2016 Year End Review

Veterans of Foreign Wars - Post 3225 – Clovis, CA

As we approach the New Year, 2017, I find myself looking back at what our Post and Auxiliary has accomplished over the last twelve months. I hope you will take a few minutes to reflect back on 2016 and take pride in what we accomplished together.
I want to thank every member of the Post and the Auxiliary for the hours and hours of work you contributed to make sure we continue our legacy - helping Veterans and their families in our community. Without the individual contributions from our membership, our legacy would cease to exist.
So, let's travel back to:

January 2016

After a busy December 2015, we had a chance to spend some time with family and friends. We did, however, support the Auxiliary at Bingo at the Community Living Center at the Fresno Veterans Administration Hospital on January 3rd. Auxiliary 3225 does a great job at this event several times throughout the year and Post participation has added to the experience for the Veterans residing at the CLC.
On January 28th, Art Nunes, Ronnie Rackley (Chairman for JROTC and ROTC) and August Flach from the Post and Patrice Flach from the Auxiliary attended the Clovis East JROTC Awards Program honoring several of their cadets.

February 2016

At our meeting on the 5th, we awarded Certificates and Scholarships to the Voice of Democracy winners. Gabe Villasenor, our Chairman for Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen did an outstanding job with this annual event. We awarded five high school students with VOD and three middle school students with PP awards. The Voice of Democracy winners were: Haroutiun Khlyan, Jacob Hargrove and Timothy Diliberto from Design Science High School, Justin Lagera from Clovis North High School and Michael Seley from University High School. Michael Seley also won an award from VFW District 9.
Our Patriots Pen winners were: Sania Heydarfachi from Tenaya Middle School, Nancy Gomez from Hamilton K-8 and Joanna Murillo from Easterby Elementary School.
We also entertained Guy Adams and Jack Hannah from the Heart of the Horse Therapy Ranch. A donation of $1,000.00 was awarded by two students from Clovis West High School. They created an entrepreneurial project on campus with the goal of helping pets. These students, who are also brothers and their teacher, Steven Rocheford, presented the check.

On the 7th of February, we visited with our brothers and sisters at CLC for Bingo once again.
On the 17th, Jerry Hayden – Youth Activities Chairman and August Flach presented Certificates of Appreciation to Girl Scout Troop 2385 for their volunteer hours at Post and Auxiliary events in December.

On the 18th, we had a similar meeting with Cub Scout Pack 59 to present Certificates of Appreciation for their ongoing support of our programs and events.

March 2016

At our meeting on March 4th, Girl Scout Troop 2385 attended and brought along a supply of Girl Scout Cookies. Every Veteran at the meeting was given a box of their choice as a "Thank You". We, in turn, purchased a lot of cookies. Many of those were sent overseas to our Active Duty Military.

On March 5th, we attended the 100th Anniversary Army ROTC event at Fresno State University. The Army ROTC program on campus hosted a "Raider Challenge" for JROTC programs in the Central Valley as well as units from other states to compete for trophies and recognition after a grueling day of physical fitness events. Mother Nature made the event even more challenging with a good, all day hard rain. During the awards ceremony, Post 3225 was recognized as an ongoing supporter of their ROTC Program. We received a very generous donation from the "Bulldog Battalion".

We were back at the CLC for Bingo again on March 20th. The residents at CLC truly appreciate the Auxiliary and Posts involvement and the comradery.

April 2016

If it's April in Clovis, everyone knows it's "Rodeo Time" and to make sure the Post was ready to Cowboy Up, we set up our Recruiting and Information booth for "Big Hat Days" in Clovis. This has always been a great venue for recruiting new members, distributing Buddy Poppies and socializing with the residents of Clovis.

On April 7th, the Veterans Administration hosted an event at Clovis Veterans Memorial District to honor Vietnam Veterans at the "50th Anniversary" of the start of the Vietnam War. A large number of Post 3225 members attended and received recognition and the long awaited "Welcome Home". Each honoree was presented a 50th Anniversary lapel pin.

In honor of the 58,459 Brothers and Sisters who never made it home.

On April 16th, several members supported the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) fundraiser at the AUSA Wine & Vintage fundraiser. A good time was had by all attendees. "A stroll down Memory Lane".

On a beautiful Saturday, April 23rd, Post and Auxiliary participated in the 2016 Clovis Rodeo Parade. Mother Nature was not a factor this year and the crowd assembled was very welcoming as always. We had a great time again this year. Plan to join us on the last Saturday in April 2017.

May 2016

On Sunday, May 1st, Post and Auxiliary 3225 members along with the Clovis community, Girl Scout Troop 2385, Boy Scout Troop 514, the Color Guard from the VFW Post in Kerman and various other Veterans Service Organizations were assembled at the Memorial District to celebrate "Loyalty Day". Every person in attendance handled the Flag of the United States and presented it to the Honor Guard from Clovis Post 3225 to be raised on the flag pole.

The Clovis East High School JROTC Cadets Awards Presentation was next on May 5th. Chief Dennis Nodine arranged for a delicious dinner and contacted numerous Veterans Organizations to present the awards to very deserving Cadets.

Earlier in the day, on May 5th, we learned of the passing of Danny DiPierri, a life member of VFW Post 3225. Danny was proud to have served in the Marine Corp and was a Korean War Veteran. Rest in peace brother and Semper Fi.

On May 11th, Ronnie Rackley (ROTC/JROTC Chairman) and Commander August Flach attended the Fresno State Army ROTC Awards ceremony. Receiving the Veterans of Foreign Wars – Post 3225 ROTC Award is Cadet Silva. He was awarded the VFW ROTC Medal and a check for $500.00.

On Friday, May 13th Farmers Market 2016 began. Post and Auxiliary 3225 participated during the entire summer. The event is held every Friday night through September 30th. This has been an excellent venue for recruiting new members, fundraising, distributing Buddy Poppies and accepting Flags that are ready for retirement from the Clovis community.

As we have done several times in past years, on Saturday, May 14th, we held a VFW 3225 Post Medal Ceremony honoring all members of our Post who had not already received the award. Through our recruiting efforts, we continue to add new members and we wanted to honor them for their service and sacrifice. The honorees come from every branch of the service. The military campaign these Veterans served in represent every combat action from World War II to the present Global War on Terrorism. We enjoyed a nice dinner with appetizers and desserts provided by Auxiliary 3225 and after the dinner, our award ceremony took place.

On May 25th, Post and Auxiliary members attended a program hosted by the Fresno Elks Club. High School students met with and interview Korean War Veterans from the area. Their interviews were recorded and presented at this dinner. Several of our Korean War Veterans participated. Thanks for sharing your experiences.

In preparation for Memorial Day, on Saturday – May 28th, Post members visited Academy Cemetery as well as Red Bank Cemetery to place US Flags at the graves of all Veterans laid to rest on these hallowed grounds. With the assistance of the Boy Scout Troop 514, Girl Scout Troop 2385, Cub Scout Pack 59 and the Clovis Post Honor Guard, a full ceremony took place including lowering the flags to half-mast at the entrance to each location, followed by our National Anthem and a brief ceremony with a "Three Volley Salute" and the playing of Taps. This is an annual event that every member takes pride in as we honor the fallen.

May 30th was the day designated as Memorial Day 2016. It was a very busy day for Post and Auxiliary 3225. We began at 0730 hours, at Sierra Villa Assisted Living Center. Again this year, as we have done for the last three years, we held a Memorial Day ceremony to remember fallen Veterans that once resided at Sierra Villa. The National Anthem was performed by Michael Burton, the Post Chaplain. The Post Honor Guard then fired Three Volleys and played Taps.

Many members of Post and Auxiliary 3225 attended the ceremony at Clovis Cemetery. This year, the American Legion, Post 147 hosted the event and did an outstanding job. The Veterans of Foreign Wars – Post 3225 will be responsible for hosting Memorial Day 2017 at Clovis Cemetery. It will be a privilege to honor these Veterans and their families.

Following the ceremony at Clovis Cemetery, we attended a Memorial Day Concert at Clovis Veterans Memorial District and enjoyed a delicious meal hosted by the Memorial District. Post 3225 members hosted the "bar", providing coffee, tea, water and soft drinks.

Thank you to every member of the Post and Auxiliary, who participated in the numerous events during this National Holiday, set aside to pay our respects to our fallen heroes.

Sierra Villa Assisted Living

Academy Cemetery

Red Bank Cemetery

June 2016

Each year, we have selected a local non-profit organization helping Veterans in our community. This year, we decided to work with the Heart of the Horse Therapy Ranch. The organization has worked to provide rehabilitation and developing motor skills through horseback riding. Their clients were primarily children until five years ago when they started working with a group of Veterans that have a variety of visible and non-visible scars as a result of their military service.

The Heart of the Horse Therapy Ranch was gifted a large piece of property, owned by the Gallo family, with the stipulation being that the property be renovated and used to address Veterans' needs – among those needs are Veterans with debilitating injuries, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, those that are homeless and men and women who can't find employment. The Fundraiser, as we labeled it is Veterans Equine Therapy Home Project. We began raising funds in May at the Farmers Markets and continued through September. As you can see, there is a lot of work to be done.

With the help from our wonderful friends at Sandy's Country Junction Restaurant, funds were also raised at a couple of dining events held at the restaurant. The first dinner was a "Friday Night Fish Fry" on June 17th. Tickets were sold in advance and at the door for $10.00 for an "all you can eat" dining experience hosted by the owners of Sandy's.

The incredible staff from Sandy's worked to serve our guests, providing their usual, unparalleled charm and personality to the evening. Thank you all for your incredible generosity.

A dessert bar provided by Auxiliary 3225 and a silent auction helped to make this a GREAT event. For weeks prior to the evening, Post and Auxiliary members as well as several Clovis residents worked tirelessly to gather items for our silent auction from business merchants from Clovis and Fresno. We can't thank you enough for your assistance.

As the month of June was drawing to a close, it was time for our monthly "Social Dinner". The venue for the dinner changes each month and this month, we chose The 500 Club in Clovis. We enjoyed the company of our Senior Vice Commander, Dave Youngs for the last time as we bid him farewell before his move to Alabama. Dave did an outstanding job as Senior Vice for the two years he held the position. We hated to see him go but he has family in Alabama and we should always remember - "family first"!

We wish you the best and thank you for your contributions to VFW Post 3225.

July 2016

If you've been a member of Post 3225 for any length of time, you're aware that July always heats up, partially due to triple digit temperatures but also because from July 1st through July 4th, we operate our Fireworks stand. Mother Nature provided temperatures close to 110°each day but thanks to the Memorial District, we had ice for our coolers, a highly visible location for our booth and a generator to provide power for lighting and operating fans to cool things off. This is our major fundraiser for the year and due to the hard work and long hours donated by a relatively small number of our membership, this years' event was the best in recent memory. Dennis Van Zandt assumed responsibility for the four day event from Dave Youngs who moved to Alabama to be with family. Dave put in a full day on July 1st at the stand and boarded the plane early July 2nd. I'm sure everyone who worked with Dave the last few years will agree that "we missed you, Dave". Dennis never missed a beat though. The stand ran smoothly every day. As I'm sure Dennis will tell you, hard work and many hours of "hard labor" contributed to the final result. We appreciate all of the members who helped again this year but I want to acknowledge Dennis Van Zandt, Tom Gritton, Jerry Hayden and Max Donaldson. These gentlemen operated the stand from Set Up to Tear Down every day, a minimum of 12 hours each day. Thank you, as well to every member who helped over the four days. Your time and energy resulted in the best year I can remember.

On July 16th, a ceremony was held at Academy Cemetery honoring the "Pioneer Spirit" of many, dating back to when the Academy community was formed. The Post was asked to present the Colors at the ceremony. Roy Fessenden, Rob Ambrosini and I were honored to provide the detail for this important occasion. You will be interested to know that the land where the Cemetery lies was donated by one of those "Pioneer Families", the Simpsons and that one of the members of Auxiliary 3225 is

related to them – Joanne Simpson Coon. *The first internment was an 8 year old boy, Benjamin Baxter Baley in November 1867.*

On July 17th, we visited our friends at the Community Living Center for another rousing Bingo event.

August 2016

At the mid-month meeting a few months earlier, we discussed a project to turn downtown Clovis into an "All American City" by providing an "Avenue of Flags" on Clovis Avenue, Pollasky Avenue and Veterans Parkway. We presented a plan to the Veterans Memorial District seeking their involvement and on August 24th, we met with Business Owners of Old Town (BOOT) to determine what interest there might be among them. There is a lot of interest and our plan is to work with a Boy Scout Troop to have them take on this project.

On August 25th, the Clovis Kiwanis Club hosted a reunion for the World War II and Korean War Veterans who attended the previous two Honor Flights to Washington DC to see the memorials dedicated to their service and sacrifice. Post 3225 Color Guard was honored to present the Colors for the event.

September 2016

On September 9th, the second fundraising dinner for the Veterans Equine Therapy Home Project took place at Sandy's Country Junction. The "Taco Fiesta" was a huge hit. We are very grateful to Bob and Elaine Pierce and the staff at Sandys for hosting this event for us. Some of the members of the Auxiliary provided desserts once again and the community provided some great items for the silent auction. The Taco Fiesta was even more popular than the Fish Fry in June. We came close to filling up the restaurant for a second seating. The food was outstanding and our guests were generous. Thank you again, Bob and Elaine.

A few of our members attended Service Officer Training on September 10th. Earlier in the year, we lost the services of Jack Fosnot who worked as the VFW Veteran Service Officer at the Fresno V. A. Hospital. We miss Jack a lot. He was excellent at his job and loved being able to help Veterans. No one who attended the training will be able to fill the void left by Jack's departure. Thanks, Jack, for everything you did for our Brothers and Sisters.

POW/MIA Recognition

September 17th was the day to remember and honor Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action on POW/MIA Day. Our friends from Fresno Ex-POW Chapter 1 attended the program hosted by Post 3225 and District 9. Several other Veterans Organizations participated as well, including the American Legion, AMVETS, DAV and Madera VFW Post 1981.

Prior to the event, our guests shared memories from their periods of captivity with us so that we could communicate their hardships to the audience during the program. Even with the stories they shared with us, it is impossible to fully understand what they endured. These gentlemen served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. If you haven't taken the opportunity to visit with them, I recommend you do so. You may not have many opportunities left. Bring your children or grandchildren. Give them the chance to meet some real American Heroes.

September 25th was an opportunity to set up our booth at the Antique and Collectables Show on Pollasky Avenue. This one day event draws huge crowds and has been an excellent opportunity to interact with the community. Although we have our recruiting materials with us, our primary reason for being there is to start the fundraising campaign for Wreaths Across America 2016.

October 2016

October 1st brought us to the final fundraising dinner for the Veterans Equine Therapy Home Project. "The Chuckwagon Barbeque" was held at the Clovis Veterans Memorial District.

We occupied the Veterans Room, Veterans Parkway from 4th Street to 5th Street and the park at Veterans Parkway and 5th Street where "L Train" Country Western Band performed live. Guests were served tri tip (donated by Cargill – thank you so much), beans, cornbread and salad. Outside, Bob and Terri Brookshire had the "Crumb Snatcher Goodies" lunch wagon set up where

they served hot dogs, sodas, some tasty treats and several choices of "stuffed baked potatoes". I regret not venturing outside and buying a stuffed tater before the party was ending. Thank you, Bob and Terri, for your generosity and for going to the trouble of hauling your lunch wagon and all the equipment down the mountain for this event.

We had an extensive dessert bar provided by a few of the members of Auxiliary 3225 and a very giving group of ladies who supported this campaign from the very beginning. Thank you so much – Bonnie Holden, Kathy Fast, Linda Branam, Katie Wylie, Joanne Coon, Sharon Smith and of course, Patrice Flach.

The dessert bar was a great success and raised a good portion of the proceeds for the evening. The raffle and silent auction also generated a lot of fun and excitement during the evening. We sincerely thank the residents and merchants of Clovis for their generous donations in support of our fundraiser. Among the items donated were a collection of Saddles from Doctor Rampertab from the Fresno V. A. and the Clovis community as well as an amazing assortment of prizes from Dave Holden. His generosity and guidance were integral to the success of our efforts.

The proceeds from our fundraising and those from PG&E will be presented to Guy Adams at our Post meeting on February 3rd 2017. I hope you'll join us.

HEART OF THE HORSE THERAPY

On the 16th of October, we attended "Glorious Junk Days" in downtown Clovis where we raised funds for the 2016 Wreaths Across America campaign for Academy Cemetery and Red Bank Cemetery. We had a small number of members who participated but it was a very successful event as we raised almost $1,000.00 in an eight hour period. Thank you to the Clovis community for your ongoing support.

In support of the Wreaths Across America program, specifically for Clovis Cemetery, led by Linda Branam, we attended an all you can eat Spaghetti dinner at Sandy's Country Junction on October 21st. During the year, Linda worked in support of the Veterans Equine Therapy project and our own Wreaths Across America campaign and we were happy to support her efforts as well.

On October 22nd, our own fundraiser continued as we met with some wonderful folks at Academy Church. This was the second year we were invited to attend their Barbeque and tell them about the Wreath ceremony planned for Academy Cemetery where their fallen family members are laid to rest. Thank you, Joanne Coon for making these arrangements.

We continued our fundraising on October 28th when Guy Adams joined us at the PG&E station in south Fresno to enhance their internal fundraising for the Veterans Equine Therapy Home Project. This was a very fun, well organized event with a delicious Barbeque and a carnival atmosphere with games to compete in and some terrific items for the silent auction. In total, our friends at PG&E raised a little over $4,000.00 which will be presented at the VFW meeting on February 3rd, 2017. Great job, PG&E. Thanks for getting behind this project to help our Veterans in need.

Clovis Fest took place on October 29th and 30th. It has historically taken place in early October but was delayed this year. We set up our recruiting booth and continued raising funds for Wreaths Across America. We had beautiful weather on the first day of the event but it was cool and wet on the second day. This affected the attendance significantly. It was still a great opportunity to converse with the residents of Clovis.

November 2016

Veterans Day – November 11th 2016. The day started early (0500 hours – OMG that's early) with the chef's firing up the ovens and griddles in preparation of the annual Veterans Day Pancake Breakfast. The doors opened at 0700 hours with a hungry crowd awaiting us. Gnarly Charley from KSKS was on hand doing a live feed, which really raises awareness of our event and provides for some great music for our guests. The service was outstanding and the food was hot and delicious. We had a large number of volunteers on hand from several groups from Clovis. They kept the coffee cups full and were quick to clear, clean and set up the tables for our guests. Our volunteers were from Buchanan High School Leadership Group, Clovis East Air Force JROTC, Bullard High School, Girl Scout Troop 2385, Boy Scout Troop 514 and Troop 60 as well as Lana Ambrosini, a seasoned volunteer helper who hasn't missed a Pancake Breakfast in the last five or six years. Thank you to all of our volunteers.

The costs for the food items were minimized thanks to Sandy's Country Junction, Producers Dairy and Denny's Restaurants. We are very grateful for your support.

Veterans Day is a busy day for the Auxiliary as well. They work for months in advance preparing baked goods, jams, quilts, art work and other handmade items for the boutique and raffle tables. The Auxiliary members also collected donations from businesses in Fresno and Clovis.

During the four hour event, we served more than 600 Veterans and their families, our volunteers and the Post and Auxiliary members who pitched in to make this event successful.

The Clovis Veterans Memorial District hosted a variety of events throughout the day. While we were serving pancakes, there was a Muscle Car Show and some military vehicles outside on Veterans Parkway. At 1100 hours, guests were entertained at a concert of military and patriotic music. In the auditorium, documentary films were shown featuring our men and women in uniform who served our country during every conflict America has fought in and a Memorabilia Room where souvenirs are displayed and exhibited for the guests' pleasure.

At the end of the day, the Board of Directors and the Memorial District hosted a Veterans Day Dinner for Veterans and a guest. We enjoyed a delicious catered dinner, a brief program and a large portion of comradery amongst a group with at least one thing in common – we are all Veterans. If you attended the dinner, please take a few minutes to say "Thank You" to our hosts, the Clovis Veterans Memorial District.

Over the years, our Post and Auxiliary have supported the 144th Fighter Wing Squadron in a variety of events. Several members of the Post are active duty with the 144th. Earlier this year, we learned that many of them were being deployed to Europe. We attempted to put together a "going away" barbeque at the base but we couldn't put it all together in time.

On November 13th, these men and women had returned home and along with VFW District 9, American Legion at the State level, AMVETS, DAV and VFW Post 1981 from Madera and Post 3225, we held a "Welcome Home" luncheon for those deployed and their families.

Beginning on November 17th, our Department Commander and the Auxiliary President visited District 9 and a number of the Posts in the District. While they were here, on November 18th, we visited the Veterans Home in southwest Fresno. We got the grand tour of the facility and had the opportunity to visit with many of the Veterans living there.

We also visited the Veterans Administration Central California Health Care System (the Fresno V. A. Hospital) where we met with Administration briefly, toured the hospital and visited with some of the Veterans there.

The day wrapped up at the VAVS dinner at Yosemite Falls Café and a social gathering at Post 8900.

On November 19th, our guests met up with a large contingent of members of Post 3225 at the Social Breakfast at Sandy's Country Junction.

Following breakfast, we traveled to the Heart of the Horse Therapy Ranch where Guy Adams and a group of his ranch hands talked about their mission. Guy shared some great experiences with children who have benefitted from the therapy obtained by riding horses. He also talked about the program to benefit Veterans and how riding horses has helped these men and women. After a tour of the Ranch, we traveled to the site where the Veterans Equine Therapy Home is and had the opportunity to see first-hand the condition of the home as it sits today and discuss the plan to renovate it. Once completed, the home will benefit up to ten Veterans by providing a roof over their heads, a bed to rest, meals, counseling and vocational job training. Our State visitors expressed much enthusiasm for the efforts to help Veterans in our community.

The State visit concluded after a dinner at Clovis Veterans Memorial District in their honor with live entertainment by AUSA Sounds of Freedom Military Band. The meal was provided by VFW Post 1981 (Madera) and drinks provided by Post 3225 (Clovis).

November 20th, found us back at the Community Living Center for another afternoon of Bingo with the residents.

December 2016

December 3rd, the first Saturday in December, Clovis holds the "Children's Electric Light Christmas Parade" through downtown Clovis. Every year, Post 3225 has pulled their float (the same one used for the Rodeo Parade) but only after a major face lift. Bill Rogers, Jerry Hayden, Dennis Van Zandt and John Schaible spend countless hours decorating the float. When completed,

the float takes on a totally different personality. The spectators, especially the kids in the crowd, are really in the Christmas spirit by the time the parade takes place. Nice job on the float again this year, gentlemen.

December 7th 1941 – "A Day That Will Live In Infamy"

Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day 2016 – 75th Anniversary

To pay tribute to the Pearl Harbor Survivors and all World War II Veterans, we gathered at Clovis Veterans Memorial District to honor those men and women whose lives were forever changed when the United States was attacked. Sadly, we had just one "Pearl Harbor Survivor" in attendance however, we were fortunate enough to have several World War II Veterans in the audience. Their sacrifices to our nation were acknowledged and a brief "bio" was read on each of them. At the beginning of the ceremony, each World War II Veteran was escorted onto the stage by a Veteran from more recent campaigns. As they entered, they ceremoniously "Presented the Colors" as their "bios" were read to the large audience that attended the program.

In all, fifteen flags were presented including the Flag of the United States, California Flag, POW/MIA, all six Branch of Service and Campaign Flags from WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

Several VFW Posts and District 9 contributed to the success of the event. Jim Anderson spent many hours working out all the details from start to finish and is deserving of congratulations and our gratitude. Post 1981, Madera provided the Honor Guard, Fresno Post 5057 handled the "9 Bells" ceremony and Clovis Post 3225 participated in the event and hosted the luncheon after the program. The Auxiliaries provided delicious side dishes and desserts and are worthy of our sincere "thank you".

December 8th was a difficult day for Post 3225. William Kramme passed away after suffering a third stroke in a short period of time. His graveside service was held at Clovis Cemetery where he received a "Full Honors" funeral detail. He was a "Life Member" of the VFW and earlier in the year, was awarded his 65 year membership pin and patch. He served in the United States Army during World War II. He will be sorely missed by all that knew him.

On December 9th, VFW Post 3225 and American Legion Post 147 joined together to celebrate Christmas. This joint party has become an annual event enjoyed by the members of both Veterans Organizations. We are very fortunate to have such a close relationship with the Clovis American Legion and look forward to many more joyous occasions spent together.

The party began with the Clovis High School choir singing some of our favorite Christmas Carols. These youngsters really set the tone for a great evening together.

Many of our members may not be aware of a program done by the American Legion where a Veteran is selected to receive a "Quilt of Valor" for his/her military service as well as their ongoing commitment to "service". This year, two of our members (who may also be American Legion members) were honored and received beautiful hand-made quilts. The honorees were Gerald Hayden, an Air Force Veteran who served in Vietnam and Lorenzo Rios, a retired Lieutenant Colonel who served in the United States Army during Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Both of these men are very deserving of this distinction as they continue to serve our Veteran community. Congratulations Gentlemen. You should be very proud!!!

As the evening progressed, we were entertained by Michael Burton, VFW 3225 Chaplain, who is also a DJ. He has a great assortment of music genre and karaoke equipment. Thanks Michael.

Our friends from Clovis East Air Force JROTC served the meal and provided some of the evenings' entertainment when they took over the stage and performed for us.

In addition to all the background music and the comradery with fellow Veterans, we enjoyed an unbelievable selection of desserts provided by the Auxiliaries from the VFW and American Legion. They were delicious!

With the assistance of two very hard working ladies, Sharon Smith and Terri Brookshire, we commenced with the raffle prizes. I lost count of how many gifts were raffled but Sharon did some great gift shopping prior to the party, wrapped all of the gifts and stayed within budget. If you've attended previous Christmas joint parties where Terri added so much excitement, fun and

personality, you weren't disappointed this year. In spite of some difficult health issues that kept her off her feet, she added so much to the festivities as she and Sharon became Santa's helpers at the party. Ladies, thank you both. It would not have been as much fun without you. I also want to thank Mr. Jim Pacini from the American Legion. As we were setting up the room earlier that morning, he handed me a stack (had to be at least fifty) gift certificates to local restaurants to be raffled at the party. Thank you so much for your generosity.

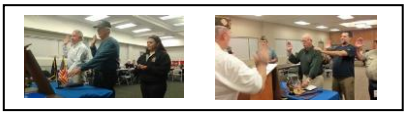
On the 10th of December, I joined Jim Powroznik and Lorenzo Rios at the Clovis Police Department where we met with the Chief of Police, Matthew Basgall. Earlier in the year, when Policemen and women were being disrespected and hateful things were done and said across America, one of our members, Bill Lieberg suggested we do something as a Post to thank our Police Officers for risking their lives every day in order to keep us safe. At an earlier meeting with the Clovis Police, we asked what the Clovis Police would do with a donation from our Post. We were told that the K-9 program lost funding in 2010 and the Department was anxious to start the program again. We reported that need to the membership and received unanimous approval to proceed. So, on December 10th, we presented a check for $500.00 and a commitment to fundraise and create awareness in our community. Lorenzo Rios, CEO of Clovis Veterans Memorial District, stated that they would also get on board to support the K-9 program. We are eager to work together to bring this to fruition.

On December 17th, members of Post and Auxiliary 3225 held ceremonies at Academy Cemetery and Red Bank Cemetery on what had been designated as "Wreaths-Across-America" Day. At 1200 hours (Eastern Time Zone) and 0900 in California, simultaneous programs began with a moment of silence followed by the laying of Ceremonial Wreaths representing the branches of service and our POW/MIA. The program is held to REMEMBER the fallen, HONOR those that serve and TEACH our children the value of Freedom. With the sponsorships we received during the last five months of the year and our fundraisers, we met our goal to provide all one hundred and twenty five Veterans laid to rest at Academy Cemetery and all two hundred and twenty Veterans laid to rest at Red Bank Cemetery with a "Holiday" wreath. We contributed forty wreaths for Clovis Cemetery as well.

I want to thank Jim Anderson and Lorenzo Rios for doing a superb job as Master of Ceremonies for us. Lorenzo handled the duties at Academy and Jim took care of Red Bank along with Post members and volunteers from Boy Scout Troop 514, Girl Scout Troop 2385, Boy Scout Troop 60 and Cub Scout Pack 59. I also want to thank our featured speakers, Susan Frantzich and Don Vanderheyden.

The Clovis Veterans Memorial District hosted a "Meet Santa Claus" event on December 23rd. Visitors were welcomed to join in on the fun including a bounce house, cookie decorating, hot coffee or hot chocolate, a band concert by AUSA Sounds of Freedom Military Band and of course a last chance to tell Santa what they would like for Christmas. There was no charge to enjoy all the festivities but donations were accepted. Those proceeds were donated to VFW 3225. I had no prior knowledge that this was taking place so when I asked about it at the office, I was told that the staff at the Memorial District wanted to do something nice for our Post. This was such a nice surprise. Thank you Clovis Veterans Memorial District your thoughtfulness.

A sincere "Thank You" to our members who have kept Post 3225 strong through recruitment of new members and to those new to Post 3225, "Welcome Aboard". We're honored by your membership.



Prior to November, the Post added at least one new member every month for Forty Five consecutive months. This is an accomplishment you should all take a great deal of pride in.

So, there you have it! We say farewell to 2016 and look forward to 2017. Together, we accomplished a lot in the past twelve months. We built upon an already great reputation in our community through our service to Veterans and to the Clovis community.

I wish you all, a Happy New Year!

August C Flack

Commander