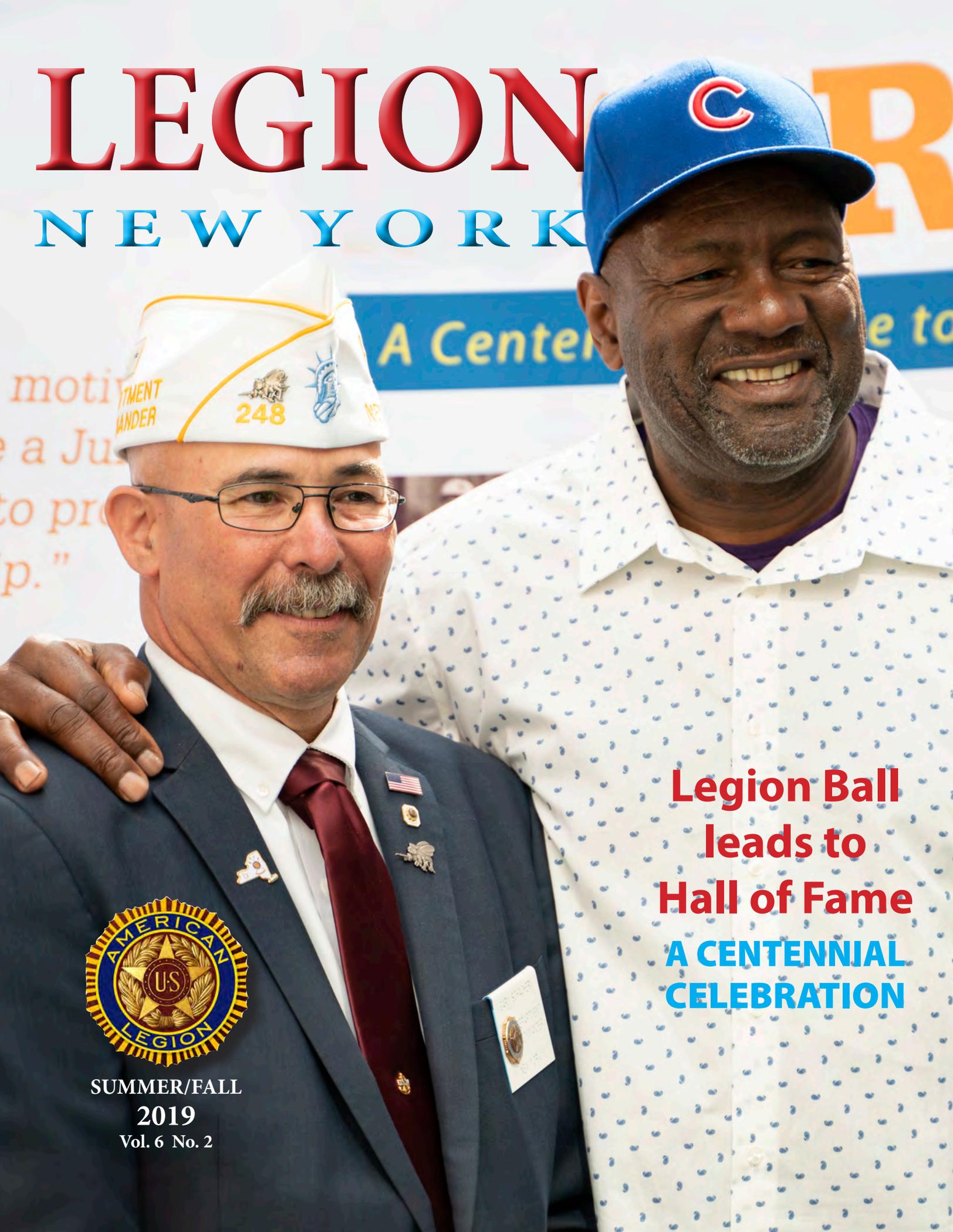


LEGION

NEW YORK



**Legion Ball
leads to
Hall of Fame**
**A CENTENNIAL
CELEBRATION**



SUMMER/FALL
2019
Vol. 6 No. 2

LEGION NEW YORK

The American Legion
Department of New York,
112 State Street, Suite 1300,
Albany, New York 12207.
518-463-2215
info@nylegion.net

COMMANDER
Gary M. Schacher

ADJUTANT
James Casey

VICE COMMANDERS

Districts 1 & 9

Conrad Flickenschild

Districts 2 & 10

Frank J. Fazzio

Districts 3 & 4

Edward R. Lupian, Jr

Districts 5 & 6

Leslie F. Crossett

Districts 7 & 8

Thomas Schreck

NATIONAL EXEC.
COMMITTEEMAN

Edward Bertrand

ALT. NAT. EXEC.
COMMITTEEMAN

William Kearsing

TREASURER

John C. "Jack" Clancy

JUDGE ADVOCATE

W. Patrick Falvey

MASTER-AT-ARMS

Richard F. Calbo

CHAPLAIN

Rev. Robert J. Sweeney

HISTORIAN

Frank Carletta

EDITOR

Robert Stronach

To submit photos, news,
articles, email the editor at:
news@nylegion.net

Volume 6, No. 2
SUMMER / FALL
2019

WORDS FOR LEGIONNAIRES TO LIVE BY

by GARY SCHACHER

"Veterans take care of veterans."

I cannot remember how many times I have repeated those words in my travels on behalf of The Department of New York.

Whether it's during visits to districts and counties, or traveling to Gettysburg battlefield to lay a wreath in memory of New York's soldiers, or paying respects at major memorials in the nation's capital, I am constantly reminded of, and inspired by, The American Legion's mission to take care of veterans.

Yes, veterans take care of veterans. That drives our legislative efforts to get proper recognition for World War II sailors who died on the USS Turner, and to get alternative PTSD therapies supported and funded.

It is also why we showed up at the grave of a War of 1812 veteran, whose descendants reached out to us. Thanks to the effort of Department Adjutant James Casey, we were able to unveil a new headstone to replace the one that had been destroyed over time.

Veterans taking care of veterans is a big reason why you and I belong to the largest veterans service organization in the U.S.



Commander Schacher takes a quiet moment at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

And it should make all of us proud.

In fact, there is so much that so many of you are doing as members of the Legion Family.

Thank you for your continued service!



COVER: LEGION BALL LEADS TO HALL OF FAME

Department Commander Gary Schacher is with Baseball Hall of Fame inductee Lee Smith. A former Legion Baseball standout, Smith headlined The American Legion Weekend at the Baseball Hall of Fame on March 29-30. See PAGES 3-6. Photo by SCHELLY STONE/The American Legion.

BACK COVER: FACES OF VETERANS

The portrait of an Army veteran on the back cover is part of Stephen Willette's Faces of Veterans project. Willette (pictured at left) hopes to capture the uniqueness and character of veterans in all of New York's 62 counties. Most of his photo shoots take place at Legion Posts. See PAGES 10-11. Photo by STEPHEN WILLETTE/Patriot Images.

HALL OF FAMER SAYS LEGION BASEBALL STARTED HIS CAREER WAS AN HONOR TO WEAR LEGION UNIFORM

by PAUL POST

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y., March 29 – Lee Smith still can't help marveling where he came from and where he's headed, a kid from a rural Louisiana town so small it didn't have a red light, to the hallowed National Baseball Hall of Fame.

It wouldn't have been possible, however, without the opportunities afforded him by The American Legion's youth baseball program.

Smith and three others – Mike Mussina, Harold Baines, Roy Halladay – slated for induction on Sunday, July 21, are among the 81 players whose path to Cooperstown was greatly influenced by Legion ball.

“American Legion baseball doesn't pick you because you can afford to travel,” Smith said. “They take you because of how good you are and



Lee Smith speaks to Legion Family guests at the Baseball Hall of Fame. Smith is one of 81 players whose path to Cooperstown was greatly influenced by Legion Baseball. Photo by Schelly Stone, The American Legion.

whether you can play the game.”

“American Legion baseball really started my career as far as understanding the game and why coaches do

certain things, like the hit and run, and learning how to read the bat, who has good bat speed,” he said. “It was a real learning experience for me. I'm really glad

to hear American Legion baseball is still here. It's really needed because a lot of people overlook sound fundamental baseball.”

Continued on next page.



Lee Smith signed autographs for Legion Family members, young and old. Photo by Schelly Stone, The American Legion.

Continued from previous page

Smith pitched for 18 seasons with the Cubs, Red Sox, Cardinals, Yankees, Orioles, Angels, Reds and Expos. His 478 saves were the top mark in baseball from 1993 into the 2006 season and still rank third on the all-time list behind Mariano Rivera's 652 and Hall of Famer Trevor Hoffman's 601.

A seven-time All-Star who finished in the Top 5 of his league's Cy Young Award voting three times, Smith led his league in saves four times and topped the 30-save mark in 10 seasons.

Early this spring, he traveled to Cooperstown for special festivities commemorating the contributions of American Legion baseball to the nation's pastime. He was joined there by numerous Legion officials including National Commander Brett P. Reistad, New York Department Commander Gary Schacher, National Vice Commander Paul Spedaliere, past National Commander David K. Rehbein, chairman of the 100th Anniversary Observance Committee, and New York



Legion Family members enjoyed getting autographs from Lee Smith during American Legion weekend at the Baseball Hall of Fame. Photos by Schelly Stone/The American Legion.



Adjutant James Casey.

Schacher presented Hall of Fame official Scot E. Mondore, an army veteran and Legion member, with a special commemorative bat in recognition of the Legion's 100th anniversary. He also

gave one to Bruce Mayfield, New York State American Legion baseball chairman.

"I grew up outside of New York City so I would go down quite often to Yankee Stadium and sit in the right field corner where they held the

Reggie (Jackson) signs," Schacher said. "And right after I got released from active duty in the Navy, in 1983, I went to the July 4 game and got to see Dave Righetti throw a no-hitter against the Red Sox."

Continued on next page.



Department Commander Gary Schacher presents American Legion Centennial Commemorative Bat to Scot E. Mondore, a Hall of Fame official who served in the U.S. Army. Looking on are, from left, Hall of Fame inductee Lee Smith, National Vice Commander Paul Spedaliere, National Commander Brett Reistad and Department Adjutant Jim Casey. Photo by Paul Post.

Continued from previous page

During the weekend, Hall of Fame guests could visit the Gallery where plaques are located, and take guided tours highlighting players who served in the military and the equipment they used.

A special Operation Gratitude was also planned, in which visitors could thank military personnel and veterans by writing letters of appreciation to them.

“American Legion baseball isn’t just about playing sports,” Reistad said. “It’s about sportsmanship, physical fitness, learning to work as a team. Legion baseball started in South Dakota in 1925 and has flourished over the years. It’s a mainstay of The American Legion program. There are roughly 3,500 teams around the country. Many of those who played American Legion baseball made their way to this coveted location.”

Jon Shestakofsky, Hall of Fame vice president for communications and education, described Legion baseball as part of the fabric of America.

“In this room, the most sacred space in the game of baseball, we’re surrounded by 329 members of the Hall of Fame,” he said. “Of those, 81 were shaped by American Legion baseball, one-quarter of the all-time greats represented on these walls.”

Smith also credits local men, who served in the military, for teaching him valuable lessons about the



ABOVE & LEFT: Legion Family members enjoy Lee Smith’s interactive talk at the Hall of Fame. At left is National Commander Brett Reistad. Photos by Schelly Stone/The American Legion.

‘Legion Baseball part of fabric of America’

-- Hall of Fame vice president

discipline, hard work and determination needed to succeed. But most of all, he enjoyed the camaraderie of teammates, which he still considers family. In fact, he’s already invited his now 87-year-old former coach, James Morgan, and best friend and Legion catcher Charles Cockfield to join him on Induction Weekend, scheduled for July 19-21.

“We had great times,” Smith said. “When we played, not just the team, but the whole family would go afterward to a restaurant called the Cotton Patch and we’d go there and talk about the game. There was six of us in the truck and five on the back of the truck. Families got to meet each other. We all hung together. That’s why I say, I don’t have teammates,

I have family members. It will be like that for the rest of my life.”

“Now when a game is over, everybody goes their separate way,” he said. “It looks like a concert when the game is over.”

On the diamond, Smith was one of the most feared relief pitchers the game has ever seen. Off the field, he’s

Continued on next page.

HALL OF FAME WEEKEND CANDIDS *photos by Paul Post and Schelly Stone*



Continued from previous page

a good-natured gentle giant who enjoys a good laugh, even when poking fun at himself. For example, he likes telling the story about a monster home run that Hall of Fame Twins outfielder Kirby Puckett once hit off him.

“Kirby hit a mammoth home run off me in Minnesota. Bob Stanley was my setup man. He came up to me with a baseball in his hand and said, Hey, Smitty. How’d you hold that one? He said, I want to make sure I don’t ever grip the ball like that,” Smith said smiling.

He also told about his initiation to the big leagues as a young Cubs rookie.

“We were on a 10-day road trip to California and they bought me a short-sleeved yellow leisure suit and real high shoes, three to four inches high,” Smith



said. “Every time I left the hotel room I had to wear this outfit. Needless to say I didn’t leave the hotel room very much. When we got back home to Chicago all the players had to go through the airport and I threw a shoe! One of my heels came off! So there I was limping through O’Hare Airport with one shoe and a yellow

leisure suit.”

“That had to be the top of the list right there for most embarrassing moments,” he said, laughing.

On the mound, though, he was all business, which also goes back to his days as a young Legion player.

“The one thing I learned so much from my coach was to go out there and put

your best foot forward and don’t second guess yourself,” Smith said. “If you go out and do the best you can, there’s no way anybody else can second guess you. And you’ve got to work hard. It’s not going to be given to you. Those things were instilled in me by American Legion baseball. It really was an honor to put that uniform on.”

UTICA BLUE SOX TAP 3 LEGION PLAYERS



FROM LEFT: **Vincent Castronovo** (Utica Post 229), **Dewey Roden** (Sherrill Post 230), and **Ryan Enos** (Oriskany Post 1448).

by **MARK MITCHELL**

UTICA -- The American Legion baseball league has been in existence since 1925. The program helps young high school players develop their skills over hot summers to get the attention of college and even some pro scouts in the stands. The league not only helps develop baseball skills, but provides lessons that young men take with them for the rest of their lives. Legion baseball supports the morals of equality, sportsmanship, good health and active citizenship.

Three players from the Mohawk Valley that played through the legion baseball program are now a part of the Utica Blue Sox. Vincenzo Castronovo from Utica Post 229, Ryan Enos from Oriskany Post 1448 and Dewey Roden from Sherrill Post 230 are suiting up in the blue and white this summer as a part of the Perfect Game Collegiate Baseball

League.

"I was very excited to be able to come home for the summer and play on the field that I basically grew up on," said Castronovo.

Enos enjoyed his four years playing for Oriskany Post, but he is ready to create new memories alongside Castronovo and Roden.

"It felt great knowing that I would be staying home for the summer and playing in a great league..." said Enos.

Roden loved playing legion baseball, but is excited for the challenges ahead. "It's definitely nice to be able to climb the ladder of competition and keep striving to play on better stages," he said.

Athletes always have that one person who helps them get through a tough loss or help when they are struggling with a situation on the field or in the clubhouse.

Enos, Castronovo and Roden expressed how their fathers helped them deal with the mental stresses that baseball brings when climbing the levels of the game.

Noted Enos: "I would say my dad Eric Enos, my uncle Steve Strife, and all of the other coaches I've had along the way through my career. They have helped me develop my skills while also teaching me about the mental aspect of the game."

All the hard work that these men have put into their games and getting better every day has gotten the attention of George Deak, team owner and general manager of the Utica Blue Sox. Deak sees over a thousand player applications for the chance to be a part of the Blue Sox and when these three players came across his desk, he had a good feeling

that they would be successful.

"There is a lot that we do as a coaching staff when picking players for our team. First and foremost: does the player meet the physical requirements to play for us. Second, what type of person is he? Does he have behavioral issues? Is he a good teammate in the clubhouse? We look for the character just as much as the talent and these three guys fit that mold perfectly," said Deak.

Playing legion baseball makes good players better and gives everyone a fair shot at climbing the ladder to play at the next level. Deak expressed his belief about how legion baseball can highlight players in a good and fair light for college and pro scouts.

Noted Deak: "Legion ball is the fairest, most unbiased proving ground at that level of baseball."



Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul presents Department Commander Gary Schacher and Legislative Chair Frank LaMarsh with a proclamation honoring The American Legion on its 100th anniversary. The proclamation was signed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo. The presentation took place March 12 during the Legion's annual Legislative Hill Day.

LEGISLATIVE HILL DAY 2019

LEGION SHARES TOP PRIORITY ISSUES WITH LAWMAKERS

Providing alternative therapies to combat post traumatic stress and preventing veterans' suicides are top legislative priorities for The American Legion Department of New York, legionnaires told state legislators March 12.

Legion leaders laid out their priorities during their annual Hill Day breakfast with lawmakers in Albany. Then veterans from around the state took the message to the State Capitol as they visited legislators' offices.

"Many of our returning Veterans come home physically and emotionally scarred by the horrors of war," Department Legislative Chairman Frank LaMarsh noted in his report to legislators.

"...Too many of today's returning warriors are battling homelessness, suicide, and the need for employment. In addition, as the number of woman Veterans continues to grow, additional focus and emphasis must be placed on the care and treatment of our woman Veterans. In looking toward the future, we can't forget the children of our returning Veterans and the impact multiple deployments of one or more parents has on them or the needs of the Veteran caregiver.

"The American Legion Department of New York recognizes these concerns and calls upon our New York State Legislature and Governor to join us in

reaching out and helping our Veterans' community by enacting legislation or policies designed to meet those needs."

He identified priority legislation, such as:

1. The devastating impact of PTS and TBI demands a dedicated and comprehensive study to delineate viable treatments such as animal therapy, hyperbaric oxygen treatment (HBOT), and various other courses of action including medical marijuana, that have demonstrated beneficial results. Another alternative, the RTM protocol (The Reconsolidation of Traumatic Memories) has a proven track record and the American Legion Department of New York strongly

urges the State Legislature to approve and fund this work. In addition, we ask that State agencies be directed to undertake such studies as necessary and make public the results.

2. Suicide is an epidemic among our Veterans, still averaging more than 20 per day nationwide. The American Legion encourages Congress and the President to sign into law acts similar to the Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act that will expand and improve care provided for Veterans and service members with mental health issues who are at risk for suicide. We also urge the New York State Legislature and State

Continued on next page.

LEGISLATIVE HILL DAY



Oneida County Legionnaires visit with Sen. Joe Griffo during the Legion's Hill Day. Photos by Frank Carletta.



Department Legislative Chair Frank LaMarsh with Assemblyman Michael Cusick of the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee.



Department Commander Gary Schacher with Sen. John Brooks of the Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs. Senator Brooks recognized Legion members on the floor of the Senate.

Continued from previous page.
agencies to provide greater awareness and to keep funding programs and groups that reach out to men and women in uniform, Veterans and their families through family care programs, suicide prevention programs, job fairs, and public service announcements, bringing about awareness of PTS and suicide prevention.

3. Even though medical and mental health care are primarily the responsibility of the Department of Veter-

ans Affairs, the Legion encourages New York State to muster support for any and all viable treatment that offers help for military service men and women to deal with the trauma of war.

The Legion further asks New York State and its agencies to review any means of extending State recognized alternative health care programs to disabled Veterans unable to receive such care through their VA health care providers.

4. The American Legion

urges to state legislature to pass a resolution asking the federal government to take action to identify the remains of crewmen killed aboard the USS Turner that exploded and sank on Jan. 3, 1944 outside New York harbor. A total of 136 crewmen were killed. The remains of some crewmen may be interred in four graves in Long Island National Cemetery in Farmingdale marked Unkown U.S. Sailor with the date Jan. 3, 1944.

Upon being identified, the

Legion would like the remains to be given the respect and burial they deserve, and that their families be given the opportunity to grieve and lay their loved ones to rest.

5. The American Legion urges the State Legislature to formally recognize the date June 8 as USS Liberty Day now and forever, and dedicate a Memorial in Albany, NY befitting the courage and dedication of the USS Liberty's crew, and the five New York sailors who lost their lives.

FACES OF VETERANS



IRAQ VET FOLLOWS PASSION TO CAPTURE PORTRAITS

by ROBERT STRONACH

Stephen Willette spent 16 years in Air Force security forces, including two deployments to Iraq, before medically retiring with multiple sclerosis in January 2017. A month later he found himself in the waiting room at Stratton VA Medical Center in Albany. And

he began looking around at the aging veterans.

He studied their faces, noticing their uniqueness, their character.

He thought about capturing that character, musing at the time: “When I am older, what will have been my contribution to the veteran

community?”

It took over a year, but that musing was the genesis for his photography service, *Patriot Images*, and the birth of his *Faces of Veterans* project several months later (especially after a Saratoga County veterans service officer invited him to take

pictures of veterans).

His passion is to photograph, for free, as many veterans as he can in all of New York’s 62 counties for an exhibit that will portray the uniqueness and personalities of veterans, and “prompt an awareness that veterans are all around us.”





Many of his images are already in his online gallery at patriotimages.org.

It's a self-funded project that relies on donations.

By June 2019, Stephen had conducted photo shoots in seven counties, mostly at American Legion Posts. In fact, his project led him to

join The American Legion at Lake George Post 374, while photographing Warren County veterans.

Stephen sometimes photographs veterans with family members, or service dogs; whatever the veteran feels comfortable doing. He has noticed that when

veterans get together, they occasionally open up. "I just kind of show up and do what I do," and sometimes "they start telling stories," even to the point of tears.

The *Faces of Veterans* images are black and white. "I believe it shows a lot more character of the individual. I

didn't want to draw attention to anything other than that person."

To invite Stephen to your county or post, contact him at: email@patriotimages.org 518-350-3119



MID-WINTER CONFERENCE

STANDING OVATION FOR WOUNDED MARINE



Commander Gary Schacher (left) and Marines huddle around wheelchair-bound Sgt. Eddie Ryan at the Mid-Winter Conference banquet. Photos by Robert Stronach.

by ROBERT STRONACH

ALBANY -- Department Commander Gary Schacher stood at the podium, looking out at the packed banquet hall Saturday evening during the Mid-Winter Conference, and said:

“I have a good friend here -- Sgt. Eddie Ryan.”

Suddenly everyone was standing and applauding.

Ryan, a Marine confined to a wheel chair after being shot in the head and face in Iraq in 2005, was a guest of honor. He also was the honor veteran last September at the Patriot Highlander Challenge, an obstacle course race that Schacher co-founded to raise money for wounded warriors.

The commander introduced Eddie’s father, Chris – to which Eddie quipped:

“He’s my best friend.”

Schacher then asked any Marine veterans present to come forward and surround Eddie for a group photo.

Schacher noted that Eddie had been a member of The American Legion, but with his family focusing on his rehabilitation, his membership lapsed. The Department took steps to make sure that

didn’t happen again. Retired Sgt. Eddie Ryan is now a life member of Lake George Post 374, the commander said.

•••

Before Department Adjutant James Casey introduced featured speaker Paul Dillard, the 2020-21 candidate for national commander, he called National Auxiliary President Kathy Dungan up

to the podium to address the gathering.

“My theme is, ‘Serving Our Heroes.’ YOU are my heroes.”

It was just a few words, but she got a standing ovation.

•••

Paul Dillard, a Vietnam era veteran who hails from Texas, also pointed to what his theme would be as national commander.

“No veterans left behind!”

He received rousing applause for that, and went on to say:

“I honestly believe, a hundred years ago, that was the intent of those doughboys” who founded The American Legion on the four pillars of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

Continued on next page.



Paul Dillard, 2020-21 candidate for national commander

MID-WINTER CONFERENCE



The Saturday evening reception featured the American Legion Yankee Doodle Band. Photos by Robert Stronach.

Continued from previous page.

Those pillars need a foundation, he said, which is the membership.

Membership rolls suffer due to the number of older veterans going on to “post everlasting,” and the number who do not renew. It’s time to turn that around, at the post level, by making personal contacts with members, letting them know “you appreciate their support of the Legion.” And by asking neighbors, in-laws, work and professional contacts if they served and urging them to join The American Legion.

He recounted how World War II veterans mentored him. “Those World War II guys would call every mem-

ber and thank them” for being a member, for paying their dues, for supporting the work of The American Legion.

“Let’s take that with us and go back to our posts.” He urged the audience to carry on the mission, to carry on “what the founding fathers did for this organization” (which turned 100 on March 15, 2019).

After all, “where would veterans be, where would America be, without The American Legion?”

•••

The banquet capped a day of seminars and meetings on Legion programs and veterans’ issues.

Commander Schacher and National Commander-Can-

didate Dillard got to share their thoughts on the Legion and veterans’ concerns with representatives from several news media outlets (The Saratogian, The Times-Union and CBS WRBG Chan. 6).

•••

A reception prior to the banquet featured a number of patriotic and popular tunes performed by the Yankee Doodle Concert Band from Fort Crailo American Legion Post 471 in Rensselaer.

•••

Following the banquet, a newly formed Sons of the American Legion rock ‘n roll band, *SALute*, entertained the Legion Family to bring attention to the Sons’ campaign on behalf of the Legion’s Child

Welfare Foundation. Performing were SAL members Joe Guidice (keyboards and vocals), Gabe Cinquegrana (guitar and vocals), Kevin Harrington (percussion), Joe Possavino (bass guitar) and Larry DiLorenzo (lead guitar).

•••

Sunday’s general session featured, among other things, a video of Department Commander Gary Schacher’s interview with Theodore Roosevelt IV, grandson of one of the Legion’s founders, Theodore Roosevelt Jr. His great grandfather was President Teddy Roosevelt. Theodore Roosevelt IV, a Vietnam war Navy SEAL, is honorary chair of The Legion’s 100th Anniversary Celebration.

MONROE COUNTY HONORS LEGION AT RED WINGS GAME



Monroe County honored The American Legion at the Rochester Red Wings baseball game on Father's Day. County Executive Cheryl Dinolfo presented a proclamation to County Vice Commander Charles Clark.

ROCHESTER, June 16, 2019 – Monroe County celebrated American Legion Day at the Rochester Red Wings AAA baseball game on Father's Day.

County Executive Cheryl Dinolfo presented a procla-

mation to County American Legion Vice Commander Charles Clark prior to the start of the game.

"Happy 100th Anniversary to The American Legion..." Dinolfo declared in a follow-up Facebook post.

"It was great to see everyone at the Rochester Red Wings AAA baseball game today. Alongside County (Vice) Commander and Irondequoit's own Charlie Clark, we proclaimed today to be American Legion Day in

Monroe County to recognize the incredible service that Legionnaires provide to their fellow service members, veterans, and our entire community. We are fortunate to have you!"

NY LEGION FAMILY HONORS DOC GIBBS

The American Legion Family honored the national commander of the Sons of the American Legion (SAL) during a weekend "Homecoming Celebration" April 26-27 in Buffalo.

Department Commander Gary Schacher and Department Adjutant Jim Casey joined members of the Sons, the Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary as they welcomed and paid tribute to New York's own Greg "Doc" Gibbs, the 2018-2019 national SAL commander. Gibbs is also past commander of the SAL Detachment of New York.



Department Commander Gary Schacher with National SAL Commander Greg "Doc" Gibbs.

MELISSA IS STATE ORATORICAL CHAMP



Oratorical Champion Melissa Barnosky, center, with Department Commander Gary Schacher, left, and Oratorical Chairman Anthony Paternostro. Photo by Frank Carletta.

ALBION CENTRAL SENIOR WINS TITLE 2ND YEAR IN ROW

ALBANY —Melissa Barnosky, a senior at Albion Central School in Albion, New York, is The American Legion New York State Oratorical Champion for 2019, Oratorical Chairman Anthony Paternostro announced.

This is the second year in a row that Melissa has won the title. Melissa competed against four other finalists from a cross section of the state in the 82nd Annual American Legion Department of New York Oratorical

Contest.

Melissa won a \$6,000 scholarship and represented New York in the National Oratorical Contest in Indianapolis, Indiana in April.

She was sponsored by Sheret Post 35, Orleans County, 8th District, and Zone 5. The “Constitutional Speech Contest” took place March 2 at Sand Creek Middle School in Colonie, New York.

The other finalists were:

- **Lea Pohalski**, a junior

at St. Pius V School, was awarded a \$4,000 scholarship. Lea was sponsored by Green Lawn Post 1244 of Suffolk County, 10th District, and Zone 2.

- **David Bruen**, a senior at Clarkstown South High School, was awarded a \$2,500 scholarship. David was sponsored by William E. DeBoise, Jr. Post 1682 of Rockland County, 9th District, and Zone 1.

Rounding out the awards are:

- **Aiden Boehm**, a junior at Coxsackie-Athens High School, was awarded a \$2,000 scholarship. Aiden was sponsored by Coxsackie Post 166 and Cairo Mohican Post 983 of Green County, 3rd District, and Zone 3.

- **Victor Gelfuso**, a junior at Richfield Springs Central School, was awarded a \$2,000 scholarship. Victor was sponsored by Hugick-Purcell-Shepard Post 616 of Otsego County, 6th District, and Zone 4.

BRET REISTAD TALKS 'BUDDY CHECK'

NATIONAL COMMANDER VISITS EASTERN NEW YORK



Department Commander Gary Schacher accompanies National Commander Brett Reistad on his visit to Eastern New York districts. Photo by Doug Malin.

SARATOGA SPRINGS — The American Legion does a good job at recruiting new members, but must step up retention efforts to ensure the organization's strength and effectiveness. National Commander Brett Reistad shared such concerns with 320 people who turned out for an official visitation dinner at the Gideon Putnam Hotel, The Saratogian reported March 30.

Specifically, he is promoting a grass-roots Buddy Check program, in which Legionnaires contact current and former members to see how they're doing and if there are any issues they might need help with, reporter Paul Post wrote.

"This is not a member-

ship campaign," he said. "It's a comradeship campaign. Remember, this organization

was formed a century ago around personal contact and engagement."

Reistad was joined by New York Department Commander Gary Schacher and many other district officials.

Locally, Navy veteran Keith Koster, of Saratoga Springs, has started an initiative called The American Legion Athletic Club, designed to get the younger War on Terror veterans involved in outdoor activities.

"It gives veterans another option for getting involved in [the] Legion and joining if they want to, which would build membership," he said.

On St. Patrick's Day, Koster completed a grueling, year-long Centennial Challenge by carrying The American Legion flag to the summit of all 46 Adiron-
Continued on next page.



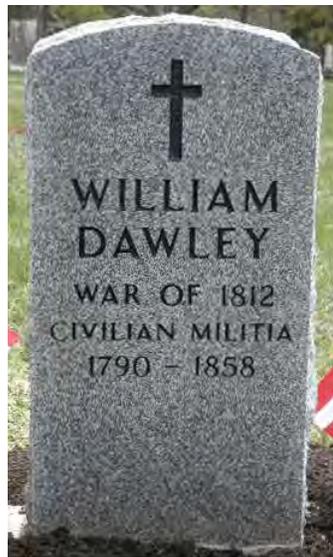
Keith Koster, who was featured in the previous issue of Legion New York, made the cover of Legion Magazine.

WAR OF 1812 VETERAN GETS NEW HEADSTONE

NATURAL BRIDGE — Thanks to the effort of Department Adjutant James W. Casey, the grave of War of 1812 veteran William Dawley is sporting a new headstone in Sand Hill Cemetery.

It all started when Lillian Dawley Kinney of Watertown was doing genealogical research and located the grave of her great grandfather William Dawley, an original settler of Wilna, the Carthage Republican Tribune reported May 26.

The headstone had broken off, was buried and when



unearthed was barely readable.

“All I did is ask for help

and he (Mr. Casey) paid for everything,” Mrs. Kinney told reporter Elaine M. Avallone. “What an amazing organization. My father, the late John Dawley, would be so extremely happy to see this happen.” She added her father was a World War II veteran, serving as a Navy medic in the Philippines.

Department Commander Gary Schacher was on hand for the unveiling, along with 5th District and Lowville Commander C. Lee Hinkelman, Department Americanism Chair John Konkol, Carthage Legion Command-

er Timothy Mulvaney, and Carthage Legion members Stanley Akins and Ed Rebb.

“Veterans take care of veterans,” Commander Schacher said. “This is our 100th anniversary year. We do as much as we can for veterans.”

Mrs. Kinney’s cousin, Alice Dawley Stewart of West Carthage and brother, Thomas Dawley of Watertown, praised The American Legion. The newspaper quoted Mrs. Stewart: “It is a great honor that they were able to do this for us and our ancestor.”

NY LEADERS KICK OFF FLAG DAY ON FOX TV

Department Commander Gary Schacher and Department Legislative Chair Frank LaMarsh appeared on the early morning TV show, *Fox & Friends First*.

They helped to celebrate Flag Day by showing proper flag etiquette.

They demonstrated the proper folding of Old Glory while host Heather Childers read the meaning behind each fold.



Commander Gary Schacher and Legislative Chair Frank LaMarsh demonstrated flag etiquette during a live broadcast on “Fox & Friends First”.

Continued from previous page.
dack High Peaks, in observance of the Legion’s 100th anniversary. He was recently featured in a cover article in the national American Legion Magazine.

People at the dinner gave Koster, a three-time cancer survivor, a standing ovation.

Reistad touted the Legion’s many contributions and work on behalf of veterans throughout its history. After World War I, it was directly responsible for approval by Congress of the U.S. Veterans Bureau, the forerunner of today’s Department of Veterans Affairs, which has

medical facilities throughout the country. “There weren’t enough hospital beds in this country to take care of everybody,” said Reistad.

During World War II, the Legion successfully fought for passage of the G.I. Bill.

The organization was also responsible for the creation

of House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees, to address veterans’ needs, in both houses of Congress.

Most recently, the Legion’s temporary financial assistance program helped U.S. Coast Guard members who were without pay during a recent government shutdown.

COMMANDER SCHACHER LAYS WREATH AT GETTYSBURG

Department Commander Gary Schacher renders salute during wreath-laying at Gettysburg Battlefield. Photo by Mario Cristaldi.



Department Commander Gary Schacher traveled to Gettysburg, PA for Memorial Day services, along with a few members of the Legion and American Legion Auxiliary.

“I was so honored to be invited to lay a wreath at the New York Monument inside the National Cemetery in Gettysburg,” he said, and “was so fortunate to have members of the New York American Legion and

Auxiliary make the trip.”

While there Commander Schacher met Lewis Jones, commander of Gettysburg American Legion Post 202, and “ran into Rich Heiland, a Seabee that I served with back in 2001.”

He also got the chance to present a commander’s coin to a reenactor playing President Lincoln.

SHERRILL TEAM BOWLS WAY TO TOP PRIZE IN STATE TOURNEY

The Sherrill Legion team of Pete Noto, Chad Glover, DJ Fogg and John Fogg bowled its way to the top team prize in the 70th annual New York State American Legion Bowling Tournament.

The tourney was held over several weekends in April and May at LeRoy Legion Lanes (Botts-Floritto Post 576) in

LeRoy and Mancuso Bowling Center in Batavia.

Other first place finishers were:

- Treva Pecore, All Event category.
- Dennis Jones, Singles.
- Jeff Coleman and Kyle Ewen, Doubles.

VETERANS PARK OFFERS SPEAKERS PROGRAM

SIDNEY, NY – Posts looking for a meeting program may be interested in a presentation being offered by Sidney Veterans Memorial Park. Navy veteran Dick Germond, a member of Charles L. Jacobi Post 183 in Sidney and president of the park association, announced the initiative to offer a 20 to 25-minute program about the veterans park. Dedicated three years ago, he said, the park is a “jewel and must-see attraction.” To schedule a presentation, especially for posts in the Southern Tier and Leatherstocking Region, contact Dick Germond at 607-643-8318; or, send e-mail to: fmfchief@gmail.com.



NY CONTINGENT VISITS D.C. MEMORIALS

A contingent from the Department of New York, led by Department Commander Gary Schacher, took time to pay respects to fallen servicemen and women in a visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial and the National Seabee Memorial (especially since the commander served with the Seabees in Iraq).

The New York Legionnaires and Sons of the American Legion members were in Washington, D.C. for The American Legion Washington Conference, Feb. 24-27.



New York legionnaires and Sons of the American Legion members at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

SCHOOL DISTRICT HONORS LEGIONNAIRE FOR SERVICE

HAMPTON BAYS, NY —Hampton Bays School District honored Legionnaire Rick Robinson in February.

“The district is proud to honor Mr. Robinson for his bravery and service to the United States,” School Superintendent Lars Clemensen told the Patch online news.

High school senior Kevin McNamara read Robinson’s bio; county and town officials presented proclamations.

The Patch reported:

Robinson started to feel a need to serve his country in 2007: His twin brother joined the Navy at 39 — and, motivated by his brother, Robinson joined the Army National Guard at 40 years of age. After basic and advanced training at Fort Benning, GA (where he was nicknamed “the old man”), he returned and was assigned to B Company of the Fighting 69th Infantry Regiment. In April 2008, Robinson volunteered to join with C

Troop, 101st Cavalry Regiment, and was deployed to Afghanistan for nine months. He was stationed at Forward Operating Base Hughey in Nangarhar Province, Jalalabad. He served as a gunner in the turret of a Humvee, utilizing 50-caliber and M240 weapons systems in support of ground troops and convoys.

Once home, Robinson was again assigned to B Company, 69th Infantry Regiment, this time on Long Island. In 2010, his unit was reassigned to Japan to train with the Japanese Defense Forces. During the remainder of his service, back in the U.S., his unit was twice activated for state emergencies that included protecting airports and train stations after the Boston Marathon bombing. Robinson was honorably discharged in January 2017 after 10 years of service. He is an active member of American Legion Hampton Bays Post 924 and VFW Post 5350.



Rick Robinson



FACES OF VETERANS
a project by
Stephen Willette

*"This project belongs
to the veteran
community and their
families. I'm just
the man holding the
camera."*

