



# The Hezzie Gazette

Official Newsletter of Hezzie Griffis American Legion Post 30

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## Commander's Comments

### Seize the Opportunity: Get Involved Today

2024 may be winding down but Post 30 is just getting started. In October, we organized two Buddy Checks: the first was to reach out and check on everyone after the storm, and the second was a follow-up to invite everyone to our October meeting. On October 30, we had the pleasure of teaching a flag etiquette class at W.E. Parker Elementary School, and on October 31, we handed out candy at the Edgefield Trunk or Treat. If you think that's a lot, just wait until you see what we have planned for November and December.

I won't list our upcoming activities here since they are detailed later in the newsletter, but I want to emphasize that **our mission as an organization is vital to our veterans, their families, our youth, and the community.** It takes all of us working together to keep Post 30 thriving.

As we look ahead, there are numerous opportunities for you to engage with our post and make a meaningful impact. Whether it's volunteering for an event or spreading the word about our initiatives, every contribution counts. **Every hour of your time volunteered helps us achieve our goals and supports those we serve.** Additionally, every bag of pecans sold, each rifle raffle ticket purchased, and timely payment of your dues all contribute to keeping our post operational. These small actions collectively strengthen our ability to serve and support our community.

Your involvement not only enhances our operations but also fosters camaraderie among members. I strongly encourage you to review our upcoming activities and choose at least one where you can lend a hand. Remember, your participation can inspire others to get

involved as well. Together, we can create a ripple effect of support that reaches far beyond our post. Thank you for your continued support.

-- Winston Boddie, Post 30 Commander

## Language That Became a Top-Secret WWII Weapon



Navajo Code Talker veteran Thomas Begay with a framed picture commemorating National Navajo Code Talkers Day

I wouldn't have been able to write this until after 1968 when declassified, 23 years after WWII. But August 14<sup>th</sup>, Navajo Code Talkers day is important to many here in Arizona, and it's some 56 years later. I feel pretty safe. The story begins in early '40s when WWI veteran Philip Johnston recalled the effectiveness of native American speakers during his stint in the U.S. Army. Johnson was raised by missionary parents on a Navajo reservation and spoke Navajo fluently. He knew of the military's search for a code that was undecipherable by enemy. The unwritten, complex Navajo language spoken only by native Americans of the U.S. Southwest was the answer. This convinced the U.S. Marines who established a whole platoon of Navajo language speakers. According to Chester Nez, one of the original 29 *Navajo Code Talkers*, as they became known, told that a major took us into a great big room, and said, "You guys are going to have to make

up a code in your own Native language.” That’s all he said. He left, closed the door behind him, and locked the door.”

*Navajo Code Talkers* would be part of every Marine assault in the Pacific from 1942 to 1945. The Japanese were totally baffled. It’s the only code that has never been deciphered by an enemy. In 1982, August 14<sup>th</sup> was proclaimed National Navajo Code Talkers Day. Gold congressional medals were awarded in 2001 to the 29 original members for services as radio operators during WWII. And in 2008, Congress passed the Code Talkers Recognition Act, honoring code talkers from all tribes. Only three of the original 29 *Navajo Code Talkers* are living. Now you know the rest of the story, as late newscaster Paul Harvey might have said.

### Update



With great respect and sadness Post 30 acknowledges the death on October 20, 2024 of U.S. Marine John Kinsel, one of the last *Navajo Code Talkers*. He was 107 years old, a resident of Lukachkai, Arizona. He served with the 9th Marine Regiment and the 3rd Marine Division during the Battle of Iwo Jima in WWII.

— by J. W. “Pete” Peterson, correspondent at large

### From the Adjutants Desk

We are pleased to report that **70.9%** of our membership has already paid their **2025 Dues**—fantastic progress! If you haven’t yet submitted your dues, please consider doing so soon to help us reach our goal of 100% dues paid this year.

#### Benefits of Paying Your Dues Now:

**Support Post 30 Community Efforts:** Timely dues payments help fund our initiatives and community outreach programs, ensuring we can continue to serve veterans and their families effectively.

**Help Keep the Lights on:** Your dues play a crucial role in covering our yearly operating costs, allowing us to maintain our facility and provide a welcoming environment for all members. From utilities to maintenance, timely payment of your dues helps keep our post running smoothly.

**Avoid Last-Minute Rush:** Paying now means you won’t have to worry about the last-minute rush as the deadline approaches, allowing you to focus on other important matters.

**Access to Member Benefits:** Your membership provides access to exclusive discounts, resources, and programs that can significantly outweigh the cost of your dues. This includes discounts on travel, insurance, and more, which can save you money throughout the year.

**Multi-Year Memberships:** By paying online, you can take advantage of multi-year memberships. This not only secures your membership for several years but also protects you from potential increases in dues during that time period.

Dues can be paid in several convenient ways:

**In Person:** Bring cash or check to our monthly meeting.

**By Mail:** Send a check made payable to American Legion Post 30 to:

American Legion Post 30  
P.O. Box 30  
Edgefield, SC 29824

**Online:** Visit [Mylegion.org](http://Mylegion.org) to pay your dues electronically.

Let’s make the **2024-2025** year our strongest yet! If you have any questions about membership or know someone interested in joining, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me.

Thank you for being an essential part of our Post 30 family!

-- Jane Doolittle, Post 30 Adjutant



## John Kemp, Legionnaire of the Quarter



John Washington Kemp, Jr., 86, prominent Edgefield resident and 30-year member of American Legion Post 30 is being honored by the post as Legionnaire of the Quarter for Oct.- Dec. 2024. "I joined the Legion because of allegiance to my country" says Kemp.

He's fervently patriotic and quick to tell you about the role South Carolinians played in American Revolutionary victories in high drama battles of King's Mountain in 1780 and Cowpens in 1781. Those battles were parts of a chain of events to eventual Patriot victory over the British at Yorktown, Virginia in 1781, ending the war and paving the way for American independence. "After about 250 years of democracy" says Kemp, "I'm concerned about my country".

John Kemp proudly served in the South Carolina Air National Guard. "I felt I needed to give my country some of my time" he said. He was a Staff Sergeant assigned to the 157th Fighter Squadron at McEntire Air National Guard Base near Hopkins, SC. There, he worked as an airborne radar mechanic on now long retired F-104 fighter aircraft. During the Vietnam War era he was deployed with his unit for nine months to Spain, and he maintains contact with service buddies to this very day.

Locally, Kemp is remembered as a wildlife advocate, award-winning tree farmer, avid poet, entrepreneur of John Kemp Antiques, and former mayor of Edgefield from 1966 to 1968. How fortunate we are to have him in our midst.

-- by J. W. "Pete" Peterson, correspondent at large

## From The Halls of Montezuma to The Shores Of Tripoli – Happy Birthday U.S. Marines



The United States Marine Corps (USMC) birthday is celebrated on November 10 in honor of when the Second Continental Congress established the Corps in 1775 to support US naval forces in the Revolutionary War. The day is a significant occasion for active and retired Marines to come together to recognize their history, traditions, and the sacrifices of those who have served. They include Post 30 members, Justin Bailey, Hugh Chrisco, Bruce Everitt, Ronald Peterson, [no relation] and Harry Taylor.

If there was ever a "hybrid" military force, the Marines are it. Their mission is clearly embodied in one of the most readily recognized songs in the world today and the oldest of the service songs of our country, The Marines' Hymn. "From the Halls of Montezuma [the Battle of Chapultepec in 1847, Mexican-American War], To the shores of Tripoli [First Barbary War and the Battle of Derna in 1805 in what is now Libya]; We fight our country's battles In the air, on land, and sea...." Marine protocol calls for Marines present and past to stand at attention, face the music and sing the words to the Hymn. Sir Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister 1940-1945 and 1951-1955, an ardent admirer of the Corps, reportedly could recite all three verses of The Marines' Hymn from memory.

Aside, Tun Tavern in Philadelphia, PA is thought to be where the first Marines enlisted. Others say "no," it was the Nicholas' family tavern, the "Conestoga Wagon." Seek and you shall find! You can ask, but don't think any of our Post veterans enlisted in Philadelphia.

Semper Fi!

-- by J. W. "Pete" Peterson, correspondent at large

## Chaplain's Corner

### "Thanksgiving"

I once heard a term from an old country comedian and preacher named Grady Nutt. He actually wrote a book about Thanksgiving and often preached on the subject. We all know that this month we gather with family and friends to celebrate Thanksgiving. Sometimes I think the holiday gets more and more squeezed out by the month-long Halloween festivities and then Christmas decorations and music popping up first thing in November.

Thanksgiving is basically a term that means not relegating giving thanks to just one holiday, or even to weekly prayers or blessings for food. Thanksgiving is a total lifestyle where we recognize that we came into this world with nothing and will leave with nothing. Everything we have - whether we've worked for it or been given it, is a resource and a blessing. It allows us to care for ourselves but also to care for others. We should demonstrate our gratitude to God by sharing what we have with others - our time, our talents, our money, our energy.

Thanksgiving is when we notice like everyone else all the scary and bad news happening in the world, but we make a conscious choice to look at our blessings and count them. Say them out loud if it helps. But one can easily tell the difference between a person who practices Thanksgiving and one who seems to always live filled with anxiety about what will happen next - many things which are out of our control. I encourage each of us to practice daily Thanksgiving year 'round. Not just on November 28, 2024.

See you at our next meeting!

-- William Beaver, Post 30 Chaplain ☒

### How A Flower Among Rubble of War Became an Enduring Symbol

It was May 3, 1915 near Ypres, Belgium. A Canadian army officer physician Lt. Col. John McCrae was sitting on the rear step of an ambulance staring at the grave of a friend and brother-in-arms killed in action. He saw blood-red flowers growing among the graves and was moved to write the first words of what would become a renowned poem, *In Flanders Fields*. In tribute to McCrae's poem, University of Georgia professor Moina Michael vowed to always wear a red poppy as a symbol of remembrance of the sacrifices of First World War

soldiers. In 1918, she campaigned to have the poppy adopted as a national symbol of remembrance and was honored by a U.S. three-cent postage stamp bearing her image as the creator of the remembrance poppy.

At the American Legion's 1920 conference in Cleveland, Frenchwoman Anna Guérin addressed Legionnaires about "Inter-Allied Poppy Day." The Legion adopted the poppy as its memorial flower and committed to support Guérin in her U.S. Poppy Day campaign. "The Poppy Lady from France," as she was called, successfully organized the first U.S. nationwide Poppy Day the week before Memorial Day 1921, distributing silk poppies made by the widows and children of devastated France.

In many Commonwealth countries and others, Remembrance Day also known as Poppy Day, is a memorial event usually observed on Armistice Day, the 11th day, of the 11th month and 11th hour (November 11th, our Veterans Day), when the First World War officially ended. In continuing recognition of Poppy Day, American Legion Auxiliaries in the U.S. annually distribute imitation poppies and receive donations in support of veterans, active military personnel and family members in need.

-- by J.W. Pete Peterson, correspondent at large

### Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC)

The VEAC will be held from November 14-16, 2024, in Ladson, SC. This event is open to all veterans and their family members and will take place at Exchange Park, located at 9850 Highway 78. The hours for the event are 0900 to 1500 on November 14-15, and 0900 to 1400 on November 16.

This VEAC provides an opportunity for veterans to receive assistance with VA claims and benefits. Attendees can get help with filing VA disability compensation (C&P) claims, pension applications, and even on-site C&P exams for eligible veterans. Additional resources include veteran readiness and employment benefits, access to the VA mobile center, VHA health care benefits with on-site enrollment, and information about VA national cemetery memorial benefits.

Community partners will also be present, offering various services to support our veterans. Past VEAC events have successfully helped thousands of veterans secure the benefits they have earned through their service.

## On the Horizon

**Edgefield Block Party:** The new date for the Edgefield Block Party is Saturday, November 23, from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. We have been given a free vendor spot and will be handing out free popcorn to kids, selling pecans and rifle raffle tickets.

We will be joined by Larry Turner who is the lead outreach coordinator from the Alston Wilkes Society (AWS). AWS is a South Carolina nonprofit organization that provides supportive services to veterans and their families.

Volunteers are needed for setup, staffing, and takedown. If you're interested, please contact Winston Boddie at 803-761-2508 or email [alpost30sc@gmail.com](mailto:alpost30sc@gmail.com).

**Fall Pecan Fundraiser:** Our pecan fundraiser is going great! We have confirmed with Mascot that the storm will not impact our pecan delivery schedule. We anticipate receiving our order around the second week of November.

Once the pecans arrive, we will organize a day and time for everyone to come by the post to pick up their orders. Additionally, we will be selling pecans at the Edgefield Block Party, so be sure to check us out there!

**2025 Rifle Raffle Fundraiser:** The 2025 Rifle Raffle is officially underway! Each ticket is \$25, with \$10 from each sale going directly to our post. Last year, we raised \$1,140 from the raffle, and this year, we have set an ambitious goal of \$2,000.

Sportsman's Warehouse in Columbia is sponsoring this year's raffle. Each winning ticket will be rewarded with a gift card equivalent to the cost of the firearm associated with that drawing. This means winners can either use the gift card to purchase the firearm or apply it towards other merchandise available at Sportsman Warehouse—a fantastic selling point for potential ticket buyers.

Tickets are available now. Let us know if you'd like some to sell or to purchase some for yourself. They'll make a great Christmas present. Along with a delicious bag of pecans of course.

**Edgefield Christmas Parade:** The annual Edgefield Christmas Parade is set for Sunday, December 8, at 1500, and we're excited to announce that Department Commander Bruce Donegan will be joining us as our special guest! He'll be driving his American Legion car,

followed by our veterans float. Let's show Commander Donegan a warm welcome by having a strong turnout from Post 30 members.

**Annual Christmas Party:** Join us for our Christmas party on December 19 at 6:00 PM at the Post! The menu will feature pork roast, two sides, and dessert, catered by 3rd Generation Catering & Restaurant. Ticket prices are \$25 and are available for presale now. Deadline to purchase tickets is December 1. For further information or to purchase tickets, please contact Jane Doolittle (803-480-1061) or email the post at [alpost30sc@gmail.com](mailto:alpost30sc@gmail.com).

## Calendar of Events

### November 11, 2024

Veterans Day Ceremony, Edgefield Veterans' Memorial Park, Time 1100

### November 14, 2024

Executive Committee Meeting at 1800

### November 14-16, 2024

Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC), Exchange Park, 9850 Highway 78, Ladson, SC

### November 21, 2024

Monthly Meeting, Dinner at 1800, meeting at 1830

### November 23, 2024

Edgefield Block Party 1000-1500, Edgefield Town Square

### December 8, 2024

Edgefield Christmas Parade, 1500

### December 12, 2024

Executive Committee Meeting at 1800

### December 19, 2024

Annual Christmas Party beginning at 1800

## NOTE IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING:

You must call Jane Doolittle (803-480-1061) or email the post no later than the Monday prior to our scheduled meeting so we can have an accurate headcount for dinner.

