



UP TO DATE - WITH 308

COMMANDER - JOHN MIKA

JR PAST CDR. - FLOYD STANDKE

1ST VICE CDR. - RALPH ROSAS

ADJUTANT - LARRY BOWMAN

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Commanders Corner

Since my last month's article did not make it in the newsletter, not a lot has changed in the economy, although we thankfully have had a few up sessions in the market. Housing prices have declined further, and layoffs continue. The new administration is spending your money like it is going out of style, and continues to borrow money to increase its voracious spending. Remember a basic tenet of government, that a government does not create money, it can only borrow money or increase taxes in order to spend more money. And the current administration is doing both in a ravenous fashion never seen before in our country.

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Borrowing money increases the national debt and in fact within a few short months of the new administration, the new debt total is currently about four times that which it inherited from the previous administration. In order to reduce the national debt that the administration is creating it plans to raise taxes, placing the emphasis on those making over \$250,000. However that kind of money is seldom made by a salary, and is more typically a small business owner, who in order to keep their income stable, will in turn raise their prices with the result that you and I will spend more as the price of goods and services increase, which in turn creates that nasty devil, inflation. Inflation is the dearth of those living on a fixed income, and it really hurts all of those working for a salary. One way or another, as the government spends more money, you and I will eventually pay for it.

Another interesting point is the shifting of funds and priorities. President Obama wants our troops pulled out of Iraq to save money and fulfill his campaign promise. However he is at the same time building up troop strength in Afghanistan. It appears to me that this is like a shell game, as funds spent in Iraq will be less, however additional troops and more money will be spent in Afghanistan.

There was an interesting and informative article by Dr. Ralph Matkin, one of our Post members, in the California Legionnaire paper put out by the American Legion Department of California. Dr. Matkin, a native of Kansas City and a member of the 101st Airborne Division who served in Vietnam, describes the Liberty Memorial and National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. The full article is

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Correspondent at Large

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

By Ralph Matkin

Those words immediately came to mind when Larry Bowman asked me to write a column for the Post Newsletter. Should have said "NO THANKS!" outright, but something kept me from doing so. Must confess, though, the challenge of taking pen in hand again is rather addictive.

It's probably best to introduce myself this first time back in the writing saddle, as it were. First, Larry's bright idea to rope me into this seems to have come from reading a Letter to the Editor I wrote that appeared in the state newsletter about the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, MO. Second, my initial reluctance is born from having published close to 100 academic articles, book chapters, and books from 1980 to 1994. Got really bored with that and switched to writing a few fiction and non-fiction novels between 1998 to 2002. Those were a terrific change of pace, until a case of "writer's block" hit me like a ton of bricks around 2003. Haven't dug out from under that weight, and still have a couple of unfinished novels in the hopper that have been giving me fits ever since. Third, maybe contributing to the Post Newsletter will get my creative juices flowing again. And fourth, Larry's always been good to me, so it's time I returned the favor!

"Who the hell are you?" you might be asking – and rightly so, I imagine. Well, here it is in a nutshell. Born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri, and educated totally in the Midwest – Missouri, Kansas, and Illinois, specifically.

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National Commander Report

The National Commander of The American Legion finds reason for optimism in President Barack Obama's request for increased funding of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The President released his fiscal year 2010 budget request executive summary on March 27 in which he calls for a \$25-billion increase in VA appropriations over the next five years.

"By this action, President Obama is sending a clear message to those who have worn, are wearing and will wear the uniforms of the armed forces that he recognizes and appreciates - in a tangible way -- their contributions to our society," said Commander Rehbein. "Although we have yet to see the details of the budget request, this initial budget overview signals good news from the President and, by extension, his new Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki."

According to the executive summary, President Obama's budget request addresses several legislative priorities of The American Legion including increasing the size of the Army and Marine Corps, closing military/civilian counterpart pay gap as well as improving military and veterans' health care, especially in the area of mental health.

The President is also calling for a repeal of the Veterans' Disability Tax -- which still burdens some military retirees with service-connected disabilities, and allowing more Priority Group 8 veterans to enroll in the VA health care

system. These are veterans whose income and / or net worth is above the usual VA thresholds but are willing to contribute co-payments for their health care.

"Also worthy of note," said Commander Rehbein, "is that some of the proposed funding increase will go toward timely implementation of the new Post 9-11 GI Bill and thus will provide significant improvements in the earned educational benefit package for veterans.

"Considering all of the present-day challenges facing him," concluded Commander Rehbein, "The American Legion appreciates the President's attention to the needs of our veterans' community. We look forward to working with the Administration and Congress in achieving a timely, predictable and sufficient VA budget."

Founded in 1919, the 2.6 million-member American Legion is the nation's preeminent service organization for veterans of the U.S. armed forces, including active duty, National Guard and Reserves, and their families. A powerful voice for veterans in Washington, The American Legion drafted the original GI Bill and was instrumental in establishing the agency that today is Department of Veterans Affairs.

Emergency Kits

Currently the United States is in the midst of one of the largest food recalls in American history. As Americans dig through their cabinets and refrigerators to remove potentially contaminated food associated with the recent peanut recall, we would like to also remind citizens to open and check their Emergency Preparedness Kits to remove any potentially harmful items from these also.

Because peanut products are often recommended as staples in Emergency Preparedness Kits due to their long

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Post Officers 2008-2009

Commander - John Mika
 1st Vice - Ralph Rosas
 2nd Vice - Ed Simmons
 3rd Vice - Cecil Montes
 Adjutant - Larry Bowman
 Finance Officer - Joe Gattuso
 Service Officer - Louise Towner
 Chaplain - Patrick Jones
 Historian - Larry Bowman
 Sgt. at Arms - Val DeBolt
 Judge Advocate - Ken Schultz
 Asst. Adjutant - Don Urquidez
 Ast. Sgt. at Arms - Felipe Lopez
 Ast. Sgt. at Arms - Ed McCune
 Ast. Sgt. at Arms - Peter Schuster
 Editor - Larry Bowman
 Jr. Past Commander - Floyd Standke

Executive Committeemen

Floyd Standke
 Peter Schuster
 Don Urquidez

House Committee

Cecil Montes
 Larry Bowman
 Floyd Standke
 Ed Simmons
 Peter Schuster

Delegates

Joseph Gattuso
 Larry Bowman
 Floyd Standke
 John Mika
 Ed Simmons
 Ralph Rosas
 Cecil Montes
 Ed McCune

Alternate Delegates

Open
 Val DeBolt
 Leo Nonn
 Michael Roberts
 Louise Towner
 Felipe Lopez
 Peter Schuster
 Charles Terry

Commanders Corner (Continued from page 1)
reprinted elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Hearing Committee Chairman, Don Urquidez, provided a report to the Executive Committee, at the February 17th meeting, regarding the sale of the Post building. Of the people who appeared before the Hearing Committee to provide testimony, 80% indicated their preference for the Post not to sell the building. In keeping with the majority, the Hearing Committee made a recommendation not to sell the building. A discussion ensued, resulting in a motion to table the sale of the building for three months, and to revisit the issue in order to see how the market and the financial condition of the Post is at that time.

Remember to check out our new Website; www.calegion308.org is the Web address. Reseda Post 308 information, history, officers, and current events are presented. Pictures of previous events are also posted. If there is something that you believe is missing, be sure let me know.

The St. Patrick's Day Dance, on March 15th, was a great success, as a good time was had by one and all. Cecil Montes did his magic in the kitchen, and provided an outstanding banquet of corned beef and cabbage, with potatoes and mixed vegetables, plus a salad and a scrumptious desert. Ed Simmons and the Reseda NJROTC Cadets led by John Miranda, did a great job in decorating the tables and the hall. We danced and listened to the wonderful entertainment provided by R.J. Stinger, who is a great trouper and really put on an outstanding performance.

It's not too early to mention it, but remember to attend the Memorial Day parade and Post BBQ on Monday, May 25th this year. Make sure to attend, and bring another veteran so we can have a big turnout, to show respect for our comrades who made the ultimate sacrifice and to show support for our active duty troops.

April 7th, is our next General Meeting date, and it is also first nominations for officers. Don't forget to exercise your Post responsibilities to nominate responsible representatives to run the Post, so come to the General Meeting

at 8 PM. Ed Simmons promised that dinner will be served starting at 6:30 pm.

Till the next newsletter,

John Mika

Been There—Done That (Continued from page 1)

Moved to Los Angeles in 1976 when I finally had had enough of Midwest winters, summers, and killer humidity year-round. Lived in Southern Illinois from 1979 until I successfully escaped again to Los Angeles in 1986. Been here ever since, with NO plans ever to move away again! Worked a 5-year stint at the West Los Angeles VA on the Brentwood (psychiatric) side of the complex, during which time I got a teaching job at Cal State Long Beach. Have been at CSULB since 1987, and truly am looking forward to retiring at the end of this semester. Too many cracks in the "Ivory Tower" perspective of things for my liking any longer. I suppose the realities of having served in the military are at the heart of my increasing discontent with academic fantasyland.

My active duty was in the Army from 1969 to 1971 as a draftee. Trained as a gun-toting medic, and was assigned to an artillery battery with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam. Saw some action, got some medals, came home, and ended my time in service working the emergency room at Tuttle Army Hospital, Hunter Army Airfield, in Savannah, GA. Used the GI Bill to get all my graduate school degrees. Thank you Uncle Sam, but I never wanted any part of the military ever again – or so I thought at the time. Fast forward to 1988. I got the hankering to wear the uniform again! Missed the spit and polish, and the comradeship of veterans. So, I joined the California State Military Reserve until my unit (1st Medical Brigade) was inactivated in 1996. Put my Army togs in mothballs, and have been letting my hair grow ever since!

So, there you are, and here I am, trying to figure out something interesting to write for next time the presses are ready to roll. Let me hear from you

about things you'd like to read in this column. The only topic I plan to steer clear of is politics, which will be harder to do in this climate than me agreeing to write this column. But, I enjoy challenges!

Ralph Matkin

Kits (Continued from page 2)

shell life and because they are a good source of protein, we encourage all kit owners to look at their kits to ensure food products are not on the peanut recall list. Please keep in mind that the peanut product recall extends beyond peanut-flavored products. The following are some examples of foods also included in the recall that may contain peanuts:

- Granola
- Snack bars
- Crackers
- Cereal
- Trail Mix
- Cookies
- Noodles
- Dog treats

A full list of recalled peanut products and what individuals should do with recalled items can be found on the Food and Drug Administration's Web site,

<http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/peanutbutterrecall/index.cfm>.

In addition to checking for peanut-related items, please be sure to check for other items in your kit that may have expired, including medications, food and pet food, water, and other

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9/11/2001

**Never
Forget**

EDITORIAL

Veterans Betrayed By the Department of Veterans Affairs

Peggy Burgess

Veterans have once again been betrayed by the Dept. of Veterans Affairs (DVA), the very Agency that is supposed to protect them but, in fact, has not since Korea.

The latest betrayal involves the Sepulveda VA in North Hills, CA, which serves veterans throughout the San Fernando, Simi and Antelope Valleys and Ventura County, including Lancaster-Palmdale and north to Santa Maria. Since 1996, the VA has systematically downsized and gutted this once vibrant full service hospital and medical center. The hospital was demolished and there are no urgent care or emergency services available. What basically remains is an outpatient clinic, pharmacy, a nursing home for aging vets, an x-ray lab, a methadone dispensary and a few medical buildings which are now rented to TV and film production companies, including Gray's Anatomy. None of the Film and TV revenue is used for the benefit of the Veterans.

Not content with that, a few years ago, the DVA's Asset Management Division devised a unique new tool called the Enhanced Use Lease (EUL). The sole purpose of the EUL program is to allow the VA to lease veterans Land to private sector developers and clear the way for the VA to divest itself of unwanted properties.

In 2007 the Dept. of Veterans Affairs entered into two 75-year Enhanced Use Leases at the Sepulveda VA with A Community of Friends (ACOF) and New Directions (ND). ACOF is a private sector low income developer also specializing in large scale sober living complexes. New Directions owns and operates a number of sober living homes in single family neighborhoods

throughout the Los Angeles area. New Directions also operates an in-patient drug and alcohol abuse program at the Westwood VA. Those patients are not allowed to leave the campus unescorted. The proposed Sepulveda project is entirely different.

The Leases allow conversion of two urgently needed medical buildings, 4 and 5, into a 147 unit apartment complex, plus two managers units, on 7.05 acres of largely undeveloped land near the center of the campus. The development is being promoted as permanent housing for homeless veterans. However, under federal law, it cannot be exclusively for veterans. The estimated 2004 cost of the conversion on VA property was \$40 million and would be at least double that now. Homeless veterans can be housed anywhere and we have contractors estimates that the same complex could be built from scratch anywhere else at \$100,000 per door. Buildings 4 and 5 were the psychiatric and spinal cord units.

The Leases give ACOF and New Directions, title to the buildings and all improvements plus 90% of the film and TV revenue, estimated by the VA at over \$4 million in 2009. Further, the DVA Secretary can sell or simply transfer the deed to the lessees at any time during the 75 years.

The Sepulveda VA is zoned PF-1 public facility, in this case a hospital. Apartments are not allowed in the PF zone so the Lessees must get a zoning Variance from the City Of L.A. in order to proceed. Approval of the Variance will set a dangerous precedent and open up not only those 7 acres but the entire 160 acres of the Sepulveda VA to further development by the private sector. None of it will be for the Veterans who will lose their land and their medical center forever. A Zoning Administrator hearing was held on February 20. Over 200 veterans and community members spoke in opposition to the project. The decision is still pending but whether it is approved or denied, the decision will be appealed to the North Valley Area Planning Commission by one side or the other.

The project is also opposed by the North Hills West Neighborhood Council (NHWNC), whose boundaries in-

clude the Sepulveda VA and the veterans it serves are stakeholders. The NHWNC has studied the proposed project in depth for over four years. The NHWNC voted to deny it twice, once in 2006 and again in November 2008. They concluded the veterans and the community would be better served if buildings 4 and 5, which are clean and in good condition, were refurbished and staffed as medical buildings. As such, they would house 300-350 Veterans undergoing treatment at any given time, while the apartments, even if they were for Veterans only, would house only 147 permanently.

The issue is simple. These are medical buildings, the veterans and the public conscience demand they remain so. This country is at war! To deprive thousands of veterans of urgently needed medical buildings in favor of 147 apartments to house a few would be criminal!

Veterans are entitled to receive full service hospital and medical care in their immediate area. That's why VA hospitals were set up in San Diego, Long Beach, Westwood and Sepulveda. Aging and disabled veterans and the thousands who will soon be returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, must not be forced to travel two to four hours, one way, to Westwood for medical care.

No one wants this project to go forward. In addition to the NHWNC, the coalition of neighborhood council opponents include Granada Hills South, Foothills Trails District NC and Sunland Tujunga (combined the four councils represent over 230,000 stakeholders). Also opposed are two schools, The San Fernando Valley Historical Society, LAPD (Devonshire Division), the 5,000 members of The American Legion District 20, the local chapter of Viet Nam Veterans of America, Veterans Today Network, We The Veterans and dozens of other Veterans' Organizations. The list is growing daily.

So, the line is drawn in the Sand! Veterans and the community are also calling on President Obama and General Eric Shinseki, Secretary of the DVA, to rescind the Leases and restore the entire 160 acre property as a full service

hospital-medial center. To allow use by the private sector for any other purpose is to degrade and disenfranchise the survivors who have served this country honorably, those currently serving and defile the memories of those have died in that service. This land belongs to the veterans, bought and paid for with their blood and their lives. No one has the right to lease, sell or give it away without their approval and the veterans do not approve of this misuse of their land.

Peggy Burgess



John Miranda and Reseda Cadets prior to decorating. Please see CALEGION308.ORG for more photos.

Below—Joe Gattuso and Bernie Collura just having FUN.



Left—Cecil Montes cooking up some cabbage.

Below—Mary and Pam grinning up a storm. Maybe they know a secret!



(Continued from page 3)

recalled items. The U.S. government provides information on unsafe, hazardous, or defective products ranging from consumer products, food, medicine, and cosmetics at www.recalls.gov.

Ensuring family and neighbors are prepared is an essential step in helping communities during and after an emergency. Families should have an Emergency Preparedness Kit in all locations that are frequented often, including homes, offices, schools, cars and day care facilities. These kits should hold a variety of essential items that are needed during a disaster, such as a flashlight, radio, cash, clothing, protective equipment, medicines, and of course food and water. For a complete list of Emergency Preparedness Kit recommended items, please visit <http://www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/supplykit.shtm>.



Two lovers on the dance floor.



Could it be? A large leprechaun?

“And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall set you free”

Adjutant Report

There is not much of a report this month, as I am short of time and space. Don't forget to attend, nominate, run, or vote for your officer of choice for the 2009-2010 Legion Year on April 7. We need working -dedicated officers. John Mika, Ralph Rosas, Ed Simmons, Cecil Montes, Felipe Lopez, Joe Gattuso and others need help in running this organization and building. Step up to the plate! Or at least attend a meeting and vote for your choice.

Next month we will be having another CERT class starting on May 7 and every Thursday for 6 weeks. The class is from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm. Come and learn emergency procedures. I also noticed that there is also going to be an emergency preparedness fair at CSUN on April 28. Everyone has to get their house in order to survive after a disas-

ter.

Please check out our new website and email or write with suggestions. Your old photos, newspaper clippings, post event photos, copies of post paper-work/old newsletters are welcomed as we would love to include those in our history. We are especially looking for old newsletters and correspondence prior to 1980.

There is a District meeting on April 6 should be attended by all post delegates. There probably will be extended discussion at that meeting about the Sepulveda VA and the New Directions proposal to take over buildings 4 and 5 (see editorial on page 4). Come and express your views.

On April 11 and 12 we once again have Wrestling at the Post. Stop by and have a few laughs watching a great bunch of athletes do some amazing feats.

Larry Bowman

RESEDA POST 308 UPCOMING EVENTS

April 2009

April 1 - Swing Dance
April 6 - District meeting at Saguas-Newhall Post
April 7 - Dinner at 6:30 pm
April 7 - General Meeting - 8:00
April 8- Swing Dance
April 11 - Wrestling at the Post
April 12 - Wrestling at the Post
April 15 - Swing Dance
April 17 - Friday Night Dance
April 18 - 6th Area Conference
April 19 - 6th Area Conference
April 21 - Exec. Meeting
April 22 - Swing Dance
April 29 - Swing Dance

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