

The American Legion, Department of New York  
112 State St., Suite 1300, Albany, NY 12207

AUGUST 2008



# LEGION-EARS

“NOW HEAR THIS”



Volume 2 Issue 8

Richard M. Pedro  
Department Adjutant

Available on-line at  
[www.ny.legion.org](http://www.ny.legion.org)

Edward Bertrand  
Department Commander

800-253-4466

Barbara J. Kerr, Editor



## COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

My Fellow Legionnaires,

First, I must thank you for all the support and confidence you've shown me by electing me as your Department Commander for the coming year.

Congratulations to all the newly elected officers and newly appointed committee members. I know that, as we all work together during the coming months, our programs will be very successful.

I just attended the membership workshop in Indianapolis with our membership team. Over the next few weeks, the Department Membership Team will conduct area workshops in all Districts. Please plan to attend the one in your district and to get every post in your area to send a representative. Remember to bring any ideas or suggestions that have worked for you and share them with others. We're all in this boat together and getting members is everybody's job.

The Department Baseball Tournament is scheduled for August 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>. Then we'll be off to the National Convention in Phoenix. I hope to see many of you there.

Remember – please keep our troops in your prayers. God Bless!!!

\*\*\*\*\*



**NEW  
COMMANDER  
ELECTED**

Edward Bertrand was elected Department Commander on July 19<sup>th</sup> during the 90<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention in Albany, NY.

Commander Bertrand served with the US Army from 1963 to 1965 at the US Army Data Systems Command stationed in the Pentagon. He joined Lake Placid Post 326 in 1985 and has held leadership positions at all levels of The American Legion, Department of New York.

Commander Bertrand and his wife, Terry, have three children Paul, Laura, and Tom and ten grandchildren. All of whom were present for Ed's installation.

He and Terry own and operate High Peaks Gift Shop in Lake Placid.

\*\*\*\*\*



Terry Bertrand “caps” her husband under the watchful eyes of Adjutant Pedro



National Vice Commander Thomas L. Burns (DE) addresses guests during Commander Burnett's dinner – Wednesday – July 16<sup>th</sup>



2008 Legionnaire of the Year Salvatore “Sal” Ascione (Kings County) accepts his award from Commander Burnett and Vice Chairman Tom Stone

\*\*\*\*\*

**TED  
DOTY  
UPDATE**



As many of you know, Ted Doty, Chairman Department Audit Committee, of McGraw (Cortland County) fell at the Department Convention and was quite badly injured. We are somewhat happy to report that Ted has been transferred to the Cortland Care Center

for rehabilitation. We will be overjoyed when we can report that Ted has returned home to Lois!!! Ted and Lois celebrated their 63<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary while Ted was in Albany Medical Center. Ted welcomes visitors. Cards and notes can be sent to Ted as follows:

Ted Doty  
Cortland Care Center, Rm. 126  
193 Clinton Ave.  
Cortland, NY 13045

\*\*\*\*\*



Membership Workshops will be held as follows:

Districts 1 & 9 – 8/16/08  
Fromm-Maxwell-Debaum Post 859  
Pavilion Road, Suffern, NY

Districts 2 & 10 – 8/17/08  
Williston Park Post 144  
730 Willis Ave., Williston Park, NY

Districts 3 & 4 – 9/6/08  
Joseph E. Zaloga Post 1520  
4 Everett Rd. Ext., Albany, NY

Districts 5 & 6 – 8/10/08  
Gen. Pulaski Post 1650  
1604 Burnet Ave., Syracuse, NY

Districts 7 & 8 – 8/9/08  
LeRoy Post 576  
53 W. Main St., LeRoy, NY

Registration will begin at 9:00 AM with Workshops starting promptly at 10:00 AM. Please plan to attend. This is a great way to meet, greet, and share membership information.

\*\*\*\*\*



The Bertrand grandchildren (all ten) wait for Grandpa to march by during Friday night's annual convention parade.

\*\*\*\*\*

INFORMATION  
SESSIONS FOR  
VETERANS



The City University of New York's (CUNY) Office of Admission Services is conducting Admission Information Sessions designed to address the needs of Veterans who wish to pursue higher education. These sessions will be offered on a weekly basis beginning Wednesday – August 6, 2008 at 4:00 PM. Attendees will have the opportunity to speak with admission professionals regarding undergraduate, honors, and online degree programs.

These sessions are open to all military veterans, active duty, reservists, and family members and will be held at the:

Office of Admission Services  
1114 Avenue of the Americas, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10036

Topics will include:

- Academic Programs at CUNY's 23 institutions
- Veterans' Services
- Military Educational Benefits and Financial Aid
- The Admission & Application Process

To reserve your seat visit : [www.cuny.edu/veterans](http://www.cuny.edu/veterans) or call (212) 290-5674.

\*\*\*\*\*



**SEPTEMBER IS  
NATIONAL  
PREPAREDNESS  
MONTH**

National Preparedness Month is sponsored by the US Department of Homeland Security's Ready Campaign. It is designed to encourage Americans to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses, and communities.

The American Legion is part of the Department of Homeland Security Coalition and supports September 2008 as National Disaster Preparedness Month (NDPM). Your Post and all Legionnaires can help spread the word about NDPM by using a special on-line toolkit located at:

[www.ready.adcouncil.org/PreparednessToolKit.asp](http://www.ready.adcouncil.org/PreparednessToolKit.asp). The tool kit is designed to assist in getting the word out about NPM and encourage participation.

September 2008 marks the fifth annual NPM. The month will focus on important preparedness steps such as getting an Emergency Supply Kit and developing a Family Emergency Plan.

\*\*\*\*\*

**COMMANDER BURNETT SAYS  
"GOODBYE"**



Commander Burnett gave a moving "goodbye" speech as he passed the Department "Commandership" to newly elected Commander Bertrand during the closing session of the 90<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of The American Legion, Department of New York.

\*\*\*\*\*

**NEW YORK'S YOUTH – PAST & PRESENT  
LETTER EXCERPTS**

"I just returned from Boys' Nation and I had an absolutely amazing time. The motto of Boy's Nation is "a week that shapes a lifetime" and initially all of the boys doubted that this week would have such a profound impact on any of our lives, but by the time we were preparing to leave, it was glaringly obvious that we had changed, and for the better."

"...I can tell you that it is a week of my life that I will never forget and I made friends in DC that I

will probably stay in contact with for the majority of my life.”

“The American Legion arranged meetings with senators... ..we got to tour the White House and President Bush came in and gave us a brief speech.”

“Overall, the time I spent in DC was unforgettable... The experience I have just had has definitely shaped my life and it is only through the work of people like yourself that boys like me can participate in “a week that shapes a lifetime.”

Cary Chester  
2008 Delegate to Boy’s Nation

\*\*\*\*\*

“I would like to thank you, Adjutant Pedro, and all the members of The American Legion, Department of New York, for the honor and privilege of being named JROTC Cadet of the Year.

I have enjoyed my NJROTC experiences and have had the opportunity to visit places that I would not have been able to see in the civilian world. The core values of Courage, Motivation, Integrity, and Duty to others will help me along my path of life to the Naval Service.

I am pleased to echo Captain Kasmer’s remarks that the JROTC program is indeed “...alive and well,” grooming the youth of today into the citizens and leaders of tomorrow!”

C/CDR Stephen J. Conlin, III  
2008 Cadet of the Year

\*\*\*\*\*

“On May 17, 2008, I graduated Fordham University Magna Cum Laude, majoring in International Political Economy and minoring in Business Administration. On July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008 I will begin working at JPMorganChase in their Audit two-year analyst program.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank The American Legion for their generosity, especially to me over the past four years. You

continue to help students conquer their fears of public speaking, share their thoughts and insights about the Constitution, and ease the growing cost of college.

Please extend my warmest thanks to everyone involved in this wonderful program. I consider myself very fortunate to have participated in the experience.”

Maureen Logue  
2004 Oratorical Contest  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place Winner

\*\*\*\*\*

Need we say more? Boys’ State, JROTC, the Oratorical Contest – important programs for our young people. Is your post involved? If yes – HOORAY FOR YOU. If not, WHY???

Helping today’s youth become tomorrow’s leaders. One of the biggest responsibilities of The American Legion.

Information on any of these programs and how to start them can be obtained by contacting Al Carpenter at Legion HQ (800-253-4466) or [info@nylegion.org](mailto:info@nylegion.org).

\*\*\*\*\*



The Department of Defense has asked posts of The American Legion to coordinate a “Freedom Walk” in their communities on or near September 11<sup>th</sup> to commemorate the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the terrorist attacks on our nation.

The event started several years ago at the Pentagon and has since grown to several hundred nationally. According to the DOD website, "It is becoming a national tradition that calls on people to reflect on the lives lost on September 11, 2001, remember those who responded, honor our veterans past and present, and renew our commitment to freedom and the values of our country."

"Posts do not need to do all the work – simply coordinate and publicize a short walk, no longer than two miles, with the help of a community committee of civic and religious leaders, school officials, youth and other organizations," said National Commander Marty Conatser. "Whether a post mobilizes ten people or ten thousand, it is important that we reflect on the sacrifices made by thousands of Americans to preserve our liberties."

In cities or towns where other organizations are already coordinating Freedom Walks, Legionnaires can participate in the event to show their support.

Posts can download a four-page planning guide on how to coordinate a walk, obtain media materials, and sign-up as an event organizer at the America supports You – Freedom Walk website : [www.americasupportsyoud.com/FreedomWalk](http://www.americasupportsyoud.com/FreedomWalk)

\*\*\*\*\*



**WIDOWS TAX ENDS FOR SOME – BUT NOT ALL**

A recent federal court ruling voted in favor of restoring Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities that were wrongly withheld from the surviving spouses of disabled military retirees. The court found that the DOD's dollar-for-dollar deduction of DIC payments from SBP benefits was based on a faulty interpretation of federal law.

It is important to note that while this is good news, it only effects widows who remarried after the age of 57. Before 2003, the DIC program was structured so that a surviving spouse would stop receiving DIC payments if and when a widow remarried. In 2003, Congress enacted the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 which restored DIC benefits to some surviving spouses who chose to remarry – those surviving spouses who remarried after the age of 57.

\*\*\*\*\*



**Department of Veterans Affairs Mortgage Assistance**

Many borrowers, including veterans, are being hard-hit by recent events unfolding in the nation's housing and mortgage markets. It is the goal of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to help keep veterans in their homes. To this end, VA has established a toll-free number for veterans seeking assistance with their mortgages.

- What VA can do for veterans with VA loans:
- VA may be able to help avoid foreclosure through counseling and/or special financing arrangements.
  - VA may be able to intercede with the borrower on the veteran's behalf to pursue options that would allow a veteran to keep his/her home.

What VA can do for a veteran who has a non-VA loan:

- VA can provide advice/counseling on how to work with their lender to avoid foreclosure.

What VA cannot do:

- VA cannot provide assistance with non-mortgage related issues (i.e., car payments, credit card debt, etc.).

Veterans in need of mortgage-related assistance should call VA at 877-827-3702.

\*\*\*\*\*



**SECOND ANNUAL VETERANS' FIELD OF HONOR**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Veterans' Field of Honor will be held at Seneca Lake State Park, Geneva, New York from November 7 – 12, 2008. The field will be covered with over 2,000 full size American flags posted on 8 foot poles aligned in perfect rows representing the veterans who have served or are currently serving our country.

The event offers the general public a place to honor their Veterans over a five day period covering the 14 counties of the Finger Lakes Region. Community members can sponsor a flag to be flown in the Field of Honor in memory or honor of a Veteran or active duty service member. At the conclusion of the event, the flag will be given back to the sponsor for their own use.

The funds raised from the Veterans' Field of Honor will be given to the Sampson Veterans

Cemetery, Route 96A, Romulus (Seneca County). The site currently contains several buildings dating from its inception as a training center for US Naval Recruits during WW II. Records indicate that 411,429 recruits were trained at this facility which later served as a hospital and separation/discharge center.

Visit their website at: [www.healingfield.org/geneva08](http://www.healingfield.org/geneva08)

Flags cost \$30.00. To sponsor a flag in memory or honor of a loved one, please contact [bizinfo@snosmedia.com](mailto:bizinfo@snosmedia.com) or call 315-729-6891.

Volunteers are also needed for this event. If interested, please contact Julie (315-729-6891).

\*\*\*\*\*



**THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL CONVENTIONS**

National Conventions of The American Legion are planned FIVE YEARS in advance. The schedule is as follows:

Phoenix, AZ	8/22 - 8/28, 2008
Louisville, KY	8/21 - 8/27, 2009
Milwaukee, WI	8/27 - 9/2, 2010
Minneapolis, MN	8/26 - 9/1, 2011
Indianapolis, IN	8/24 - 9/30, 2012

Contracts for housing and other events are signed in June the year prior to the convention (i.e., contracts for Louisville 2009 were signed in June 2008). It helps Departments to have an estimated figure for attendance at upcoming conventions. Therefore, if you plan to attend Louisville, KY in 2009 and/or Milwaukee, WI in 2010, please let us know via e-mail, fax, snail-mail, or phone. Name and number of rooms. This allows Departments to better utilize the assigned hotel's resources. Thank you.



LOUISVILLE, KY - 2009  
 Historic Seelbach Hotel Lobby from the  
 Stairs  
 ([www.theseelbachlouisville.hilton.com](http://www.theseelbachlouisville.hilton.com))

\*\*\*\*\*



**The American  
 Legion Member  
 Purchase  
 Program**

Dell's employee/member purchase program was initially established in 1997. Since the launch of the program, Dell has drawn on the knowledge gained from partnerships with hundreds of organizations and companies as well as colleges and university programs to fine-tune our offerings and develop a rock-solid infrastructure.

By familiarizing themselves with technology at home, employees become more comfortable with introducing technology to more traditional teaching methods.

As an extension of our relationship with your institution, Dell has been pleased to offer The American Legion and SAL the following benefits of the Member Personal Purchase Program. All of the benefits noted below are available to American Legion members by

logging into [www.dell.com/americanlegion](http://www.dell.com/americanlegion) and using your member ID number of PS35524183.

**Dell Personal Purchase Program Benefits to THE AMERICAN LEGION:**

- Up to 12% discounts on Dell's award-winning consumer PC line that includes Inspiron & XPS desktops and laptops.
- 24x7 online information and ordering capabilities.
- Special offers that are more aggressive than our standard discount structure.

*Dell's toll free number 1-800-695-8133*

\*\*\*\*\*

**2008 – 2009  
 DATES TO REMEMBER**

- Fall Meetings, Indianapolis, IN  
 October 12 – 16, 2008
- National Commanders Visit to Western NY  
 October 24 – 26, 2008
- Mid-Winter Conference, Albany  
 January 23 – 25, 2009
- Department Oratorical Contest  
 March 14, 2009
- Snow Date – March 21, 2009
- Washington Conference, Washington, DC  
 March 1 – 4, 2009
- Hill Day, Albany  
 March 16 – 17, 2009
- Bowling Tourney Opening, Geneva  
 April 25, 2009
- National Commanders Visit to Eastern NY  
 April 15 – 17, 2009
- Spring Meetings, Indianapolis, IN  
 May 4 – 7, 2009
- Department Commander's Homecoming  
 May 16, 2009
- Department President's Homecoming  
 May 30, 2009
- Boys' State  
 June 27 – July 3, 2009
- Department Convention, Buffalo, NY  
 July 9 – 11, 2009