

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.NET

August 2013

Commander's Corner



The 4th of July parade was a huge success. I wish to thank all who turned out to decorate the vehicles and ride in the parade. Post 604 was well represented and was well received by the parade spectators. Thanks go to Lieutenant Colonel Kirk White, Sergeant 1st Class Jeff McClure, Specialist Zwissler, and Specialist Shand of the Bloomington National Guard, 2nd Battalion, 105th Field Artillery for providing and driving the Hummer and Personnel Carrier used in the parade. Those that helped decorate and ride in the parade are Debbie Helton and her two grand-daughters, Mallori and Jaylen; Bill Evans; Chris Middleton; Joe Hardin and his great grandson Joseph; John Tilford; and Brian Stewart and his daughter Jessica and son Joshua.

For those that have not already heard "someone else" is no longer with the Post. "Someone else" did many things around the post and whenever a project or task came up it was pretty much agreed that "someone else" could do it. Since we can no longer depend on "someone else" doing those needed things around the post the rest of us will have to step up. Having said that, volunteers are needed to help in many areas. To find out how you can contribute to your post contact myself or one of the other officers.

Don't forget the Marine Corps Vette here at the post on the 5th of August.

— Commander – Bob Lanning

Post 604 Men's Auxiliary

For starters, some bad news. We lost Mike Griffith on 9 July 2013. Mike was a very close friend and a genuine Gentleman. Mike was also treasurer for the Men's Auxiliary. He will be deeply missed.

Okay, something a little more cheerful. Our June tenderloin special was another success. (Thanks for requesting its return). The July 4th And 5th lunch and dinner specials were both a huge success. I'm here to tell ya, if you're not coming up here for these special fixins, yer missin out on some of the best food in Bloomington.

If you are a race fan, August the 18th is the Pure Michigan 400. From noon to 6pm with hot dogs and beans available for \$3.00 .

As you already know this is my 1st year as your president. I sure could use some help in recruiting. We desperately need more members. If you know of a vet, son of a vet, grandson of a vet, or a lady that qualifies for membership, please get-em here. We'll nail their foot down till they sign up.

The men's auxiliary will return with a special Sunday in September.

Tim Haney, President Men's Auxiliary



Post 604 Ladies Auxiliary

The Ladies Auxiliary still needs Chairmen for our programs. More than one person can work on the same program and share their promotional material. You will be supplied with information and ideas on how to do them. Some of the programs are VFW National home for Children, Buddy Poppy, Hospital (I have a person for this one), Rehabilitation, Legislative, Americanism, Youth Activities, Voice of Democracy, and Cancer Aid And Research just to name a few. Also we have to get some ideas on raising money as we have no income without the bingo. We have some money to operate on for awhile. However, we still have to pay our Cancer Insurance and our Hospital's which is a mandate from national. We need to be thinking about what we are going to do.

Janet Williams, President VFW Ladies Auxiliary

RENEWING MEMBERSHIP

Annual membership renewal for the 2013 – 2014 membership year began on July 1st. Current annual memberships expire on December 31st 2013.

While supporting a V.F.W. post located in your local community may or may not be important to you personally, your membership contributes to the overall effectiveness of the V.F.W. to address important veteran's issues. As a block of 1,360,000 member voices, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is empowered to be a respected presence in defense of veterans programs at the national level.

Local support services are offered through Post 604 to both returning service members and to veterans in the community. The V.F.W., American Legion, and AMVETS all provide a strong visible military veteran presence in the community that helps raise veteran awareness and promotes national patriotism.

Your continued membership is important to us. The V.F.W. and its Auxiliaries are the life-blood of our post. If you know of someone desiring to join our ranks please do not hesitate to contact one of our officers.

Annual membership renewal forms are mailed to each V.F.W. and Auxiliary member. Dues shall be forwarded per the directions contained in the notice received by the member with the renewal form.

If you do not receive a renewal notice, please contact the Post 604 Quartermaster or one of your club officers for assistance. ❖

1st FRIDAY OF THE MONTH DINNER SPECIAL

August 2nd, 1st Friday of the month Dinner Special will be Lasagna with Garlic Bread and Salad. Serving starts at 6:00 pm till we run out, if this doesn't tempt you then our regular menu will also be available. Cost for the dinner??—you know that answer!! **Just a mere \$5.00**

Now onto **NASCAR SUNDAY!!** This month we are going to be at Michigan International Speedway, on August 18th, for the Pure Michigan 400, race starts at 1:00 p.m. The Post will be **OPEN** from Noon to 6:00 p.m. Hey! Remember the **BIG HOT DOGS** (all beef) we had on the 4th of July?? Well that's what we are having for our **NASCAR Sunday**. So, for **\$3.00**, you get a Hot Dog with the fix'ins and some Duke's beans (Bush), Corn on the Cob, coney sauce and whatever else we dream up by then. Yep!! **Just \$3.00**. We have been having fun times on these Sundays so if you haven't been to one then you ought to give it a try!!

Post 604 now has a **Jukebox** that is connected to the internet, so you have thousands of your favorite songs to choose from. The sound system is good and it is reasonably priced.

House Committee

604 Canteen – Friday Dinner Menu

Serving Fridays 1800 - 2100

Appetizers & Sides

Battered Onion Rings.....	\$2.00
Chicken Strips/Fries	\$4.50
Cole Slaw.....	\$1.75
Cottage Cheese.....	\$1.50
French Fries.....	\$1.75
Potato Salad.....	\$1.75
Seasoned Waffle Fries	\$2.00

Sandwiches

Breaded Chicken Sandwich	\$4.25
Breaded Pork Tenderloin.....	\$4.75
Cheeseburger.....	\$3.50
Chili Dog.....	\$2.50
Double Cheeseburger	\$4.75
Fish Sandwich	\$5.25
Grilled Cheese.....	\$2.75
Grilled Pork Tenderloin.....	\$4.25
Hamburger.....	\$3.25
Patty Melt	\$4.00
Philly Cheese Steak.....	\$5.00
Steak Sandwich.....	\$4.50

All Sandwiches served with Pickle and Chips
Add Cheese/Deluxe for \$.25 each

Laurens B. Strain – VFW Post 604

August 2013

Closed Sunday	Open 1200 - 2200 Monday	Open 1600 - 2200 Tuesday	Open 1600 - 2200 Wednesday	Open 1600 - 2200 Thursday	Open 1600 - 2200 Friday	Open 1000 - 2200 Saturday
				1 Air Force Day * Vet to Vet – 1900	2 Serving Dinner 1800 - 2100  Commander's Drawing 1900 Brad Harris Entertains 1900	3 State Golf Outing
4 State Golf Outing  US Coast Guard Est. 1790	5  Marine Corps Vette 6 to 9pm Open @ Noon – New Hours	6	7	8 Vietnam Traveling Memorial (Spencer) * Vet to Vet – 1900	9 Serving Dinner 1800 – 2100 Vietnam Traveling Memorial (Spencer)  Commander's Drawing 1900 Brad Harris Entertains 1900	10 Vietnam Traveling Memorial (Spencer)
11 Vietnam Traveling Memorial (Spencer)	12 Vietnam Traveling Memorial (Spencer) Open @ Noon – New Hours	13	14  WWII Ends 1945	15 * Vet to Vet – 1900	16 Serving Dinner 1800 - 2100  Commander's Drawing 1900 Brad Harris Entertains 1900	17
18  Open Noon to 6PM	19 Open @ Noon – New Hours	20 Meetings V.F.W. – 1800 Men's Aux – 1800 Ladies Aux – 1800	21	22 * Vet to Vet – 1900	23 Serving Dinner 1800 - 2100  Commander's Drawing 1900 Brad Harris Entertains 1900	24
25	26 Open @ Noon – New Hours	27	28	29 Vet to Vet – 1900	30 Commander's Drawing 1900 Brad Harris Entertains 1900	31

(* 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

Raffle License # **127960**

- Vee Aye Ah-Kred-It-A-Shun (I'll explain later)

As promised last month, here we are visiting "VA accreditation". How about a little background in way of introduction? (This is also a lesson in VA appeals.) A local veteran and I filed his service connected disability claim around 2005. We're talking two presidential terms ago. We do the basic VA Form 21-526 and some attachments, he signs, we mail to the Indy VA Regional Office. Denied. Appealed to Indy. Two hearings in Indy because they used the wrong format for the first. Denied again. Appealed to the Board of Veterans Appeals. Another hearing in Indy, but this time before the BVA judge. (The vet and I do a great presentation. We have a lot of practice by this time.) Denied. Do some research, find out the vet (limited income, on total disability from Social Security) can get his filing fees waived for the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. We file the appeal with the USCAVC and get on their docket. We contact the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program (attorneys who donate their services and who are licensed and recognized to practice at the level of the USCAVC, i.e., the United States District Court level). The Consortium turns down his case. I call and ask why. They describe their limited resources, say they try to help vets who have cases with a good chance of success, and consider our case a "loser". I petition the Court to be allowed to file a brief on the veteran's behalf. The Court allows me to submit a petition as an "intervener" – whatever that is. Local attorney Angela Parker (went on two Hoosier Honor Flights) helps me with the format. I file the intervener's brief with the USCAVC and prepare the veterans self-representation (remember, he has no attorney) fill-in-the-blanks form for his signature. We win the case – well, the USCAVC judge's decision is that the VA was wrong to deny benefits based on the documents of record, and he remands the case back to the BVA to try again to get it right. BVA denies again, just reworded. We file a new appeal with the USCAVC and get on their docket. We again contact the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program. This time (probably because the vet and I had already won the first round with the USCAVC) the vet gets assigned to a partner in a national law firm. He and his staff submit a thirty-four page brief which 1) shows the BVA staff are idiots, 2) blows gaping holes in the BVA arguments against the vet, 3) shows the BVA can't interpret or apply their own portion of the Code of Federal Regulations, and 4) among many other supportive case citations includes a recent USCAVC case decided in favor of two non-attorney guys from Bloomington, Indiana. Again, the USCAVC decides in our favor. Again, the Court remands the case back to the BVA to correct, this time giving them a six month deadline to either come up with evidence against the veteran and report back to the Court or to decide in his favor. The BVA further remands the case back to the Indianapolis VA Regional Office. Well, the six months expired in November 2012. The vet, the partner in the national law firm, and I are still waiting.

At each of the three appeal hearings in Indianapolis Regional Office I was recognized as the vet's representative. The BVA considered me his "agent", sending me copies of every letter they sent him. At one point the BVA accidentally mailed me a copy of the vet's entire claims folder, whereas as his agent for his disability claim I had no right to see, for example, his personal information from decades ago when he was going to school under the G.I. Bill. (You remember, this is about the same time the VA was losing laptops with thousands of veterans' personal data.) The BVA counsel telephoned and asked me to come up with a release letter signed by the vet and back dated to before they sent me his

file. They wanted to cover their behinds. I, thinking they might thereby owe us a favor and be more likely to decide in his favor, did. The United States Court of Appeals also sent me copies of all their correspondence to the vet during our first filing. Do you get the idea that I was somehow recognized by the VARO, BVA, and USCAVC as representing the veteran?

The Indy VA Regional Office sent me a nice letter in September 2012, more than seven years after the vet filed his claim. "We can't recognize you as his agent. You are not accredited." There's a 2008 regulation. The letter included a website address for more information. I go there. It's written for attorneys who want to represent veterans for money. But, there's an email address for other questions. I send them an email summarizing my experience and pointing out the rules changed during the course of the case. I'm still waiting for a response to that email.

I contact a local Congressman and describe the situation. My fear is that the Indy VARO may have asked our vet, who has moved twice over these seven years, for additional information required to resolve his claim and we don't know it. The VA has just said they won't tell me and the law firm partner is only the vet's representative at the US Court level, not at the VARO level. The Congressional staffer describes how I can apply to become accredited. (The September 2012 letter from the VA did not, which seems a little stupid.) I fill out the accreditation application, give the names and addresses of three references, and mail to the VA in Washington, DC.

The Washington, DC Veterans Affairs office mails me a letter saying they've requested letters of recommendation from my three references and, by the way, I can call a telephone number in the Indy VARO Office of Counsel and schedule my test. I'll be given ninety minutes to complete a twenty-five question test. The questions are all either multiple choice or true-false. The letter goes on to provide the United States Code and Code of Federal Regulations chapters and sections which will be covered. I call the number, schedule the exam, and ask, "Does anyone really take an hour and a half for twenty-five multiple choice or true-false questions?" Answer: "Well, some do." Bear in mind, these are almost all attorneys who want to make more money.

Not even tricky. Any decent service officer would have minimal problems, if any. Finish in a little less than ten minutes. Would have been quicker but double checked every question. Test is mailed to DC to be graded. Get email from DC that passed. Email goes on to say will be accredited when last recommendation comes in, and to stay accredited will have to complete "continuing legal education" (CLE) regarding VA benefits, three hours of credit within the first year and more later. Since – other than Andrea Parker, John Rucker, and Mike Carmin – I'm suspicious of most attorneys, I further suspect there's going to be a sneaky way to get these three hours credit. Sure enough, if you do a Google search for "VA accreditation course" you will get gobs of hits, most for a DVD you can claim to have watched or for a telephone conference call you can claim you listened to. You then send a letter to the VA self-certifying you've completed your three hours of VA course credit as required to keep your accreditation. Most of these "courses" include a keen little certificate with your name on it. Now, if you or someone you love pays an attorney to help with VA benefits or appeals because they brag they are "VA accredited" – and many attorneys do – you'll know just how much that Vee Aye Ah-Kred-It-A-Shun is worth.

John Tilford – Service Officer

Laurens B. Strain V.F.W. Post 604
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6 TO 9PM**

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