

The Story of

JOHNSON – BROWN
POST 1736

Alexandria, La

THE STORY OF
JOHNSON – BROWN
POST 1736
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES

ALEXANDRIA, LA

By
Tom Heston

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Dedicated in Grateful Memory to the Veterans of All Wars Who Died in the Service of our Country. They stand in the unbroken line of Patriots who have dared to die that Freedom lives, and through it, they live in a way that humbles the undertakings of most men

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In Memoriam

WILLIAM HENRY JOHNSON

Sartori, Louisiana

Private Co. "I" 26th Infantry, 1st Div

Born Lloyd, Louisiana

Sailed overseas March 12, 1918

Wounded October 2, 1918

Died of wounds received in action

October 5, 1918

Brought back from France

June 1922 and reburied in

Oak Grove Cemetery near Clear Water

Station just southeast of Lecompte, La

On Rock Island R. R. in a tract of

Land now owned by the Texas Company

On November 13, 1929, the grave was poorly kept and had no marker of any kind. Nearest relatives, Mrs. Mary Emmonds (Sister), Lecompte, La, Albert Johnson (Brother), Lecompte La, of Baptist Faith.

In Memoriam

JOHN F. BROWN

ASN 58218

RFD #1 Box 28, Alexandria, La

Private First Class, Company "H", 37th Infantry

From January 16, 1917 to May 30, 1917

Company "I", 28th Infantry till May 28, 1918

Born Zimmerman, La

Enlisted at Jackson Barracks, La, January 9, 1917

...First Division...

Sailed overseas June 12, 1917

Killed in action at Cantigny, France, May 28, 1918

Buried in U.S. National Cemetery, Pineville, La

Was cited for Gallantry and Meritorious Service
in First Division General Order #1, January 1, 1920.

Relatives, Mrs. Mary Catherine Brown (Mother)

Route 1, Box 76, Pineville La (address as of March 1929)

Changed to 705 Lakeview, Pineville, La (Dec 1929)

Oh God of Hosts

Be with us yet

Lest we forget,

Lest we forget.

RIP

We've learned the lessons that ye taught.
Rest ye in peace, ye Flanders' dead.
The fight that ye so bravely lead
We've taken up
And we shall keep true faith with ye,
Who lay fast asleep
With each a cross to mark his bed
With poppies growing over-head
Where once his life-blood ran red.
So let your rest be sweet and deep
In Flanders' Fields.
Fear not that ye have died for naught.
The Torch ye threw to us, we caught.
Ten million hands shall lift it high
That Freedom's light shall never die.
We've learned the lesson that ye taught
In Flanders' Fields.

The proceeding sketches of William Henry Johnson and of John F. Brown, and the quotations from "America's Answer", by R.W. Lilliard, were transcribed from the minutes of the first meeting of Johnson-Brown Post 1736, Veterans of Foreign Wars, dated September 20, 1929.

THE BEGINNING

The year was 1918 and it was over, over there. The last of 4,627,118 American “Johnnies” came marching home, and the names of 116,708 other Americans were inscribed on the eternal rolls of honor. They had joined the unbroken line of Patriots who had dared to die that Freedom might live.

The quiet country towns and in bustling cities across the United States the men who fought “The Great War” knew that nothing would ever be the same. They had tasted life and death. As they had shared the troops trains and the trenches, they shared a common bond and a common ideal: “WE Shall Never Forget”.

That ideal found expression in a noble fraternity that traced its roots back to 1899, when veterans of the Spanish War, the Philippine Insurrection of 1899, and the China Relief Expedition drew together to form organizations to preserve the ties that had been formed in hardship and danger. These included the “American Veterans of Foreign Service”, formed in Columbus, Ohio, on September 29, 1899, and the “Colorado Society, Army of the Philippines”, founded the same year. Another group, also called the “American Veterans of Foreign Service”, was formed in Pennsylvania in 1903 when three smaller organizations merged. The Ohio and Pennsylvania fraternities united in 1905, keeping the same name. The “American Veterans of Foreign Service” grew rapidly in the East, and the “Army of the Philippines” expanded in the Western United States.

The two organizations held a joint National Encampment in Denver, Colorado, in 1913, where they voted to merge. The resulting organization was called “Army of the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.

At the National Encampment of 1914, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, this name was changed to the “Veterans of Foreign Wars”.

Across the Atlantic, Europe was embroiled in all-out war, and on April 6, 1917, the United States stepped into the fray. By March 1918, there were only 85,000 U.S. troops in the expeditionary force in France. But by September 1918, that number had swelled to 1,200,000, as the New World went to the rescue of the Old. On November 11, 1918, it was all over.

The doughboys came home, swelling the ranks of the V.F.W., as the 1920's roared into a rollicking era of ragtime, radio, and rumble seats. Everything was flying high and heading for a crash.

It was September 20, 1929, when a group of these veterans met in the sleepy river town of Alexandria, La.

That first meeting was held in the Central Grammar School, which was located in Alexandria on Murray Street, on the present site of the Rapides Parish Courthouse. Present were doctors, farmers, bookkeepers, laborers – a veritable cross-section of the population that had fought “to make the world safe for democracy”. This meeting was the foundation and the beginning of Johnson-Brown Post 1736 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Who were Johnson and Brown? How did the Post come to be named after them? Nothing answers that questions better than the minutes of the first meeting of the Post. They are presented here, word for word, exactly as they were written.

THE FIRST MEETING

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF V.F.W. US U.S. – SEPT. 20, 1929

1. Meeting was called to order by Acting Chairman Comrade Geo. W. May at 8:00 P.M.
2. It was decided and agreed upon that the names of all deceased Comrades from Rapides Parish be placed in a hat and two different comrades draw name numbers, which names would constitute the name of the Post. Whereas the names of Wm. H. Johnson and John F. Brown were drawn, and it was authoritatively recorded that the name of the Post should be known as the Johnson-Brown Post No. 1736, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.
3. The Post immediately proceeded with the next routine matter of election of officers to service until the 1st meeting in January 1930, at which another election will be held for the entire year of 1930. Officers elected were as follows:
 1. Dr. R.B. Evans, Commander
 2. Chas. M. Bollar, Senior Vice Commander
 3. W.G. Bowden, Junior Vice Commander

4. Geo. W. May, Quartermaster
5. R.O. Coopender, Advocate
6. Dr. Edmond Klamke, Post Surgeon
7. Dr. R.B. Evans, Trustee
Chas. M. Bollar, Trustee
W.G. Bowden, Trustee
8. E.J. Burnam, Officer of the Day

4. It was moved and seconded that 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month be acknowledged as regular meeting nights, move unanimously carried. Through courtesy of Post Surgeon, Dr Klamke, the Post was given permission to meet in the Parish Health Unit Building at 7th and Murray Street, which meeting was to be a called meeting for Sunday October 6th, 1929, at 2:00 P.M., for the purpose fo instituting the Post and installing the recently elected officers.

5. The election of the Post Chaplain was deferred until the next meeting at which ministers who are eligible for membership int eh V. F. W. were expected to be present.

6. Comrade Robt. D. MacDonald announced that it was possible that Comrade Dr. Milton Vaughn of the Little Rock (Ark.) Post would be here to institute the post and install the officers.

7. Commander Dr. R.B. Evans agreed to appoint officers for the following respective offices, viz. at the meeting of Sunday, October 6. Adjutant, Patriotic Instructor, Post Historian, Guard, Sentinel, 2 Color Sergeants, Bugler, Sergeant Major, Quartermaster Sergeant.

8. The acting Adjutant reported a paid membership of 26.

9. Moved, seconded, carried that the meeting adjourned, meeting adjourned at 9:10 P.M. with an attendance of 19 present.

approved

J. L. Hinton

Dr. R.B. Evans

Post Adjutant

Post Commander

The post was formally instituted, and the first officers were officially installed on October 6, 1929.

POST CHARTER
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE
UNITED STATES

By the Authority of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, be it known that
Comrades

Dr. R.B. Evans*
Cha. M Bollar
W.G. Bowden*
Geo. W May
R.O. Coopender
Dr. Edmond Klamke
Samuel Haas**
E.J. Burnaman*
J.L. Hinton
Nugent Hill
Dr. F.M. Fridge
Jules B. Brydels
W.D. Cailleateau*
G.J. Guillory*
E.G. Plunkett
J.W. Hudgens*
Peyton Ford
Daniel Willis
Anthony Nugent
B.F. Selvidge
R. Cookson

N.D Thomas
H.E. Stiles
F. Vandervelde
H.E. Torbett
C.C. Hill
E.A. Mestayer
S.C. Spengler
B.J. Rosenthal*
G.L. Broussard
L.O. Shilling
W.H. Thornhill
J.W. Sneed
E.J. Dufour
C.O. Walker
W.J. Richardson
J.T. Cappell
R.R. Reed
Charlie W. Wilson*
James J. Taylor
Robt. D. MacDonald
Frank Hurst

Having served honorable 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 Alexandria, in the State of Louisiana, to be known as

JOHNSON-BROWN POST NO. 1736

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

OF THE UNITED STATES

In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the Official Seal of the Association this 6th Day of October 1929.

R.M. Handy Jr.
Adjutant General

Howard K. Duffy
Commander in Chief

*Future Post Commanders

**Sameul Haas, of Alexandria, La, was the first Department Commander, Department of Louisiana, V.F.W., in 1924, when Louisiana split from the Department of Louisiana-Mississippi.

From this small but promising beginning Johnson-Brown Post 1736 began to grow and plan an increasingly important role in the community of Central, Louisiana. The veterans' Hospital in Pineville was an immediate center for service to veteran by members of the new Post. The earliest records state that the Post began by contributing \$15.00 to the Veterans' Hospital Christmas parties every year. Money was short in the depression years, and members were few. But since then, hundreds of thousands of volunteer hour and many thousands of dollars have been donated by the members of the Post and its auxiliaries, to help sick and wounded veterans on their way back to health. Many awards have been presented by the Hospital to the volunteers from the V.F.W.

In addition to the Veterans' Hospital work, early community involvement by the Post included the formation of a drum and bugle corps. Boys from throughout Central Louisiana were trained to perform and march with the veterans on patriotic occasions in the 1930's. One former bugler fondly recalls feeling "very big and grownup" marching as a little boy alongside the veterans of the Spanish-American War and the Great War. Years later, when he himself was a combat veteran of World War II, he recalled that "playing soldier wasn't anything at all like I thought it was in the V.F.W. Drum and Bugle Corps".

Johnson-Brown Post, in the years between WWI and WWII, formed a formal honor guard and firing squad which provided memorials at funerals of deceased veterans.

This honor guard travelled all over the state of Louisiana, at their own expense, in uniform, to provide taps and honors for their comrades. When community parades and patriotic occasions called for it, the early members of the Post turned out in uniform to participate. As the years went by, some of the uniforms go a little tight, and their numbers grew fewer. But heads were high, and the step was proud as the dressed-right past the reviewing stands.

LADIES AUXILIARY

The year was 1931. The Nation was struggling through the great depression, and experience which left its mark on everyone who lived through it. Most people in Central Louisiana were eating only what they could raise themselves, nobody had any money.

The new V.F.W. Post in Alexandria was just getting by also, with the help and dedication of some of the original charger members who stated recruiting new members – a task that some of the m continued until the last days of their lives. In accomplishing this task, these members found it was necessary to have their women beside them. So it was on January 2, 1931, that the Ladies Auxiliary of the V.F.W. Post 1736 was formed, with 18 charter members



CHARTER
LADIES AUXILIARY
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES

BE IT KNOWN THAT

Julia Raggio
Julia Peterman
Barbara Evans
Leonia Delany
Mabel B. Sichtermann
Flora Wilson
Beryl Hinton
Mamie Glenn
Edith H. Wenner

Margaret Hicks
Lula Rosenthal
Sallie Phillips
Stella Bollar
Edna Guillory
Mary C. Brown
Myrtle D. Rowland
Lou H. Haas
Sara Phillips

Being the Mothers, Wives, Sisters, and Daughters of the Men of the United States Army, Navy, or Marine Corps, whose service created eligibles for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States; and the United States Army Nurses who have had overseas service are hereby authorized to organize and are constituted an Auxiliary, to be known as

JOHNSON-BROWN AUXILIARY OF POST 1736

Stationed at Alexandria, Louisiana

In Witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals this 2nd day of January 1931.

Grace H. Davis
Secretary

Ada E. Harrison
President

Since that date, the women who have formed the Ladies' Auxiliary of Johnson-Brown Post 1736 have contributed countless hours of service and care for the V.A. Hospital patients, to the functions and finances of the Post, and to the successful attainment of the goals of the VFW. The members of the Ladies' Auxiliary have frequently been the motivating force behind the VA Hospital parties and programs. They have extended their concern to include patients in area nursing homes, Central Louisiana State Hospital, Pinecrest State School, and the children in St. Mary's School and local orphanages. Many of their efforts to help individual veterans and their families were not recorded in minutes but are remembered by those whom they touched.

No one has ever kept track of the number of Post members who, faced with a need for sitters, drivers, or help with a sick spouse or child, have called on the Auxiliary for help. The response has always been a heart-warming, "Don't work. We will take care of it."

Christmas in a hospital is never fun for anyone, especially with patients might be far from their own homes. Christmas in the Alexandria VA Medical Center has been made brighter over many years for countless veterans, due to the efforts of the Ladies' Auxiliary of Honson-Brown VFW Post.

Always integral partners in Post activities, the Auxiliary won national recognition in August 1975, when they Buddy Poppy display won First Prize in its class at the National Convention in Los Angeles.

Many of the "finishing touches" around the Post Home and grounds have been the results of the efforts of the Auxiliary members, who constantly strive to make the atmosphere and activities of the Post more pleasant.

Among the highlights of any VFW year are visits by National officers. But certainly, one of the brightest highlights occurred on September 27, 1953, when the Auxiliary entertained at a reception and dinner for the visiting National Auxiliary President in the Continental Room of the Hotel Bentley. Like a setting for a Hollywood movie, the grand old hotel witnessed many events with the beauty and charm of the Deep South. The Post Auxiliary presented many events, over the years, where this beauty and charm was evident.

At their 30th anniversary celebration at the Post Home on January 18, 1961, the Ladies' Auxiliary numbered 261 members. In recent years they have actively joined the National crusade against cancer, contributing both time and money to the educational and research programs that have led to inroads against that disease.

V.A. Hospital

On June 30, 1931, the US Veterans Bureau took over the recreation activities of the Red Cross at Veterans Hospital #27, in Pineville La. The new administration had no budget for writing paper and envelopes, Johnson-Brown Post 1736 immediately ordered 10,000 sheets of paper and 5,000 envelopes and delivered them to the Veterans Hospital, just as the Red Cross supplies ran out.

This was only one of the countless numbers of special projects and services the VFW was to provide to the patients of the VA Hospital of the next half century. Even during the years of the Great Depression, the Post somehow found the money to help patients and projects at the Veterans hospital. The Post had only 55 members in December 1932, and who knows how many of the were out of work, but they still came up with \$15.00 for the Christmas Tree Fund at the Veterans Hospital. The contribution was the same every year, until 1952, when another \$25.00 was added, for presents for Christmas stockings being filled by the Auxiliary. The minutes of the meeting of November 12, 1952, state. At that time the Post had a grand total of 61 members paid up for 1953. At some meetings, as few as six were present.

But this small group kept things going. On June 11, 1952, the Quartermaster was authorized to spend \$35.50 to purchase a case of cigarettes for the VA Hospital. On August 10, 1953, there were 230 patients treated to a watermelon party, at the total cost to the Post of \$20.40. The records do not show where the watermelons came from.

On November 2, 1953, the Post and Auxiliary were holding bingo parties of the patients, Stage shows and singing groups were presented frequently. One of the biggest must have been the one presented on April 8, 1960. That was the day the Post sponsored the Paul. A. Miller "Big Top" Wild Animal Circus on the Hospital grounds. But times changed, the traveling shows faded; and by 1954 the post was raising money for the "the VA Hospital TV Fund". From bingos to blackouts, throughout the years the members have consistently come up with new ideas to raise money for the veterans in the hospital. The idea is: "Keep'em smiling in beds of white".

JUST LOOKIN' FOR A HOME

It wasn't easy, being a new VFW Post growing up during the depression years, without a home to call you own. From the first meeting at the Central Grammar School, on September 20, 1929, to the spacious, modern, comfortable Post Home of today, the road was difficult and long. The second meeting, when the Post received its Charter and the first officers were installed, took place on October 6, 1929, in the building of the Rapides Parish Health Unit, at 7th and Murray Streets, Alexandria. In 1934 the Post was meeting in Guillory's Barber Shop, at 10th and Beauregard. When the barber shop moved to Lee and Vance, the Post moved with it.

The year was 1941. No one who was old enough to remember December 7 will ever forget exactly where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news of the day that has lived in infamy. Across the Country a new generation of young men lined up at the recruitment stations as the United States prepared to meet the most dangerous challenge in its short, 165-year existence. Many men who had fought in World War I found themselves in uniform once again. From Omaha Beach to Berlin, from Pearl Harbor to Nagasaki, American fighting men met the challenge and changed the course of history.

During World War II the small VFW Post 1736 held its meetings in the old Rapides Parish Courthouse, which was located on the present site of the Town Talk parking lot. With the entire Nation united for Victory, the Post and Auxiliary worked diligently on the home front. Military bases mushroomed around Central Louisiana, and Post activities included USO parties and dances, scrap iron and victory bond drives. An ever-growing number of wounded veterans were coming home, and one gold star after another was silently hung in windows of local homes. The idea of acquiring a permanent Post home was shelved, as were a lot of other plans, for the duration.

Then it was 1945. President Harry S. Truman went on the radio and announced: "The Allied armies, through sacrifice and devotion and with God's help...." Three years, eight months, twenty-six days, and 405,399 American lives after Pearl Harbor, the Nazis and the Japs were both beaten.

More than 16,000,000 men and women served in the armed forces of the United States during World War II, and Central Louisiana was honorably represented. Veterans returning to Alexandria and Rapides Parish found war welcome at Johnson-Brown Post 1736. The immediately began to take part in every phase of Post activity, soon playing vital roles. Both new members and old had plans for the future growth of the VFW and its services to the growing army of Central Louisiana veterans.

After World War II Johnson-Brown Post held its meeting in the old Community Center, in Mockingbird Park, on Bolton Avenue. The A&P Store is not on that site.



In June 1948, discussion was about the need of a clubhouse for holding meetings and a place of recreation for members. The minutes of December 14, 1948, show that the members were talking about finding a building for a Posts Home.

On June 27, 1950, the Post was meeting in the Penguin Club at 3109 Lee Street. On that same date President Truman ordered US forces into combat in Korea, and the Seventh Fleet into the Formosan Straights. Another new generation of Americans was about to earn its qualification for membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. At the Post meeting the older veterans were talking about all the clubs in town where meetings might be held, and that were suitable for entertainment. In Korea, young men were dying.

A major move came on October 25, 1950, when the Post voted to move in with the Marine Corps League, on Upper Third Street, and former Veterans' Club with them. The post invested \$900.00 in the venture and moved to Upper Third. On December 12, 1950, the Post invested an additional \$400.00 in the Veterans' Club, bringing the total commitment to \$1,300.00. But by January 9, 1951, the Veterans' Club was being sold and the Post was looking for another home.

After the sale, the Post continued to meet at the same location, which was then known as "Ozzie's Supper Lounge". But in April 1951, the Post was still paying off several hundred dollars' worth of bills from the defunct Veterans' Club. The meeting of May 1, 1951, was held at the old Community Center.

The Post was incorporated in the State of Louisiana in October 1952; the Articles of Incorporation were approved by the National Commander-in-Chief on March 24, 1953.

From Congressional charter granted to
The Veterans of Foreign Wars:

"The purpose of this corporation shall
Be fraternal, patriotic, historical, and
Educational, to preserve and strengthen
comradeship among its members, to assist
worthy comrades; to perpetuate the memory
of our dead and to assist their widows and
orphans; to maintain true allegiance to the
government of the United States of America,
and fidelity to its constitution and
laws; to foster true patriotism; to maintain
and extend the institution of American
freedom and to preserve and defend the
United States from all her enemies whatsoever."

FUND RAISING

Over the years various fund-raising projects were undertaken to raise money for the building fund. In 1947 the Post sponsored the Orchestra of Vaughn Monroe, in the City Park Auditorium. The fee for the famous singer and his "racing with the Moon Band was \$1,200.00. Due to the City's rules, no liquor was to be sold in the Auditorium. Only 400 tickets were purchased, at \$1.00 each. Net proceeds to the building fund were - \$400.00

But the members kept plugging away, holding barbeques, raffles, gumbos, to raise money for the building fund. On October 19, 1948, the Post cleared \$444.44 on the Pepper Carnival at the Rapides Parish Fair, in conjunction with the Rotary Club. The bought \$250.00 worth of Victory Bonds for the budding building fund with the proceeds.

Travelling music shows were a big thing before TV. On June 23, 1950, the Post sponsored the Curley Fox Texas Ruby Show and made a net profit of \$1.90. The members voted to turn the process over to the Auxiliary, since they had sold the tickets for the show. Still the Post was looking for a home.

On April 22, 1951, the found one. It was at 3822 Lee Street, and it was part of a deal with a promoter who wanted to run bingo games. The promoter was to run three bingo games a week and the Post was free to use the building for its own purposes on the other nights. The Post was to receive \$150.00 to \$200.00 a month and would incur no expenses. The building was near the present location of the Handyman Big Tin Barn. On January 9, 1952, the Post had only 61 members; in July of that year, it stated a jackpot drawing at each meeting to increase attendance.

A GIANT STEP

The first Post Bing was held at the Lee Street location, and the things slowly began to fall into place. The Post Building Committee, on February 11, 1953, was contacting real estate agents about property for a future home. The Post was meeting again in Guillory's Barber Shop. On September 9, 1952, the declined an invitation from the American Legion to use their facilities until a meeting place could be found. The VFW Post was on the verge of taking a giant step, one that would require independent fundraising activities and a total dedication of all the members.

On October 14, 1953, those members voted to purchase Mrs. Warner's four lots from the Haas Investment Co., amending that later to three. Nine members were present and voting at that momentous meeting. These lots on Bayou Rapides were to become the site of the present home of Johnson-Brown Post 1736. Negotiations dragged on. In the meantime, the Post rented a building at 2120 Lee Street and held bingos there. At the time, forty people was a big crowd and ten dollars a big jackpot.

At the meeting of December 9, 1953, it was reported that the Post had purchased lots 4, 5, and 6 of the Donna Subdivision from Mrs. Warner, with \$3,000.000 borrowed from Comrade Steve Thiberville. Talks were under way about the type of building to be constructed. The members voted to cash the bonds that had been purchased for the building fund and use the money towards building a Post home and equipping it. Each member was asked to donate one day's labor or make a cash contribution towards the construction. the work was to be done by members, mostly on weekends.

It was on Saturday, January 2, 1954, that the first shovel of dirt was turned. The Post had 169 members at the time.

This small group of ex-GIs, with courage and faith in each other and the future of the VFW was starting a home for their Post and their comrades of the future. As veterans of the Korean War began to appear on the membership roster, the Post was growing, and the new Post home was growing with it.

THE ROLE OF MR. STEVE

The purchase of the land on Bayou Rapides and the construction of the first building was made possible largely through the dedication, courage, and generosity of one man, Comrade Steve Thiberville.

“Mr. Steve” as he was universally and affectionately now, financed the acquisition of the lots on which the present buildings are located. He put up thousands of dollars for the completion of the first building, later contributed several thousand more dollars for expansion project, and purchased two adjoining lots to expand the VFW property.

On February 10, 1954, the membership authorized a loan for not more than \$2,500.00 to finish the Post Home. This was in addition to the original \$3,000.00 borrowed from Mr. Steve to start the Home. On April 14, 1954, this authorization was raised to \$3,500.00

While construction was underway, the Post continued to meet at 2120 Lee Street and on February 10, 1954, at 1407 Harris Street, the City Beverage Company, owned by Mr. Steve.

The mortgage recorded in Book 364, page 371, of the records of the Clerk of Cour, Rapides Parish, Alexandria Louisiana, states that Johnson-Brown Post 1736....”is justly, truly and legally indebted unto Steve J. Thiberville, whose wife before marriage was Naomi Johnson, with whom he is now living and residing, in the just and full sum of Six Thousand Five Hundred and no/100 (\$6,500.00) Dollars...payable forty-eight (48) months from date, payable to the order of Steve J. Thiberville, and bearing interest at the rate of six (6) per cent per annum from date until paid....”

The property was described as “A certain piece, parcel, or tract of ground, together with all the buildings and improvement thereon, and together with all rights, ways, and privileges thereunto appertaining, located in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, and being more particularly described as follows, to-wit: Lots Four (4), Five (5), and Six (6) of Donna Subdivision, as per plat thereof by Irion Lafargue, dated April 25, 1953, recorded in Plat Book 8, page 169, of the records of

Rapides Parish, Louisiana.” The mortgage dated August 16, 1954.

The Courthouse record shows that the mortgage was paid in full and cancelled on March 6, 1957. The mortgage burning was celebrated at a barbecue and joint installation on March 31, 1957.

Photo

Burning the Mortgage on the first Post Home are Commander
Phil Dafford, Auxiliary President, Lucille Agnella,
and House Committee Chairman, Joe Nicotre, March 31, 1957

The Post repaid the loan, but every interest check that was presented to Mr. Steve was simply endorsed by him and returned to the Quartermaster, with directions to use the money for improvements. Never once did Mr. Steve accept one cent of the interest that was due him on the financial assistance he had lent to the Post.

But Mr. Steve did not limit his support only to the financial programs. As the Post put up its various buildings, he was always there, working on constructing a facility for use by future members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Many workers fondly recall Mr. Steve bringing lunches from Fuzzy's for everyone. The privilege of providing liquid refreshment was decided by a roll of the dice. The story is told that once Mr. Steve won the privilege seven straight times.

Photo

The first home on Veterans' Drive measured 40x60 feet
And was built mostly by volunteer labor (Photo courtesy of L.L. Roberts)

The task of building the first home for the Post had been completed. But the task of building the Post was just beginning. With the advantage of having their own meeting hall, members stated recruiting new comrades. The 175 members who met in the first building at the end of 1954 grew to 280 at the end of 1955, 362 in February 1956, and 440 in February 1957. By the time December 1958 rolled around, Johnson-Brown Post 1736 was the largest in the Department of Louisiana, with 633 members paid up for 1959. From the 26 members enrolled at the first meeting thirty years before, Johnson-Brown had come a long way.

The membership reached 783 at the end of 1968; it was 811 on January 7, 1970. On December 31, 1971, the Post passed the one-thousand-member milestone with 1,039 VFW members.

As the membership grew, so did the need for more space and better facilities. On May 26, 1954, \$500.00 more was borrowed from Comrade Steve J. Thiberville to finish paying off the bills of the building. The Posts was to pay Mr. Steve \$110.58 each month on the note. Each month the interest was returned to the Post.

The minutes of June 9, 1954, state that the Post was renting the building to the Club steward, who paid the Post \$112.00 a month, and he paid all utility bills.

The minutes of July 21, 1954, further state that the Post borrowed \$2,500.00 from Mr. Steve to pay off the steward for his interest in the lounge. From then on, the Post ran the lounge itself, clearing \$200.00 profit in the first six weeks of operation.

The adjoining property was purchased by the Post on January 16, 1957, on an open note that was paid off on March 6, 1957.

The lounge area was expanded with new construction that was finished and dedicated on October 8, 1960. The program for the day described it was "a 30 by 60-foot lounge and bar, acoustic-type ceiling, luan mahogany paneling, indirect lighting, new booths and tables, all for your enjoyment". The lounge and bar were completed at cost of \$16,000.00.

In 1965 another addition was put up, housing the old office of the commander, the Ladies' Auxiliary former meeting room, and the game room. These additions cost \$14,000.00 and measured 20 by 120 feet.

Once again, most of the work was donated by Post members who were making an investment of their time and their talents in the future of their Post, for the benefit of their comrades. These workers, whose identities changed over the years were invariably known by the non-workers and "the Clique".

GETTING INVOLVED

From its beginning, members of Johnson-Brown Post have been involved in their community, in their churches, schools, and in other civic organizations. Their VFW membership gave a new focus of service to many, service to veterans and the families of veterans. Their VFW membership also formed them into a new alliance with their former comrades-in-arms, increasing their strength and effectiveness through the power of their numbers.

Like any organization, the number of active, working members in the VFW has always been smaller than the total of card-carrying members. It's a worn-out joke that VFW stands for "very few workers. But those very few workers with the will to do have done it over the years and are still doing the jobs that need to be done, whether they are stacking boxes, taking inventory, writing minutes, paying bills, working bingo, visiting veterans in the hospitals, or selling Buddy Poppies on the streets, plus ten thousand other VFW jobs. Over the years, the small handful of men who got these jobs done have experienced a sense of satisfaction and comradeship known by very few, and never by the complainers. Fortunately, the new members who are workers and not complainers have constantly appeared.

They appeared on the streets of Alexandria on June 13, 1950, selling Buddy Poppies. They took in \$131.55 that day. Twenty years later, on June 3, 1970, some of the same members who were selling Buddy Poppies in 1950 were on the streets again, alongside veterans of Korea and Vietnam. The Buddy Poppy sales totaled \$701.00 that year. On May 28, 1983, VFW members who were veterans of three wars raised \$3,286.00 selling Buddy Poppies.

But Buddy Poppies, the trademark symbol of the VFW programs to aid handicapped veterans, are not the only thing that brought members of the Johnson-Brown Post onto the streets. On January 21, 1955, Post members collected \$234.18 on the streets of Alexandria for the March of Dimes. In April 1957, the VFW Police Auxiliary was collecting funds for the Easter Seal Society. A clipping from the Alexandria Daily Town Talk showed volunteers from one civic organization making

Plans “to top the record \$403.00 collected in one weekend by the VFW Police Auxiliary. The newspaper apparently did not print a photo of the record setting VFW volunteers. Remembering kindness shown to veterans in many theaters of war, members of the Alexandria VFW Post have run the bells and manned the kettles for the Salvation Army for many Christmas seasons.

The VFW Police Auxiliary had been formed by 15 Post members on March 11, 1955, for civil defense purposes. It was another example of Post service to the community.

The Post ceremonial Squad reported that ten 30 caliber rifles had been secured for the firing squad, on May 20, 1957. At that time the Squad had provide honors at five funerals. In August of that year the Post made and installed highway directional signs for the Alexandria National Cemetery, making that facility more accessible to visitors.

MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE

The year was 1959. The Supreme Pup Tent, Military Order of the Cootie, the Honor Degree of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, recognized the achievements and the dedication of the members of Johnson-Brown Post and reestablished Pup Tent No. 1, which had originally been located in Baton Rouge, at Johnson-Brown Post 1736 in Alexandria



CHAPEAU ROUGE PUP TENT NO. 1
FERTILE HUNTING GROUNDS OF LOUISIANA
A COOTIE IS A CLOSER THAT A BROTHE
BUSIER THAN A BEE
SUPREME PUP TENT, MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CHARTER

Whereas an itching supplication has been received from Chapeau Rouge Pup Tent No. 1, Alexandria, Louisiana

COOTIE NUMBER:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Henry Rudisill | 10. Lloyd L. Roberts |
| 2. Ben F. Clark | 11. Joseph E. Nicotre |
| 3. William R. Hopson | 12. Roland A. Normand |
| 4. Charlie W. Wilson | 13. Murrell E. Price |
| 5. Henry T. Cunningham | 14. Roy L. Brennon |
| 6. William E. Brodnax | 15. Steve J. Thiberville |
| 7. Vence Vancheire | 16. Cecil E. Arrington |
| 8. Melvis S. Hindley | 17. Sam P. Bath |
| 9. Walter D. Ledig, Jr. | |

Known ye that acting under authority vested in us by the Constitution and By-Laws of the Supreme Pup Tent, Military Order of the Cootie, United States of America, we do hereby grant this Charter to be issued to the supplicants named above and their eligible associates and successors und the title of

CHAPEAU ROUGE PUP TENT NO. 1

FERTILE HUNTING GROUNDS OF LOUISIANA

And by virtue of this instrument the said Pup Tent is entitled to act and enjoy all the privileges permitted by the Constitution and by-laws of the Supreme Pup Tent.

In Witness Thereof we do hereby affix our names and the

Seal this Ninth day of May, year of the Fortieth Scratch, being the year of the Christian era Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-Nine

Since their Charter Year of 1959, the Cooties of Chapeau Rouge Pup Tent No. 1 have consistently lived up to their distinction as the honor degree of the VFW. Their untiring service to the veterans and to their families, in the VA Hospital, in the Post, and in nursing homes, has been established as the standard by which members who may deserve the honor of being invited to join the Cooties have been measured. The cooties have made significant contributions to the growth and strength of the Post. On March 6, 1980, the Cooties Wednesday afternoon bingo began.



CHAPEAU ROUGE AUXILIARY

"An Auxiliary Member is Closer Than a Sister
Busier than a BEE
Supreme Auxiliary to the
MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE
United States of America

CHARTER

Whereas an itching supplication has been received from Chapeau Rouge Auxiliary Pup Tent No. 1, Alexandria, Louisiana

Lexie Allen
Opal Arrington
Argelia Bath
Peggy Marie Bath
Barbara Ann Bath
Ruby Bohrer
Adis Brydels
Myrtle Covington
Josephine Daugherty

Eddye Hattaway
Eunice Hattaway
Merna Pendergast
Antionette Price
Virginia Roessler
Effie Sikes
Flora Wilson
Mary Yerby

Known ye that acting under authority vested in us by the Constitution and By-Laws of the Supreme Auxiliary Pup Tent, Military Order of the Cootie, USA, we do hereby grant this Charter to be issued to the supplicants named above and their eligible associates and successors und the title of CHAPEAU ROUGE AUXILIARY TO PUP TENT NO. 1,

Fertile Hunting Grounds of Louisiana

And by virtue of this instrument the said auxiliary is entitled to act and enjoy all the privileges permitted by the Constitution and by-laws of the Supreme MOC Auxiliary. The Supreme Auxiliary reserves the right to suspend and reclaim this Charter and annul the rights and privileges her conferred for any neglect or refusal to conform to the laws and usages of the Auxiliary to the Military Order of the Cootie, USA

In Witness Whereof we hereunto affix our names and the seal this Twenty-second Day of January, year of third convention, being held the year of the Chistian era Nineteen Hundred Sixty-Four.

Mildred Sandiford,
Supreme President

Beth S. Friedenreich
Supreme Secretary

“We Pick Our Company”

HELPING HANDS

It was June 1656 when the Post had 416 members that a playground “second to none in Alexandria” with swings and slides was being constructed on the grounds of the Post Home. The equipment had been partially paid for by “blackout” contributions at Post meetings.

The Post activities have often been directed towards children. A \$25.00 bond was presented to the winner of the 1952 City Marble Tournament. (Marbles?) That’s right. On June 6, 1959, the Department of Louisiana held its Annual Marble Tournament at Johnson-Brown Post.

From its earliest days, it was the custom of Johnson-Brown Post to provide a case of fresh fruit to the local orphanages at Christmas time, and to contribute a cash gift to the Alexandria Doll and Toy Fund. On Armistice Day, 1953 (which became Veteran’s Day in 1954), the members voted to supply Christmas baskets to needy veterans’ families, instead of to the orphanages, which seemed to be well taken care of at Christmas.

“The skirt of Hurricane Audrey lashed Alexandria with 60-mile winds and continuous rain this afternoon”, the news reports of Thursday June 27, 1957, said. AS rough as it was, it was just the skirt of Adrey that lashed Alexandria. The full force of the killer storm shattered the little Louisiana coastal town of Cameron. Every building that wasn’t smashed by the 100MPH winds was flooded by the rampaging tides from the gulf and calls for help went out across the state.

At 3:30 in the morning on Sundy after the storm, a crew of volunteer workers from Johnson-Brown Post 1736 left the parking lot and headed for the wounded town south of Lake Charles. On their arrival they were assigned the task of cleaning up the wreckage of the Cameron VFW Post, which had been totally destroyed.

These were the men who had won two World Wars, stopped the Chinese in Korea, and had built Johnson-Brown Post with their own hands, men who had the American “can-do” spirit. They started from the ground up, and before ethe day was over, they had rebuilt the Cameron VFW Post and had it under a new roof.

The job was done in a single day. Then they returned to Alexandria and went about their usual work of service to their community and its veterans there.

Their community service included many years sponsoring and coaching Dixie youth and Dixie Boys ball teams. Auxiliary members sponsored Girl Scout Troop #109, for retarded girls, in the year of 1959. In May 1961, the Post was sponsoring Sea Explorer Ship #7, active and successful Scout troops in Louisiana has been VFW Troop #33, at Johnson-Brown Post.

Although the VFW does not get involved in local politics, its members have shown a great sense of responsibility when it comes to public service. When the City of Alexandria adopted a new City Charter, on November 5, 1969, four out of the five members on the City Charter Commission which drew up the Charter were members of Johnson-Brown Post 1736.

On January 5, 1955, Johnson-Brown Post publicly recommended that Alexandria Base be renamed in honor of Lt. Col. John B. England.

LAISSEZ LES BON TEMPS ROULEZ

The opening of the new Post Home in April 1954 meant greater opportunities for the VFW members and their ladies to enjoy themselves in the privacy of their own home, their own Post Home. It also meant new opportunities to help sick and needy veterans.

When the first Tuesday night bingo was held on September 7, 1954, twenty-five percent of the proceeds were dedicated to the VA Hospital TV Fund. The Post was trying to take up the slack where there was a need. But that plan to supply TV sets to the VA Hospital didn't last long. On September 15, 1954, the bingo games were stopped at the "request" of the Rapides Parish Sheriff's Department. Apparently, the legal status of bingo for non-profit organizations such as the VFW had not been clarified. Eventually, working with other civic groups and several churches, the bingo was started again, but not until April 17, 1956. In the meantime, the Post and its many programs of service to veterans and to the community were severely limited. The proceeds from bingo have been the Post's major source of income, making possible the countless parties, gifts, and

prizes, and treats that have been given to VA hospital patients, the Voice of Democracy Scholarships that have been awarded to area high school students every year since 1948, the kids' ball teams, the Scouts, the aid to needy families, and the endless stream of VFW community service projects. They have all been finance by Post bingo.

Bingo may have been stopped for a while when the Post's new Home opened, but that didn't stop the members from having good times. The first Saturday night dance was held on September 11, 1954, for lack of interest, some VFW Cajuns found the way to get them going again. On February 19, 1955, a gumbo supper was served before the Saturday night dance, for just fifty cents a bowl. The mix of good gumbo, country music, and Louisiana VFW members was apparently the right combination, because the Saturday night dances have been regular features at the Post since. Unfortunately, since the last of the French-speaking older members passed from the scene, in 1982, good gumbo and sauce piquant have been getting harder to find.

But there was plenty of gumbo at the New Year's Eve Dance held on December 31, 1955, with dancing to the juke box. It was reported at the next meeting that the Post had cleared \$10.00 on the gumbo, \$8.00 on the party favors, and \$180.00 at the bar. Square dance classes were being held at the post on Friday nights in November of 1955, and it was "Honor your partner, honor your corner" at the VFW square dances on Saturday nights in 1956. But the big event of the year was held at the Post Home, on February 11, 1956. It was Mardi Gras, and the annual Mardi Gras Ball left many with memories of music, magic, and romance.

While plans were underway in the early sixties to expand the Post, plans were being turned into action to help veterans. With 750 members on March 3, 1960, the Post was sponsoring regular monthly parties at the VA Hospital. Special Suppers, musical shows, parties, and games entertained the patients frequently. Bingo games for the patients were a means by which the Post could spread a little money around, sharing some of the financial success the Post was enjoying from bingos and from the lounge.

Photo

VFW Police Auxiliary, about 1959. Seated, left to right: Joe Lipohwicz, Roy Brennon, Marshall T. Cappel, Melvin S. Hinkley, Andrew Gambrodello, George Bowden, Huey Pharis. Standing, left to right: Bill Robinson, Vince "Shorty" Vancherie, unidentified, Red Hopson, Sidney Rudd, Lawrence Himmel Sr., Al Guillot, Fred Bissel, Sam Bath, Wesley Arrington, Back row: The second man is JP Farriere; the last on is Cecil Arrington. Errors and omissions will be corrected in future printings if the information is provided (Photo courtesy of Red Hopson).

Photo

Chapeau Rough Pup Tent #1 and Auxiliary, about 1964. Left to Right: Henry Rudisill, John Gardner, Joe Cohen, Joe Caraway, Sam Covington, Lloyd Hattaway, Red Hopson, Joyce Sides, JP Ferrier, "Old Man Charlie" Wilson, Jules Brydels, Ben F. Clark, Baylor Hattaway, George Kloor, George Roessler, Same Bath. Ladies: Martha Hopson, Martha Gardner, Josephine Dougherty, Virginia Roessler, Mary Yerby, Dolly Bath, Lexie Allen, Flora Wilson, Myrtle Covington, Adis Brydels, Lois Abbington. (Photo courtesy Virginia Roessler)

PERPETUAL CHARTER

The year was 1961. Post dues were raised to \$4.00, and the US was providing South Vietnam with helicopter gunships and crews to fight communists. US forces in South Vietnam totaled 3,200. Johnson-Brown Post reached a new milestone in its history, with 33 life members.

The National VFW Headquarters determined enough members had made a permanent, lifetime commitment to the Post to ensure its perpetual vitality.

On April 21, 1961, the Post was granted a Perpetual Charter.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

FOUNDED 1899

PERPETUAL POST CHARTER

NO. 115

To Whom It May Concern,

Be it know that, pursuant to the directives of the Commander-In-Chief, in furtherance of the fraternal, patriotic, educational, historical, and welfare programs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this Perpetual Charter is issued to the Johnson-Brown Post 1736 as evidence that the Post has the required number of life members to merit this distinction.

In Witness Thereof we have hereunto set our hands and the seal of the Corporation this 21st day of April 1961.

IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF

JOHN WILSON BACHERT

WHO DIED IN SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY

AT SEA, ASIAIC AREA,

ATTACHED U. S. S. LANGLEY

**HE STANDS IN THE UNBROKEN LINE OF PATRIOTS WHO HAVE DARED TO DIE
THAT FREEDOM LIVES, AND THROUGH IT, HE LIVES IN A WAY THAT HUMBLER
THE UNDERTAKINGS OF MOST MEN.**



ABOUT THAT TANK

The US Army tank that stands on the VFW property is a monument to the veterans of all wars. The M4A3 tank, from the 773rd Tank Battalion, was armed with a 76mm cannon and had a water-cooled 500 horsepower Ford V8 engine that used four gallons of gas to the mile. It had a top speed of 32 miles per hour.

Perhaps it was that slow speed that caused it to take two full days, in 1957, for the tank to be driven from Fort Polk to the VFW Home in Alexandria. Accompanied by an escort of two jeeps with volunteer drivers, the tank was manned by VFW members who once drove tanks for a living. The tank did have one breakdown on the way to its present home, when it ran a sprocket off its drive line, near Gardner. Repairs were made on the site and the trip continued.

Many stories have been told, and can still be heard, about the tank weaving back and forth across the road, being chased by State Police, going into ditches, and rotating the turret to aim the cannon at passing cars. The stories have all been emphatically denied by the VFW crew.

“Who, us? But four gallons to the mile, that was about right”. It has not been determined how much fuel the tank used on the trip.

The tank crew consisted of Comrades Henry C. Rudisill, driver, WE Brodnax in the lead jeep, and Leon Theil in the rear jeep. The rescue party, dispatched when the tank broke down near Gardner, was led by Shortie Vancherie. Capt. George Roessler led the La. National Guard escort, from the 773rd Tank Battalion.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Whatever the weather, whatever the task, a small number of old-faithful regulars showed up every Saturday morning to work on the Post home. Since the original twenty-six members in 1929, a small handful of ex-GIs, over the many years, have built and maintained the Post, making it a resource now worth easily more than one million dollars, owned by all the members.

Among this small group of workers, one member showed such dedication and effort that he was singled out for special honor.

Comrade HT "Steve" Cunningham rode the Rapides Avenue bus every Saturday morning without fail, for many years, carrying his toolbox to work on the construction at the Post Home. Week after week, year after year, until his health failed, Comrade Cunningham quietly and faithfully set an example of dedication and hard work, but building a home for his VFW and for veterans he would never live to meet. But newer members who were not around in his day still hear the story told: "I can see him now, getting off that bus every Saturday, with his tool box".

The Post home was not Comrade Cunningham's only service to veterans. Because he was a full-time volunteer at the VA Hospital, an advocate for veterans' rights and benefits, and a helper to countless veterans with problems, he was honored by the Louisiana Veterans' Service Officers Association for his outstanding service to veterans. The Alexandria Daily Town Talk reported on the ceremony honoring him, on May 1, 1964. "Since his retirement after 45 years with the Missouri-Pacific Railroad, Cunningham has devoted all of his spare time to helping veterans".

He was named "The Outstanding Member of Johnson-Brown Post 1736" in June 1964, and he received a similar award from the Veterans of WWI.

In 1971 the Post membership decided that their Boy Scout and Cub Scout Troops needed a home of their own.

"We haven't got the money to build anything like that now".

That was the end of that discussion and ground was broken for the Scout Hall on August 11, 1971.

Once again, Saturdays and Sundays turned into workdays. Vietnam Veterans joined with their comrades from the other wars in erecting the building themselves, stone by stone, tile by tile. They were following the example set by Comrade Steve Cunningham and countless others like him. In working together, they found that they were forming a bond of comradeship and unity that has characterized the VFW from its beginning. Today the home of Johnson-Brown Troop 33, Atakapas Council, Boy Scouts of America, and Cub Scout Pack 19, proudly bears the name: CUNNINGHAM HALL.

The engraved plaque hanging in the hall states:

“Whereas Comrade Steve Cunningham, having provided an outstanding example of leadership and service to veterans of the armed forces of the United States of America, and

Whereas he unselfishly gave of his time, efforts, and means in support of youth activities, and

Whereas his life has been an example of selfless dedication and remains an inspiration to all veterans and the entire community.

Therefore, be it resolved that the officers and members of Johnson-Brown Post 1736 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States do hereby honor his memory and salute his example, and by unanimous acclamation, do place his name upon this building, a home for the activities of the Boy Scouts of America, which shall henceforth be known as CUNNINGHAM HALL.

Given this Fifteenth Day of May 1972, at Alexandria, Louisiana”.

Photo of Cunningham Hall

EAGLE SCOUT Mark Bohrer, Star Scout Cody Saucier, and Life Scout James Saucier, of Johnson-Brown Troop 44, form an honor guard outside of Cunningham Hall.

Photo of HT “Steve” Cunningham

GROWING UP

Johnson-Brown was the largest Post in the State on June 17, 1966, when the 36th Annual Convention of the Department of Louisiana met in Alexandria. About 300 members marched in the City-wide parade. In the decade of the seventies, Johnson-Brown grew again to be the largest in the State, with a peak enrollment of 1,986 members. Post members held the highest offices in the Department of Louisiana and were regularly named to the high National offices, as the Post grew in both Department and National recognition. Johnson-Brown Post has provided the Department of Louisiana, Veterans of foreign Wars, with five Department Commanders:

Department Commanders:

Sam Haas	1924-25
Joe Nicotre	1961-62
Leonard Gray	1972-73
Bill Procter	1974-75
Larry Rivers	1980-81

The year was 1970 and the first Vietnam Veteran was elected to the Chair of Post Commander. The longest war in American history was slowly drawing to its agonizing close. Tet, Huey's, special forces, My Lai, all left their scars on the 3,385,000 American GI's who earned their eligibility for the VFW membership with the Southeast Asia Campaign Ribbon. They had served their Country as courageously and honorable as any VFW members had. More than 57,000 of them died; 303,704 were wounded.

When it was over, they came home to the world and often a chilly reception. It was a time of change and adjustment of the entire nation. In the VFW the older members adjusted to comrades who had more hair that they did and the number of Vietnam Vets on the membership rolls rose.

"That's one thing I'll say about the VFW" one Vietnam Vet said, "they don't treat you like a stranger".

The Vietnam Veterans did not act like strangers, soon taking active parts in every phase of Post activities. They worked bingo, visited hospitals, served on committees, were elected to office, sold Buddy Poppies. The future of the Post was guarded as well, in the hands of the men who fought in Vietnam.

Post programs and membership continued to grow through the seventies. Reaching out into the community, the Post adopted a project to help the Mizpah Boys' Home, in Elmer, Louisiana. Besides raffles, barbecues, and dances, the Post sponsored Alexandria's first City Championship Judo and Karate Tournament, on October 24, 1970, in the Rapides Parish Coliseum Exhibition building. The event, sanctioned by the AAU and the US Judo Association, drew top competitors from five states. More than \$6,000.00 was contributed to the Mizpah Boys' Home as a result of the tournament and all the other events. The Boy's Home in Elmer also displays the American Flag on a flagpole erected for them by the VFW.

Other Post programs have included the annual Veteran's Day Parade, Buddy Poppy sales on Memorial Day Weekend, memorial services at the National Cemetery, plus parties, games, and special programs for the patients at the VA Medical Center. Dances and

Parties have been held for nursing home and Central Louisiana State Hospital residents, and the Post has sponsored countless teams in Dixie youth, Dixie Boys, Pony Leagues, Little Leagues, and others. The Voice of Democracy Scholarship Program sponsored by Johnson-Brown since 1948 is a standard part of the school year in the high schools of Rapides Parish. Thousands of dollars in scholarships have been presented the Voice of Democracy winners by the Post.

MISTER VFW

The events of May 22, 1971, were among the most significant in the history of the post. After many years of hard work and dedication by many comrades, the final payment was made on the last debt; the mortgage was burned. Johnson-Brown Post Home now belonged entirely to the veterans who were its members, who had built it, maintained it, and formed it into a valuable resource for many members yet to come, a resource that exists today for only one purpose, to provide services to veteran and their families.

The burning of the mortgage was a fitting occasion, the membership decided, to bestow on one of its members the greatest honor within its power. The program and the plaque for that special day bore the following inscription:

"In SINCERE GRATITUDE for many years of leadership, service, fellowship, and financial support, Johnson-Brown Post 1736, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Alexandria, Louisiana, DEDICATE THIS DAY, MAY 22, 1972, TO

MISTER STEVE J. THIBERVILLE

AND PROCLAIM HIM

MISTER VFW

The Post Home that Mr. Steve had helped start, financed, and build forty-three years earlier, was finished and paid for. Although a great many comrades had worked and sacrificed to make it possible, the membership decided that Mister Steve, above all others, deserved the title: "Mister VFW"

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

The year was 1979 and the Post was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. Among the events to commemorate the occasion was an effort to locate the graves of William H. Johnson and of John F. Brown, after who the Post had been named.

John F. Brown is buried in the National Cemetery, Pineville Louisiana in Section A, Plot 1422.

William H. Johnson is buried in the Oak Grove, or Pratt Cemetery, in Clearwater, Louisiana. To reach his grave, take Louisiana Highway 167 South from Alexandria towards Turkey Creek. Cross the Rapides-Evangeline Parish Line at Cocodrie. The Cemetery is on the left, opposite a rest area on the right, 1.6 miles past the Parish Line.

Both graves are now marked, well-cared for, and are frequently visited by members of the Post. On Veterans' Day and Memorial Day flags and floral tributes are placed on both of their graves by Post members. No campaign is organized in the Post to have members place these tributes. None is necessary. They are honoring their fallen comrades.

OTHER POSTS

There were other VFW posts in Alexandria for a short while after World War II, spin-offs of Johnson-Brown. Records of these posts were not located, and memories were found to be hazy. Some confusion about meeting places has been detected, so this information

about other VFW Posts is included to clarify the record of memory.

Apparently, the Heart City Memorial Post 846 met upstairs at the old Turf Bar, 3rd and Johnson Streets, across from Schwartzburg's, on the second Tuesday of each month.

Sterling-Simmons Post 3652 met in the Plumber's Hall, on Rapides Avenue.

The Paul-Howard Memorial Post was found in Fishville.

These Posts were fading from the scene in the late 40's and early 50's. After the Sterling-Simmons Post ceased to exist on January 15, 1965, Johnson-Brown Post 1736 was the only VFW Post in Alexandria, until 1973.

It was on May 30, 1973, that black members of Johnson-Brown Post established the Leonard W. Eli Post 8852, on lower Third Street. This Post was named for a US Marine from Englewood Plantation who was killed in Vietnam on his second day in that country. Officers and members of Johnson-Brown Post 1736 were instrumental in starting Post 8852.

THE NEW ERA

The year was 1982. It was obvious the Post had once again outgrown its quarters. Weekly dances, bingo, and other activities were straining its capacity. People were being turned away at the door on busy nights.

After much discussion, the members decided to finance construction of an addition to the Post Home, rather than build a new home. This project doubles the floor space of all the areas that had been built since 1954, adding an additional 7,120 square feet, at a cost of \$315,007.39. Included were a sprinkler system for the entire building, tables, chairs, and other equipment, and a paving of the parking lot. The note was financed through Security Bank and Trust Co.

The willingness of the officers and members of the Johnson-Brown Post 1736 to take on such debt for the expansion and improvement of the facilities indicates their trust and confidence in their comrades and in the future of the VFW, just as the original Charter Members had done in 1929, and the nine who voted to buy the

land in 1954. The opening of the expanded building on May 28, 1983, with the formal dedication on August 27, 1983, was the opening of a new era in the history of the Post.

If this era is as full of the spirit of comradeship, patriotism, and dedication to the ideals of the VFW as have been the days of our past, then our future is assured.

Oh God of Hosts

Be with us yet

Lest we forget

Lest we forget



POSTSCRIPT

Whose names should be included in the written history of the Johnson-Brown Post 1736? To list every member who made an outstanding contribution since the founding, in 1929, would clearly be impossible. To list even the best-known of them would be to risk omitting many others whose services were just as worthy, a risk we choose not to take. Therefore, we have included in this history only the names of the members mentioned in the minutes of the first meeting, the Original Charter Members, the Perpetual Charter Members, the Post Commanders, the Ladies' Auxiliary Charter Members, and the Charter Members of the Military Order of the Cootie and the Cooties' Auxiliary, plus the five Department Commanders who were members of the Post. In addition, the names of three comrades who were singularly honored by the Post with historic commemorations have been included because the story could not have been told without them. Perhaps the story would not even have happened without them, the Member who financed the Post, a member who helped build it, and a young man who died for their right to do so. Willima Henry Johnson and John F. Brown, who were 17- and 18-year-old when they gave their lives in the service of our Country, represent all the fallen Americans who stand in that unbroken line of Patriots. To them this work, and this Post is dedicated.

The Comrades named in the pictures of the Police Auxiliary and the Cooties represent the many others who were the workers and the backbone of the Post. And, of course, we could not fail to include as many names of the crew that drove the tank as we could discover. They probably never dreamed that they would be going down in history the day they drove it to the Post.

However, it was the thousands of ordinary, dues-paying, hospital-visiting, bingo-working members who built Johnson-Brown Post and made it grow. They are the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. They are making history today, the history that will be written in future days of Johnson-Brown Post 1736. Each member today has the responsibility of making history of tomorrow as proud as the past. It's up to them to write the rest of the story.

ROLL CALL OF COMMANDERS

With gratitude and respected, we salute these comrades who have served their Nation and their Post with honor:

- Original Charter Member

1929	Ralph P. Evans*	1946	George J. Guillory*
1930	Ralph P. Evans*	1947	Hugh R. Vaughn
1931	Samuel Haas*	1948	C.P. Devaney
1932	Samuel Haas*	1948	C.E. Ewing
1933	Charles F. Delaney	1949	C.E. Ewing
1934	K. Hundley	1950	George Bowden
1935	John Hudgens*	1951	Carl Voda
1936	H.H. Duggan	1952	W.D. Cailleteau
1937	Louis F. Fish	1953	Steve J. Thiberville
1938	F.J. Rosenthal	1954	Steve J. Thiberville
1939	C.F. Lord	1955	Roy L. Brennon
1940	Samuel Haas*	1955	H.T. Cunningham
1941	Charles W. Wilson*	1955	Joseph E. Nicotre
1942	Phanor J. Couvillon	1955	Joseph E. Nicotre
1943	George J. Guillory*	1957	Phil Dafford
1944	J.A. Meyers	1958	Steve J. Thiberville
1945	Earl J. Burnam	1959	Cecil Arrington

1960	Huey Pharis	1981	Bill Samuels
1961	Walter Ledig	1982	O.R. Weatherford
1962	Sam Bath	1983	Bill Samuels
1963	Jules Brydels	1984	
1964	Leonard Gray	1985	
1965	Leonard Gray	1986	
1966	Bill MacArthur	1987	
1967	Bill MacArthur	1988	
1967	Pat Lynch	1989	
1968	Dick Baker	1990	
1969	Dick Baker	1991	
1970	Bill Procter	1992	
1971	George Teague	1993	
1972	Billy Parker	1994	
1973	George Teague	1995	
1974	Ed Schmidt	1996	
1975	Tom Hudson	1997	
1976	Joe Nicotre	1998	
1977	Billy Hirsch	1999	
1978	Tom Hudson	2000	
1979	Wen Myer	2001	
1980	Bill Samuels	2002	