

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Post 9934 & Auxiliary 9934
Dana Point, California



Mail Call



January 2025

Happy New Year!



VFW Post 9934, Auxiliary, friends, and family gathered at the Spark of Love Toy Drive in Santa Ana on December 5th to sort and distribute the thousands of toys that had been donated to the Orange County Fire Authority. Grateful Marines from our adopted local unit, MAG-39 picked up their share that morning.



Commander's Message

Greetings Comrades,

I hope that you all enjoyed your holidays with family and friends. At the present time your post officers are making plans for the incoming year. The most pressing issue, as always, is membership. Recruiting new comrades and hopefully extending the life membership rolls.

As your commander, I have partnered with other commanders to work on new ideas in an attempt to breathe life back into District 2. Also on the table is the subject of consolidating Post 5868 Laguna Beach with Post 9934 Dana Point.

Post 5868 will have their regular meeting on January 8th and will discuss the consolidation with our Post. I will be present at their meeting to answer any questions the members may have.

Only good can come of this union. Their comrades will become members in a more active post. Consequently, Dana Point will have a larger area to promote our organization.

If Post 5868 decides to consolidate, we will then vote on the issue at our own meeting on January 14th. I have already discussed my vision with our post officers as to how we should prepare for this new year. This could be an amazing opportunity for Post 9934 to locate and assist other veterans in the area.

I also see our comrades being able to connect with new community members who have never had contact with the Veterans of Foreign Wars let alone a Veteran.

If any of you have questions or concerns and/or ideas for the future of our Post, please call or email me directly.

I will see you at the January 14th meeting at South Shores Church at 6PM.

Please be safe and be kind to each other.

*Rick Jauregui, Commander
Post 9934, Dana Point*

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POST OFFICERS FOR 2024-2025

Post Commander	Rick Jauregui	Service Officer	Aaron Pluff
Senior Vice Commander	Richard Alonzo	Service Officers Team	Jim Socks
Junior Vice Commander	Carlos Garcia		John Coon
Post Quartermaster	Phil Jimenez		Ben Valencia
Assistant Quartermaster	Wayne Yost	Service Officer Advisor	Marty Hoffman
Adjutant	David Vera	Service Officer Support	Debbie Yost
Post Chaplain	Ron Egigian		
Judge Advocate	Dolores Padgett	Trustee (3-year term)	Rodney Bradley
Post Surgeon	Gil Castro	Trustee (2-year term)	Robert Pruitt
Post Color Guard Captain	Carlos Garcia	Trustee (1-year term)	Scott Roberts

AUXILIARY OFFICERS FOR 2024-2025

President	Lisa Mers	Conductor	Ralph Mariano
Senior Vice President	Sharon Miller	Guard	Tory Boegeman
Junior Vice President	Lupe Brady		
Secretary	Terry Marr	Trustee 3	Mary Koebler
Treasurer	Cindy Somerville	Trustee 2	Sharon Miller
Chaplain	Carlene Chew	Trustee 1	Judy Brandmeier

ALL STATE POST

2004-05, 2005-06, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-2015, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-2018-2019-2020, 2021-2022, 2023-2024

ALL AMERICAN POST

2007-08, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2019-2020, 2021-2022, 2023-2024

2018 & 2022 NATIONAL OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

From the Desk of the Quartermaster



As we reached the end of 2024, I reflected on what an exciting and rewarding experience it has been for our post. We continue to serve our Veterans and Active service members.

We were able to sponsor 108 Thanksgiving meals to our active military at Camp Pendleton. We thank our Chaplain Ron Egigian for his leadership and hard work in helping our military families to have a joyful Thanksgiving.

Once again this year, we were able to assist with Spark of Love Toy Drive in Santa Ana. We had 15

members of our post, auxiliary, and family helping us. What a great turn out for this event. A standing ovation for those that helped.

We celebrated our annual Post 9934 Christmas dinner at Jack’s restaurant with 43 in attendance. Congratulations to Ben Velencia for all his hard work and becoming this year’s Comrade of the year. We ended our year with co-hosting the City of Dana Point’s New Year’s Eve party at the Community Center..

We are always involved in the community events and meeting the needs of our Veterans. For all this I am so proud of all the members in our Post. Thank You. And Happy New Year to all our comrades and families.

*Phil Jimenez, Quartermaster
Dana Point VFW Post 9934*



Auxiliary Corner

“Nothing is as strong as the heart of a volunteer.”
(Jimmy Dolittle)

The Month of December in our hearts was the month of peace, joy, and giving.

We ended the year with a joyful brunch in the beautifully spirited holiday home of our own Judy Brandmeier and a great holiday dinner at Jack’s Restaurant with the Post. Lots of laughter and great discussion on how to make the new year better.

We are asking you to continue the giving spirit for the new year. It doesn’t have to be grand, perhaps volunteering for an hour or donating gently used items directly to your local church or school or paying for the coffee for the person behind you. It may not seem like much, but to the person receiving it’s a grand and kind gesture.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please reach out to our President, Lisa Mers at lisabmers@gmail.com. If you are already a member but can’t drive to the meeting, please reach out to Lisa and we can Zoom you into our meeting. It’s a great way to participate. Please become a member of the VFW Auxiliary 9934 Facebook page and keep posted on our new year adventures.

Wishing you a healthy and giving new year.

*Terry Marr,
Secretary, Historian
VFW Auxiliary 9934*



VFW AUXILIARY
UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR UNCOMMON HEROES®

CONGRESS SENDS DOLE ACT TO PRESIDENT'S DESK

After a final round of minor technical corrections, the Senate approved by unanimous consent, S. 141, Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act. Subsequently, the House voted in favor of the bill for a second time and now it heads to the president for signature. The VFW thanks all the advocates from around the country who responded to our Action Alert urging their representatives and senators to support this historic legislation! This is a significant VFW legislative victory that will fund a range of enhancements vital to critical health care services for veterans and caregivers who need help now.

VFW Action Corp Weekly

December 23, 2024

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NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE SURPASSES \$14 BILLION IN TOTAL RECOVERED VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION

The VFW's Accredited Service Officer network made significant impacts in veterans' lives in fiscal year 2024

WASHINGTON - The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is proud to announce it has surpassed a milestone in fiscal year 2024, as its National Veterans Service (NVS) network of 2,162 Accredited Service Officers recovered \$14.6 billion in compensatory awards, resulting in tangible, positive impacts to the lives of more than half a million represented veterans.

"Once again, the hard work and dedication of our VFW accredited representatives shows in every single dollar that they recovered for the veterans, family members and survivors that VFW represents," said VFW National Commander Al Lipphardt. "This is another milestone in our 125-year history, and it was accomplished through their magnificent efforts."

The NVS Accredited Service Officer network includes full-time VFW employees as well as individuals employed by other nonprofits and state and local governments across the nation. Every service officer provides Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)-accredited claims assistance, free of charge, to transitioning service members, veterans, family members and survivors. Last year alone, the network processed roughly 146,000 veteran claims — more than 38,000 of which were brand new, initial claims for veterans, many of whom had never before applied for disability compensation. Of the new claims, about 14,000 were filed through the VFW's Pre-Discharge claims program on behalf of service members exiting the military.

fit for veterans who sustained injuries and/or illnesses during service. Governed by law and ensured to those who qualify as part of initial military enlistment contracts, eligibility for VA disability compensation is not just given. It requires a veteran to prove service-connection of their illness or injury by showing that an event occurred during service leading to or aggravating their condition, they have a present diagnosis of the condition, and a medical professional believes that the condition is at least as likely as not to have been incurred as a result of their service. This trio of requirements is known as a nexus. Once service-connection is established, VA disability compensation is awarded to mitigate the often lifelong impacts their condition brings.

"The only point I am more proud of than our service officers' labors is that every single dollar of recouped compensation went to those we represent," said NVS Director Mike Figlioli. "Our service officers did it all out of a sense of duty, care and concern — for free!"

Notably, recent VA data suggest that veterans who interact with their VA benefits — including those receiving disability compensation — are at lowered risk of dying by suicide. Read the report here.

The VFW's NVS program relies on grants and donors to operate. For every dollar received, an average of \$1,678 is returned to veterans in earned benefits. To support NVS during this giving season, visit vfwfoundation.org/national-veterans-service/.

Veteran disability compensation is an earned bene-

vfw.org/media-and-events

December 10, 2024

Christmas Dinner at Jack's



On December 8th we had a wonderful Holiday Dinner at Jack's Restaurant in Dana Point with forty of our Post Comrades, Auxiliary and family in attendance. The food was delicious (as always at Jack's) and the ambience was festive and fun. Our tech expert, Anusha Misra and her parents joined us and Anusha was honored with a statue commemorating her as Patriot of the Year from Post 9934 and US Flag in a display case. Ben Valencia was honored as Comrade of the year by Commander Rick. Jack's staff were friendly and the service was excellent. A truly memorable occasion.



Visit our Website
vfwpost9934.org



‘OUR VETERANS DESERVE THE BEST’: LAWMAKERS URGE ARMY TO RESTORE HORSE-DRAWN FUNERALS AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

WASHINGTON — The return of military horses that have escorted caskets to gravesites at Arlington National Cemetery for more than 75 years will depend on the Army securing adequate pastureland, repairing rundown stables and improving training for handlers, officials said.

Unsanitary living conditions and a lack of open space for the herd to graze led to an indefinite suspension of the 3rd Infantry Regiment Caisson Platoon in May 2023 after several horses died, Maj. Gen. Trevor Bredenkamp, commander of the Army Military District of Washington, said Wednesday at a hearing of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee’s subpanel on disability and memorial affairs.

Lawmakers sought an update on the Army’s work to improve care for the horses and develop a plan for the resumption of horse-drawn funerals at Arlington.

“Caisson-pulling military horses were dying in 2022 because of the Army’s failure to provide proper food, veterinary care, pastureland and stables for the herd,” said Rep. Morgan Luttrell, R-Texas, chairman of the subcommittee. “Our caisson platoon should be the most elite organization of its kind on the planet.”

Known as the Old Guard, the caisson platoon of the 3rd Infantry Regiment has carried the caskets of deceased service members to gravesites at Arlington since 1948.

The caisson — a ceremonial wagon that bears the casket — is drawn by four specially trained horses. The processions are considered an integral part of traditional full-honor military funerals at Arlington.

“The Army has given us no estimate on a time or date when these operations will resume,” Luttrell said.

An Army investigation in 2023 revealed the horses were kept in cramped quarters with a lack of maintenance or care. The herd was grazing on land with construction debris and manure. Horses were consuming low-quality feed and suffering from parasites, according to the findings. Sand and gravel were found in the digestive tracts of two horses that died.

The problems evolved over time, said Bredenkamp, who also commands the Joint Task Force-National Capital Region. They included stables in disrepair, lack of open land to exercise and graze the horses, and handlers with little or no training in working with horses.

“After decades of neglect the platoon was taken out of commission — and rightfully so. But families deserve to know the Army is working diligently to returning the platoon to its rightful stature,” said Rep. Chris Pappas of New Hampshire, the top Democrat on the subcommittee.

Thirty-four families are now waiting for the return of the horse platoon to honor a deceased military member or vet-

eran with full honors at Arlington, Bredenkamp said. More than 2,000 veterans have been denied the benefit of the iconic procession since the service was canceled, he said.

The Army Military District of Washington is responsible for military funerals with full honors to the nation’s veterans.

The herd size — and its health — directly relate to the wait time for families seeking to have the horse-drawn wagons in funeral processions of loved ones, Bredenkamp said.

The Army now is focusing on land acquisition, horse fitness and talent management. Plans are to secure 100 acres for permanent stables with pasture for grazing and housing for staff, he said.

About 40 horses have been retired since 2023 because of age, medical conditions or both, Bredenkamp said.

The Army might seek to change regulations to allow soldiers to stay in the caisson longer than a two- or three-year assignment to develop and use their horsemanship skills, he said. The service is also identifying a larger pool of equine veterinarians who can treat the herd.

Though the horses have been stabled at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in Virginia for more than 70 years, there is no open pastureland left in the area, Bredenkamp said. Plans are to update stables at Fort Myer, which is next to Arlington, to use the paddocks when horses are working at funeral processions. But the herd will be kept at a larger permanent facility with pastureland, he said.

Renovations at Fort Myer will include improved ventilation at the barns, enlarged stalls and replacement of flooring to reduce the strain on the horses.

“Too many of our nation’s heroes have not been able to receive the full military funeral honors they have earned due to the Army’s yearslong mismanagement of the caisson platoon military horses,” Rep. Mike Bost, R-Ill., chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee said in August.

A “haphazard and ineffective approach” to improving the health and living conditions for the herd led to the deaths of the military horses, he said.

Bost had asked for quarterly briefings about improvements underway for the caisson platoon program until it is fully operational.

The Army plans to have a herd of 80 horses to support funeral processions, Bredenkamp said. The service intends to resume operations when it can support 20 funerals per week, he said.

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The 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) Caisson Platoon conducts military funeral honors with funeral escort for Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. Maj. John Canley, USMC, in Section 60 of Arlington National Cemetery on Aug. 25, 2022.

(Photo by Elizabeth Fraser/Arlington National Cemetery)

This article by Linda F. Hersey originally appeared on Stripes.com. Stars and Stripes serves the U.S. military community by providing editorially independent news and information around the world. November 13, 2024

[ARLINGTON - Continued from Page 6]

The Army has hired a herd manager and facilities manager, improved the diet of the horses and is using 10 acres temporarily in Virginia to graze and exercise them until a permanent facility is acquired.

“The Army is unwavering in its commitment to continue this solemn duty for those eligible and rendering honors to those who have served our nation,” Bredenkamp said. “The horse-drawn caisson funeral procession is one of the most recognized traditions in the military.”

Rep. Juan Ciscomani, R-Ariz., said millions of dollars already have been spent to improve the program with poor results, including money paid to an instructor who harmed the horses.

“What changes is the Army doing to obtain mission-ready horses and take care of them?” he asked.

Working with the equine community, the Army is rebuilding its knowledge about caring for the horses and reaching out to breeders who train horses that pull wagons.

“We are seeking horses with the right temperament that can work on a horse-hitch team,” Bredenkamp said.

The Army also is raising awareness among the troops about opportunities to work with and train the horses.

“Caisson operations require specialized skills in handling the horses and conducting ceremonial duties. To meet these needs, we are actively recruiting soldiers interested in equine work and providing them with the necessary training to become proficient in caisson operations,” Bredenkamp said.

The Old Guard and the equine community are working together to support upgrades in living conditions for the horses, Julie Broadway, president of the American Horse Council, said in a written statement prior to the hearing Wednesday.

She said the Army also has pledged to improve the skills of those “entrusted with the care and safekeeping of these

emblematic horses.”

“Management of the caisson herd on this historic military installation had deteriorated over the years. Frequent turnover among the horses’ caregivers — an inevitable result of deployments and reassignments — left gaps in knowledge and experience. Moreover, the equipment and saddlery were obsolete,” she said.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is among the advocacy groups that submitted written testimony stating support for the return of the horse-drawn funeral processions at Arlington, after the conditions improve for the herd’s welfare.

Retired U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Jon Kreitz, an equestrian expert, said photos and videos posted online revealed “ill-fitted tack and dangerous riding practices” that put at risk the safety and welfare of the horses and their handlers.

These practices were “not with evil intent but from ignorance and a lack of cognizant oversight,” he said.

Kreitz said there has been a lack of education on the care required for the horses. He cited costly contracts and the hiring of civilian contractors who lacked skills and experience.

Bredenkamp was recently assigned oversight of the caisson platoon to address the problems, improve the welfare of the animals and return the service, Kreitz said.

“From my first meeting with Maj. Gen. Bredenkamp, it was apparent that he understood that the caisson platoon’s culture needed to change from the top down to resolve these issues,” he said.

“The general came in and has done amazing things to move forward,” Luttrell said.

Soldiers of the Old Guard will now undergo a 12-week basic rider course. Old saddles and other equipment will be replaced. The caisson wagon also has been redesigned to make it easier to maneuver.

“Our veterans deserve the best,” Luttrell said. “It is by far past time for the Army to make this a priority again.”

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS - JANUARY 2025

- ◇ Wednesday, January 1st - **HAPPY NEW YEAR !!!**
- ◇ Saturday, January 11th, 10:00 am - Flag Retirement, upper parking lot Dana Point City Hall.
- ◇ Tuesday, January 14th, 6:00 pm - VFW Post 9934 Meeting, South Shores Church
32712 Crown Valley Pkwy, Dana Point
- ◇ Wednesday, January 15th, 2:00 to 4:00 pm - Disability Clinic. Dana Point Community Center,
34052 Del Obispo St.
- ◇ Monday, January 20th - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- ◇ Tuesday, January 21st, 6:00 pm - Dana Point City Council Meeting
- ◇ Saturday, January 25th, 10:00 am - Flag Retirement, upper parking lot Dana Point City Hall.

Join Wayne Yost PPR Certified Pickleball Instructor to learn more about this exciting game. Instruction is given free of charge each Monday and Friday at the Laguna Niguel YMCA, located on Crown Valley Pkwy.
8:30 – 10:00 am. Wear court shoes and eye protection, all other equipment will be provided.



JANUARY 2025 MEETINGS

The next meetings of Post and Auxiliary 9934 will be on Tuesday, January 14, 2025.

The Post meeting will be held at South Shores Church, 32712 Crown Valley Parkway, starting at 6:00 p.m.

The Auxiliary will meet at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 33501 Stonehill, starting at 6:30 pm.



Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - January 20th

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