

VFW POST 604 NEWS

V.F.W. Mission Statement

The purpose of this corporation (VFW) shall be fraternal, patriotic, historical, charitable, and educational; to preserve and strengthen comradeship among its members; to assist worthy comrades; to perpetuate the memory and history of our dead, and to assist their widows and orphans; to maintain true allegiance to the Government of the United States of America, and fidelity to its institutions of American freedom, and to preserve and defend the United States from all her enemies, whomsoever.

WWW.VFW-604.ORG

June 2015

Commander's Corner

Greetings! May has been a very busy month for us at the VFW. I want to thank all of you who gave so much of your time to make everything a success. On Saturday the 23rd we had a large turnout to help put flags on the graves at Clear Creek Cemetery. If my count was right, we had 25 people on hand and they all pitched in and we finished in 1 hour and 15 minutes. Afterwards we all met at the VFW for a really good breakfast provided by the Post.

On Memorial Day we held our program at Valhalla Memory Gardens. The weather didn't look good as we started, but someone was looking out for us. We were able to do the whole ceremony. I was surprised to see how many people came out to join us. I guess they understood the importance of remembering those who gave so much for what we have today. We invited everyone to come to the Post and join us for lunch. The turnout was the biggest we have ever had as long as I have been involved at the Post. We served about 150 hamburgers, over 140 hot dogs, plus 6 gallons of ham and beans. The price of gas should go down for awhile (ha ha!).

As Commander of Post 604, I want to tell all who have given so much of their time and labor that I am so very proud of everything that you have given to make us the best Post in the State of Indiana. All of these people give voluntarily. They get no pay. They get no special perks. Most of the time they get no thanks. They do this because they deeply care about our Post and want us to succeed. We ALL need to let them know how much we appreciate what they do.

Listed below are the people that helped with our Flag project at the cemetery on Saturday the 23rd. They are: Holly Burton & son; Chelle Brown; Mark, Xander, & Dominik Dammer; Debbie Deckard; Joe & Joseph Hardin; Dennis Knoy; Bob Lanning; Richard Moldenhauer; Cheyenne & Diane Morissette; Frank & Carol R. Ozug; James Smith; Brian, Danielle, Joy, Jennifer, Jessica, Joshua, Jordan, and Justin Stewart; John & Polly Tilford; Tom Vernon; and Dorothy White. Thanks to all and I apologize if I missed anyone.

Joe Hardin, Commander

Post 604 Men's Auxiliary

Well Gang,

May was a very busy month!! Special dinner each Friday nite, Honor Guards Dinner on Saturday, poker every Thursday and the cash game on the 1st Sunday, and tenderloins on NASCAR Sunday.....to EVERYONE that helped out a BIG thank you, extra hours were put forth from all three divisions (Ladies' Auxiliary, Men's Auxiliary, and the Post). I was very proud to see everyone come together.

As most of you already know, *John Martin* has been a little under the weather the past couple of weeks. We sent him a big get well soon and we miss ya John - take care and look forward to seeing you soon.

We had our election of officers last month and next year's officers are:

Tim Haney – President

Mike Pipher – 1st Vice

Joe Crawford – 2nd Vice

Steve Lang – Secretary/Treasurer

Greg Johnson – Trustee

Tim Dittmore – Trustee

Dennis Knoy – Trustee

Mark Taylor – Chaplin

Don't forget that every Friday Night there is a special dinner. Kathy's in the kitchen on the 1st Friday, Men's Auxiliary 2nd Friday *All U Can Eat* fish, 3rd Friday is steak night, 4th the Ladies' Auxiliary prepares our dinner, and if there is a 5th Friday Wanda Dittmore is in the kitchen. We offer some of the best food in town and priced lower than anyone else.

June 14th is the next NASCAR Sunday serving tenderloins with chips, fixins and desserts. Hope to see you there.

**Tim Haney, President
Men's Auxiliary VFW Post 604**

Post 604 Ladies Auxiliary

Ladies,

This month has gone fast. The weather is warmer and we're putting the new deck to good use. We had a beautiful Memorial Day service at Valhalla Memorial Gardens thanks to our commander Joe Hardin and all his hard work in planning this. We, (the ladies) didn't do so well with the Poppy drive. The wind and sprinkling of rain didn't help. Our officers were installed thanks to Janet Williams for her assistance.

This summer we will be having taco dinners for June, July, & August. This will be the fourth Friday of each month. Your presence is appreciated. Please come and enjoy our nice clean club and our Friday night dinners.

Have a great month and enjoy the weather.

Julia Curtis
VFW Ladies President
812-822-0028

On this day in June:

6th – D-Day Allied invasion of Europe (1944)

14th – U.S. Army founded (1775), Flag Day

21st – Father's Day, Summer begins

22nd – Pledge of Allegiance Recognized by Congress (1942),

GI Bill signed into law (1944)

25th – Korean War began (1950)

30th – Post-9/11 GI Bill signed into law (2008)

VA Legislative/Oversight Proposals

Having given up on our local Congressman, I was pleasantly surprised when called by the veterans/military staffer for the Indiana 8th District Congressman, Larry Bucshon. This staffer and I discussed the complex case of a disabled veteran who formerly lived in Bloomington (9th District) but had to move into a mobile home in rural Owen County due to his limited income. I thanked the staffer for his help and asked if he enjoyed what he did for veterans? He does. I asked if he had connections with the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, describing the difficulties we have locally in getting our proposals through. Yes he does, and said he would do what he could to get our proposals considered. Here are a few:

MIDDLE OF THE YEAR ALREADY!!!!

We are going to do our best to make this month as busy as last month was, if not more so. Let's jump to it!!

Our 1st Friday Night Dinner Special this month will be on June 5th and we are going to be serving Chicken & Noodles with Mashed Potatoes, Dressing, Corn, Roll and of course Dessert. All that for \$6.00!! Serving will start at 6:00 p.m. and go until we run out.

NASCAR Sunday this month will be June 14th--Gigantic Hand-Dipped Breaded Tenderloin Sandwiches. Yep!! Still \$5.00 plus extra stuff!!! Come out and support them!!!—they do a lot of things for your Post!!!

3rd Friday of the Month STEAK NIGHT (15th)!! 8 oz. Ribeye with Baked Potato and Salad and Dessert all for just \$11. Men's Aux. Fish Dinner on the 2nd Friday of the month (June 12th)-all you can eat!! And would you believe just \$6.50?? They bread-em, cook-em, serve-em, serve seconds, serve thirds and so on!!

Texas Hold-em Tournament every Thursday, starts at 7:00 p.m. and SUNDAY—June 7th--Texas-Hold-em Cash game--we start playing at 1:00 p.m. and go till 8:00 p.m. Food & beverages will be available downstairs for the cash game however the Canteen/Post will not be open.

House Committee

Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Centers:

The VA pension center located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin covers Indiana and has regional coverage all the way south to the Gulf of Mexico. Consider that pension center denial decision letters include appeal rights including the notice that travel expenses to appear at a personal appeal hearing (from Louisiana or Indiana or anywhere the appellant may currently live to Milwaukee, perhaps in the wintertime) are the responsibility of the appellant. I've requested Board of Veterans' Appeal (BVA) hearings regarding Milwaukee Pension Center denials of dependency indemnity compensation for three widows to be held in VA regional offices nearest their homes, specifically Indianapolis, IN and Nashville, TN.

Continued on page 4

Laurens B. Strain – VFW Post 604

June 2015

Closed Sunday	Open 1200 – 2200 Monday	Open 1600 – 2200 Tuesday	Open 1600 – 2200 Wednesday	Open 1600 – 2200 Thursday	Open 1400 – 2200 Friday	Open 1000 – 2200 Saturday
	1	2  Full Moon	3	4	5 Dinner Special	6 D-Day: Allied Invasion Of Europe (1944)
7  Cash Game 1 pm	8 HOT DOG MONDAY Open @ Noon	9  Last 1/4	10	11  Starts at 7pm * Vet to Vet – 1800	12 Serving Dinner 1800-2100  Post open at 2pm Commander's Drawing @1900	13
14  NASCAR SUNDAY U.S. Army Founded (1775) Flag Day	15 HOT DOG MONDAY Open @ Noon	16  New Meetings V.F.W. – 1800 Men's Aux –1800 Ladies Aux -- 1800	17	18  Starts at 7pm * Vet to Vet – 1800	19  Serving Dinner 1800 – 2100 Post open at 2pm Commander's Drawing @1900	20 Armed Forces Day
21 Father's Day Summer Begins	22 HOT DOG MONDAY Pledge of Allegiance Recognized by Congress (1942) GI Bill Signed in Law (1944) Open @ Noon	23	24  1 st 1/4	25  Starts at 7pm Korean War Began (1950) * Vet to Vet – 1800	26 Ladies Aux. DINNER SPECIAL Post open at 2pm Commander's Drawing @ 1900	27
28	29 HOT DOG MONDAY Open @ Noon	30 Post 9/11 GI Bill Signed into Law (2008)				

(* For Vet-to-Vet Held at IVY Tech, 200 Daniels Way room A118 – Check website <http://www.vetovetbloomington.com/> to confirm location)

Telephone Number **(812) 339-2375**

Charity Game Night License # **134469**

Raffle License # **134470**

In each request I pointed out that to expect an elderly, infirm widow having a low income to pay her own way to Milwaukee is at best insensitive. (I did not add, “. . . and at worst an obvious ploy to discourage appeal hearings” but the thought certainly occurred to me.) Of those three cases, two are still waiting for their BVA hearing dates after nearly two years. One did not need a personal hearing after all, a case which serves to introduce the following first example. If the VA must use pension centers, at least include the option of a regional office hearing location in the appeal rights information sent to claimants.

Pension Center example 1: An Ellettsville widow applied for dependency indemnity compensation (DIC), Milwaukee denied, she gave up. Her next door neighbor is a friend of mine. He asked across the fence . . . ? She told him. He asked her to meet with me. Her late Vietnam veteran husband's death could have been service connected three ways: he was already service connected for diabetes type 2 (contributed to his death), he had a severe ischemic heart condition (reduced to 20% heart function, contributed even more), and his VA-provided medication for diabetes was known to cause the fatty liver syndrome shown as immediate cause on his death certificate (indirect, but certainly not unprecedented). I prepared the Form 9 formal appeal request accordingly and asked for a BVA hearing in Indianapolis. A few months later she first received a retroactive DIC check and a few days later the decision letter which included a statement that the VA assumed the positive decision satisfied her appeal. Bear in mind that she and I never appeared before a BVA veterans' law judge and never presented any of the additional evidence we were gathering. Therefore the Milwaukee Pension Center already had all the information they needed for a positive decision available at the time they issued the denial, it was just quicker to deny than to do a little digging in the veteran's VA records. I'm sure that from the time the denial was issued until it was changed as a result of the successful appeal the case was counted as 100% accurate in the VA pension center data, and it would have remained so except for the one question from the widow's neighbor. How many other similarly denied widows who have given up on the VA don't have such neighbors? But their denials show as accurate to the VA. Don't believe VA pension center accuracy data.

Pension Center example 2: One of my two widows still waiting on her BVA hearing was denied by Milwaukee because her husband was 100% service connected disabled for only 9 years, 10 months, and a couple of weeks at the time he passed away early in 2014 and not the full 10 years required for her entitlement to DIC if his death was not due to a service connected cause, which it was not. Her Milwaukee denial was made with consideration of only the effective date for his 100% rating as shown on the electronic record. The late veteran's claim folder was in the Nashville VA Regional Office at the time, only scanned back to 2004. (This scanning of hard-copy records into digital format is considered low priority work by the VA.) Any information which might have resulted in an inferred earlier effective date would be earlier than 2004 and had not yet been scanned. Even if the pension center had wanted to do a thorough job they did not have access to the needed pre-2004 information. Compounding the scanning problem, the VA also would not have the authority to infer an earlier claim for similar cases being adjudicated now. The VA has locked-in an efficient but not an effective system, not if we define “effective” as providing benefits to those eligible according to Title 38, United States Code. Her husband's service connected disability was at least as severe a year or two before the date of his 100% rating, but he did not request a reevaluation earlier which would have paid his

widow the princely amount of approximately \$1,300 per month DIC. He did not so request because the VA medical people told him there was “nothing more the VA can do” for his condition. That's the only basis for her appeal. OK, back to Milwaukee. In the Olde Days before pension centers, when VA regional offices making such decisions actually had the veteran's complete claim folder (which Milwaukee did not), the adjudicator could flip back through the permanent documents on the right side, looking for some excuse – something, anything – on which basis to infer an earlier effective date. I've seen good adjudicators do exactly that, knowing that a denial would condemn a widow who had cared for a severely service connected veteran for decades to spend her remaining years with minimal income. Don't deny claims without review of the veteran's entire claims folder or equivalent.

Pension Center example “2.5”: The VA no longer “infers” claims (initiated by a VA employee on behalf of the veteran). ‘Stopped in March 2015. Evidently, cutting down their new claims workload is more important than assisting veterans – often elderly, grade school educated, uninformed, un-represented, and occasionally PTSD veterans – obtain all the benefits to which they are entitled by Title 38, United States Code. This no-inferred-claims change applies across the board and not just to pension centers. Two of my personal service connected disabilities were inferred by good VA employees; disabilities that I, even after working for the VA as a benefits counselor, did not know were compensable. Restore the inferred claims option for VA employees' use in helping veterans.

Pension Center example 3: Pension centers have minimal familiarity with local “pension poacher” scams and firms. When this type of aggressive Aid and Attendance fraud became common fifteen years ago, I was assured by a friend in the Indianapolis VA Regional Office that “We know who they [these firms] are, and we have learned to carefully review their applications.” This local compliance effort has been lost because of pension center regionalization. The Indy VARO does not consider pension claims any longer. The VA's average time required to close an average case has declined, it's just that the cases have a much higher (albeit more effectively hidden) error rate and a higher proportion of the Aid and Attendance pension claims are fraudulent. More specifically, crack down on Aid & Attendance fraud (called “pension poachers” by the VA) concentrating on prosecution of unscrupulous and misleading agents & financial firms. Use field investigators with subpoena authority, similar to IRS revenue officers. Publishing a mild warning on the VA website is not sufficient. The “pension poachers” have already won the information battle with advertisements online, on radio, newspaper ads, and “seminars” in retirement homes much to the detriment of deserving veterans, the VA, and taxpayers. Move on to the legal battle. This action alone would save enough to pay for all the other suggestions with money left over.

John Tilford – Service Officer

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE PAID
BLOOMINGTON IN 47401
PERMIT No. 205

Laurens B. Strain V.F.W. Post 604
2404 W Industrial Park Drive
Bloomington, IN 47404-2690

"Oldest Post in the State"

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Phone: (812)-339-2375

