



AMERICAN LEGION POST 46  
NEWSLETTER  
October, November and December, 2012

"In Memory of Those Who Served and to Honor Those Who Are Serving."

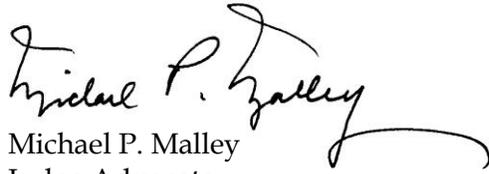
To All Fellow Legionnaires of American Legion Post 46

Every four years in November, politics takes center stage and virtually overwhelms all other news events. Although none of us are able to control the ever increasing size and pervasiveness of state and local government, we as veterans should at least make every effort to guide it in the right direction. Veterans as a group are particularly affected by political decisions including, among many others, those involving job opportunities and benefits for veterans; funding for the training of dogs for PTSD veterans; support for the exploits of Navy SEALs; delay of the dreaded "sequestration" cut to the DOD budget, etc. Although the American Legion is technically not a political entity, it has considerable influence "On the Hill" which should not be wasted. This issue of the Post 46 newsletter contains a number of articles dealing with these hot political items which may or may not influence your vote in November.

All of this being said, I ask once again "Where did the summer go?" At its last meeting, Post 46 actually designated the date and time of its annual Christmas Party for December 8<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 A.M. Please put this date on your calendar and nominate or suggest a speaker for this special occasion. Further, if you are able to do so, please make a contribution so that Post 46 can continue this holiday tradition so much enjoyed by our late commander, J.J. Van Gasse. Commander Duncan will welcome your advice, contributions and suggestions.

Please review and note the Calendar of Events for the next three months. All Legionnaires are invited to make some effort to participate in and contribute to at least one of them. Veterans Day on November 11<sup>th</sup> is, of course, the grand-daddy of them all. It is the one day of each year when veterans can commemorate and honor all of those veterans who have served before them. Although this date (marking the end of World War I) is not celebrated to any large extent by the civilian population, there is certainly no excuse for veterans to ignore it and not celebrate and commemorate it in one way or another. For the first time in many a year, I will be out of the country on this significant date and, therefore, must rely upon other Post 46 members to take up the banner in my place. Politicians making a pitch for your vote until the last minute on election day may delay or even overwhelm your preparations to observe Veterans Day. Do not let this happen and make your plans today! If you are unsure as to how and where you can participate, please contact one of the Post 46 officers who will give you the dates and times of scheduled celebrations honoring our veterans. Also note the dates of our monthly Post 46 meetings and our luncheons at Classic Cup Café. These gatherings are conducted for the benefit of our members and it makes no sense for Post 46 members not to take advantage of them and participate.

If any Post 46 member feels that a particular news event might be of particular interest to our members and deserves some further attention in our newsletter, please let me know or send me a summary of the event which we can include in our next issue; we hope to be able to get back to more local news in our next edition. Some of the news events contained in this issue were contributed By Post 46 members. I hope you all have pleasant memories of this summer to keep you warm as the days grow colder. Thank you for your support of Post 46 and its commitments to our community, our veterans and our military personnel serving on active duty.



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#### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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|-------------------|--|
| October 1         | Regular Post Meeting at 7:00 P.M.<br>Directors Room, Weber's Inn   |
| October 14        | 2 <sup>nd</sup> District Meeting, 2:00 P.M.<br>Rose City, Post 324, Jackson  |
| October 15        | Washtenaw County Council of Veterans Meeting<br>VFW Post, Wagner Road at 7:30 P.M.                                 |
| October 17        | Luncheon Meeting<br>Classic Cup Café, Jackson Road, 11:45 A.M.   |
| November 5        | Regular Post Meeting<br>Directors Room, Weber's Inn, 7:00 P.M.   |
| November 11       | Veterans Day<br>Celebrations at many locations – ask your Post 46 officers   |
| November 21       | Luncheon Meeting<br>Classic Cup Café, Jackson Road, 11:45 A.M.   |
| December 8        | Post 46 Christmas Party<br>Weber's Inn, 11:30 A.M.<br>Please bring unwrapped Christmas presents for Toys for Tots. |
| December 19       | Luncheon Meeting<br>Classic Cup Café, Jackson Road, 11:45 A.M.   |
| December 26 or 27 | Holiday Bingo, VA Hospital at 7:30 P.M.<br>Final date to be announced  |

## LUNCHEON MEETINGS

As most of you know by now, our lunch meetings are held on a Wednesday each month at the Classic Cup Café on Jackson Road, Ann Arbor. The exact dates of these lunch meetings are listed above. It is an opportunity for all members to get together, relax, enjoy a meal and get to know other members of Post 46 in an informal setting. Please try to join us from time to time and meet up with the “regulars.”

## HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

At a recent classroom in a local school, I was asked about the history and purpose of The American Legion. It was a straightforward and simple question but I had a problem in providing a full and complete answer and I suspect that many of my fellow Legionnaires would face the same problem when trying to answer such a basic question. It seems appropriate, therefore, that this Newsletter provide just a brief history of the formation and purpose of The American Legion just to remind us all why we are members of Post 46 and what basic principles unite us and what goals we are trying to achieve.

The American Legion was actually chartered and incorporated by Congress back in 1919 shortly after the end of World War 1 as a patriotic veterans' organization. It is headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, and also has offices in Washington, D.C. Currently, membership stands at an impressive 2.4 million in some 14,000 posts worldwide; however, the membership has slowly declined from a peak of about 3 million. Although the American Legion is a nonpartisan organization, its primary political activity, as one would expect, is lobbying on behalf of the interests of veterans and service members such as support for veterans benefits and pensions and on behalf of the Veterans Affairs hospital system.

The American Legion promotes its “Four Pillars” : Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation; National Security; Americanism; and Children and Youth. Most of you who attend Post 46 meetings regularly know and recite the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion which has remained virtually unchanged for many years except, of course, for the fact that the original Preamble referred to preserving the “history and incidents of our participation in the war” rather than the current version that has been amended to refer to preserving “ the memories and incidents of our associations in the great wars”. Many Legionnaires, myself included, believe that another revision is well over due to make it clear that all subsequent wars - Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf Wars, Afghanistan, etc. - are also included within this Preamble so that veterans of these wars recognize that they are also fully represented and honored by the American Legion and included within its organization.

The history of the American Legion and its development since 1919 is obviously far too involved and detailed to include in the newsletter. It is indeed a fascinating and sometimes curious history which many of you might find time to review in more detail. For example, for many years between the two World Wars, the American Legion maintained a largely isolationist perspective and passed resolutions to the effect that a “large standing army is

uneconomic and un-American”, that although it favored universal military training, “the administration of such a policy should be removed from the complete control of any exclusively military organization” and that “we are strongly opposed to compulsory military service in time of peace”. This nationalist isolationism policy would remain in place until Pearl Harbor and the entry of the United States into the Second World War.

Some of the historic highlights include: a Flag Code was adopted in 1923; the American Legion Baseball Program was created in 1925; the first American Legion Boys State was convened in 1935; the first “GI Bill” was promoted by the American Legion and signed into law in 1944; in 1982, the American Legion contributed \$1 million to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund for the construction of the Wall in Washington (the largest single contributor to the project); in 1989, the Veterans Administration was elevated to Cabinet level status at the urging of the American Legion (be careful what you wish for); and in 2008, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act was strongly supported by the American Legion and enacted into law. The primary purpose of listing just a few of these highlights is to remind us all that we are part of a large and united organization which has achieved a large number of goals which it could not otherwise have achieved without the active support of Posts and members around the country and that we are members of our respective Posts so that we can each make an individual contribution, in one way or another, to our veterans, our active service personnel, our country, community and its youth. You, as a Post 46 member, might also one day be asked about the history and relevance of The American Legion.

#### BINGO NIGHT AT THE VA HOSPITAL

Post 46 has continued the tradition of volunteering to sponsor Bingo Night at the VA Ann Arbor Hospital during the most difficult period for our hospitalized veterans – the holiday period between Christmas and New Years Day. A Bingo night for Post 46 is scheduled at the VA Hospital either on December 26 or 27, 2012, at 7:30 P.M. Please make an effort to join us to hand out some holiday cheer to our hospitalized veterans. Thanks.

#### NAVY SEALS CONTINUE TO MAKE THE HEADLINES

As all Legionnaires know, Navy Seal Team 6 was able to track down and kill Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan, on May 1, 2011. The White House immediately publicized its version of this mission and bathed in the glory of its success but many wondered if the White House version revealed intelligence and military secrets which would have more prudently been kept under wraps. A few weeks ago, a member of Navy Seal Team 6 who participated in the raid, Matt Bissonette, writing under the name of Mark Owens, released his book “No Easy Day” which describes the events leading up to the raid and the raid itself in considerable detail. Few books have hit the shelves in recent years with as much controversy surrounding it as “No Easy Day”.

The White House and the Pentagon promptly issued a statement attempting to suppress the book and alleging, among other things, that it was inaccurate, revealed classified information and was a violation of Mr. Owen’s nondisclosure agreements entered into as Navy Seal. This White House action guaranteed that the book would become a best seller so that book stores soon ran out of copies and second and third editions have already been published.

For those of you who were fortunate enough to obtain a copy of the book, you might have been somewhat disappointed by the style in which it was written. It is not a literary masterpiece. Mr. Owen claims early on in the book's preface that he specifically avoided endangering those still on duty by changing names and timeframes and by only using information that was already available to the public. In fact, he hired a former "special operations attorney" to review the manuscript to make sure that it did not contain "sensitive information to compromise or harm the United States." There is a great ongoing debate as to whether or not Mr. Owens should have written and released the book and many former Navy Seals have contributed to both sides of this debate. Did he indeed break faith with his former comrades in arms and violate his non-disclosure commitments or did he have some obligation, now that he is a civilian, to "set the record straight" in order to correct what he believed to be the errors contained in the White House version?

The title "No Easy Day" is evidently derived from the Navy SEAL philosophy: "The only easy day was yesterday". The early chapters describe many of the men who have dedicated their young lives, at considerable sacrifice, to the pursuit of "bad guys" who are a threat to American citizens and its way of life. The author obviously admires this cast of characters and finds comfort and strength in their company. This becomes very obvious when the book describes the Osama bin Laden raid. The book completely explodes many of the myths that have surrounded the mission. For example, there was no extended firefight as the team worked its way to Osama's room. Further, there was no prior intent to capture anyone found in the compound alive. Women and children were killed during the raid and Osama himself was shot simply because he was yet another person found on the third floor of the compound. He was then shot a few more times at point blank range to make sure he was "absolutely" dead. The SEALs are depicted as human beings who succeeded in their mission through training, dedication and courage and despite the fact that the leading helicopter containing the advance team actually crashed into the compound upon arrival. No Easy Day can be viewed as both a security breach and a "must read" and as just one definitive reading of the post 9/11 war against terrorism. Ironically, Mr. Owen's first-hand account came out as other Special Operations forces released a video critical of President Obama in which they allege he later deliberately leaked classified information on the mission to advance his reelection.

More recently, we received further news about the valor and courage which Navy SEALs seem to possess in such great reserve. The White House has finally confirmed that the two former Navy SEALs who were killed in the recent attack of the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi were not part of Ambassador Stevens's official security detail (later reports indicated that Mr. Stevens had little if any security at all despite repeated warnings to the State Department of an intended attack on the consulate on the anniversary of 9/11). This delayed explanation confirmed that these two Navy SEALs actually took up arms voluntarily to protect the facility when it was overrun by insurgents. They were both personal service contractors and had no duties related to security whatsoever; however, they apparently both bravely stepped into action when Stevens became attacked by the mob and engaged in a lengthy firefight from the inner area of the consulate all the way to an outside annex and nearby American "safe-house." This later confirmation was apparently provided to fill out the misleading description of the episode issued by the White House which left a misinterpretation that the two ex-Navy SEALs might have, in some way, been responsible for the ambassador's personal safety or had become

separated from him. In fact, they were yet two more SEALS who voluntarily risked their lives and died as heroes. Ready to Lead, Ready to Follow, Never Quit.

### SERVICE DOGS FOR OUR WOUNDED VETERANS?

The April, May and June issue of this newsletter contained an article about Man's Best Friend and PTSD dogs trained here in Michigan by Stiggy's Dogs, Inc. In fact, this newsletter suggested that Post 46 members might consider making a donation to this program when making their charitable contributions at <http://www.stiggysdogs.org> or to call (248) 667-8364. If you still have a copy of this newsletter, I hope you will revisit it and review the information it provided about this beneficial program. I was fortunate enough to see some of these dogs in action this summer when escorting wounded veterans for week long rehabilitation and recuperation visits to both Montana and to the upper peninsula of Michigan at our own Wilwin Lodge. I am now persuaded more than ever what a valuable comfort these dogs can provide to some of these young men and women whose lives have otherwise been ground up by the horrors of war.

As a specific example of such an event, as he was walking down the street, one of the veterans evidently had a sudden misgiving about approaching the intersection of the street ahead. Upon command, his dog walked forward to the corner, looked around the corner and gave some type of signal that the "coast was clear". On another occasion, a veteran became fearful about opening the door and entering his room. He sent his dog into the room ahead of him to assure him that no one else was in the room. Otherwise, these dogs appear to simply act as companions and friends to these veterans in the same manner as many dog lovers normally love and treasure their pets.

Unfortunately, the Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced that, although it will continue to pay service-dog benefits to veterans with vision, hearing or mobility related injuries, it will not do so on behalf of veterans suffering only with post-traumatic-brain-disorder (PTSD) or other mental health disabilities. A 67 page draft of the rules concerning veterans and their need for service dogs was recently published in the Federal Register. The VA further justified its decision in regard to mental health service dogs stating that the "VA has not yet been able to determine that these dogs provide medical benefit to veterans with mental disease" and that the VA cannot therefore justify the cost.

Based upon this decision by the VA, it is now more important than ever to support private initiatives for the training of these PTSD dogs such as Stiggy's Dogs, Inc., Paws 4 Stripes based in New Mexico and Genesis Assistance Dogs, Inc., based in Palm Beach, Florida. These service dogs are individually trained by these organizations to perform tasks for a specific wounded veteran. Some of the tasks performed to assist veterans with PTSD include surveying darkened rooms, turning on lights, re-orienting an owner during nightmares or flashbacks, navigating crowds, sensing anxiety, and sometimes even enforcing boundaries for personal space.

John Ensminger, author of Service and Therapy Dogs in America, has expressed concern that, under the new rule, medications will trump service dogs when it comes to treating PTSD. "What it may mean in practice is, if we can tranquilize you to a certain level with psychotropic medications, then you don't need a dog. I think that is wrong." Until one actually comes into close personal contact with a PTSD veteran and his service dog, it is difficult to fully understand

the calming and positive relationship between them which is so vital to the veteran's rehabilitation. I was privileged to observe this working relationship between veteran and service dog many times this summer and was fully persuaded that the bond established was of valuable benefit to the wounded veteran and his well-earned recuperation process. I ask that each Post 46 member use his or her influence to persuade politicians at all levels to continue support of the PTSD service dog program and/or to contribute to those private organizations which are involved in the training of service dogs. Thank you.

### **IN BRIEF - NEWS ITEMS FROM THE MILITARY BAG**

**Charitable Contributions:** State Attorney General Bill Schuette recently charged a West Bloomfield man, Neil Thrasher, with creating fake veterans' charities in Farmington Hills and Southfield and spending more than \$100,000 from donors at athletic clubs, liquor stores and restaurants. Mr. Thrasher apparently raised a large portion of these donations using a telemarketing scheme from 2009 to 2012. He is charged with two counts of embezzlement from a charitable organization, punishable by up to 10 years in prison. Yet another warning from your Post 46 newsletter to check and recheck the organizations to which you make charitable contributions. A 10 year term is not long enough for the likes of people like Mr. Thrasher and, as you know, his term, if he serves any time in prison at all, will be shorter than 10 years.

**Home Depot Crew helps Army Wife:** A recent article in a Detroit newspaper carried an article describing the charitable work performed by a group of Home Depot employees on behalf of an Army wife whose husband was serving overseas. The article reported that a group of 25 volunteers from Home Depot were recently painting, sawing and hammering as they completed work at a White Lake Township home which an Army officer had been unable to complete before he was shipped to Afghanistan. A week after Lt. Prapotnik ripped out the main bathroom, he got the call to duty. This project was a part of Home Depot's 2012 Celebration of Service to help those in the military and their families. Between now and Veterans Day, the company expects to participate in more than 300 projects nationwide that focus on veterans housing. Your newsletter just could not overlook the opportunity to repeat a short version of such a heartwarming article in case you missed it.

**Veterans photo ID Cards:** It has recently been reported that, for the first time, veterans in Washtenaw County will soon be able to receive a photo identification card. These cards are primarily intended for use at businesses to show staff that the individual is a veteran and is eligible for special discounts or offers that might be available. Other Michigan counties already have this program in place. If any veteran wishes to obtain such a card, the veteran should record his or her military discharge in the Washtenaw County Clerk's Office. This office states that it will soon be prepared to also issue a photo ID to veterans at the same time. The fee for this service is \$10.00 but Michael Smith of the Department of Veterans' Services has said that the County Department of Veterans' Services will be able to cover the \$10.00 fee if the individual veteran cannot afford it. Note that many Post 46 members already have similar cards that identify their veteran status if they are enrolled in the Veterans Affairs Healthcare System; however, others only have hospital paperwork which might not clearly disclose to a business that the person is a veteran. If any Post 46 member obtains one of these photo ID cards, please provide your newsletter with a brief note outlining the issuance process and any experience you have with its acceptance at local businesses.

**Michigan Veterans Trust Fund Audit:** Michigan state auditors recently raised questions about the costs of operating a program that gives grants to distressed Michigan veterans or their families. The audit calculated that an amazingly high 49% of the money spent in 2009-2010 went for administration. The audit criticized the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund for not identifying more ways to reduce these seemingly high administrative costs at state and local levels. Costs at the county levels also varied considerably from \$46 in Otsego County to \$98,353 in Wayne County. This audit focused on an emergency grant program created after World War II that provides money to veterans and their families stuck in short-term financial distress. The money is provided for rent, utilities, home repair or mortgage payments and comes from investment earnings generated by a \$50 million trust. The average administrative cost of handling an application across the state was \$139. The audit disclosed that Washtenaw County had handled eight applications at an average cost of \$888 each; however, Anne Dutcher, trust fund director, made the following assurance: "No veteran was not given a grant because of lack of money."

**Thomas More Law Center and Col. Dooley:** As many of you know, the Thomas More Law Center is based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and over the years has represented and become involved in a number of legal matters representing the interests of veterans. One of its stated missions is to fight for and preserve a strong national defense. Some of the legal actions in which the Thomas More Law Center have been involved have previously been reported in prior issues of this newsletter ranging from its defense of Marine Col. Jeffrey Chessani who was being prosecuted for the alleged Haditha Massacre back in 2006 to its more recent involvement in preserving the Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial Cross from removal and destruction. The latest legal challenge taken on by the Center is the representation of U.S. Army Lt. Col. Matthew Dooley, a 1994 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Col. Dooley, a highly decorated combat veteran, was an instructor at the Joint Forces Staff College, a branch of the National Defense University, when he was recently removed from his teaching position and publically condemned by General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, because of the allegedly negative way Islam was portrayed in an elective course he was teaching titled "Perspectives on Islam and Islam Radicalism" The action taken to dismiss Col. Dooley was evidently taken as a direct result of a letter written to the Department of Defense dated October 19, 2011, and signed by 57 Muslim organizations demanding that all training materials that they judge to be offensive to Islam be "purged" and that instructors involved "are effectively disciplined". According to the Thomas More Law Center Alert, Col. Dooley's class was in fact intended to grapple with the most dangerous aspects of radical Islamic ideology and his students were encouraged to debate and affirm or dismiss various interpretations of radical Islam as well as develop and possibly advocate what actions could best be taken by the United States when confronted by Islamic radicals. There is not sufficient time and space available in this newsletter to detail all of the awards, commendations and medals earned by Col. Dooley during his 18 year military career and the six operational and combat tours he served while deployed in Bosnia, Kuwait and Iraq. The Thomas More Law Center is a 501(c)(3) organization and has undertaken the defense of Col. Dooley as part of its mission to support a strong national defense through litigation, education and related activities. You may reach the Thomas More Law Center at (734) 827-2001 or read about this case and others it has undertaken by visiting its website at [www.thomasmore.org](http://www.thomasmore.org).

**The Lowering of Flags Continues:** Gov. Rick Snyder had the unpleasant duty to order that flags be lowered to half-staff for two more recent Michigan casualties. **PFC Shane Cantu** of

Corunna died in Afghanistan on August 28, 2012. Corunna was a member of the U.S. Army and was based in Germany and Italy prior to his deployment to Afghanistan. **Gunnery Sgt. Daniel Price** of Zeeland died in Afghanistan on July 29, 2012. Price was a member of the U.S. Marine Corps and had previously served three tours of duty in Iraq prior to his deployment to Afghanistan. These are but two of the recent Michigan casualties that were brought to the attention of this newsletter. They are but a small reminder of the ultimate sacrifice which may be asked of all service personnel who enter military service. "May their souls rest in peace. Amen."

#### FINAL WORD - POLITICS AND SEQUESTRATION

This newsletter began with the warning that the November elections are soon upon us and we will see the best and worst of politics in the months ahead. Politicians are all aware of the "fiscal cliff" that looms ahead and the fact that the highest income tax increase in history will soon take effect unless political action is taken. Will our elected officials in Washington do anything to prevent such drastic events from occurring before the end of the year? Unfortunately, instead of taking a scalpel to surgically carve out expenses from programs that can best afford it, our politicians have decided to take the less risky political route and have so far chosen to apply the meat axe approach of sequestration and cut all veterans budget items equally across the board. As veterans, we have a particular interest in what actions will be taken to protect veterans' disability and education benefits, health care and counseling. We have received mixed messages on this score. On one hand, the White House has assured us that these benefits are all exempt from sequestration but that other programs outside the VA will face severe cuts. On the other hand, the White House recently threatened to veto a defense appropriations bill because it does not include higher health care fees for members of TRICARE, the military health care system. Keep an eye on Washington - there will be some chaotic months ahead- and be sure to vote in November!

#### POST OFFICERS

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