this week. There, they will learn what other organizations are doing on Veteran homelessness, substance abuse and PTSD issues. Furthermore, they will represent Post 1 with our local issues/support.

Quick Founder Day Banquet update: Union Pacific just recently signed on as a supporter of the event. Add them to DaVita, Centennial Airport, USAA and others. We're still working on a securing a guest speaker. For several of the guests that we have approached in July and August, their schedules are only booked 90 days out, so hopefully we will know within the next 30 to 45 days.

You are what makes Post 1 the best Post in the country. Thank you!

Michael

michael@vfwpost1.org

Sr. Vice Commander's Report

By Cameron Cook

"Not Your Grandpa's VFW"

For quite some time I have been deliberating on what I want to discuss in my first public communique to the membership of John S. Stewart VFW Post 1. I have had conversations with several of the leaders and members of the organization about possible topics, and a common response was to highlight what makes me the most proud of being a leader in this Post.

This proposition is a challenge in itself, because there are so many things that make me proud to participate in such a vibrant and dynamic organization, but after much consideration, I have decided that what fills me with the most gratification is how young our Post is.

To clarify, when I discuss the youth of our Chapter, I am not talking about how old the organization is, because in terms of existence, we obviously have no elder. I am also not talking about the average age of our membership. While I would venture to say that we do have more current conflict members than most posts, we still have our fair share of silver-haired gents from World War II, in addition to loyal members from Korea and Vietnam, and everything in between and since.

Even though I have the utmost pride for our long legacy and wide-ranging membership, when I say that I am proud of the youngness of VFW Post 1, I am speaking about our *mentality*. We don't think like a traditional VFW. We think like a *new* VFW. Post 1 is establishing a new model of innovative service for the rest of our VFW comrades across the country to follow.

That's right, I used *innovation* and the *VFW* in the same sentence, and while those two terms are not commonly associated with one another, Post 1 is setting a new standard in this category.

The model that has been created since our organization was forced to regroup around a decade ago has transitioned from the classic stereotype of a bunch of silver-haired fellas wearing funny hats, sitting in dark bars, and drinking cheap beer, into a tight and vibrant organization focused solely on *serving Veterans*.

Our membership possesses leaders and active community members for nearly every conceivable need in the veteran arena, including, but not limited to, services and support for females, homeless, disabled, mental health, family members, students, and substance abuse.

Even though our network and umbrella is both broad and deep, our goal is to ensure

that no Veteran ever faces their challenges alone. We want every Veteran that we come across to know that we've got their back and if Post 1 doesn't provide the service they need, we definitely know someone that does. This is a cause that every member in our organization believes in, regardless of age or conflict, and I truly believe that is one of the primary reasons that our membership is rapidly and constantly growing in a time where civic engagement in our nation is diminishing at an alarming rate.

It is proper that our organization which started over 113 years ago in order to provide a place for returning warriors to congregate and serve their comrades in arms is now ushering in a new era for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We have taken the lessons, both good and bad, that we learned with past generations and proactively applied them to our present day warfighters.

As a Post, we have the utmost respect and admiration for our fellow VFW Chapters, but it is my ultimate hope and wish that other posts across the nation take note of our strategies and missions before it is too late. For I do not believe that those struggling with membership and engagement will last much longer if they do not overhaul and modernize their organizations in the standard that our post has established.

If they do not learn to adapt then they will not last to serve future generations of returning veterans. I am sure that the youthful activeness of Post 1 will make certain that we will be around well into the future, ensuring that our brothers and sisters who bravely served will have someone to welcome them home and receive the respect and service that they have earned and deserve.

We still love our cheap beer, but when I see a group of Post 1 Veterans from every era, gender, race, and demographic sitting over those discount brews and vigorously discussing how they can truly help a recently separated veteran, despite their perceived differences, there is nothing that makes me prouder.

Jr. Vice Commander's Report

by John Keene

I attended the National Convention in Louisville in July as a member of Post #1 and as an exhibitor in the conventional hall, working in the Veterans Care Plus booth. VCP is a veteran's service organization that offers discounts on a variety of health care needs. In particular, VCP offers significant savings on hearing aids.

Hearing loss is one of the leading health concerns for veterans, yet only about 800,000 of us are eligible for free hearing aids from the VA. That means the vast majority of us either have to rely on private health insurance or pay out of pocket. Add to that the cost associate with the treating the hearing loss of our family members, who are not eligible to go to the VA, and it adds up quickly.

Several years ago I developed a program through Veterans Care Plus, administered by HearUSA (the national hearing care network that I work for), that offers veterans and their family members free hearing exams and up to 40% off the cost of hearing aids. Additionally, each hearing aid comes with an extended 3-year warranty and a two-year supply of batteries. While I don't personally gain from this program, VCP donates a small portion of every hearing aid sale back to the VFW headquarters.

To learn more about hearing loss and this particular program, feel free to contact me.

On another note, summer is over and my daughter went back to school the last week of August. At her school I met a retired Marine, whose daughter just enrolled in our school. I immediately invited him to the veteran bowling night on September 5th. Not only is he coming, but he is also bringing another Devil Dog with him. Thanks to Post #1 for organizing social events outside of the monthly meeting. I hope to see more of them, as it is a great recruiting tool.

Camaraderie Committee Report

By Justin Cook

VFW Post 1! In case you hadn't heard, we're getting together about things that don't pertain to business. In fact, we're figuring out ways to get to know each other better and building stronger networks with folks that can relate to our unique experiences. I'll give you an example: Just this past Thursday the 5th, we all met up and just hung out together! The venue was Punch Bowl Social (65 Broadway, Denver), a great bowling alley and game room here in town. So what did we



do? Well, we bowled a few games, had a few laughs and met some great new people. Combat veterans just like you, hanging out together swapping stories over a beer/Dr. Pepper and wings. We had all kinds of folks from all walks of life and honestly, our event was better for it.

Again, I want to reiterate: Everyone is welcome to participate in our events. If you're sitting there thinking you won't go because of "X" reason, that's silly. Come hang out! Be looking out for an email from us in the latter part of the month for our October event!

Post 1 Member Profiles

Garrett Reppenhagen - Former Sniper, Social Activist

by Jonathan Raab

Garrett Reppenhagen grew up as an Army brat.

His father enlisted during the Vietnam War in order to choose his Military Occupational Specialty, and to have some control over his career. He ended up staying in the Army for twenty years, and his family followed him from post to post, duty assignment to duty assignment.



Garrett in Baqubah, Iraq, 2004

Not long after his retirement, Garrett's father died of Agent Orange related cancer, a legacy of his service in southeast Asia.

Garrett was a high school drop out - someone who, in his own words, wanted to find his own way in the world. He ended up joining the Army, seeing it as a way to put some structure back into his life.

"I signed up one month before September 11th," Garrett told me. He had signed up as a Cavalry Scout, and attended Basic Training at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

"I was a little worried and reluctant about what kind of direction it was going," Garrett said, reflecting on his first year in. "Going into the military in October, I still didn't know what the military response [to 9/11] would be."

His first deployment was to Kosovo in 2002. While the country had been a war zone, his unit's orders were to conduct peacekeeping operations for six months. Their replacement unit ended up getting diverted to Kuwait, so the deployment was extended another three months.

"The war kicked off in Iraq while I was in Kosovo," Garrett said. "I was becoming a little bit unsure about the reasons for going into Iraq."

While he was skeptical about the war in Iraq, his deployment to Kosovo was fulfilling.

"Kosovo was such a great experience to me, being part of the U.S. military in a peacekeeping operation," he said. "It was such a positive experience as far as delivering medical supplies, stopping human trafficking, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, really just keeping the peace and doing what I thought the potential of the military was."

Upon returning home after the extended tour, Garrett had a positive view of the military. He was selected to attend the U.S. Army Sniper School. After completing the grueling five-week course, he was officially a sniper.

His next deployment was to Iraq in 2004. He was stationed at FOB Scunior in Baqubah, Iraq. There he pulled dual duty as a member of his brigade's sniper team, and served with his platoon on their missions.

"For the most part, I was doing counter-IED missions, counter-mortar sniper missions, and some of the time I was kicking in doors and doing presence patrols with the scouts."

It wasn't long before his initial misgivings about the justification for war in Iraq turned into a greater feeling of disillusionment. While the news and the official line was that the fighting in Iraq against U.S. forces was being conducted by foreign fighters, Garrett realized a lot of the people his unit engaged were locals who didn't want an American occupation.

What was worse is that the threat of Saddam's WMD was greatly overblown. Garrett also considers the U.S. civilian oversight of Iraq, led by Paul Bremer, as incompetent and misguided.

"It started really spoiling my sense of why we were there," he said. He is quick to point out that he never stopped doing his job, and carried out every mission and order, despite his personal feelings.

"I started writing a military blog called fight to survive, and started describing some of the stuff that was not only happening to me, but how I was feeling about it."

Garrett's blog gained notoriety as an insider's anti-war blog, but he didn't understand why it was labeled as such.

"I never stopped doing my job. On one hand, I made an oath and obligation that I would do my job and serve my country. On the other hand, I was weighing my ethics and morals about what we were actually doing here in the larger picture."

Garrett was in Iraq for some of the worst months of the war. Between January 2004 and February 2005 the insurgency gained strength, the First and Second Battles of Fallujah were fought, the Abu Ghraib scandal broke, and the first democratic elections of the post-Saddam era took place.

Upon coming home from Iraq, Garrett took a job in Washington, D.C. with a nonprofit group called Veterans for America. He also became politically active with the anti-war group, Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Having lived in Colorado previously, Garrett decided to move to Denver to use his G.I. Bill and get his degree. He was instrumental in helping the local nonprofit group, Veterans Green Jobs, begin their employment and weatherization operations.

Currently Garrett works for Vet Voice, an environmental and land management policy lobbying organization.



Garett speaking with Jon Powers, Jon Stoltz, and General Anderson

Brenda Smull, Post 1 Public Affairs Officer (PAO)



At OBC Ft. Gordon, GA- 1989

Brenda Smull hails from New Jersey and served as an Army Platoon leader in the 13th Signal Bn, 1st Cavalry Division during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. She received her commission from the ROTC program at Rutgers University where she majored in Biochemistry.

Upon returning from Saudi Arabia in 1991, Brenda's father, a World War II Veteran and former VFW Post Commander, ensured that she joined the VFW. She has been a member ever since.

Brenda became active in Post 1 in early 2012 after reading an inspiring article in the Denver Post citing the impact and difference Izzy Abbass and the Post 1 members were making in the community. She has served as the Post Public Affairs Officer for the past year and a half and was recently appointed as the Colorado Department Chair for Women Veterans.

Brenda has been an active member and leader in Toastmasters International since 1994, and enjoys public speaking, mentoring and teaching. She is an IT Project Manager and Certified Scrum Master for web application development projects. She is also an avid road and mountain biker.



In Southern Iraq, March 1991

In the Community

Auraria Veterans Resource Fair A Success

by Michael Mitchel

The week of September 3rd was Veterans' week at the Auraria Campus near downtown Denver.

The kickoff was the Veteran Resource Fair. The fair was a room full of agencies, organizations and staffers for Senators Udall and Bennet, as well as Representatives Degette and Permuter. Every group represented had the common purpose of helping veterans.



Darrin Bradford, Michael Mitchel, and Aaron Torres

Post 1 had a table and, like so many events that we attend, we ended up crashing the event. With so many Post 1 members present from working the tables for the many of the represented organizations, we all got together for a group photo. It was a fun event, and laughter filled the room as members hugged, said hello, and caught up.

A special shout out to Patrick Walsh, Kevin Moreno and Justin Cook who helped staff the table and were a major reason for THE 17 NEW MEMBERS of Post 1. Well done Gentlemen!

We Want YOU For Post 1 Historian

Being the First VFW Post in the world, we hold a great responsibility to manage and care for our unique archives of documents, photos, press clippings, scrapbooks and other artifacts. We also need to continue to incorporate records of our current activities into the archives.

Post 1 is looking for a motivated member who can lead this effort. If you are or know of a Veteran who is working on an advance History degree and needs a project for their Thesis, I would like to speak with them. We can work with their school for Academic Credit.

- Michael

Buckley Family Fun Fest Day

by Dave Gruber

We had a successful day at Buckley on Friday, bringing in thirteen new or transfer members to the Post.

I would like to highlight two of them. Col Kindt is the Medical Group Commander and the fourth ranking officer of the 460th Space Wing. In his previous assignment, he worked for the Air Force Surgeon General as the AF senior psychiatric advisor. His primary focus was PTSD. We also signed up the base chaplain, and both are interested in becoming involved in Post 1's efforts to raise awareness and facilitate treatment about and for PTSD.

Ladies Auxiliary

The first Council of Administration meeting was held in Alamosa, Colorado the

weekend of August 10 -11. The Auxiliary was represented by myself and Treasurer Jean Jaffe. We now have the plan in hand for the new year and we are off to a great start!

We welcome new member Susan Mitchel, we thank our Post Commander Michael for this member. We also had the privilege of reinstating the membership of Meranda Anderson, Loana Mason and Dawn Cassidy. I want to personally thank Barbara Green of Castle Rock for these members. Many years ago we had the honor of serving the Castle Rock Auxiliary #10578 together. Barbara continued to be a loyal member at large and re-connected with me in 2009. Our heartfelt thanks go out to her for being a huge supporter of Auxiliary #1.

We are on our way to a 100% membership goal by November 30, 2013. As of this writing it seems the National organization is a little behind with the 67% membership number. We will be sending 2nd reminder dues notices out very soon. REMEMBER only members in good standing may apply for a Cancer Grant.

The 2nd annual Poppy Queen Contest is well underway. The final judging will take place on October 12, 2013. For more information contact Brenda Smull at Brenda@vfwpost1.org. Our scholarship chairman, Jean Jaffe has distributed the Patriots Pen material to Horizon Middle School. Watch for more judging information. Deadline for this contest in November 1, 2013. The theme for this year is "What Patriotism Means to Me".

In early August our Junior Vice President Sherry Wing and myself spent a little time at the storage location for the Post and Auxiliary. We barely touched the surface of sorting through the wonderful reminders of almost 100 years of service by the Auxiliary. We did pick out some of these keepsakes which are currently on loan to the Department of Colorado for their 100 year display. I wish every member could visit this location just once - a whole new meaning to thanks for the memories! We will try to get some more items from Auxiliary #1 to display. Just a bit of trivia for those new members out there - charter date for Auxiliary #1 is April 1, 1914. One of our members and a Past Department President, JoAnn Sparks was at our last meeting and was able to provide insight to a beautiful stained glass piece from the storage area. What a great time we had and we were so happy to have her at a meeting again!

The first District 1 meeting will be held Saturday, September 21, 2013. The host Post will be #5061 with joint meeting commencing at 11:00 AM. The next Department Council of Administration meeting will be hosted by the Security Post #3917 on October 19 - 20, 2013. The Buddy Poppy drives are going strong, next scheduled event is Saturday November 2, 2013. This drive will be go from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the King Soopers located at 3100 S. Sheridan. These drives are a lot of fun thanks to Pete and Dyanna so come on out and enjoy! The funds raised from

these drives help us assist our Veterans in so many ways.

The next Auxiliary meeting is September 28, 2013 at Post #2461, 1350 S. Broadway. We start at 10:30 AM, hopefully completing our business by noon. Thanks to all for your continued support, hope to see you soon.

Loyally,

Marsha A. Harrison
President

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

Follow us on 

Like us on 

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 Committee- Justin Cook, Brittany Bartges

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)

JOHN S. STEWART POST 1



"THE FIRST POST"