



EARL GRAHAM POST 159

BRYAN, TEXAS

THE LEGIONNAIRE

For God and Country - Since 1920

Commander's Comments

Fellow Legionnaires,

I would like to congratulate our Officers and membership for the success they achieved as Post 159 hosted the 2nd Division May 16th and 17th. I have been to many such conventions, both 6th District and 2nd Division, and have never seen it done better or with more enthusiasm. You all can be proud of the contribution your fellow Legionnaires made to represent you to all the Posts making up the 2nd Division.

On June 4th, we look forward to our Election of Officers and Executive Committee at large. The nomination committee has recommended a slate of candidates, but should you want, you may add your name by a motion from the floor.

I know many of you have not seen our tank. We acquired a Patton M47 Main Battle Tank from the museum at Fort Hood. Our team pulled this off, and we are grateful for that effort. In June, a volunteer organization will be coming to clean and repaint the tank. Amazing!!! This is a great thing we did not anticipate.

As always, I appreciate your service to this nation, dedicated to God and Country. We are dedicated to mutual helpfulness, and fraternity is our goal.

For God and Country,

Gary M. Banta, Commander

Membership JOIN OR RENEW

Contact the Adjutant
adjutant@alegion159.org



Want to make sure you—or someone you know—never miss our latest news and events? It only takes a moment to join our mailing list. Share this newsletter or click [here to subscribe](#) and stay connected with our community!

Advertise Here

**Did you know you can
sponsor this newsletter?**

Interested? Contact us
today at it@alegion159.org
to secure your spot in our
next issue!

Festory Gertking

Licensee of the American Legion
and its various units and posts.

Design

Licensee of the American Legion
and its various units and posts.



ALEGION159.ORG



[\(979\)778-1936](tel:(979)778-1936)



[BRAZOSLEGION159](https://www.facebook.com/BRAZOSLEGION159)

Subscribe to Our Newsletter

Stay connected, subscribe
now for Monthly Legion
news, and event updates.
Follow us on Facebook.



Administrative Notes

Our Post has recently transitioned to a new Email provider, which will significantly improve our ability to communicate with members by email.

This enhancement will allow us to share more timely news, updates on Post activities and events, and send a condensed version of our monthly newsletter directly to you.

Unfortunately, we currently do not have email addresses on file for approximately 175 of our members, and many of the addresses we do have are no longer valid.

To ensure you continue receiving important Post communications, please log in to your MyLegion account at mylegion.org to add or update your email address. If you prefer, you may also contact me directly at adjutant@alegion159.org, and I will be happy to update your information on your behalf.

Thank you for helping us improve communication within our Post.

Wes Wynn
Adjutant

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

June 4 - Membership Meeting

5:30pm - Legion Social

6:30pm - Membership Dinner

Menu ~ Hamburger Steak with Brown Gravy, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans and Rolls

{Bring Side Dish or Dessert to share}

7:30pm Membership Meeting



CALLAWAY-JONES
FUNERAL & CREMATION CENTERS

June 13 - Veteran Breakfast Army Birthday Celebration Sponsored by Callaway-Jones

8:00am to 10:00am - Come celebrate the Army's 251st birthday with us! Enjoy a hearty breakfast of bacon, eggs, Spam, hash browns, and biscuits topped with Uncle Albert's famous gravy. Coffee, orange juice, and birthday cake will be served.

June 13 - Manage Your Crazy Self

11am to 2pm - Randy

Guttenberger presents practical tools for understanding stress, communication and decision-making.



2ND DIVISION THANK YOU

On behalf of the 2nd Division, we want to thank the 159 Family for hosting the 2nd Division convention. This post continues to set the standard high for the rest of the division. The emphasis this past year has been working as a family. The 159 Family demonstrated we are better together.

We would like to thank the convention chairs – Gary Kistner and Marjean Neve. The two of you ran the convention flawlessly and many commented on your leadership abilities.

There are too many names to mention, but we want to extend our gratitude. Thank you to all the greeters, gatekeepers, those who set up and cleaned up, worked registration, sold ads, produced the program, shopped for supplies, stocked the bar, served the “Tiger Paws” drink special, ordered food, made breakfast casseroles, served food, took photos, procured the entertainment, kept our finances straight, decorated the facility, provided auction items and door prizes, worked in the kitchen, donated funds for tables in the Auxiliary room, made coffee, and so much more. The dinner was enjoyed by all and the “pieces de resistance” was the homemade tuxedo cake.



The theme of Big Cats was displayed proudly and embraced with all of the decorations, the snacks, the drink special, the word search, and the scavenger hunt.

Some comments from those visiting said the convention was so enjoyable and had a fun atmosphere. One visitor stated this was “one of the best conventions she ever attended.” The Commander and President would give this convention a 5-star rating.

We are blessed and “proud” to be a part of the 159 Family.

Steve Kim, Department Vice-Commander, 2nd Division and Licia Kim, ALA 2nd Division President

EARL GRAHAM POST 159 HAD A MONUMENTAL MAY.

The post welcomed a historic M47 Patton tank, hosted the state's 2nd Division Convention, and successfully united local Veteran Service Organizations for Memorial Day. Looking ahead, Post 159 is coordinating a veteran celebration for the Army's birthday.

Post 159: May in Review & Upcoming Events

🚩 M47 Patton Tank Monument

We successfully transported our M47 Patton tank from Fort Hood to our Bryan post. It now stands as a proud monument to the service and sacrifice of our veterans, reinforcing our ongoing commitment to the military and our pillar of national defense.

🏆 2nd Division Convention

Success! On May 16 and 17, we proudly hosted legionnaires from across the state. This highly successful gathering was a massive triumph, made possible by the dedication and months of preparation from our officers and volunteers.



🏆 United VSO Memorial Day

This Memorial Day, it was our honor to unite with all of the Brazos Valley's Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice. This marked the first time in many years that our VSOs have come together in the community, setting a powerful precedent for how we honor our veterans moving forward.



🏟️ Bryan Yard Dogs Baseball

Veteran Spotlights: May 24th, Post 159 Honor Guard participated in a special Memorial Day ceremony ahead of the Bryan Yard Dogs baseball game. The Honor Guard provided a traditional 21-gun salute to honor and remember our nation's fallen service members.

The Bryan Yard Dogs have arrived in the Brazos Valley! They are looking to honor local veterans with free tickets to home games and would love to spotlight a veteran during their opening ceremonies. Please reach out to let us know if you are interested in participating.

🍰 Army Birthday Breakfast

Celebrate the Army's 251st Birthday with us on Saturday, June 13th (the official birthday is June 14th).

🕒 Time: 0800 - 1000 Veteran Breakfast at the Post.

🍴 Menu: Eggs, Bacon, Spam, Biscuits, Uncle Albert's famous gravy, and Army birthday cake.

James "Jimbo" Pfeffer - 1st Vice Commander

The History of Memorial Day

Many of us know the official history of Memorial Day—how it began as Decoration Day in 1868 when General John A. Logan issued his famous order to deck the graves of our fallen comrades with flowers. But two years before that order was penned, and just one year after the final shots of the Civil War were fired, a quiet, stunning gesture took place in Columbus, Mississippi. It didn't come from a military commander or a politician. It came from a small group of women whose hearts broke for the fallen—a group that, if they were alive today, would undoubtedly be leading our American Legion Auxiliary.

America was still a bitter, deeply divided nation in April 1866. Almost entirely driving this resentment was the unprecedented devastation of the Civil War, which resulted in the deaths of nearly 700,000 Americans. Grief was everywhere, and the anger between the North and the South was still razor-sharp. In Columbus, a group of local women—all of whom had lost husbands, sons, or brothers in the conflict—decided to form a local memorial association. Their mission was simple: they wanted to clean up Friendship Cemetery, where hundreds of casualties from the brutal Battle of Shiloh had been laid to rest.

These grieving widows and mothers went into the cemetery loaded down with armfuls of fresh flowers. As they began decorating the graves of their own fallen boys, they looked across the cemetery and noticed a separate section. It was overgrown, neglected, and wild. Buried there, far from home, were the Union soldiers who had died in the local military hospital.

At that moment in history, the idea of a Southern mother honoring a Northern soldier was unthinkable. The war was too fresh, the pain too raw. But as these women looked at the neglected mounds of the Union graves, they didn't see the color of a uniform. They saw young men who had died hundreds of miles away from home and loved ones. They knew that those graves would remain bare because those boys' mothers and sisters would not be welcome in the South.

Driven by a sudden, overwhelming urge to help, the women walked over to the enemy graves. They cleared away the weeds, and placed flowers irrespective of Confederate or Union resting places. As word of this quiet act of grace spread, it caught the attention of the entire nation including General Logan when he established the official Decoration Day two years later.

When you look at what those women did in 1866, you are looking at the foundational DNA of the American Legion Auxiliary. Decades before the Auxiliary was officially chartered, these women exemplified its core mission: to honor the sacrifice of the soldier, to care for the memory of the fallen, and to step into the gaps left by war with grace, compassion, and hard work.

The old battle lines of the Civil War are long gone, but the need for that dedicated spirit remains. This Memorial Day, as we join together with our own Post 159 Auxiliary members, we carry on a legacy that stretches back to that Mississippi cemetery—and we do it with a very specific symbol of remembrance in our hands: the red poppy.

Just like those women in 1866 who used flowers to honor the fallen, today our Auxiliary distributes the red poppy. Inspired by the battlefields of World War I, this little crimson flower is more than just a decoration; it is a visual pledge that the price paid for our freedom will never be forgotten. Every time an Auxiliary member hands out a poppy, they are continuing that 160-year-old tradition of concrete, active remembrance.

So this Memorial Day, when you see both our Veterans and Auxiliary members out in the community, take a moment to appreciate the history they are keeping alive. The true spirit of this day isn't born out of a government mandate or a three-day weekend. It is born out of a deep, human instinct to look at a veteran's sacrifice and say, "You are not forgotten, and you will always be held in honor."

Chuck Wilson - Public Relations American Legion Post 159

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

D-DAY

D-Day, the Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, was one of the most important moments in the history of freedom. Brave soldiers from America, Great Britain, Canada, and many other nations crossed the English Channel and stormed the beaches of France to begin the liberation of Europe from Nazi tyranny. Thousands gave their lives so that future generations could live without fear, oppression, and dictatorship. The courage shown on those beaches demonstrated the willingness of free people to sacrifice everything for the cause of liberty and human dignity.

The success of D-Day changed the course of World War II and helped secure freedom not only for America, but for nations across the world. It opened the door for the defeat of Nazi Germany and restored hope to millions who were suffering under occupation and persecution. The sacrifices made by the Allied forces remind us that freedom is never free; it is protected by courage, unity, and faith in God to do what is right. D-Day stands today as a lasting symbol of bravery, sacrifice, and the determination of nations working together to defend liberty for all mankind.

For veterans in the American Legion today, D-Day should stand as a powerful reminder of duty, sacrifice, courage, and unity. The men who landed on the beaches of Normandy came from different backgrounds, different states, and even different nations, yet they stood together for one purpose — the defense of freedom. Their example



reminds today's veterans that the values they swore to uphold did not end when their military service ended. Through organizations like the American Legion, veterans continue serving their communities, supporting fellow veterans, honoring fallen heroes, and protecting the principles of patriotism and liberty that D-Day helped preserve.

D-Day should also inspire remembrance and gratitude. The freedoms enjoyed in America and throughout much of the world today were secured at a tremendous cost. For American Legionnaires, remembering D-Day means honoring those who never came home and ensuring their sacrifices are never forgotten by future generations. It is a call to keep alive the spirit of service, faith, and brotherhood that carried those soldiers through one of history's darkest times. D-Day reminds veterans that courage, faith in God, and commitment can change the world.

Virgil (Goofy) Marko, Chaplain
Post 159 American Legion

THE TRADITION IN YOUR POCKET: A HISTORY OF MILITARY CHALLENGE COINS

AND THERE WE WERE SERIES
BY FRANK OPITZ, HISTORIAN

World War I - A Story; France, WWI Soldier's

The first modern appearance of a challenge coin was in World War I in Europe. While it's important to note that the following story is unverifiable, it's certainly a legendary part of challenge coin history. In World War I, American volunteers from around the country joined flying squadrons in what would be the early basis of the Air Force. Many of these volunteers were well-to-do students from prestigious colleges who decided to leave school and join the military. Legend has it that in one such squadron, a wealthy lieutenant made solid bronze medallions with the squadron emblem and gave them to each member of his crew. He kept one medallion for himself, which he wore in a leather pouch around his neck. After some time, the lieutenant's aircraft was damaged during a mission in Germany, forcing him to land behind enemy lines. He was captured by a German patrol, who took all his personal belongings, apart from the pouch around his neck. The lieutenant was imprisoned in France, until he managed to escape and sneak back across the front line to Allied territory. However, French soldiers on the front lines didn't recognize his American accent and, due to his lack of identification, assumed him to be a German spy. In a final attempt to save himself from the firing squads, the lieutenant showed the medallion he was still wearing to the French soldiers, who recognized the squadron emblem. This gave the lieutenant enough time to prove his identity, and he was finally returned to his squadron. The lieutenant then made it



a tradition to ensure that all squadron members had a special coin on hand for similar situations. And thus, a military coin tradition was born!

Fifty years later in Vietnam, an Army Green Beret sergeant-major strove to unite his isolated and unheralded team of warriors. He had minted the oldest existing challenge coin, the Vietnam Green Beret. Men distinguished each other by this unconventional passport when they met deep in the jungles. Since then, hundreds of coins have been stamped with the mottos and insignia of military units. The concept has also spread to civilian organizations. The coin check is a cherished custom in which military members share and compare coins in bars, compelling the "loser" to buy drinks for the rest of the group. Typically, older coins carry the weight of seniority, while officer coins carry the weight of rank. The loser is he who forgets to bring or hesitates to show his coin.

AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY DAY

The first ever American Legion Family Day at Post 159 was held Saturday, April 25, 2026.

PSAs went out to the radio stations and 3 television spots were arranged to publicize the event.

About 30 volunteers arrived at 8:00 AM to begin set up on the grounds. Flags lined the driveway and balloons were set out. Due to the wind the balloons were removed. The Bounce House was in place along with several carnival-style games. Eight information booths were decorated and awaiting visitors.

The Bake Sale received an abundance of treats to be priced and sold. Tables were set out for families to sit and enjoy free hot dogs, chips and water.

As guests arrived, they were greeted by an auxiliary member. About 90 guests (48 adults and 42 children) were in attendance. The children enjoyed playing the games for prizes and playing in the Bounce House. A fire truck and patrol car were supposed to be in attendance, but failed to show.



Patriot Paws was the highlight of the day. Four student trainers and 4 dogs were in attendance and the children enjoyed petting them. The Honor Guard was another favorite stop. The kids enjoyed talking with the Veterans and exploring the guns used for Final Salute. The Junior Shooting Program was supposed to have a booth, but failed to show.

There were a number of areas that could use improvement, but overall, it was a successful event and plans are being discussed for building upon this to make this event bigger and better for the following year.

Thank you to all who helped make this event a success.



Explaining the Preamble to the American Legion, Part 10

TO PROMOTE PEACE AND GOOD WILL ON EARTH

Every month at Post 159, we stand and recite the Preamble to our Constitution. This month, we are diving into the next phrase in our series. It sounds simple but carries immense weight: **"To promote peace and good will on earth."**

As veterans, we know the true value of peace because we know the cost of war. Our founders understood that peace isn't just the absence of conflict—it is an active, daily effort. Until the entire world becomes a "good neighborhood," Legionnaires still have work to do.

The American Legion tackles this massive goal in two distinct ways – Diplomatic Support and Peace Through Strength.

From our earliest days, the Legion has supported international frameworks to encourage nations to resolve conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy rather than the battlefield. When negotiation works, it is always the preferred path.

We firmly believe that a strong national defense is the best way to discourage aggression. However, history has taught us that true good will cannot be bargained for with a tyrant; it must sometimes be defended on the battlefield. In the 1940s, promoting peace meant mobilizing a global force to crush Adolf Hitler's war machine, just as after 9/11 it meant pursuing Usama bin Laden to the ends of the earth to ensure American soil remained safe.

Today, that same logic applies whenever our nation faces rogue regimes and global threats. True peace is not passive compliance. It requires standing firm and, when necessary, using decisive military force to stop aggressors when the rest of the world is unable or unwilling to do so. As Legionnaires, we know that the ultimate goal of any military action is to restore a just stability—we

justify it as the final, necessary instrument to ensure a lasting peace.

You might wonder how a local Post in Texas impacts global peace. The truth is, it starts right here. We build a "good neighborhood" from the ground up every time we support our local community.

We do our part every time we:

- Host community blood drives to save local lives.
- Support youth programs like Boys State, Girls State, the Junior Shooting Program and youth sports.
- Help a fellow veteran navigate their VA benefits.
- Open our doors for community fundraisers and fellowship.

By fostering good will in our own backyard, Post 159 does its part to strengthen the foundation of peace worldwide. Thank you for your continued service to our community and our nation.

The best way to promote good will is to stay active in our community. We need your help to keep our local programs running strong. Join us for our next monthly membership meeting on June 4th at the Post home. Come out, get involved, and help us plan our upcoming summer community outreach events. Your voice and your service still matter!

For God and Country,
Chuck Wilson - Public Relations American Legion Post 159





EARL GRAHAM POST 159

MAIL: P.O. BOX 326 BRYAN, TX 77806
PHYSICAL: 101 WACO ST. BRYAN, TX 77803
OFFICE: (979) 778-1936

OFFICE HOURS:
MONDAY 0900-1100
THURSDAY 0900-1000



AMERICAN LEGION POST OFFICERS

COMMANDER – GARY BANTA
COMMANDER@ALEGION159.ORG
(979) 218-0807
1ST VICE COMMANDER – JIMBO PFEFFER
1VC@ALEGION159.ORG
(979) 229-9227
2ND VICE COMMANDER – MARK WILLIAMS
2VC@ALEGION159.ORG
FINANCE OFFICER – ROGER SMITH
FINANCE@ALEGION159.ORG
ADJUTANT – WES WYNN
ADJUTANT@ALEGION159.ORG
(979) 422-5309
ASSISTANT ADJUTANT – GARRETT MARTIN
ADJUTANT@ALEGION159.ORG
HISTORIAN – FRANK OPITZ
HISTORIAN@ALEGION159.ORG
CHAPLAIN – VIRGIL MARKO
CHAPLAIN@ALEGION159.ORG
JUDGE ADVOCATE (JAG) – RANDY MICHEL
JA@ALEGION159.ORG
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS – ANDREW GAYER
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS@ALEGION159.ORG
SERVICE OFFICER – JOSÉ NAVA
SERVICE@ALEGION159.ORG

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – AT LARGE

JOHN HINCE
RALF HAUSER
SHAWN JARNIGAN
DAVID PEARCE
TERRANCE NUNN
DAVID MARION
JOHN OGDEN
PETE DIBELLO
JACK MOORE
CHUCK WILSON

TRUSTEES

CHAIRMAN – BRADY DRENNAN
BOTCHAIR@ALEGION159.ORG
(757) 650-7156
VICE CHAIRMAN – GARY KISTNER

ROBERT MCCLYMOND
TOM SMITH
GEORGE WEBER
LARRY FIKES (EMERITUS)

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY OFFICERS

PRESIDENT – JEANNE PRESTWOOD
BARJEANLO@GMAIL.COM
(979) 324-4024
VICE PRESIDENT – RUTH BOSQUEZ
JUANRUTH24@GMAIL.COM
SECRETARY – DIANA MILLS
TREASURER – LICIA KIM
LICIAKIM.ALATEXAS@GMAIL.COM
(979) 676-2227
CHAPLAIN – BEA HAUSER
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS – SHARRON ROSEDAHL

MEMBERSHIP-AT-LARGE

MARY ANN MCCLOUD
JOANNA DAVIS
NANCY REICHART

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

OFFICE: (979) 778-1936
SQUADRON COMMANDER: TBD