

MEMORIAL DAYS
AMERICAN LEGION MAHONING VALLEY POST 15, INC.
"In Peace, As in War, We Serve"



The American Legion is a national organization open to men and women who served in the United States military during wartime. Members do not have to have been in a war, but must have served during wartime. The purpose of the American Legion is to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; to preserve memories and incidents of our associations in the great wars; to inculcate a sense of individual obligations to the community, state, and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and good-will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom, and democracy; and to consecrate and sanctify its comradeship by its devotion to mutual helpfulness.

Following the end of World War I, in 1919, The American Legion was organized on a national basis and local Legion Posts were quickly chartered all over the country. The Youngstown Post was number 15. The Poland Post, number 145, was chartered in July 1929. The following names appear on the Post 145 Charter: Buzzard, H. Cover, Campbell, W. Cover, B. Cover, Dickinson, Evans, Fifthian, Grissinger, R. Howell, H. Howell, Humm, C. Johnston, G. Johnston, Kerr, Kuhl, Marrie, McCullough, Miller, Moris, Miles, McCormick, McCreary, Olson, Orr, Powers, Rohrbaugh, Redding, Snapp, Stewart, Smith, Sexton, Wire, Watts, Witt, Wolfe, and Zedaker. The first formal meeting was held in Poland Village Hall in November, 1929. Past Commanders of Poland Post 145 include: Paul McCreary, Messers McNab, Smith, H. Cover, Evans, Sr., Jefferies, Simon, B. Cover, Jackson, Sr., Watts, Wietelmann, Williams, Wymer, Sr., Gray, Dankel, E. Brooks, Skinner, Wymer, Jr., Pitchford, Powers, Rauschenbach, Speer, Westerman, Miller, Vasu, Howren, Simington, Simpkins, Evans, Jr. (two terms), McNab, Jr., D. Brooks, Jackson, Jr., Westerman, Bill Miller, and William Benton.

The Post immediately became active in Community affairs and among these have been student awards, Fourth of July fireworks and celebration, sponsoring of a Boy Scout Troop, formation of a firing squad available for all patriotic observances and for funerals of veterans. The first major project was securing its own building and in 1936 the cornerstone was laid at 35 Cortland Street. The Post Home still serves the American Legion. The World War I plot and monument in Riverside Commentary was work of the American Legion. Perhaps its greatest continuous interest is being of assistance to veterans' families, especially in death; and the is responsible for the Decoration of Graves just prior to Memorial Day.

In 1975, Youngstown Post 15 and Poland Post 145 merged and became known as American Legion Mahoning Valley Post 15, Incorporated, and was located in Poland at the Post 145 Home, 35 Cortland Street. At the time of the merger, William Benton was Commander of Post 145 and Donald Massaro and Robert Clayton were Commanders of Post 15; the merger was beneficial to both Posts.

Youngstown Post 15 sold its Post Home which was located on Spring Street, and

now is the home of the Youngstown State University Police Department. The Post Home in Poland was upgraded to include a kitchen, paved parking lot, and the property was fenced in. New furnaces were installed and electrical wiring updated. In 1986, Post 15 dedicated a monument to the Four Chaplains, and is located on the Post grounds.

Post 15 sponsors the annual Memorial Day Parade in Poland, which begins at the Post Home on Cortland Street, and ends at the Poland Riverside Cemetery. In 1995, more than one thousand participated in the event, making it the largest Memorial Day Parade in recent history. Another first for this event was its being televised. In cooperation with Paul Wachtel, General Manager of Armstrong Cable Services, the 1995 event was shown on two different occasions in the days following Memorial Day.

With approximately 170 members, Post 15 continues to service the community by sponsorship of the Memorial Day Parade, and by providing its Color Guard at events including the Fourth of July Fireworks display, Opening Ceremonies of Tournaments for the Poland Community Baseball Association, including the 1995 Little League Baseball Ohio State Tournament, Buckeye Boys' State, and are available for public speaking to local schools and organizations, and various other functions throughout the community. Also in 1995, the Post 15 Color Guard participated in The Laying of the Roses at the Vietnam Memorial on public square in Youngstown, Ohio. One hundred and three roses were laid at the foot of the monument in honor of those killed in action or missing in action during the Vietnam War. Post 15 was invited to participate by Vietnam Veterans of America Mahoning Valley Chapter 135, and were accompanied by American Legion Road of Remembrance Post 472.

Since Post 15 was chartered, sixty-two have held the title of Commander. Those Commanders are listed as follows, with an asterisk denoting Commanders who have served more than one term: J. D. Robertson, H. E. Snell, Thomas L. Barrowman, Robert R. Roberts, W. Turman Sprague, Benjomin L. Alger, Joseph L. Lettau, C. C. Sickles, William A. Young, Orsen Abbey, Franklin P. Erck, A. E. Baldwin, Lewis J. Kinder, Paul L. Booth, Fred F. Blewitt, Homer Carlyle, Clarence a. Horton, Carl V. Thompson, Dan E. Pyle, Harry E. Dewey, Harold W. Lansing, Charles C. Davis, Raleigh P. Swanner, William J. McCambridge, John E. Doyle, Norman Cleverly, Goner Evans, Francis L. Bennett, John J. Kennedy, William W. Rowe, Joseph Guerriero, Mylio S. Kraja*, Robert Weimer Aubrey F. Dingley, Odelin Kraja, James R. Sekinger, John Vitale, Ralph LaCivita, Jack a Lipari, Joseph W. Arquilla, Colwel P. Wilson, Stephen J. Petretich, Frank Buccieri, Harry J. Machuga, Christopher J. Carano, Donald Baynes, John F. McCarthy, Clyde B. Jacobs, Lawrence La Civita*, W. Thomas Williams, Robert Clayton*, Donald Massaro, James Prelog, Matthew Flowers, Albert Antonelli, Paulcivic John , John Gustafson*, James Szabo, Ira Witenberger, Victor A. Norling, Sr., and Paul E. Johnson*. Joseph K. Vrabel is the current Post 15 Commander.

Post 15 boasts having one of its members serve as Past Department of Ohio Commander. Mylio S. Kraja holds the distinction of having held this office. Under administration on National Commander James M. Wagon seller, Kraja was a liaison officer for the American Legion to the United States Congress. At its 1995 Veteran's Day Dinner, Kraja was honored with a Fifty Year Continuous Service Award for having been an active member of the American Legion. Mr. Wagon seller was the guest speaker. Also honored in 1995 were Odelin Kraja, John J. Lynch, and William Lee.

The Post 15 Ladies Auxiliary is still active in American Legion affairs, and

participates in Buckeye Girls State. The Ladies Auxiliary also provides a buffet-style dinner for participants of the Memorial Day Parade, and various other community functions. Helen Holcshuh serves as the President of the Ladies Auxiliary. The Sons of the American Legion is currently in the process of chartering a Squadron in Poland to assist Post 15 in many activities. The Sons were active in the Memorial Day Parade by assisting in Decoration of Graves and by participating in the Color Guard. Membership is open with no age limit to the sons, grandsons, stepsons, or other direct descendent of an American Legion member.

104



The Four Chaplains. The plaque is located at the American Legion Hall. (Photo by JeffreyM. Vrabel)



1995 Memorial Day Parade
Marshall Lt. Col. Victor A Norling, Sr.
(US Army Ret.) is accompanied by his
son, USAF Capt. Glenn Norling.

Buckeye Boy's State delegates chosen by Post 15 to participate in the program designed to teach high school juniors government, Americanism, and history. (front l to r) Frank Rigelsky, Poland Seminary High School; Bob James, Boardman High School, John Hruby, Poland High School; and Reid Paterson, Cardinal Mooney High School. Post 15 representatives are (back l to r) Rodney Aey, Commander Joseph K. Vrabel, Paul E. Johnson, Lewis Greene, Victor A. Norling, Sr., and Christopher J. Carfano.



Post 15 Color Guard circa late 1960's preparing to Salute the Dead in a ceremony held on the Main Street Bridge in Poland Village, Ohio

MEMORIAL DAYS



Marine PFC. James H. Spencer

In the serenity of Riverside Cemetery, four markers stand, testimony to four Poland men who died in Vietnam.

Marine Pfc. James H. Spencer, son of Mr. & Mrs. Charles H. Spencer of Howell Drive, was born January 10, 1947 and graduated from Poland Seminary High School in 1966. He was killed in action July 14, 1967. Sgt. Howard Carpenter, who was reported missing in action March 13, 1967 and later reported killed, is the son of Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Carpenter; William Edward Prowitt, U.S. Coast Guard, husband of Jill Diane Deichert, died August 7, 1967, and Marine Pvt. Edward Horn, son son of Edward Horn and Mrs. Betty Leonard, was killed May 1, 1969.

A black granite memorial and surrounding plantings, located to the south of the cemetery, visible from State Route 224, were erected by Pfc. Spencer's parents. His mother still sends to parents of any tragedy a poem, "TO ALL PARENTS," by Edgar A. Guest.

TO ALL PARENTS

(by Edgar A. Guest)

"I'll lend you for a little time a child of Mine." He said,
"For you to love the while he lives and mourn for when he's dead,

It may be six or seven years, or twenty-two or three,
But will you, till I call him back, take care of him for Me?
He'll bring his charms to gladden you, and shall his stay be brief
You'll have his lovely memories as solace for your grief.

"I cannot promise he will stay, since all from earth return,
But there are lessons taught down there I want this child to learn.
I've looked the wide world over in my search for teachers true
And from the throngs that crowd life's lanes I have selected you.
Now will you give him all your love, nor think the labor vain,
Nor hate Me when I come to call to take him back again?"

I fancied that I heard them say: "Dear Lord, They will be done."
For all the joy Thy child shall bring, the risk of grief we'll run.
We'll shelter him with tenderness, we'll love him while we may
And for the happiness we've known forever grateful stay;
But shall the angels call for him much sooner than we've planned.
We'll brave the bitter grief that comes and try to understand."



Capt. A. B. Mitchell

Capt. Anthony Baird Mitchell, age 25, son of Attorney and Mrs. Osborne Mitchell of Poland, died in action while taking food and ammunition to the beleaguered paratroopers of Arnhem. Four days after the battle, Capt. Mitchell's commission as a major went through. He was awarded the Flying Crosses and the air medal for antisubmarine patrol work. He was based in England.

Capt. Mitchell enlisted early in 1941 after graduating from Washington and Jefferson University and attending the Cornell University College of Engineering for two

years.

Capt. Mitchell leaves his wife, Sarah Jane Mitchell, and his son, Anthony Baird Mitchell, Jr.



Pvt. Pricate Leslie E. Werner

Private Pricate Leslie E. Werner, a member of Co. F, 16th Infantry, first division, was killed in action in France September 12, 1918, during the fighting at St. Mihiel; he was the only Poland soldier killed in action. He entered the service May 29, 1918.

Born and raised in Poland, he was the son of C.A. and Sylvia Little Werner, and attended the Poland grade and high schools. Before entering the service he was chief clerk for the Adams Express Company

His parents, two sisters, Mrs. Fred Hengen and Mrs. Isabel Stevenson, his grandmothers, Mrs. Jessie Werner and Mrs. Lemuel Little were from Poland. His grandfather Lemuel Little, fought in the Civil War.

At the request of residents of Poland, Pvt. Werner was buried in the only remaining grave in the "soldiers circle" of Riverside cemetery with the veterans of the Civil and Spanish American wars.