Holliday - Continued from left
required of these potentially young members and their families. Does our membership require "Older and Retired" members, many that are set in their thoughts and routines? It may be that, we, considered part of "The Establishment", especially in Louisiana, consider and provide incentives to increase membership, other than just referring that responsibility to others.

Viewing the current "happenings", I try and keep abreast with the news. I do VOTE - a precious privilege that so many do not seem to appreciate! I honor and attempt to contribute to the programs, ideals and ideas that made this a great country and do my small part in trying to maintain and add to the Greatness of this Country and the ideals that elevated the United States of America to that plateau. Serving My Country in the Military was the easy part - maintaining these ideals seem to be more taxing every day. My membership and responsibilities with The American Legion, and other Veterans organizations, in accord with my religious values, are a small step toward keeping America free and great.

Memorial Day, not just on the day, but throughout the year, we should remember and owe honor to those that gave their lives in keeping this great country free and safe. May 2016 commemorates 150 years of this honored day. What was originally known as Decoration Day, began on May 30, 1868, to honor those who sacrificed their lives in wartime. Since then, and until January 2016, approximately 1.2 million Americans have sacrificed their lives in wartime. At the beginning of the 20th century, this day became known as Memorial Day, and by many, mistakenly included those that have died in all circumstances. We should honor all Veterans, those deceased and those living, however, I believe that May 30, not necessarily the Monday holiday law of 1971, should be set to honor those who sacrificed their lives in "Wartime". We all need to do our part in keeping this country great.

Most all may have "setbacks" that may derail us for a period of time, work, sickness, obligations we have committed to, and a multitude of other circumstances. In The American Legion, you can start with these personal occurrences and extend knowledge of these happenings to Post, District, Department and National. In most cases, Legion Members endure these "setbacks" and continue their work toward the "Greater Great".

Continued on Page 4

Vice Commander's Views
Rodney Holliday

NEWS: The Legion Year is over 10 months gone! All but one of the District Conferences have been held and our awards to youth and other deserving citizens have been presented - we are well on the way to the presentation of Department awards at State Convention.

During the last District Conference (3rd District), our National Commander, Dale Barnett, is scheduled to attend. The dates of this Spring Conference have been, as in many past years, selected to allow for the visits from the National Commander. Also, the 3rd District Conferences are normally held over a 3-day period, which allows more time for Legion Business and the scheduling of Legion Business and special events.

I have attended these Conferences in past years and it has always been a special time for me. The socializing with Legion Family, Legion Business, the entertainment and food are "utmost". Special thanks to those that do the work for this Conference. If within your schedule, you should attend the 3rd District Conference, meet the National Commander, and enjoy the Great Comradery that I have always experienced when attending this Conference.

ALSO, we still need "MEMBERSHIP". Take the extra time to contact members that have not yet paid their dues. Impress upon them the importance of their membership in The American Legion and to all Veterans. Work to "sign up" new Members and put them to work in your Posts. They may, in the future, be the Department and/or The National Commander.

VIEWS: Can we separate our views from continued everyday happenings? Probably not; it seems to be the way of our current society.

I look back to the days that seemingly I had more time to do and accomplish more than I do now. In the opinions of some, I have sort of been left behind, especially in technology, some areas where I have no real desire to keep current! I suppose I manage to do, or get done, those tasks that are required, and even some that I personally don't really agree with.

In my realm, the "old time" contact, handshake, hug - actual contact with people, even over the telephone, is much more satisfying than slapping it on a screen and hitting "send". We emphasize the recruiting of "Young Members" - do we stop to think of the everyday tasks

Vice Commander's Views
Rudy Bourg, Sr.

Greetings Comrades: We are nearing the end of the American Legion Year, and yes as I've stated before, the light at the end of the tunnel is very bright and we still have much Legion work to do, especially in membership. The Department has moved up to 41st in the nation out of 55 Departments. I know we can do better. All we need is 1,151 memberships turned in to reach our goal of 100% for the Department. And in doing so, we can help our outgoing Commander Les Cromwell go out in style by achieving his goal.

In reference to News on Veteran Affairs: The veterans of Louisiana have finally gotten a leader of Veterans and one who will fight for our benefits as the Secretary of Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs and that is Mr. Joey Strickland. The Secretary is a Combat retiree who retired from the U.S. Army as a Colonel. He is a mover and shaker. Since January, 2016 he managed to fill the 11 vacant V.A.C. positions in the various parishes so that maximum number of veterans can receive assistance in processing their V.A. claims.

The Veterans in the Southern half of Louisiana from Mississippi to Texas will be receiving up to date VA Medical Care System or will be within the next year are so. The New Orleans VA Medical Center's Administration Staff have already accepted parts of the Hospital and has already hired over 1,600 employees and are actively seeking another 1,200 employees in various type positions from doctors to clerks and grounds keepers. The hospital will have 200 inpatient beds and another 20 beds for mental health patients, and 12 ICU beds. The Goal is to see the first veteran patient in December 2016 in the new 1.6 million square feet facility.

Additionally, in Lafayette, a new CBOC is currently being built. It will be a 29,224 net usable square feet facility and is scheduled to open by winter 2016. The New Lake Charles CBOC will have a 24,088 net usable square feet facility and it is scheduled to open early spring to early summer 2017. Both facilities will offer besides Primary Care, Dental, Audiology, Radiology (X-Ray only), Lab Services and other specialty services based upon patient needs in the area.

Let us never forget that the American Legion is made up of Four (4) sister organizations; The American Legion,
Vice Commander’s Views – Continued from Page 3 - Rudy Bourg, Sr.

The Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion (SALS) an extended arm of The Legion, and The Legion Riders. We need to keep them in mind when we are recruiting memberships. As one of your Department Vice Commanders, I wish to thank you for your vote of confidence in allowing me to serve as a member of the Leadership Team. My Co-Vice Commander, Rodney Holliday and I have worked as one throughout the year. We travelled throughout the State together, working in unison as one for the good of the Legion rather than each having Districts. Hopefully, this will continue in the future. It has been an Honor serving with Rodney as Co-Vice Commanders. Since my last article, I attended the Department Mid-Winter Conference, 7 of the 8 Spring Conferences held, and will be attending the 3rd District Conference on May 20 thru 22 in Houma. I attended 11 Legion Birthday Celebrations and numerous Post meetings.

Just a reminder, if your Post hasn’t made its donations to NEF and or The Poppy Funds yet, it is time to do so. With the storms and excessive rains that we’ve recently had, many of our Legionnaires are eligible for financial assistance, however, only if they are current on their membership they are eligible. Our Department Convention will be on June 10-11-12 at the Best Western in Alexandria. We will be having Guest Speakers, Presentation of Awards, and The Department Elections. Come and support your candidate and elect the Legionnaires you wish to lead your Department for the 2016-2017 Legion year. After all, it is our Department. Hope to see you there.

Vice Commander’s Views – Continued from Page 3 - Rodney Holliday

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and prayers to known members at Department and those on Commissions: “Less” C; “Rudy” B; Harold B; Forrest T; Archie B; Tony B; “Petey” M; “Skip” P; “Gene” F; “Jim” T; Mario S; and the many others, at all levels, who have experienced personal and family illnesses. They worked through these times, with God’s help, and continue their work for The American Legion. My personal priorities are ordered – God, Family and Country. With these guidelines “I live my life”.  

Added Quote: Winston Churchill, “Wouldn’t it be great if no one had to take credit for anything”.

THE 2016 AMERICAN LEGION ORATORICAL PROGRAM

H.T. “Terry” Sharp, Department Oratorical Chairman

The Department of Louisiana’s 2016 American Legion Oratorical Contest is now complete and provided a great field of contestants from across the Department. Northwestern University in Natchitoches again provided an excellent venue for our Department finals held March 6th. This outstanding facility provided a stunning recital auditorium with seating for 400 guests. The contest was open for all to attend for a great experience on the fundamentals of our Constitution provided by an outstanding High School representative from each District. There were 6 Districts represented that provided each student with an opportunity to express their views in preparation for acceptance of the duties, responsibilities and the rights and privileges of American citizenship. The eventual winner, Niketah Berko, was from the 8th District and will receive a cash award of $1,000 along with a plaque from the Department recognizing his achievements. He also advanced to the National Oratorical Contest to represent the Department of Louisiana. Regrettably, he did not advance beyond the first round, but the excitement of the event and the pride of competition provided the true value of the experience, the development of leadership, and a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the Constitution of the United States. The Department of Louisiana and its members are proud of his accomplishments and wish him the very best in all future endeavors.

2016 AGRICULTURE AWARDS

H.T. “Terry” Sharp, Department Agriculture Chairman

Each year, through the guidelines of our National Americanism Programs, The American Legion recognizes and awards the youth of our communities for their work and achievements in Agriculture through the programs of the Louisiana 4H Foundation and the Louisiana FFA Association. A $1000 Scholarship is awarded to one individual in each of these programs and will be presented in person at each program Convention and awards venues. The 2016 FFA Convention will be held at the Civic Center in Monroe the first week in June (date has not been announced). The name of this year’s winner has also not been released as of yet. The 4H Awards Banquet will be held June 21st at the Cook Conference Center on the LSU campus. The 2016 winner is Tristan Nicholas of Vernon Parish. All Posts should be advised that these two programs provide excellent opportunities to reach out to the youth in the Post communities. I urge all Posts to get involved at some level with awards and recognitions on behalf of the American Legion.

From the Sons of The American Legion

From Camille A. Lejeune, Jr. – NEC/Detachment Adjutant

Louisiana has dropped to 26th at the National level with 93.207% - we only need 190 members to reach 100%. If you review the membership report, we have over 277 members that have not renewed yet. We, as Squadron leaders should be using email, phone or dropping our members a note. Check your rosters and if you have a member that has over 3 years of continuous years, please contact them. We seem to lose more on renewals and gain on new members. Should you need my assistance, please contact me at: lamembership@yahoo.com. May 11th is 100% target at National. It is also the date that we use to calculate membership winners as well as voting strength at Convention. June 30th is the date we use to order 100% ribbons for those Squadrons that have reached 100%. Don’t hold your membership.

Citation of Achievements have been ordered and received. Membership awards will be ordered from the May 11th report. The call in for June Convention was mailed on April 13th. Within the call in was your consolidated reporting form, housing form, program and new officer’s form. Donations to The American Legion programs are still underway. All donations must be received by May 31st at National to be counted for this membership year. Your final elections should be taking place this month. Once you’re done, please complete the officer’s form and email or hard copy mail to me. If you don’t elect, I still need a contact person for your Squadron. I would like to produce a short roster for Convention if the participation is there. Special Olympics will be held in Hammond at Southeastern University on May 21st; State Convention will be in Alexandria from June 10th to June 12th; and Boys State will be held from June 26th thru July 2nd at Northwestern in Natchitoches. Registration is held on Sunday, June 26th. DEC will be July 30th, 2016. National Convention will be in Ohio on August 26th. Delegates will be chosen at the June Convention.

From John C. Lawrence – Detachment Commander

Dear Sons, Legionnaires and Auxiliary: We have not reached our goal of $2r per member for the OWF and NEF, but we still have time, so please send in donations now for these vital programs. We are nearing the end of this year and it has gone by quickly. I hope that over the past year I have been able to inspire you. I hope I was able to make you think. I hope I was able to make you do. My mission was to get you active and involved. Have I achieved everything I wanted to this year? No, but I did achieve some things with the help of the other elected and appointed officers. The State Convention is coming up soon and we will be faced with electing new officers. I will be running for Commander again this year. I look forward to seeing you at convention and ask you for your support. I would like to thank all who helped me and assisted me to make this a good year. Happy Memorial Day and please fly your US flag.

Final Thoughts

A Word – From the Editor

“After the verb ‘to love’ – ‘to help’ is the most beautiful verb in the world.” ~ Bertha von Suttner