



## AMVETS Post 1776 Cyber Newsletter

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*The Tallahassee  
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Aviation Museum.  
The College  
campus is on the  
site of the run-  
way used by the  
Army Airforce in  
WWII. (Page four)*



From the Commander.....

Welcome to the second edition of our new Cyber Newsletter and Happy New Year 2020. 2019 was a busy and exciting year for Post 1776. We succeeded in raising most of the funds needed for our Bell Tower Project, we had a successful Golf Tournament, we have some new members and new leadership and a new meeting location. Thanks to Paul Rogerson and Randy Miller, we have converted our accounting system to a new system in Quick Books that will help us better account for our fundraising activities and have the ability to produce financial reports when needed. Our contracts are in place for our Bell Tower and the week before Christmas I met with Randy Miller, the Chair of our Planning Committee for the Bell Tower Project met and with Doug Barkley of Barkley Engineering and with Raymond Miller, the Director of the Tallahassee National Cemetery to discuss final plans for the Bell Tower. If all goes well and some promised funds come through there is no reason not to think of a dedication of our Bell Tower sometime this Spring.

Also, it is not too late to start thinking about the dedication ceremony itself. I envision a major event at the Cemetery with us inviting local, State and National dignitaries. The construction of a Bell Tower with Carillon at a National Veterans' Cemetery is a big thing. If you as members have any thoughts about how we can make the event even more special, please share your thoughts with me or bring them up at our next couple of meetings. I am hoping the dedication ceremony will spotlight our Post locally and put us on the map so to speak.

Once again, if you are reading this newsletter on our website or have received it online and are not a member of AMVETS Post 1776 please give us a call or go to our website at [www.amvets1776.org](http://www.amvets1776.org) and join. If you are already a member, thank you for your continuing support as we grow in membership and *thank you for your service!*

AMVETS National was chartered in 1947 and the Tallahassee AMVETS Post 1776 was chartered in July 2009. AMVETS Post 1776 meets on the first Thursday of the month at the Allegro Senior Living Center at 4501 Shannon Lakes West, Tallahassee, Florida 32309. We invite honorably discharged veterans, including Guard and Reserve, from all branches to join us. We are a small Post doing big things for the veterans in the Tallahassee area. *For more information please visit us at:*

[www.amvets1776.org](http://www.amvets1776.org).

## An Act of Kindness

By Gordon Lightfoot, Post 1776, Commander

Many of us veterans, especially veterans active in veteran services organizations, like our Post 1776, belong to several other veteran service organizations, I think we have about 18 in the Big Bend area. Sometimes we belong to multiple veteran service organizations and in just about every one that I belong to we are constantly looking for ways to fund our next project. We sell poppies, we look for grants we hold raffles and generally raise money in a myriad of ways. But in our zeal to raise money to support our organizations' projects or maybe a memorial or another veteran cause we don't always think about the impact we have on the veterans or the public at large that we solicit from.

As your Post Commander, and if you will indulge me for a moment, I would like to share a brief "act of kindness" I experienced 2 days before Christmas at our Tallahassee National Cemetery.

Several weeks before Christmas I got an email from our Post Finance Officer Paul Rogerson, telling me about an Army veteran and his wife that wanted to contribute to our Bell Tower/Carillon Project for the Tallahassee National Cemetery on behalf of the veteran's father in law former Marine Sergeant Delbert C. Cruit a Marine that served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division in Korea. A Marine that is failing in health at this time. The son in law and daughter asked that I don't share their names which only adds to their modesty and makes their act of kindness even more remarkable to me.

The son in law communicated to me that he would like to present a check to me at the Cemetery, a fairly substantial contribution, toward our Bell Tower/Carillon Project, asking if I would make sure Delbert would be placed on our "wall of honor" a plaque we plan to install at the Cemetery honoring our contributors.

I really didn't know what to expect but I asked Raymond Miller to meet with me and the family for a very informal presentation of this contribution. Raymond had to step away for a moment and then what I didn't expect, in a very private moment my newfound Army veteran friend stood in front of Delbert with his wife by



Picture, I took of the Bell Tower/Carillon at the PhoenixCemetery, this being the design for the Tallahassee National Cemetery)

his side and said, "Pops, we know you are a man that has everything now but we wanted to honor you by presenting a check to AMVETS so that they will place your name on their wall of honor for the Bell Tower they are going to place here at this Cemetery." There was a moment of silence. I found myself at a loss for words, then our Delbert simply said, "Thank you." I gave the Delbert our Bell Tower Challenge coin and a book I authored for another Marine friend of mine that fought at the Chosin Reservoir in Korea. We chatted for a while and I showed the family where our Bell Tower would be placed and where we anticipated our Wall of Honor Plaque would be hung inside the administrative building.

The family left together and I have since been told Delbert spent a couple of days at the hospital around Christmas but is home and doing okay now. And by the way, Delbert is a life long member of Sauls Bridges Post #13 of the American Legion.

So, when you begin your solicitations, for whatever reason, think about your cause, you might just strike a chord or an emotion with someone that really wants to give for some very personal reasons.

*Semper Fi,  
Gordon*

## How my life and my family was saved by the flip of a coin!

By Anthony "Tony" Minichiello, Adjutant AMVETS Post 1776 Tallahassee

In one of my WWII magazines, I read an article titled the "Toast to the Nickle". It did not appear to be an interesting item so I skipped over it and continued reading other more interesting articles. About a month later while sitting on our back porch, with my Scotch and Cigar, I picked up that magazine again. When I got to the third line and my eyes saw the **Arkansas National Guard** mentioned I remembered my Father in Law. Willie Hogue, had been a member of the Arkansas Guard. Reading further I began to realize the stories he told about service in Alaska were true!

He was trained as a team member on an anti aircraft gun in the 206th Anti Aircraft Battalion.



PFC Willie Hogue, 1941

Reading the article further it mentioned that the 206th had been sent to Texas to compete with a Battalion from New Mexico (The 200th AA Battalion). The battalion which scored the highest marksmanship could pick its overseas assignment. The two options were the Phillipines or Alaska. The competition turned out to be a draw. It was decided the matter would be settled by a coin toss.

The 200th C.A. from New Mexico wanted badly to win because most members were fluent in Spanish, which would come in handy in the Phillipines.

The decision came down to a coin toss. The 200th C.A. won the flip of a nickle and was sent to the Phillipines. That loss of a coin toss would prove to be a fortunate thing for the 206th. The 200th C.A. was decimated when the Japanese invaded the Phillipines and were forced to participate in the Bataan Death March.

Instead of the Phillipines, the 206th was stationed at Dutch Harbor, in Unalaska, Aleutian Islands, Alaska on August 16, 1941. Just four months later Pearl Harbor was attacked and the troops were prepared to fight. The fight came in June of 1942 when the Japanese attempted to overtake Dutch Harbor and the Aleutian Islands. The Japanese pilots bombed the entire harbor and base beginning what was known as the Aleutian Island Campaign. Accounts claim that the pilots were flying so low the soldiers on the ground could clearly see the faces of the Japanese. Willie's buddies said he had shot down a Japanese plane but he doubted he had.

As for the 200th, they were sent to the Phillipines and were in action when the Japanese invaded. after three months the Americans surrendered to the Japanese. Of the 1800 men of the 200th only 900 survived the Death March and Captivity to return home. Within one year a third of these survivors died. The article went on to mention that at every reunion of the 200th there was a "Toast to the Nickle".

I seriously doubt that my Father in Law Willie would have survived the war had he been sent to the Phillipines and I would never have met my wife of 56 years: Linda Hogue Minichiello.

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**Have an interesting life story you wish to tell? Submit it to the Adjutant. We only ask that it be true and meaningful to you.**

## Dale Mabry WWII Army Airfield Museum Moving Forward!



### TCC (Tallahassee Community College) has designated three acres to the projected Dale Mabry WWII Aviation Museum.

On this day in 1941, (January 24th) Colonel Jacob Wuest signed General Order #1, establishing his command of the Tallahassee Air Base, which would later be formally named Dale Mabry Army Air Field.

Tallahassee Community College is to be commended for taking this next step in honoring its shared heritage with Dale Mabry Army Air Field by partnering with us to establish a museum on its campus. The first step was placing a historical marker in 2001 recognizing TCC as the former site of the airfield.

We want to thank Tallahassee Community College President Jim Murdaugh and Vice Presidents Kim Moore and Barbara Wills for their leadership and foresight in forging this partnership with the Dale Mabry Army Air Field Museum, Inc.

Our ultimate goal with the museum, captured in our mission statement, is to “bring the values of our honored past into the present, in preparation for our shared future.” The lessons of the past must be remembered to help us successfully navigate modern affairs.

We believe this museum will create untold opportunities for students at TCC—in fact, all students of Leon County and the Big Bend—to learn of Tallahassee’s amazing role during WWII both on the home-front, and on the war-front.

By designating a site for the museum, TCC has made it possible for the museum to seek funding to relocate historical buildings from the base, still in existence 79 year later, that will be the cornerstones of a re-created representation of the airbase. This will allow visitors to travel back in time and learn what life then was like

Either a North American *P-36 Apache* or *P-51 Mustang* and a North American *T-6 advanced trainer* in the former Lively Technical High School fenced area that was located on the site of current day Public Library, 200 West Park Avenue.



PHOTO BY TONY MINICHELLO, 1967



Lively Technical High School as it appeared in the 1940's and 1960's.

**AMVETS Post 1776, Tallahassee** plans to add the Dale Mabry WWII Army Aviation Museum to its list of Veteran War Memorials throughout the Big Bend Area. We currently produce an educational “Tourist Brochure” indentifying these Memorials and plan to convert this brochure into a living educational tour complete with docents for our youth throughout the Big Bend Area.