

Military Order of Foreign Wars of the United States

Rhode Island Commandery

*Instituted 28 February, 1900
Deus et Libertas*



NEWSLETTER

Winter 2021-22

*Marking 121 years
of service*

www.rimofw.org



Christmas Wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery

IN THIS ISSUE

Commander's Message	2
RI Commandery History	3
RIMOFW in the Community	4
Luce Family Legacy	6
MOFW National News	7
MOFW and RI National Guard	8

Last week about 40,000 volunteers came to Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia to participate in the somber and beautiful holiday tradition of laying wreaths at the graves of service members.

They placed more than 150,000 wreaths at our largest military cemetery in an effort to recognize those who served and many who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Volunteers are asked to say every service member's name out loud when placing a wreath. This tradition at Arlington has been going on for three decades.

Wreaths Across America, founded in 2007, will bring volunteers to 3,100 cemeteries in a nationwide effort to honor fallen veterans and soldiers during the holidays.

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE



On behalf of your Executive Committee, I wish you and your families the happiest of holidays, a Merry Christmas and all the best in the New Year.

As we move into 2022, membership is still my personal hot button. If we do not actively recruit new blood, RI MOFW will die.

I understand from the registrar that we now have 146 members. If those members perceive us to be inactive, and if we do not provide them a reason to renew their memberships, we will lose them as well.

Make no mistake: we are not alone in this challenge. Even the most established veterans and hereditary groups are suffering a decline, and that is primarily due to cosmic changes in how younger generations choose to spend their time, allocate their resources and focus their volunteer efforts.

Going forward, the groups that survive will be those that acknowledge these changes and adapt to them. Only the most nimble and creative will grow and prosper.

On the National level, many of us are pushing MOFW USA leadership to realize that the goals and principles that were sacrosanct in 1900 may need to adapt to the 21st century. We must consider reasonable amendments and updates to our goals and membership requirements in order to account for our population's shift in priorities.

To that end, I will do what I can to bring the RI Commandery into the 21st century, kicking and screaming if necessary. Membership recruitment and retention is Priority One, and I will make whatever changes are necessary in the way we operate to support that goal.

When we launched our new website I promised a membership survey, asking what is important to you, and what kind of activities you would like to see us take on. That survey is ready in draft form, and we expect to finalize it early in January.

With fingers crossed that the pandemic will allow us to do so, we also hope to resume regular member events in 2022.

HELP WANTED! RIMOFW SEEKS TALENT TO HELP WITH OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMS

Over the past few years, the lion's share of Commandery work has been performed by the officer members of your Executive Committee. Our previously robust committee structure has become relatively dormant—partly due to COVID. and partly due to attrition.

Our committees with openings include our our Membership Committee and our newly established Public Affairs Committee. The latter includes responsibility for our website (where we already have a Webmaster); social media, newsletter, email responses, communication with members, and audio-visual.

Here are some specific tasks with which we need help:

1. We need a tech-savvy individual who can increase our social media presence and profile.

We have made tremendous strides with our new website, but that's just the first step. In order to be relevant to younger people, we need to meet them where they live, work and play. That means some combination of Facebook, Messenger, Twitter, TikTok, etc.

2. Do you enjoy planning events? If so, RI MOFW could use your help, as we intend to become very visible within the community, and to also offer regular activities for our membership.

3. We also seek someone who is active and well connected within the network of hereditary organizations, such as the Society of Cincinnati, Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution, General Society of Mayflower Descendants, etc.

4. Finally, we welcome the assistance of a graphic designer who could assist with with the production of this newsletter and other MOFW publications.

Our open EXCOM positions include Deputies to our Secretary, Registrar, Treasurer, Quartermaster and JAG functions.

We plan to fill at least two of these open positions as soon as possible. Job responsibilities will be tailored to fill the needs described above.

If you are interested in any of these positions/opportunities, please email me personally at FrankL69@aol.com, or call 401-831-8696.

The RI Commandery: From Its Founding to World War II

by Dennis Morgan

SERVICE OR NAME OF OFFICERS REPRESENTED	WAR	REMARKS
Rhode Island Commandery	Instituted	February 28, 1900
	Organized	March 15, 1900 (original)
Officers		Deceased

Commander
Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce, Retiree.

First page of the RIMOFW register from 1900.

The Rhode Island Commandery was instituted on 28 February 1900 and was organized on 15 March in Providence. The first Commander was RADM Steven Luce, USN, a veteran of the Civil War and founder of the U.S. Naval War College. (He used his service as a Passed Midshipman in the Mexican War to qualify for membership, since the Civil War was not a conflict involving a foreign adversary.)

The first Commandery Officers, in addition to RADM Luce, were: Senior Vice Commander CAPT Stephen Waterman; Junior Vice Commander Henry L. Greene; Secretary Charles F. Peckham; Treasurer Walter S. Ballou; Judge Advocate BG James M. Varnum; and Registrar LT George Eiswall.

Ten of the 17 founding members were veterans of the 1st RI Volunteer Infantry from the Spanish-American War. Two others claimed naval service, and the other five were Revolutionary War hereditary members. It wasn't until after World War I that the membership began to greatly increase. Between 1919 and 1939 roughly 225 veterans of the Great War became Companions. One of the notable members from that period was textile magnate Charles F. Tillinghast, who was a direct descendant of Stephen Hopkins, colonial governor of RI and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He commanded a company in the 1st RI Volunteer Infantry during the Spanish-American War. Tillinghast became a colonel in the RI Militia (later the National Guard) and was made an honorary BG on his

retirement in 1917 from the Militia. He accepted a Coast Artillery commission in the US Army and retired as a colonel in 1939.

Many members were from prominent Rhode Island families, such as MAJ William Gammell, Jr.; CDR Frederick Thurber; COL Everette St. John Chaffee; LTC John Champlin; COL G. Edward Buxton, Jr., LTC Charles W. Lippitt, Jr., and CPT William F. Whitehouse.

CDR Thurber was prominent in the Tilden-Thurber Company; COL Chaffee became the first Superintendent of the State Police; and COL Buxton is remembered as a founder of the Infantry Lodge.

The original Membership Register is in existence and used to this very day to record the names and service of new Companions. Since 1900, more than 2,080 individuals have joined the Commandery, with the newest members joining in September.

Some meeting minutes, membership records, newsletters and officer lists from the 1980s forward have been located in the State Arsenal on Benefit Street; they continue to be stored there. Sadly, however, other than the Membership Register book, we can find none of the early records of the Commandery from 1900 to the mid-1970s. The only historical perspective we have today is the occasional old article from the Providence Journal describing an annual meeting, a particularly newsworthy speaker or participation in parades and other patriotic events.

The next installment will highlight those who joined the Commandery after WW II.

RIMOFW IN THE COMMUNITY

Dedication of Woonsocket World War II Memorial and Eternal Flame



(L) Kasim Yarn, state Director of Veterans Affairs, briefs Governor McKee; (R) Rob Patton, great-grandson of famed WWII General George S. Patton, Jr., stands with RIMOFW Commander Frank Lennon in front of a rubber decoy tank.



Ron Barnes, Colonel of the Pawtuxet Rangers and MOFW Junior Vice Commander, accepts a flag from Brig Gen D'Agostino on behalf of his father, Raymond W. Barnes, one of the WWII veterans recognized posthumously. The senior Barnes was a B-17 bomber crewman shot down over Germany who survived the war in a prison camp.



Bob Godfrey holds flowers for the stone dedicated to his father, WWII fighter ace John Godfrey. LTG Reginald Centracchio, former Adjutant General and former RIMOFW Commander, assists. LTC Dennis Morgan is on the right.

The event included the dedication of a memorial stone in honor of Woonsocket fighter ace Major John Godfrey, and the induction of bomber crewman Joseph Parylak into the RI Heritage Hall of Fame.

A highlight was recognition of the role Woonsocket played in the creation of the "Ghost Army" of General George S. Patton, Jr. This ruse, involving inflatable rubber tanks and thousands of other pieces of decoy equipment, helped deceive the Germans as to the actual location of the D-Day landings in 1944.

Many of the rubber tanks were manufactured at the US Rubber plant in Woonsocket, and one of those tank decoys was on display. Rob Patton, great grandson of the general, was on hand to assist in the dedication of a stone honoring General Patton and the Ghost Army.

RIMOFW members with active roles included Jim D'Agostino, Dennis Morgan, Kasim Yarn, Rev. Philip Salois, Ron Barnes, Bert Guarnieri, Joe Guarnieri, and Frank Lennon.

Hundreds attended this October 17 event, which was funded by the Heritage Harbor Foundation and sponsored by American Legion Fairmount Post 85.

Senator Jack Reed, Governor Dan McKee, WWII documentary producer Tim Gray and other dignitaries participated in a ceremony which honored area WWII veterans and the local civilian workers who supported the soldiers overseas.

RI Purple Heart Trail Dedication in Westerly



Father Phil Salois, Bert Guarnieri, Frank Lennon, Jim D'Agostino helped man the MOFW information table.

RIMOFW was well represented on National Purple Heart Day (Saturday, August 7), which was celebrated locally by the dedication of the RI Purple Heart Trail.

Activities kicked off with a morning motorcycle ride from Warwick to Westerly, blessed by MOFW Chaplain and Purple Heart recipient Father Phil Salois. MOFW members Dave Russell and Bert Guarnieri participated in the ride.

Governor McKee then presided over a formal dedication ceremony at the Elks Lodge in Westerly. He was ably assisted by State Veterans Affairs Director Kasim Yarn, who is also the immediate past commander of RI MOFW.

Commander Frank Lennon, Brig Gen Jim D'Agostino and MOFW volunteer Bill Sheridan joined the group in Westerly and helped man the table shown in the photo.

Organizers, led by Joe "Tiger" Patrick, Senior Vice Commander of the RI VFW, recognized all Purple Heart recipients with a specially numbered challenge coin.

Victory Day in Newport



Companions Bert Guarnieri and John Duchesnau

On Monday, August 9th, military historian and hereditary researcher John Duchesnau served as the Master of Ceremonies at Newport's 76th Annual Victory Day Commemoration. The ceremony commemorating the end of World War II took place at Newport City Hall.

Duchesnau is also RI MOFW Senior Vice Commander. Other MOFW members participating were State Veterans Affairs Director Kasim Yarn, who is also the immediate past commander. Jim D'Agostino, Bert Guarnieri and Father Salois attended as well.

Joint Leadership Dinner: MOFW, ROA and AUSA



(L-R) Jim D'Agostino, Bert Guarnieri, Rich Suttie; all from RI MOFW; Bob Galvanin, head of AUSA; John Ricottilli, ROA RI president.

Resuming a long time tradition, the MOFW Executive Committee joined its counterparts from ROA and AUSA for an annual Christmas/holiday dinner. Close to 20 attendees enjoyed dinner, drinks and war stories at the Italo-American Club in Providence on December 8th.

Leaders of the three groups agreed that collaboration would be important to future survival.

Help Us Find the Old RI MOFW Records!



RIMOFW Memorial at RI Veterans Cemetery, Exeter.

Our valuable and historically significant Membership Register has been carefully preserved and maintained for more than 120 years. Thanks to Companion Dennis Morgan, the book was rebound and restored about ten years ago.

Some of us were under the mistaken impression that the remainder of the organization's records were safely stored at the State Arsenal on Benefit Street, the home of the Providence Marine Corps of Artillery.

I arranged with BG Richard Valente to visit the armory, where I was disappointed to find that the MOFW archives consisted of a single four-drawer file cabinet. While the files contained original membership applications, member card files, bank statements, financial reports, old newsletters, and correspondence, none of them were older than the late 1970s.

That begs the question: where are the organization's records from 1900 to 1975?

Neither the State Archives nor the RI Historical Society is holding any MOFW records. The records custodian at the RI National Guard Archives at the old Armory of Mounted Commands on North Main Street also reports there is no MOFW material there.

Does anyone have any other ideas?

-Frank Lennon

A Family Legacy: Rear Admiral Stephen Bleecker Luce

by Anne DuBose Joslin



On the left, a painting by Alexander James depicts what Luce might have looked like as a Midshipman in the Mexican War. On the right is his formal photo portrait from 1888.

Anne Dubose Joslin, great, great grandniece of RADM Stephen B. Luce, and Rear Adm. Jeffrey A. Harley, president, U.S. Naval War College, stand by while taps is played to honor Luce during a commemoration ceremony to mark the 100th anniversary of Luce's death. The graves of Luce and other family members are at St. Mary's Episcopal Church Cemetery in Portsmouth,

My family's home was a big, barn-red early 18th century house sitting on Cliff Avenue in Newport R.I. overlooking Easton's Beach and the Atlantic Ocean. The house, first belonging to John Easton, an early Colonial Governor of R.I., was bequeathed to my Father by Stephen Bleecker Luce, the grandson of Rear Admiral S.B. Luce.

Admiral Luce was the founder of the Newport Naval War College in 1884, and also the founder of the R.I. Commandery of the Military Order of Foreign Wars in 1900, the same military society in which I am honored, today, to be a Hereditary Member.

Stephen's Grandfather, Admiral Luce, married my Great-Great Grandaunt Eliza Henley in 1854 with whom he had three children; Stephen, his only grandson, had no children of his own and thus when he died, bequeathed "John Easton Farm" to my Father, Captain Royal Knight Joslin (USNA 1940 and NWC 1961).

Having a home in Newport was always important to me while living the life of a Navy junior and moving to a different place every few years. I remember well the handsome in-uniform portrait of my Great-Great-Granduncle Stephen hanging on the wall in the long front hallway of our clapboard Newport home.

I grew up listening to stories about Admiral Luce's amazing career, which involved spending thirty-three years at sea, sailing on every ocean on the globe: the longest time at-sea of any Naval officer to date. He was the officer my Father admired the most, and therefore, vicariously, I grew up with a feeling of great respect for him.

After retiring in 1889, Stephen B. and Eliza made their home on Frances Street in Newport, around the corner from where I live today. He continued, for a decade, to give inspiring speeches and write provocative articles on Naval History and Strategy at the War College; at present, the college stands as a thriving international institution of naval study.

Luce died in Newport in 1917. As a devout Episcopalian, he had his funeral in Trinity Church, after which a military procession marched five miles north to Saint Mary's Cemetery. It was here where, in 2017, I joined RADM Jeffrey Harley, President of the Naval War College, to honor Luce in a ceremony to mark the 100th anniversary of the Admiral's death; as a living relative, it was a very special occasion for me.

Stephen Bleecker Luce was a man who loved the sea, loved ships, loved his family, and believed the American Naval Officer should and could be the best in the world. How lucky I am to have had his legacy be part of my life.

Anne DuBose Joslin is a Newport resident, instructor in Presidential Politics at Salve Regina's Circle of Scholars, a former White House appointee and author of the political non-fiction book, *Ambushed*. She has degrees in English, Research and Statistics, and Criminal Law.

MOFWUS NATIONAL NEWS



LCDR Christopher St. Victor-de Pinho of Connecticut, MOFWUS Commander General

New National Commander General Chris St. Victor hails from Connecticut, and he is actively considering changes to MOFW's organization and structure to help us thrive in the 21st century.

The national officers recognize that the traditional model of a veteran or hereditary organization may not be successful going forward, as the priorities of younger generations change. As the 21st century progresses, social media, digital communication with members (including the website and newsletter), as well as website email responses are all functions that require a common and consistent message. Events and activities also need to address the needs of active, working spouses and families.

As a result, a number of proposals are on the table for review at the convention, to include:

A. Members-at-large. Today, qualified Companions who live in a state where there is no commandery are assigned to the National Registrar's state. There are obvious flaws in this arrangement, which would be corrected by creating a true At Large national membership category.

B. State Honorary Companions. Now, Honorary Companions need to be elected by the National Council. This change would allow each State Commandery to establish its own rules for Honorary Companions and elect them locally, subject to meeting certain National standards.

C. Associate Companions. This new membership category would be open to any person who is not otherwise qualified to be a Veteran or Hereditary Companion of the MOFW. They would pay the normal dues, but would not be able to vote or serve as a National Officer. Enlisted personnel, CIA Officers, military authors and researchers, etc. are examples of people who could be Associate Companions.

D. Reorganization of the MOFW Communications function. The proposal creates a



Chief of Staff-Communications, who will manage this department. Four national HQ positions would report to this CoS Communications: one each to manage the newsletter, website, and social media. The fourth function would be that of historian.

MOFW National Convention Scheduled for June, 2022 at West Point



The National Convention originally scheduled to take place in New York this past year was postponed by COVID. It will now be held at the famous Thayer Hotel at West Point from June 16-19, 2022. Details will follow, but National has asked for a preliminary headcount of potential attendees.

If you think you might be interested in attending please email Commander Lennon at FrankL69@aol.com.

This is not a commitment—the organizers are just trying to determine participation for planning purposes.

RIMOFW AND THE NATIONAL GUARD

Starting after World War I, this RI Commandery began relying greatly on the support of the RI National Guard for its development and growth. Many Guard officers were members, and several State Adjutants General served as officers in the Commandery. Some even headed the RI MOFW Commandery while they were serving as AG.

RI MOFW member Norman S. Case served on the Mexican Border in 1916, and during WWI he commanded Company A of the 103d Machine Gun Battalion assigned to the 26th Division. By 1926 he was a National Guard Lieutenant Colonel with political aspirations.

Case was elected MOFW Junior Vice Commander in 1926, a few months before he ran for Lieutenant Governor. He won, and as Lieutenant Governor was re-elected as a MOFW officer and council member on January 25, 1927. The Providence Journal reported, "Brief greetings from Governor Aram Pothier were voiced by Lieutenant Colonel Norman S. Case, a member of the chapter."

Nine days later, Governor Pothier died suddenly, making Case the State's Chief Executive. Case chose several of his staff from MOFW ranks, including key advisor



Governor Norman S. Case (LTC, RIANG)

OCS Class 46; MOFW Superior Academics Award



(L) OC Kilpatrick's official photo. Above, OC Kilpatrick stands to receive his award from BG Frazer.

The RI Commandery presents an award for Superior Academics to the top student from each National Guard Officer Candidate School class. The most recent graduation, that of Class 64, took place October 16th at Camp Varnum, home of the 243d Regiment (Regional Training Institute).

We sought a Companion, also an OCS grad, to volunteer

to present the award. BG Thomas Frazer, former Assistant Adjutant General (1990-1994) of the RI National Guard stepped up.

BG Frazer presented this year's award to Officer Candidate Mackenzie Lear Kilpatrick, a 36 year old New Hampshire native and father of five who needed an age waiver to enlist. Kilpatrick also took home the Superior leadership Award for his class.

LT James A Tillinghast, USNR . When Case died in 1967, his honorary bearers were almost all former MOFW officers.

Clearly, times have changed, and today all veterans service organizations and hereditary groups struggle to maintain their footing. Concerns about "undue command influence" and the appearance of favoring one group over another have resulted in the distancing of National Guard leadership from these groups, to include RI MOFW.

Since taking over the Commandery last spring, I have made it a priority to try

to carve out an appropriate role for MOFW that could revitalize our standing and visibility with the National Guard. In discussions with Adjutant General MG Christopher Callahan, we zeroed in on several possibilities: planning and developing professional development seminars for NCOs; adopting a specific unit, and supporting that unit's soldiers and families; and programs involving military heritage and history.

By the time the next newsletter is published, I hope one or more of these initiatives will be well underway.

Wear Your Membership With Pride!



MOFW insignia, badges, ties, hats, shirts, pins and other accessories can be purchased from the MOFW US website.



For details visit: mofwus.org/quartermaster-store
Or email Brad Hopkins at azmofw@gmail.com

