



NOVEMBER 2019

VETERANS DAY

Veterans Day originated as “Armistice Day” on November 11, 1919, the first anniversary of the end of World War I. Congress passed a resolution in 1926 for an annual observance, and November 11 became a national holiday beginning in 1938. Unlike Memorial Day, Veterans Day pays tribute to all American veterans—living or dead—but especially gives thanks to living veterans who served their country honorably during war or peacetime.

In essence, this is your day. Many veterans and patriotic Americans gather together to honor all of our veterans. It is time to appreciate and thank veterans for their service to our nation. Many veterans have sacrificed much, either mentally, physically, or otherwise to defend the freedoms of their fellow Americans. As November is a month to give thanks, Veterans Day also tends to transcend the entire month. This month, your Star Post 309 has been very busy hosting or participating in various events to show gratitude to our veterans and service members.

On November 6, Star Post 309 and the LASD Military and Veteran Affairs Unit hosted the first ever Veteran Symposium. This event was meant to bring awareness to our Sheriff’s personnel of the rights of our service members under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), to bring awareness to the many veteran services and resources available, and to bring a better understanding of how important it is to honor our military service members, past and present.



The attached photograph represents the military veterans who attended the symposium. You will see these veterans who are LASD members demonstrate the diversity we celebrate on our Department. These veterans - sworn and civilian, male and female, representing all races and ethnicities - are demonstrative of the people we serve in our communities.



At the symposium we had various organizations and representatives who provided important information to the group. We would like to extend a special thanks and acknowledgement to the following organizations who joined us: the US Labor Department, the US Department of Veteran Affairs, the California Department of Veteran Affairs (Cal Vet), the LA County Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, the Mindful Warrior Project, the UCLA Veteran Family Wellness Center, and personnel and units from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department including the Personnel Administration Bureau Sworn Examination Unit, the Recruitment Unit, Dr. Matthew Schumacher from

Psychological Services Bureau, Pay, Leaves, and Records, and the Employee Services Center. We also thank the Association for Los Angeles Sheriff's Deputy Sheriffs (ALADS) for being on hand. Did you know ALADS offers their members a waiver of dues if they are deployed long term for military service? If you are an ALADS member, contact them the next time you're out on long term deployment for this very gracious benefit.

During the event, we presented Sheriff Alex Villanueva with the Patriotic Employer Award issued by the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). Deputy Carlos Levario nominated the Sheriff for the award because of his support and willingness to allow our LASD Military and Veteran Affairs Unit to continue working for the benefit of our reservists. Our friend and fellow American Legion member Tom Lasser, representing the ESGR, read the citation for the award, and along with Deputy Levario, presented it to the Sheriff.

After receiving the award, the Sheriff addressed the audience and reminded them the importance of respecting the rights of our reservists and veterans, of seeing to their needs, and of being supportive of their mission of service.



US Marine Corps 244th Birthday

Our Star Post 309 Sergeant at Arms Oscar Martinez is a USMC veteran. He is assigned as a sergeant in the Sheriff's Information Bureau. He brought together other members of Star Post 309 to host the first Marine Corps Birthday Cake Cutting Ceremony at the Hall of Justice. Marines all over the LASD celebrate their birthday at the various units and bureaus on the Department; however, this was a milestone for having it our Sheriff's Headquarters.

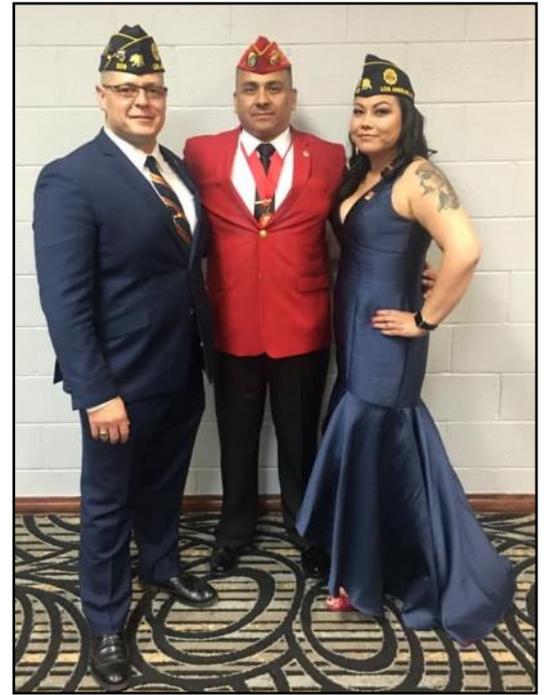
The cake was cut by the LASD MVA representative Deputy Carlos Levario. Carlos spent four years on active duty in the Marine Corps. The honor of representing the “oldest” Marine went to our Star Post member LASD Commander Jack Ewell. Representing the “youngest” Marine was our very own Deputy Francisco Velazquez. We also want to congratulate Frankie for recently having completed the field training program for patrol.

Several LASD members, both Marines and those representing other branches, celebrated the Marine Corps birthday by honoring those who serve, those who have served, and those who have gone before us. In a special part of the ceremony, we also honored those missing in action who remain unaccounted. We pray for their safe return and their repatriation.



Continuing the USMC Birthday celebration, our Star Post 2nd Vice Commander Esmeralda Gadut and her husband, past Star Post Commander Patrick Gadut celebrated as guests of honor at the PFC Eugene A. Obregon (MOH) Marine Corps Detachment League 1347 Ball. Incidentally, Esmeralda and Patrick met while serving in the Marine Corps.

Our good friend Antonio Chapa serves as the Commandant for the Marine Corps League detachment. The honoree for the evening was USMC veteran Nick Velez. Nick is involved with many efforts and



organizations that support our veterans. As part owner of Bastards Canteen, Nick was instrumental in sponsoring the lunch at our most recent charity golf tournament. Nick is also heavily involved with Save the Brave, a veteran support organization.

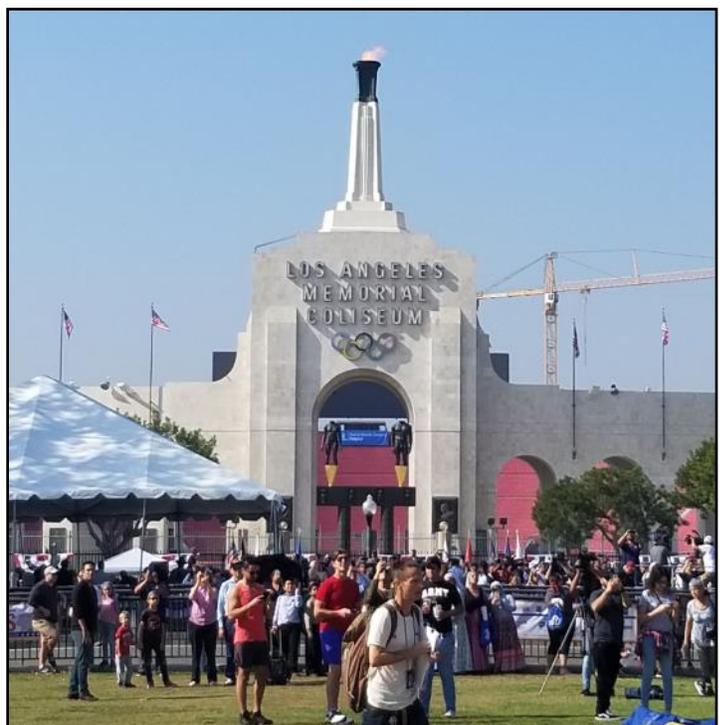


During the evening, Esmeralda shared a special moment with a Southland Young Marine. One of the greatest honors we can give is the passing of encouragement to the children of our world. While at the Ball, this Young Marine caught the eye and heart of our 2nd Vice Commander Esmeralda. In true passion of leadership as one of the fewer and prouder Women Marines, our Legionnaire passed her coveted USMC 4th Recruit Training Battalion pin to the young Devil Pup as a token of inspiration. The words of encouragement brought out the brightest of smiles as she became the center of admiration from her young peers.

VETERANS DAY LA

On November 11, the County of Los Angeles hosted its inaugural Veterans Day LA at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. The event's mission was to build onto the community passion for veterans having saved the name of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, and establish an annual event celebrating the contributions of our L.A. Veterans – the largest population of veterans in the U.S.

Many a Legionnaire was involved in the planning of this event, including Star Post 309. We were instrumental in providing an LASD Color Guard to the event. There were 12 Color Guard teams in total, and it was great to have our deputies representing the Department. Our newest Star Post 309 member, Sgt. Alex Kim of K-9 participated with his bloodhound in the service dog march as part of the



festivities. Our Star Post member Jerry Berry provided a US Army Military Police jeep to display next to our table at the resource fair. The jeep was quite the hit with many people stopping to take selfies with it.

The event could not have taken place without the support of the event's Chair, Supervisor Janice Hahn, whose father, Kenneth Hahn who was also an LA County Supervisor, was a member of the American Legion. In a very special moment of the day, at 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum torch was lit in honor of all our veterans. It was truly a sight to behold.



LASD Assistant Sheriff Robin Limon, LASD Sgt. Vince Plair (USMC), and Carlos Levario took time to meet with Supervisor Hahn. She thanked us for being there and representing the Department. Later we were graced by the lovely ladies of the American Legion Auxiliary Jackie Robinson Post 252 Color Guard. This is a very unique Color Guard comprised solely of women.

We were very happy to have been among the hundreds and hundreds of veterans and supporters at this event, and we look forward to again participating in the years to come.

During the month of November, Sheriff Alex Villanueva authorized and commissioned the wearing of camouflage style LASD uniform patches for our uniformed personnel to wear on duty. This project, much like the October Pink Patch Project for breast cancer awareness, was a project aimed at raising funds for homeless veterans in LA County. Star Post was asked if we could provide the name of an organization to whom the proceeds from the patch sales would go. After some research, we suggested the Salvation Army homeless veteran shelter and transition center in Bell.

The first batch of patches sold out almost immediately. Over \$12,000 was made from the sales, all of which will go to the veteran shelter. We thank everyone for their support.



SPIRIT OF THE LAW AWARD

Earlier this month, the American Legion Star Post 309 was recognized for their works as members of the law enforcement family and as military veterans for the service we provide to our veterans and their families by the Spirit of the Law Awards committee. Retired LASD Deputy Ricky (RB) Jones started The Spirit of the Law Awards in 1984. He began to recognize the police officers who in the *spirit of the law* assisted individuals or families in the communities in which they patrolled or lived. These Officers received a letter of recognition for their acts of compassion. Through the many years, Ricky has evolved this recognition to various community members who provide selfless service to their communities.

Star Post 309 was chosen among two dozen nominations for this award. The following is the narrative from the selection committee:

Dear American Legion Star Post 309,

We are proud to announce you have been chosen for the 2019 Spirit of the Law Awards, category Spirit of the Law Award – Law Enforcement.

We as a nation, along with the Spirit of the Law Awards family are grateful for Star Post 309 members' service in our Nation's military. We thank you for your continued service to our Nation's citizens in serving in law enforcement, post military service. Our founder, Retired Deputy Ricky Jones' motto is, "Serving in military or law enforcement is a matter of one's heart." All of your members of Star Post 309 live this. Your service to our citizens and your dedication to excellence in service is a matter of your hearts. We look forward to honoring you all.



Post Commander Ernie Bille and Star Post Retiree Liaison and Past Commander Ron Nybakken drove to San Jacinto to receive the award on behalf of Star Post 309. We were surprised to be among several remarkable people who do great things everyday, and were very honored to have been counted among them. Our Star Post received a State Senate proclamation, as well as a proclamation from the city of San Jacinto presented to us by Mayor Russell Utz. We also had the pleasure of meeting Matthew Zerebny, father in law of fallen Palm Springs PD Officer Lesley Zerebny. Matt keeps up the good fight and is a proud supporter of law enforcement. He will forever be a part of our thin blue line family.



Additionally we had the pleasure of meeting a fellow Legionnaire from Post 53 in Hemet, Ronnie Imel. Ronnie and his wife are non-stop when it comes to serving veterans. They helped establish a women's veteran support group and always give back to the veteran community. In fact, one of our own Star Post legionnaires was assisted by Ronnie in filing a VA claim for Agent Orange exposure. It truly is a small world. As an Army Ranger, Ronnie lives up to his unit's motto of "leading the way."

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

Our membership rolls keep growing. Our service and the good that we do is definitely the reason for this remarkable phenomenon. Where other veteran service organizations are dwindling, ours continues to grow. Our presence in the Sheriff's Department, the County, and the community is also a big reason for our positive recruitment efforts. For some of these guys, it took a little longer than usual to join, but we are glad they finally decided to be part of our veteran family.

In no particular order, we congratulate the following newest members of Star Post 309. Many of these members signed up during our Veteran Symposium, and the other great majority hail from the recently graduated Academy Class 441 which boasted a total of 13 veterans in the class (although only 11 joined - not too shabby). We welcome them all to our family.

Alex Kim
Marcos Rojas
Steve Diaz
Michael Ponce De Leon
Steven Dodson
Jonathan Morales
Luis Gonzalez
Antonio Ventura
Eric Rubio

Michael Gonzales
Jamhari McDonald
Mike Marion
Ronald Stone
John "JP" Anderson
Johannes Villanueva
Adrian Munoz
Dillan Williams

Bryan Moreno
Ronald Klumpp
Mike Reynolds
Roman Moreno
Erik Alvarado
Joel De Avila
Jose Teniente
Benjamin Harvey

In the photograph are the 13 veterans from Class 441 who are joined by Sheriff Villanueva and the two military veterans with the Recruit Training Unit, who are also Star Post members, Bryan Moreno and Carlos Lopez.



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR LEGIONNAIRE

It's been a little while since we featured one of our members in our newsletters. Thankfully this time around, our friends at the Santa Clarita Valley Signal news outlet featured one of our own Star Post members in their most recent veteran spotlight. The SCV Signal devotes a monthly segment featuring veterans who reside in the SCV, and several of our LASD members have been spotlighted. For the entire article, visit their website at signalscv.com. Excerpts for this story and the photograph were taken from their site. The story was authored by Emily Alvarenga, and was published on November 1, 2019.

When Joseph F. Fender was in the Navy, he was assigned to the USS Pearl Harbor while it was being built at the shipyards in Avondale, Louisiana, and was tasked with helping to outfit the ship. "I thought I was just going to show up and do the job, but I found myself assisting in purchasing the equipment," he said. "The lines, the ropes, the communication equipment — all the things that I thought I was going to learn how to use, not only did I have to use them, but I had to figure out how to purchase them." Fender describes it as having to build a house before ever living in one. "Not only do you not know how to live in it, you don't know how to build it."

"So, we had to build the ship, just so I could figure out how to use the stuff," he added, chuckling. Though challenging, these tasks gave him a good perspective on working backward, which is now helping him in his new tasks as a lieutenant at the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Station.

"It's unique because now that we're building the new sheriff's station, one of the collateral duties that I just took over is being the liaison for the new station, and I've never done that before," Fender said. Now, he'll be instrumental in figuring out what equipment and certifications they'll need before they even move into the building, which is set to open next year.

"That Navy experience gave me a little bit of perspective that, hopefully, I'll be able to use when I take on that new job," he said.

Fender was born on June 5, 1975, in Forestville, Maryland. "My dad was in the Marine Corps and he was stationed at 8th & I in Washington, D.C." Fender, the oldest of three, was only there for about a year until his family moved back out to California, which is where both of his parents are from. First, they moved to Sylmar as his father started work with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, then to Palmdale, where he attended elementary school, and finally to Lancaster, where he spent the remainder of his childhood.

Again following in his family's footsteps, Fender decided he wanted to work in law enforcement and tested for five different departments in the local area. "My dad, my grandfather and my great-grandfather all worked for this department," he said regarding the L.A. County Sheriff's Department. "And they were the first ones that called me."

He knew it'd be similar to what he was accustomed to in the military as law enforcement is portrayed as a paramilitary organization. "And it was. I absolutely believe my military service helped me get hired at the department." Many of his classmates while in the Sheriff's Academy were veterans, and leadership tasked them with being platoon sergeants because of their military experience. "I like doing that stuff. I don't mind being in charge and taking the handle."



Los Angeles County Sheriffs
Lieutenant Joseph Fender sits at
his desk with a shadow box
containing his medals at the
Santa Clarita Valley Station in
Valencia. Cory Rubin/The Signal

Fender met his wife while in the Navy as she, too, was assigned to the USS Pearl Harbor, and now is a nurse. Together, they've got three sons, who they've also raised to know the value of public service.

His two older boys were both Eagle Scouts. "(They're) very service-oriented, always giving back to the community." His oldest son is in the Coast Guard. "I didn't know anything about the Coast Guard. It was always looked at like the Navy's little brother, but the more I learned, the more impressed with the service I was."

"He's a boatswain's mate just like his dad," he added with a big smile.

His middle son is also very patriotic. "I'm excited to see which branch he goes into."

And his youngest is only 10, excited to join Scouts next year. "He's just happy being 10 — he's got lots of time."

We were very proud for Joey to have been featured as he and his family are truly an example of service before self.



IN MEMORIAM



We were very saddened to hear of the passing of our good friend and 49-year member of the American Legion Star Post 309, Galen "Ike" Sabean. Ike transferred to Post Everlasting on October 31, 2019. Ike was born a Canadian citizen, and went on to become a US citizen. He served in the US Army. After his service, he joined the LASD where he rose to the rank of detective and served as an elite "Bulldog" in the Homicide Bureau. Ike could be seen at just about every Round-Up making sure things went smoothly. His life's celebration took place at the Los Angeles National Cemetery where some of our Star Post members were in attendance. You will never be forgotten.

Also in November, we commemorate the passing of one of our Charter Members, Rudolph "Cookie" Vejar who died in the line of duty on November 12, 1932. In our November 2018 newsletter, we featured a full story on Cookie Vejar. We also featured a story on his son, Allen Vejar, who is also a Star Post member. On Veteran's Day, we reached out to Allen to check in on him. Although feeling a bit tired, Allen said that he's still hanging tough for being 88 years old. We wish Allen and his family well, and we shall never forget the sacrifice of his father. Rudolph Vejar's legacy lives on for as long as Star Post 309 remains. He will never be forgotten.



Rudolph Vejar, US Army, World War I

A DAY OF GIVING THANKS

On November 16, your Star Post family celebrated a pre-Thanksgiving dinner. Thanks to everyone who attended, and for those of you who missed it, you really missed out. We take these opportunities to get away from the basic business side of our meetings and just get together with our comrades, friends, and family in a fun and casual atmosphere.

Dinner was catered and provided by the Mission BBQ and featured a southern style to it replete with smoked turkey, melt in your mouth brisket, cornbread stuffing, green bean casserole, coleslaw, and to top it off, our homemade chili. This was the chili that our in house chef Robert Lee cooked up for the Special Olympics Chili Cook Off. After tasting the chili, we believe we could have regained the Grand Master chili championship. It was that good!

Dinner entertainment was provided by Blinded by the Blues. That harmonica player was something else! Their blues renditions kept the crowd moving. For those who follow us on Facebook, you'll see Hugh Crooks showing our young Adjutant Kari Mercer his moves on the dance floor. Hugh showed everyone he still can boogie.

Later in the evening, we took time to step outside and enjoy the beautiful night sky with a hearty cigar. Our Legionnaire Bill Strait is an avid cigar aficionado and a very generous man. Bill treated some of our lucky members to a genuine Cohiba. Thanks for the smokes, Bill!

Afterwards, some of our members stuck around to croon to some music and enjoy each other's company. It truly was a family affair. We encourage more of our members to join us in future events.

From all of our Star Post 309 family to yours, we wish you a safe and blessed Thanksgiving.



Upcoming Events

Our end of 2019 meeting will take place on **Saturday, December 7 at 11:30 AM** at the post building in Glendale—714 W. Wilson Ave., Glendale 91203. A light lunch will be served. This will be our final meeting for the year. We want to use this opportunity to gather whatever items have been collected for our holiday drive. Thanks to our members, our Auxiliary Unit and the Southland Young Marines, we've collected several items to be distributed to women veterans at the West Los Angeles Veteran Home. Legion posts and Auxiliary units from District 17 (the district which Star Post 309 belongs to) will be presenting the donations on Tuesday, December 13 at 11:30 AM.

The first meeting for 2020 (can't believe we're even saying that) will be on Saturday, January 18 at 11:30 AM at the post in Glendale. This meeting will help plot the remainder of our events for the Legion year which ends on June 30, 2020.

Significant events to come in 2020 for which we have to plan are the Retiree Round-Up in Laughlin from April 5-8, 2020; the Annual Tree Planting ceremony tentatively scheduled for Friday, May 29, 2020; and the Department Convention in Visalia, CA from June 25-28, 2020.

Sometime in March, we'd like to hold our Law and Order Program where we honor our own first responders for their heroic acts of valor and community service. More info to follow.



BLAST FROM THE PAST

HERE'S A THROWBACK PHOTOGRAPH ALL THE WAY TO AUGUST 1969 - THAT'S JUST OVER 50 YEARS AGO! LASD COLOR GUARD AT AN AMERICAN LEGION DISTRICT 17 EVENT AT THE HALL OF ADMINISTRATION IN LOS ANGELES

Have questions on how to join? Email us at info@starpost309.com. If you know a veteran who qualifies for membership, please share this newsletter and our information with him/her. Star Post 309 is a recognized tax exempt 501(c)(19) veterans organization. Questions about this newsletter can be directed to info@starpost309.com. **Mailing address: Star Post 309, 10 W. Bay State St. #913, Alhambra, CA 91802.** Tax ID 95-XXXXXXX