



Buddy Poppy Queen



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 red 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.