



THE HISTORY OF VFW POST 7234

It was 1945, as the War ended a group of World War I and World War II Veterans saw a need for a Veterans of Foreign Wars Post in Sussex County. James E Wilgus Sr of Selbyville a World War I Veteran was asked to be chairman to establish a charter VFW Post in Sussex County. Mr. Wilgus served in the United States Army in the Delaware 59th Pioneer Infantry in World War I as a Sgt 1st Class from 1916 - 1919, participating in battle campaigns at Meuse-Argonne, Chateau-Thierry, and Verdun, where he received decorations for his service. Mr. Wilgus worked in general merchandise, feed grinding and started the Selbyville Cleaners. Mr. Wilgus and his wife Jennie devoted much of their time to the local and State VFW, where he served as a Past Post Commander and Delaware State Commander. The

charter was received and the Post installed May 18, 1946 with 92 charter veteran members and William R. Ringler was elected the first Commander. Mr. Ringler also served as the Mayor of Selbyville and Deputy Director of the Delaware DMV. Both Wilgus and Ringler were active in the Selbyville Volunteer Fire Department; many of our members have been volunteers at other Fire Departments throughout our history. The Post, although established, lacked a “home”; they met in Selbyville Town hall, the Fireman’s Hall, and Red Men’s Hall. In 1948 10 members came together to build a permanent home. They purchased a piece of property on Rt 113 in Selbyville for \$1000 and constructed a cinderblock building on the site. After a few years the members felt it did not look good to have their cars parked near a major road for everyone to see especially since they held important positions. Finally in 1953 the Post bought the home of Walter G. Newton on Quillen’s Point. To finance the purchase they sold the Selbyville cinderblock building and land to a poultry company for \$14000. It was a two story wood building which caught fire on December 20, 1959, and burnt to the ground. In 1960 a loan of \$38,000 was secured to build the present home of the Post which included the current dining room and downstairs. The kitchen, upstairs Bar, deck, and Atrium were added later.



MAY 65

So on October 20, 1967 a Mortgage Burning Ceremony was celebrated with dinner and Music by the Uniques. While Commander Robert Wilkins and Auxiliary President Mae Felerski held the loan papers Danny's Father, Elmer Steele provided the flame.

A year later on April 27, 1947 several ladies mostly wives of the charter members established a charter Veterans of Foreign Wars Ladies Auxiliary. Some of the original charter members were Helen Cullen, Glenda Long, Rita Taylor, Gloria Gum, Volta Murphy, Mary Rickards, Jennie Wilgus, and Olive Ringler. No charter members of the Auxiliary are alive today; Gloria Gum was the last when she died in 2016. The Auxiliary has always been true partners in the volunteer activities of the Post. In fact in the old days there was a joint meeting once a month and there are pictures of Auxiliary members working side by side with Post members at the Chicken Shack, helping to erect flag poles and marching in parades.



Another milestone occurred November 11, 1976 when the Post reached 25 life members and was able to apply for a permanent charter. Four of those members are still active members of the Post and all were Past Commanders (Irv Hudson and Hal Barber - World War II Veterans and Danny Steele and John G. Mitchell – Vietnam War Veterans).

Interestingly the founding members of the Post and Auxiliary were descendants of the founders of Selbyville in 1778. The Veterans (mostly World War II) and their spouses were young and busy building careers and businesses and raising families. They wanted their own place to get a drink, socialize and share time together. And although there were other fraternal organizations they wanted a veteran focus. They chose the Veterans of Foreign Wars whose values were fraternal, patriotic, historical, charitable and educational. As other wars followed the sons and daughters of the founding members joined to continue this tradition. Mostly notably two Commanders from the Vietnam War (Danny Steele and Paul Brennan) had a father as Commander and a mother as President.



Danny remembers as a lad of 11 cutting the grass at the Post, an honor guard helmet was his reward. In the 50s the Post added several Korean War Veterans and in the 60s the Post added its first Vietnam War Veterans. Danny Steele and John Mitchell were the first two from Vietnam and went on to be Post/District/State Commanders (Danny was the youngest Post commander in the history of the Post (22 years old) and youngest District Commander) (John was the youngest State Commander and only two time State Commander).



25th Anniversary of VFW7234



Donald Lynch, Jack Lynch, Kathryn Tingle (70th Anniversary)



70th Anniversary Commanders



70th Anniversary Presidents

In the Last several years the Post has added Veterans from recent wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Desert Storm/Desert Shield, and War on Terrorism. Hopefully they will assume Leadership positions and continue the legacy to serve and honor all Veterans.

The Auxiliary members initially were related to descendents of World War II Veterans. In 2012/2013 members related to Veterans who served in other Wars began to join and in 2015 men related to Veterans from all Wars were allowed to join. This created an expanded base for the Auxiliary to continue their strong and steady support of the Post and Community.

The major tradition of the Post and Auxiliary has always been the Patriotic Ceremonies; most notably Memorial Day and Veterans Day; in addition the Post paused to remember Loyalty day, VE Day, D-day, Pearl Harbor Day, Flag Day and POW/MIA Day with ceremonies.

Mason Dixon VFW honors former POWs

Some eighty persons attended a special Labor Day ceremony in front of the War Memorial at Mason-Dixon VFW Post 7234, Ocean View, on Monday, September 7.

A floral wreath, sent from the Arlington Cemetery Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, was dedicated to the POWs and MIAs who died in the Korean conflict.

Highlights of the 30-minute event were brief remarks by ex-POWs Chaplain Ross Roberts and Nicholas Tosques, and the firing of a salute to the honored dead by the Post Honor Guard.

Ex-prisoners of war in attendance included:

Nicholas Tosques, a Korean War veteran captured by the Chinese who spent 29 months as a POW in Manchuria; Ross Roberts, crew member on a B-24 Liberator bomber shot down over



Former prisoners of war (from left) Harry Meyerson, Howard Melson, Winfield Rosenberg, Ross Roberts, Nicholas Tosques and Lois Farrow, widow of the late Thomas Farrow, honor former POWs during a ceremony Labor Day at the Mason Dixon VFW Post in Ocean View.

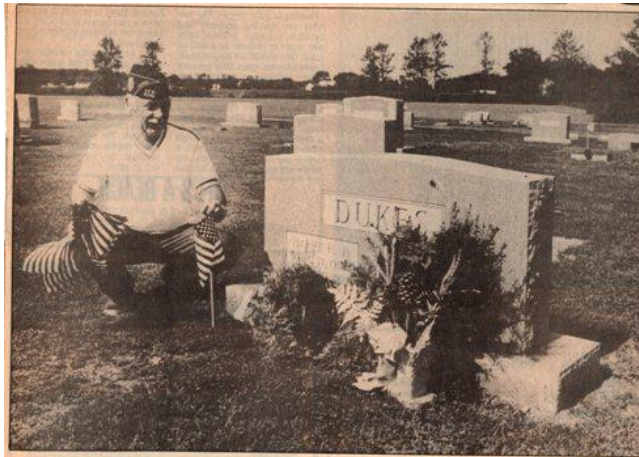




We have recently performed a Vietnam War Veterans Day and a 9/11 Ceremony. In early days all Ceremonies were performed outdoors and usually in other locations like John West Park in Ocean View and the Boardwalk in Bethany Beach. Of special note was Veterans Day in Bethany Beach where the Post and Auxiliary Officers and Honor Guard marched from the Church to the Boardwalk and performed a solemn ceremony to honor all Veterans. The Post and Auxiliary Officers performed several Special Events and Ceremonies to honor veterans and Our Country in the community including local Assisted Living Facilities.

Another major tradition of the Post and Auxiliary was respect and honor for the Flag. Over 20 flag poles have been donated and installed by the Post at local cemeteries, churches, libraries, and municipal buildings. The Post still maintains these poles and flags. In addition both Post and Auxiliary members have been photographed in articles donating flags to various organizations in Sussex County.

Perhaps the most patriotic mission was to place flags and VFW emblems at the graves of over 600 veterans across the local community for Memorial Day.



Veterans from Mason-Dixon VFW post #7234 from Ocean View spent Memorial Day laying wreaths, flowers, flags and other tokens of remembrance on more than 600 gravesites in cemeteries throughout the county. Pictured left, Irvin Hudson, himself a World War II veteran who saw action during Hitler's last great offensive in 1944 which became known as the Battle of the Bulge, lays flowers on a gravestone. Hudson

fought alongside General Patton's armored division and was wounded three times. Here, Hudson adorns the tombstone of Lt. Colonel Harry Dukes who was a former manager of the Sussex Trust in Frankford and a prisoner of war during World War II. Dukes was shot down in his B-17 over Germany and was held prisoner for about a year and a half. Dukes died in Sussex County two years ago. (Photos by Dave Katten).



New Flagpole and Flag for Selbyville Library

Mason-Dixon VFW Post 7234 recently erected a flag pole and donated it, along with a flag, to the Selbyville Public Library and the citizens of Selbyville. Pictured Owen Edeberg, Americanism Chairman, and Don Feltnerberger, District Four Commander add the finishing touches of paint to the flagpole as member of the VFW and library staff look on. Back row from left include: Rita Taylor, 40 year charter member; Virginia Taylor, Secretary of the Ladies Auxiliary; Harley Taylor, Past State Commander; Edna Steele, Americanism Chairperson; Kathryn Tingle, Immediate Past President; Janet Scott, Chairman of Trustees for the Selbyville Library and Katherine Evans, Director of the Selbyville Library.



VETERANS DAY ... To prepare for the annual Veterans Day ceremony scheduled to be held in Ocean View's John West Park Saturday, Nov. 11 at 11 a.m., George Staib, Post Commander of Mason-Dixon VFW Post 7234, Ocean View, decorates the vets memorial with American flags. Photo by Dave Katten

Ocean View VFW to host Veterans Day services

The Honor Guard deserves prominent recognition in the 75th Anniversary of our Post. At the center of each Ceremony performing Volley and Taps and at the center of each Veterans Funeral performing Volley and Taps. In their younger days they marched in parades across Sussex County and Salisbury and Ocean City including 4th of July, Christmas Parades, Veterans Day Parades, Halloween Parades, Loyalty Day Parades, etc. The Honor Guard performed at Sports Stadiums; like Philadelphia and Washington and Baltimore. They always have been and still are a proud group who honor this post and this Country with their precision, dedication, and outstanding performance at every occasion. We should recognize the Captains of the Honor Guard throughout its history; some of them are Danny Steele, Wes Sauble (a former drill sergeant), Jim Leahy, Howard Schofield, Paul Burbank, and John Gossart.



JUN 1960



Bugler Richard Hires sounds Taps at solemn Memorial Day services Sunday at Mason-Dixon Post 7234, Quillen's Point. (See related story, page 6) (Photo by Dave Kartin)

Let us not forget our premier bugler Dick Hires who played Taps at many a function and funeral with dignity and respect. Never a dry eye as he flawlessly performed.

In fulfilling their Charter the Post held numerous activities. The Post and Auxiliary Education Program reaches out to the schools in the community especially with Patriots Pin and Voice of Democracy Awards and scholarships to local high school students. This program has instilled and fostered patriotism among the younger generation as they research the traditions and individuals that have kept this country free. The Auxiliary promoting Americanism continually sought ways to be a valuable volunteer in the community in helping others. During an election year the Auxiliary made sandwiches for the Poll workers. They offered safety courses in Boating, Guns, Bicycle, and Home. The Cancer Benefit was a major fund raiser for this charity since the 80s. The Auxiliary for many years participated in the Stokely Center Carnival. Organizing the Local “Wreathes Across America” was an opportunity to involve the community in honoring those who served this country by placing wreathes at the Veteran’s Cemetery. The Post and Auxiliary have been active in supporting our local needy Veterans and others in the community. The Post and Auxiliary support a Food Bank and a Christmas Gift Giving Program for needy families in the Community.



The Auxiliary has collected and shipped cookies for “Operation Cookie Drop”. The Post and Auxiliary continues are big supporters of the Home of The Brave for male and female Veterans in Milford Delaware. The Post and Auxiliary have hosted the opening event for Operations Seas the Day for Wounded Warriors for 8 years.



The Auxiliary Children Parties (Easter, Christmas, Halloween) have brought joy to many generations over 60 years. There is a small house with VFW over the door by the Country Store on Rt26 in Ocean View where Santa sat and greeted the children in the old days.

The Post and Auxiliary sponsored several activities to bring members and community together to share a meal and friendship.



The ever popular Sunday Breakfast cooked and served by volunteers fed 300 to 500 people on a Sunday morning. In the beginning Breakfast was made to order but went to buffet as crowds grew. Maybe more popular was the delicious Ladies Auxiliary Friday night home cooked dinner; seating was always hard to find. Some activities sought to bring members together for fun competitiveness. The annual Turkey shoot was very popular. There was a Motorcycle poker run, an automobile rally, a chili contest, shuffle board contest, bean bag toss contest, Dart contest, golf tournaments, and many other fun events.

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To fund all these activities and events and to maintain its buildings and grounds, members organized several creative and legendary fund raisers. Most memorable were The VFW Booths at the Georgetown Speedway selling homemade French Fries and hot dogs;



The Chicken Shack Barbeque has existed for at least 60 years, starting in the center of Bethany Beach and then moving to the National Guard site. The legendary taste is still a deep guarded secret (Let's honor Flora Hudson's recipe and the "Sauce Ladies" for their service all these years); The slot machines and rip offs brought in BIG money in their heyday allowing us to pay off all the additions to the Post Home; The ever popular Flip Five (Bar Bingo) with big prizes and lots of fun.

There were many major events of Interest in the Post's 75 year History. The Old Fashioned Fourth of July picnic to honor Vietnam Veterans in 1982 was an outstanding success with over 600 attendees; complete with fireworks.



The 4th of July Parade was always a popular function for the Post and Auxiliary. In the early days the VFW led the parade carrying flags in 90 degree heat.



Mason-Dixon Post 7234 VFW Color Guard, looking good as they approach the reviewing stand.



The wheels got to ride in a beautifully recontitione '64 Ford Galaxy.

The Post and Auxiliary decorated floats and even a 64 Ford Galaxy; the Post Van decorated by Don Golis was a crowd favorite; although it was the float decorated by the Hickmans and Loppattos that took home First Place. In the last few years we joined with the National Guard decorating a float and passing out flags to the crowds.



The 70th Anniversary of D-day was our last tribute to the to the Post a jeep that was on Normandy Beach on D-day for the Veterans to sign before it went to the museum. World War II generation bringing



The 50th Anniversary Commemoration of the Vietnam War was a chance to “Welcome Home” our Vietnam Veterans.





Finally the largest function in the history of the Post was hosting “The Wall That Heals”, a $\frac{3}{4}$ replica of the Vietnam Wall in DC on October 2019. Well over 1000 individuals donated their time and energy to make the event a success and well over 8000 guests visited the site and attended the functions.





Thank you for listening to our memories of our 75 Years. In researching the history of this Post you get a sense of extreme pride in belonging to an organization that has contributed so much to Veterans and the local community. The credit goes not only to the leaders of the Post and Auxiliary but to all the members who actively participated with their time, energy, and talents. Their Patriotism and Volunteerism have touched the lives of so many over the years. The Future - the Post has faced many daunting challenges in the past but individuals have always stepped up, although the challenges looking forward seem overwhelming we hope that those here today will step up to continue the legacy of this proud and successful Post. May God Bless the Veterans of Foreign Wars Mason Dixon Post 7234 and its Auxiliary, May God Bless all those who have called this home, and May God Bless America.



By the Authority of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States:

We it Known, that Comrades

Charles A. Brown	James C. Gray, Jr.	James A. Schenckel	Byron D. Cullen
Horace J. Baker	Charles E. Gray	Thomas A. Lynch, Jr.	Salah E. Cullen
Stephen P. Baker	Charles W. Gray	Stephen M. Lynch	James E. Payne
Franklin J. Baker	Charles J. Hamilton	John E. Lynch	Richard E. Payne
Carl J. Banks	Charles W. Hastings	Donald J. Lynch, Jr.	Edward B. Richards
James V. Blanchard	Charles J. Hickman	Charles J. Lynch	Charles C. Richards
George L. Bennett	Robert J. Hickman	Jack J. Lynch	William R. Roughton, Jr.
Stephen R. Bennett	John P. Howard	Charles J. McVale	Ellis C. Savage
Charles W. Berry	Howard B. Hudson	James J. McVale	Richard C. Scott
James M. Brandenburg	Frederick B. Hudson	Thomas J. McVale	Charles R. Scott
Oliver M. Brundage	Edward C. Hudson	Raymond A. McVale	Hugh A. Stephens
Allen A. Campbell	James C. Hudson	Robert C. Moore	Edward M. Tingle
George J. Campbell	John S. Hudson	John J. Mumford	Joseph C. Tritt
Stephen J. Carey	John R. Hudson	James M. Mumford	William P. Turner
George J. Cobb	Andrew Hudson	Langdon C. Harvey	William F. Vickers
Harvey R. Cobb	John V. Hudson	Long E. Harvey	George D. West
Richard T. Cobb	Halton T. Johnson	James H. Harvey	Russell E. West
Howard E. Coffin	Everett R. Johnson	Halton J. Harvey	James C. Wilgus, Jr.
Harvey Coffin	Charles H. Keithley	Paul J. Walter	
William J. Downing	William M. Keithley	John W. Walton	
Marion E. Evans	James M. Keithley	John W. Watson	
Edmund E. Evans	James M. Keithley	John A. Penney, Jr.	
Edward C. Givens	Donald M. Keithley		

having served honorably in the Army, Navy or Marine Corps of the United States of America in foreign wars of the United States of America, are hereby authorized to organize and are constituted a Post in the City of Ocean View in the State of Delaware to be known as Mason-Dixon Post No. 7234 Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

In Witness Whereof, we have hereto set our hands and the official seal of the association this 12th day of May, 1946.



W. R. H. H. H.
W. R. H. H. H.

Joseph M. H. H.
Joseph M. H. H.

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

FOUNDED 1899



Charter Life Members

Mason-Dixon Post 7234

Harold B. Barber	James L. Murray
Paul L. Cooper	Edmond B. Richards
John W. Gains	Frank K. Richards
John S. Glasik	Frederick C. Rogers
Harry G. Hamphill	William P. Short
Theodore W. Hickman	George D. Steele
Isola W. Hudson	Edward M. Tingle
Frank Hudson	Lester B. Turner
Robert C. Kellerman	William F. Vickers, Jr.
Richard O. Lewis	William T. Walker
Ellis E. Long	Tamm J. West
John G. Mitchell	Robert H. Wilkins
Walter H. Mumford	

