



Scuttlebutt

Branch/Unit 269 Goose Creek, South Carolin

You can read all newsletters at [269 Branch/Unit 269 Newsletters](#)



Fleet Reserve National: [FRA National Home \[https://www.fra.org\]](https://www.fra.org)
Auxiliary National: [Ladies Auxiliary of the Fleet Reserve Association \[https://la-fra.org\]](https://la-fra.org)
Southeast Region: [frasoutheastregion.org \[https://frasoutheastregion.org\]](https://frasoutheastregion.org)
Branch 269 website: [FRA Low Country Branch & Unit 269 \[www.fra269gc.org\]](http://www.fra269gc.org)
FRA Branch and Unit 269 | Facebook [\[https://www.facebook.com/groups/FRABRANCH269/\]](https://www.facebook.com/groups/FRABRANCH269/)

MEAL HOURS FOR THE HOME: Lunch Hours Mon-Fri 1100-1330. Dinner Hours Mon-Fri 1700-2000

FROM THE HOME MANAGER'S OFFICE

"Due to an increase in our operating costs the Home will be increasing the price of drinks by 25 cents across the board as of 1 April."

"Ensure you have your membership card when you come in and be prepared to show it if asked"?

Branch President's Corner

The Home met on March 16 and had a very informative meeting. Because of recent events, some changes have been made.

- 1) We will now have to raise the price on drinks \$.25 effective the first of April.
- 2) We are going to be enforcing the rule that requires visitors to sign the log book. A member must sign in the visitor and be responsible for their conduct.
- 3) There is a strict NO DRUG policy on Home property and that will be strongly enforced. Anyone caught with drugs will be banned from the Home. If it happens to be a pool player that is banned, the entire team will be banned from playing pool.

Events coming up to of importance was of course we have palm Sunday and Easter coming right in the next week. The Hobson celebration will be at the Fleet Home on April 26 with a wreath laying in Charleston on Saturday the day before.

Next month's meeting will be the first round of nominations for officers. All positions are open. If you have a recommendation, please attend the meeting and make your nomination. Looking forward to seeing you all at our next regular meeting.

Yours in Loyalty, Protection and Service
 Don Barton
 Branch 269 President

Tidbits from the Unit President:

We are planning to visit and donate lap robes to residents of Victory House later this spring. Marilyn Tharp has been designated to liaison with the facility. All members and Shipmates are encouraged to make or buy one. Our goal is to present one to every resident in need. We are also collecting T-shirts, pajama bottoms, gripper socks, and word search books. A bin is set up on the bar size for donations.

At our April meeting we will discuss elections for 2026-2027. Descriptions of the duties of each office are in the Unit manual, which you can find on the web site, or you can check with me.

Reminder that our legal name is **Auxiliary of the FRA**—Please do not use Ladies.

Remember to always have your membership cards on you, especially when entering the home.

The next Unit Luncheon will be held Tuesday, April 14th at 11:30, at Los Reyes Mexican Restaurant, 5117 Ashley Phosphate Rd, North Charleston 29418. **MAP** Please RSVP to Debbie

Breeze

The Unit Yard Sale was a complete success. A big thank you to Debbie Breeze and all who participated with their time and donations.

Dates to Remember

- * April 14 11:30 am Auxiliary Luncheon at Los Reyes Mexican Restaurant, 5117 Ashley Phosphate Rd, N. Charleston SC 29418 [MAP](#)
- * April 14 5:30 pm General Meeting - Nominations of Officers
- * April 26 1:30 pm - Hobson Memorial at the home
- * May 19—Next General Meeting --Elections.

Also, thank you all who have donated food to the VA Clinic. It is most appreciated and we are continuing with this project for our Veterans. But please check the food expiration date; the clinic will not accept outdated products.

Congratulations and best wishes to all who have a birthday, anniversary or membership milestone and may those in need of prayers feel the strength of those around you and the entire Auxiliary family.



In Loyalty, Protection & Service
 NFS Pat Suckow, PNP
 Unit 269 President
 Auxiliary of the FRA
"Happy Passover and Happy Easter"

Branch Treasurer's Report

January 28 — February 27, 2026

Cash in Bank – Checking	\$ 1,958.59
Cash in Bank – Convention Checking	\$ 0.00
Cash in Bank – Savings	\$ 5,199.62
Cash in Bank – Certificate of Deposit	\$ <u>12,357.60</u>
TOTAL	\$19,515.81

BRANCH MEMBERSHIP/RETENTION

Membership and Retention: Ken Wallace

Total active members: 703

Transfer Out [7]: David Aldrich, Dominador Jimenez, Roger Little, Willie McDonald, Timothy McNally, Joseph Perillo, Ray Phillips Jr.

New Join/Reinstated [4]: Don Blair, Steven Blaisdell, Oscar Diano, Heather McGuire

Past Due [9]: Matthew Aguilera, Elijah Cales, Raymond Cotton, Jaiden Moore, Robert Newton, Kevin Patton, William Teague, Joe Travis, Gary Williams

Ready to Renew [46]: John Aguilera, Bryan Alfaro, Darryl Barrickman, Jennifer Beilstein, Ginger Bevis, Jeffrey Bolduc, Ronald Bowers, Edward T. Bowles, David Chapman, Ernest Culbreath, Richard Davies, James Delaney, Joe Eudy, James Evans, Roger Fincher, Larry Fowler, Jericho Garcia, Jeannette Gombash, Charles Gravley, David Horton, Charles Humbard, Thomas Ishee, Lynnette Jordan, John Keile, Roy Kingdom, Robert Koscianski, Ray Marshall, Verne Merrill, Larry Mole, Eugene Morris, Donald Moseng, John Murphy, Stephen Nogle, Gerald Ott, Arthur Raymond, Savannah Sellers, Cecil Skipworth, Ernest Sweat Jr., Michael Welch, Mervin Wiands Sr., Richard Wise, Fredrick Wolstencroft, Jack Wrbanich, Donald Wright, Fay Wright, Robert Yancey

Active Unit Members: 196

UNIT MEMBERSHIP/RETENTION

- 30 days past due [3]: Robert J. Kirkley Sr.; Francis Perillo; Patty A. Russell
- 60 days past due: [1]: Robert E. Horne
- 90 days past due [2]: Barbra Beilstein; Brenda Kraus
- Active Members: 196
- Reinstated-12 New- 19 Deceased: 2
- Non-Payment- 14 Ineligible- 1

BRANCH CHAPLAIN

Hospital/Welfare/Rehabilitation:

- Howard Crawford was in a very bad golf cart accident and is in critical condition.
- Cecil 'Sonny' Rash is recovering from having his right leg amputated below the knee due to a bad foot infection.
- Robert 'Beetle' Bailey is recovering from surgery for a pinched nerve in his spine.
- Jerry Stout had surgery to correct an obstruction and continues on immune therapy.
- Rick Wise is still on chemo and has a PET scan on April 10th.
- Tom Lawson is home on 25/7 oxygen and hospice care. SUBVETS have built him a ramp for his house.

Shipmates or Unit members please contact:

Branch Chaplain S/M Bobbi Sutton @
843.541.2823 or 843.879.9473
Unit Chaplain Theresa Milligan @
843-535-2757

Home Committee Report

Cash Audit as of **14 March 2026** is:

Checking Account balance	\$ 7,135.89
Savings account	\$ 50,483.50
Credit Card account available	\$ 11,981.73
Pending Check/Cash for deposit	\$ 740.00
Registers/Cash Funds	\$ 1,500.00
Cash Reserve Fund	\$ 6,000.00
Total funds	\$ 77,840.72
Net Profit (Loss): January	\$ 7,256.44
Net Profit (Loss): February	\$ 3,992.82

Building and Grounds/Special Events/and Manager’s Report: (full report in minutes at the end of the newsletter)

Golf Tournament was cancelled due to base restrictions

Indoor Picnic for 4th of July

Reports of marijuana smoking outside the Branch Home were discussed. Bartenders will notify pool teams that this conduct is prohibited and may result in loss of access to the Branch Home. The Home pool teams will also assist with enforcement.

Old Business:

S/M Frank Strunk has four people signed up for the chess club.

New Business:

The Home was the subject of a law enforcement action by SLED.

Signs will be posted stating membership IDs are required.

Voted on a \$.25 increase on ALL drinks at the bar [effective 1 April 2026]

Upcoming Events:

Easter - 5 April

Kentucky Derby - 2 May - Decorate & party

Memorial Day - 25 May - Guest Speaker;

indoor picnic

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING AN FRA CHESS CLUB?

S/M Frank Strunk has four people signed up for the chess club but he is still seeking more who are interested in playing or want to learn how to play.

Want a good challenge with no rules, prizes or dues? Just play chess! Meeting will be once a month at the FRA Home for a couple of hours.

If you want to be included, let him know at frank.strunk1943@gmail.com and if there is enough response, he will step forward with setting up day and time.

FRA National Convention Newsletter #1 is on the website. Link is on the home page.

Americanism/Patriotism - PNC Laurie Bailey (full list in the Home minutes at the end of the newsletter)

- 01 April – CPO Grade Established (1893)
- 05 April – Easter
- 05 April – Gold Star Spouses Day
- 09 April – Passover Ends at Nightfall
- 09 April – National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day
- 11 April - Submarine Force Day (1900)
- 13 April – National Borinqueneers Day

Newsbytes: The Fleet Reserve Bulletin

The Newsbytes are sent during the month from National to all FRA members via email. A direct link to Newsbytes is on the FRA269 Home Page

Newsbytes February 27, 2026

- ◇ POTUS SOTU Speech
- ◇ FRA NP Testifies
- ◇ Coalition Win On VA Rule
- ◇ Navy To Combat Burnout
- ◇ Claims Backlog Decline
- ◇ Shipmate Memories

Newsbytes March 6, 2026

- ◇ FRA National President Testifies
- ◇ Major Richard Star Act Blocked
- ◇ VA Digital "Claim Assist Portal"
- ◇ Navy QoL and Readiness
- ◇ Written Informed Consent Survey

Newsbytes March 13, 2026

- ◇ Legal Guardians for Vulnerable Veterans
- ◇ Sen. Mullin Tapped to Lead DHS
- ◇ TBI Care Gaps and "Beacon Act"
- ◇ Draft and Recruitment
- ◇ Implementation of the Dole Veterans Act

Newsbytes March 20, 2026

- ◇ FRA Demands Coast Guard Pay Parity
- ◇ President Honors Six Service Members Killed
- ◇ New Commissary Bag Fees to Begin April 6
- ◇ Written Inform Consent Survey

Newsbytes March 27, 2026

- ◇ Shutdown Eroding Coast Guard Operations
- ◇ Military Financial Literacy Act
- ◇ TRICARE and VA Community Care
- ◇ VA Modernizes Home Loan Program
- ◇ The Major Richard Star Act
- ◇ Written Consent Survey

BRANCH/UNIT 269 WEBSITE - fra269gc.org !!!!

Get your current and past newsletters and see upcoming events. To stop your current printed copy contact webmaster@fra268gc.org

BRANCH/UNIT 269 MEMBERSHIP INFO
REMINDER: ALL MEMBERSHIP FORMS AND DUES ARE TO BE PLACED IN THE RESPECTIVE MEMBERSHIP BOXES NEAR THE HOME OFFICE DOOR.

THIS APPLIES TO BRANCH AND UNIT BOTH.

The Branch and Unit Membership Boxes outside the office are the only place to leave new member and renewal applications. When you recruit a new member ensure all of their information is correct on the application. Place the new application/renewal in an envelope (available at the box) and place inside the "Membership Box". **The pass down log will not be used for anything concerning membership.**

Branch Life Membership ages and dues
Active duty: \$400.00 Ages up to 40: \$450.00
Ages 41-50: \$425.00 Ages 51-60: \$390.00
Ages 61-70: \$340.00 Ages 71-80: \$260.00
Ages 81-99: \$200.00 Ages 100 and older: FREE

The Security Corner

Provided by: George Birmingham [ET1(SS) USS H.L. Stimson SSBN655—G/SY1/G 69-74, USSVI-Holland Club Carolina Piedmont Base]

Treat your IoT devices like a guest

Our digital world, for better or worse, is expanding at an incredible rate. The Internet of Things (IoT) ecosystem has provided us with many new devices such as smart thermostats, smart doorbells like Ring and Blink, baby monitors, and kitchen appliances. In addition, the IoT of Medical Things (IoTM) ecosystem provides Internet connected devices like wearables, sensors, and smart equipment that collect, share, and analyze health data for real-time monitoring, remote care, and improved efficiency of services. All these devices use computing software of various types, like embedded firmware, or perhaps use an app that performs their function without our intervention. They connect to our home networks to provide their services. And AI now has the potential to pair with, or even replace, these devices for an even more interactive use of the technology. And that my shipmates, is where the trouble can begin.

Many of these IoT and IoTM devices, which are all connected to the Internet in some fashion, often have minimal built-in security, or none at all. This leaves them, your home network, and

your network attached devices like PCs, smartphones, security cameras, and even home medical equipment vulnerable to attack. These cybercriminals can even use breached devices to create botnets for other attacks.

But there is hope. Most all modern Internet access routers and gateways used by Internet Service Providers (ISPs) provide a network feature called the Guest Network. Originally, they were intended to allow your guests to have Internet access while in your home, or place of business. They provide a means to isolate your home or business network from these less secure devices while allowing them the necessary Internet access.

The following article will provide information about the pros and cons of using your router/gateway Guest Network features to isolate these less secure devices in your home:

The Pros and Cons of Using a Guest Network for IOT Devices

I hope you find the information it shares to be useful for your needs.

DID YOU KNOW?? Let's talk Windows!

+++++

Free up space on Windows: Low on storage? Clear out temporary files. Got to **Settings** > **System** > **Storage** > **Temporary files**, check what you don't need, then hit **Remove files**. You might gain back a few gigabytes. FYI: Look inside your **Downloads folder** first. There might be something important in there.

+++++

Turn off sleep mode in Windows 11: Go to **Settings** > **System** > **Power** > **Screen, sleep & hibernation timeouts**. Set **Turn my screen off after**, **Make my device sleep after** and **Make my device hibernate after** all to **Never**. But if you're on a laptop, this will drain the battery when it's not charging.

+++++

Improve laptop performance: Windows 11 intentionally throttles your system to save battery, but you can fix that. Go to **Settings** > **System** > **Power & battery**. Under **Power Mode**, switch both **Plugged in** and **On battery** to **Best Performance**. Your laptop will feel smoother, though it may drain the battery faster when unplugged.

+++++

Windows 11 context menu fix: ICYDK, Microsoft hid some features that used to be in the right-click menu for files and folders under **Show more options**. If you want to see everything at once, hold **Shift** and **right-click**, and the full menu will pop up instead.



**VA News by VAVS Branch Representative
PRPSE Fred Bolz**

VAVS Minutes and Newsbytes are posted on the bulletin board.

**Veterans Deemed Unable to Care for
Themselves**

As reported March 11 by Linda F. Hersey for *Stars and Stripes*, attorneys from the VA — under direction from the Justice Department — are initiating legal steps to place veterans deemed incapable of caring for themselves under public guardianship and conservatorship, the agencies announced Wednesday. The Justice Department will begin appointing VA attorneys as special U.S. assistant attorneys to participate in state court proceedings to move the “most vulnerable veterans” under public guardianship after a clinical determination, according to a written statement from the two agencies. The effort will extend to some veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness but lack family support or legal representation. They are individuals who’ve demonstrated that they are unable to make their own healthcare decisions, the two agencies said. The federal government will seek guardianship or conservatorship via the state courts, under the terms of a newly signed memorandum of agreement between the VA and DOJ.

[Read More...](#)

**VA Moves to Speed up Community Care
Appointment Scheduling**

The VA announced this week it has introduced technology to help with the scheduling of community care appointments. The External Provider Scheduling system gives VA employees instant access to the scheduling systems of all community care providers who participate in this program. With that information, VA can immediately book appointments for veterans that

fit their schedules.

[Read More...](#)

**The ‘Old Guard’ Marks Centennial of Watching
Over Tomb of the Unknown Soldier**

As reported March 9 by Claire Barrett for *Military Times*, for over 100 years, Arlington National Cemetery has been the site of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, but it hasn’t always been guarded — or revered. Following the soldier’s 1921 internment, the burial site was unguarded and often treated as a tourist attraction by visitors. That is, until 1925, when “concern over the lack of respect led Army Maj. Gen. Fox Conner, the Army’s deputy chief of staff, to order an armed military guard on March 24, 1926.” The first sentinel was posted the very next morning, with units from the 16th Brigade, 8th Infantry Division, 3rd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, and the 2nd Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, beginning what would become an unbroken vigil. The 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, known as “The Old Guard,” was designated as the Army’s official ceremonial unit on April 6, 1948.

[Read More...](#)

**Common government imposter scams
affecting Veterans**

- Payment redirect/direct deposit fraud: Avoid depositing VA benefits directly into a family member’s or caregiver’s bank account unless they are a court-appointed representative or a VA -accredited fiduciary. This precaution helps to prevent any potential misuse of funds and ensures that benefits are managed by legally authorized individuals.
- Fake compensation claims assistance: Scammers often pose as individuals offering assistance to help file compensation claims or appeals, requiring upfront fees. These imposters typically misappropriate the funds or charge excessive fees for their services, leaving the Veterans worse off financially.
- Pension poaching: Bad actors may offer to manage a Veteran’s pension benefits, promising increased payouts. These scammers often misappropriate the funds or charge excessive fees, which can lead to financial distress for the Veteran.

S/M Ernest Culbreath was inducted as a new member of Branch 269 by President Don Barton, Vice President Steve Koch and Secretary Sarah Ihme.

President Don Barton and S/M Ron Lamon were presented with a Certificate recognizing the many hours each contributed to working at the Toys For Tots warehouse in 2025. Certificate was presented by Vice President Steve Koch.



Unit 269 Auxiliary of the FRA held a very successful Yard Sale.



Mark your calendar, watch for details, watch for additions
 Unless noted otherwise all meetings are in the large room
 Where no time noted group has room for entire day
 Friday nights – 1930 – Scotch Doubles, 8-Ball Tournament

APRIL 2026						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 <u>1900-2100</u> Sojourners	2 <u>1800-2000</u> SUBVETS BOD	3	4
5 Free Pool	6	7	8	9 <u>1900-2100</u> SUBVETS Mtg	10 <u>1000</u> Retirement Party	11 <u>1000-1200</u> DAV Mtg
12 Free Pool	13 <u>1800-2000</u> Home Committee	14 <u>1130</u> Unit Lunch <u>1730</u> Unit Mtg	15 <u>1800-2000</u> Radio Club	16 <u>1800-1900</u> Branch BOD <u>1900-2100</u> Branch Mtg	17	18 <u>1000-1200</u> MilFrat Mtg <u>1800-</u> Comedy Show
19 Free Pool	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 Free Pool <u>1330</u> USS Hobson Memorial Service	27 <u>1730-1900</u> VVA Mtg <u>1900-2000</u> Carolina Coins Mtg	28	29	30		

Mark your calendar, watch for details, watch for additions
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 Friday nights – 1930 – Scotch Doubles, 8-Ball Tournament

MAY 2026						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3 Free Pool	4	5 CINCO DE MAYO	6 <u>1900-2100</u> Sojourners	7 1800 SUBVETS BOD	8	9 1000 DAV Mtg
10 Free Pool	11	12	13 <u>1830</u> Bowling Dinner	14 <u>1900</u> SUBVETS Mtg	15	16 <u>1000-1200</u> MILFRAT Mtg
17 Free Pool	18 1800 Home Committee	19 <u>1130</u> Unit Lunch <u>1800</u> Unit Mtg	20 <u>1800-2000</u> Radio Club	21 1800 Branch BOD <u>1900</u> Branch Mtg	22	23
24 Free Pool	25 MEMORIAL DAY 1200-1500 Fleet Indoor Picnic	26 <u>1900</u> Carolina Coins Mtg	27	28	29	30
31 Free Pool						

BRANCH 269 CONTINUOUS MEMBERSHIP—APRIL 2026

Robert Stancik	64	Dannis Lambries	28	Louis Goehring	17	Ernest Culbreath	5
Robert McNeish	62	Edward Smith	28	Robert Massey	17	Arthur Raymond	5
Donald Cady	55	James Mastin	27	James Turner Jr.	17	Michael Rikard	5
Eugene Weir	47	Cecil Skipworth	27	Bertil Johnson	16	Matthew Aguilera	4
Thomas Seay	44	Jack Wrbanich	27	Roy Kingdom	16	Albert Schwartz	4
Ronald Brunner	42	James Delaney	26	Fredrick Wolstencroft	16	Fredrick Sorenson	3
Eugene Lemieux	42	Edward Fretschel III	26	Jaqueline Brooks	15	Don Disinger	3
Charles Gravley	41	Terry Trump	25	Ronald Lamon	13	Jeffrey Bolduc	2
Gary Crozier	39	John Keile	25	John Autrey	12	Ronald Bowers	2
Ralph Deeter	38	Joe Eudy	24	Ray Marshall	12	David Calderhead	2
William Freligh	37	David Horton	23	Terrence Mummert	12	Roger Fincher	2
Lewis Flader	35	Paul McFall	22	Michael Roth	12	John Murphy	2
Gerald Monnat	33	Tommy Wilbanks	21	Robert Yancey	10	Michael Welch	2
Hilton Hooks	32	Gerald Ott	20	Jeffrey Kirksey	9	David Chapman	1
Frederick Bolz	30	Edward Bowles	19	Jericho Garcia	8	Thomas Ishee	1
Alan Lincoln	30	Rick Wise	19	William Lindler	8	Donald Wright	1
Charlie Calas	28	Roy Brosseau	18	Lawrence Coates	6	Faye Wright	1
Lynnette Jordan	28	Dennis Turner	18				

UNIT 269 CONTINUOUS MEMBERSHIP—APRIL 2026

Linda A. Harris	35	Anne S. Barton	9	Kelly R. Hall	8	Beverly G. Shaffer	4
Cynthia Clark	26	Rebecca R. Bower	9	Carol M. Mustain	7	Krystal A. Shaffer	4
Pat Suckow	24	Connie R. Chinn	9	Therese A. Masterson	7	Gary W. Thomas	3
Deloris J. Cox	22	Michael L. Steele	9	Barbara I. Berger	6	Angelo Clark	1
Gloria I. Boyln	15	James R. Vinson	9	Charlette B. Johnson	6	Joni K. Mikkelson	1
Mary S. Johnson	14	Michael A. Dubay	8	Jacqueline Paxton	5	Charles Smith Jr.	1
Maryln L. Muccheck	13						

YOUR BIRTHDAY IS IN APRIL 2026

If you are a Branch 269 or Unit 269 member, come on in to the Low Country Home on your birthday for a **FREE BIRTHDAY LUNCH!!!** Auxiliary members in *ITALICS*

Donald Cady	1	<i>Lori R. Beier</i>	6	Theodore Martin	12	Glenn Little	21
<i>Jayne L. Campbell</i>	1	Joseph Giannetto	6	<i>Tony W. Osterman</i>	12	William Hayes	23
<i>Mildred A. Koscianski</i>	1	<i>Dawna B. LaTourella</i>	7	<i>Lisa H. Berezny</i>	14	Michael Roth	23
Arthur Raymond	1	Donald Detwiler	8	Lee Heitner	14	Robert Block	24
Albert Schwartz	1	<i>Brenda W. Frye</i>	8	<i>Carol L. Traynor</i>	14	George Bradstreet	24
Saralyn Young	1	<i>Brenda L. Kraus</i>	8	Richard Carlson	15	Charles Ethridge	24
Joe Eudy	2	<i>Sylvia Zakrzewski</i>	8	William Reed	15	<i>Karen D. Hightower</i>	24
Roger Gibson	2	<i>Gina L. Home</i>	9	<i>Hazel N. Hacker</i>	16	<i>James P. Brown</i>	25
Richard Roebuck	2	<i>Charles E. Schuster</i>	9	Daniel Montgomery	16	Michael Greenfield	25
Robert Sollo	2	Charles Walton	9	Gordon Stevenson Sr.	17	Duane Henricksen	26
Mark Archambean	3	Don Blair	11	Paul Misuraca	18	James Mastin	27
Charles Ivey	4	<i>Terresa J. Hagan</i>	11	Ronald Redondo	18	Raymond Montminy	27
Larry Pepper	4	Mark Feathers	11	Ron Workman	19	<i>Marilyn Tharp</i>	28
Bob Segal	4	Gordon Gingras	11	Phillip Nunnally	20	William Martin II	29
Richard Brown	5	Edward Mulrey	11	<i>Tammy L. Robinson</i>	20	Larry Walton	30
Dennis Essenmacher	5	Marion 'Wayne' Hall	12	Ken Ealy	21	Eugene Weir	30
Kent Wolcott	5						

BRANCH 269

BRANCH OFFICERS

President: Don Barton
Vice President: Steve Koch
Secretary: Sarah Ihme
Treasurer: PNP Don MucHECK
Jr. Past President: Ken Hutchison

BRANCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PNC Laurie Bailey Tim Bailey
PRPSE Fred Bolz John Tharp
Larry Pepper Ron Lamon
Glenn Little Ken Wallace
David Mattingly Johnny Brown
Bobbie Sutton

APPOINTEES & COMMITTEE

CHAIRS

By-Laws: PRPSE Fred Bolz
Chaplain: Bobbi Sutton
Essay Contest: PNC Laurie Bailey
Legislative Affairs / VAVS:
PRPSE Fred Bolz
Master-at-Arms: Glenn Little
Membership: Ken Wallace
Parliamentarian: PNP Don MucHECK
Public Relations: John Tharp
Ways and Means: Larry Pepper
Webmaster: Nick Nichols
Newsletter: Nick Nichols
Youth Activities: Ed Peters

Auxiliary of the FRA UNIT 269

UNIT OFFICERS

President: NFS Pat Suckow, PNP
Vice-President: Debbie Breeze
Secretary/Treasurer: Gale Nathan,
PNC

UNIT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathy Sorenson Sue Peters
Theresa Milligan Ann Griffith
Linda Nichols Dee Wallace

APPOINTEES & COMMITTEE

CHAIRS

Amer/Patriotism: Linda Nichols
Chaplain: Theresa Milligan
Hospital: Theresa Milligan
Membership: Debbie Breeze
Publicity: Debbie Breeze
Sergeant-at-Arms: Kim Vandiver
Ship's Store: Sue Peters
Unit Activities: All Members
VAVS: Theresa Milligan
Welfare/Rehab: Sue Peters
Youth Activities: Anne Barton/
Gale Nathan PNC

LOW COUNTRY HOME, LLC

99 Wisteria Road,
Goose Creek SC 29445
843-569-2692

Frbranch269@comcast.net

Home Chairman: PNC Laurie Bailey
Admin Secretary: Sarah Ihme
Financial Sec: PNP Don MucHECK
Director: Tim Bailey
Director: Kim Vandiver
Director: Sue Peters
Director: John Tharp
Director: Dee Wallace
Director: Ken Wallace
Director: Ken Hutchison
Director: Ryan Stevenson
Home Managers: Larry Pepper
Bob Zauner
Don Garrand



Items needed for Curbside Delivery For Our Veterans at the VA Hospital

Proteins:

- Tuna Cans
- Chicken Can
- SPAM Can or other potted meat
- Bean Cans: pork & beans, black beans, kidney beans, navy beans, beanie weenies
- Bag Dry Beans
- Jar Peanut Butter

> Soup/ or Stew:

- Cans

> Sauce

- Jar or Can Red Marinara Sauce or Alfredo Sauce

> Pasta:

- Package or Box of Pasta noodles

> Rice:

- Package or Box of Rice

> Vegetables:

- Mixed Cans: corn, green beans, mixed, greens

> Fruits:

- Mixed Cans: peaches, fruit cocktail, pineapple, apple sauce

> Ready Meals:

- Mac & Cheese
- Hormel Microwave Meals
- Top Ramen
- Box/Bag Instant Potatoes

> Cereal:

Box/Bag of Cereal---May substitute 4-5 small cereal boxes---May substitute 5-6 oatmeal, cream of wheat, or grits packets

> GIFT CARD \$5.00 OR \$10.00 NOT MORE—PLACE IN Auxiliary box

Auxiliary of the FRA Unit269 is now collecting for the Victory House in Walterboro

In addition to lap robes, they need



1-Gripper-type socks



2-T-shirts

3 Pajama Bottoms



4-Word Search books

**CHANGE FRA BRANCH 269 BY-LAWS
Article V II COMMITTEES AND THEIR
DUTIES**

Whereas, at the 97TH National Convention Springfield, Missouri Article VIII Section 816 (b) was changed designating additional duties of the Hospital, Welfare and Rehabilitation Committee.

Whereas, Low Country Branch 269 by-laws ARTICLE VII Section 706(a) Committee on Hospital, Welfare, and Rehabilitation does not adequately define these duties.

Whereas, Article VII Section 701(a) be amended by adding the following verbiage from NC&BL ARTICLE VIII S section 816 (b)

Therefore, be it resolved that Low Country Branch 269 By-Laws ARTICLE VII Section 706(a) be added after the last word "regulations." to read: Duties of the committee shall be to manage and oversee the VA Volunteer Services (VAVS/ Center for development and Community Engagement (CDCE), providing education and outreach of the same to the membership of the Association, including VA MHA policy and regulations associated with this program, to report on the number and activities of designated VAVS/CDCE representatives of veteran cemeteries, or veteran homes, and to annually recognize outstanding service by a Shipmate in service to veterans in the area of hospital, welfare and rehabilitation.

And be it further Resolved: Change Section 706(g) to read "The Committee is required to attend all VAVS/CDCE meetings.

And be it further Resolved: to change Article VII Section 706(g) to be Section 706 (h)

CHANGE FRA BRANCH 269 BY-LAWS

Whereas, at the 97th Nation Convention Springfield Missouri Article VIII Section 820 Duties of the National Committee on Veterans Service was changed

Whereas, FRA LOW COUNTRY BRANCH 269 BY-LAWS are not in compliance with the change made at the National Convention,

Whereas, Article VII Section 702(b) Veteran Service be changed

Whereas Article VII Section 702 (c) does not apply

Therefore, be it resolved that FRA BRANCH 269 By-Laws be changed to read: ARTICLE VII Section 702(b) Committee members shall be VA accredited Veteran Service Office representing the FRA

And be it further resolved: ARTICLE VII Section 702© Read: Duties of the committee shall be: to oversee the FRA Veterans Service program, providing education and outreach of same to the membership of the Branch, including the policies and regulations associated with the program; to solicit Shipmates to become involved in departments of veterans affairs/services on the local, state or level, including VA regional offices, and to annually recognize outstanding service to veterans in the area of Veterans Service.

And be it further resolved: That ARTICLE VII Section existing Section 702© be replaced with the above verbiage.



USS HOBSON (DD-646/DMS-26) MEMORIAL SERVICE

**FRA LOW COUNTRY BRANCH 269 HOME
99 WISTERIA ROAD, GOOSE CREEK, SC 29445
SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2026
1:30 PM**



**FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION
LOW COUNTRY BRANCH 269
IN CONJUNCTION WITH
HOBSON MEMORIAL SOCIETY**

**WREATH PLACED AT HOBSON MONUMENT - SATURDAY, APRIL 25, AT 1200
KEYNOTE SPEAKER – FRA NATIONAL PRESIDENT RICHARD J. FETRO
PRESENTATION OF WREATHS BY LOCAL FATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS
RECEPTION WILL FOLLOW AFTER THE CEREMONY**



Fraud Alert for Veterans

⚠ DO NOT PAY FOR VA OR COMMUNITY CARE APPOINTMENTS UP FRONT

Protect yourself from a recent scam targeting Veterans.

A Veteran recently received a fake letter claiming he had a VA appointment and was asked to pay for the visit.

- VA later confirmed he was not enrolled in VA health care, and no appointment had been scheduled.
- The letter and payment request were fraudulent.

Remember:

- Veterans should never pay for any VA or Community Care appointment before or at the time of the appointment.
- VA does not charge upfront fees for appointments.
- VA does not send payment requests by email, text message, or phone.
- Community Care appointments are authorized by VA and are free to Veterans except standard VA co-pays when applicable.

If you receive a suspicious letter, call, or message:

- Do not send money or share personal or financial information.
- Contact your local VA medical center directly to verify any appointment.
- Report suspicious activity to your facility's Integrity and Compliance Officer, Integrity and Compliance Helpline at (866) 842-4357 or VHAOICHelpline@va.gov, VSAFE at 1-833-388-7233 or the [VA OIG](#) Hotline at 1-800-488-8244.

Your VA team is here to ensure your care is safe and legitimate.

SEE SOMETHING. SAY SOMETHING.

General instances of non-compliance, including potential fraud, waste and abuse:

Office of Integrity and Compliance Helpline

VHAOICHelpline@va.gov or 866-842-4357 (VHA-HELP)

Veterans who suspect they have experienced fraud:

VSAFE Fraud Hotline

<https://vsafe.gov/> or 833-38V-SAFE

Reports made to VA OIC or VSAFE may be referred to the independent Office of Inspector General (OIG) for investigation into fraud or other wrongdoing or for its oversight of VA programs and operations.



Choose VA

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**FRA LOW COUNTRY BRANCH 269
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
MARCH 19, 2026**

Shipmate President Don Barton called the regular Board of Directors meeting of Low Country Branch 269 to order at 1800, Thursday, March 19, 2026, in accordance with FRA Rituals.

Board Members present:

PRPSE Fred Bolz	Ron Lamon	Bobbi Sutton	Don Barton
PNC Laurie Bailey	John Tharp	David Mattingly	Steve Koch
Tim Bailey	Glenn Little	Johnny Brown	Sarah Ihme
Larry Pepper	Ken Wallace	Ken Hutchison	PNP Don Mucheck

Minutes: Posted on the entrance table. Motion to accept.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Americanism/Patriotism: PNC Laurie Bailey
Report at General Assembly.

By-Laws: PRPSE Fred Bolz
Report at General Assembly.

Legislative Service and VAVS: PRPSE Fred Bolz
Report at General Assembly.

Hospital, Welfare and Rehabilitation: Bobbi Sutton
Report at General Assembly.

Ways and Means: Larry Pepper
Report at General Assembly.

Golf: Larry Pepper
Report at General Assembly.

Budget and Finance: Glenn Little
Report at General Assembly.

Home Committee Report: PNC Laurie Bailey
Report at General Assembly.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Received a request from Goose Creek High School for a minimum \$500 advertisement in their yearbook. The request was denied.

Invoice received to reimburse PNC Laurie Bailey for mailing three awards and for 30 certificate holders totaling \$29.61.

- **MOTION:** PNP Don Muecheck moved, and PRPSE Fred Bolz seconded to reimburse PNC Laurie Bailey \$29.61. Motion carried.

Invoice received to reimburse the FRA Home for four steak dinners for \$84.00.

- **MOTION:** PNP Don Muecheck moved, and PRPSE Fred Bolz seconded to reimburse the Home \$84.00. Motion carried.

Two Branch bylaw changes will be presented at tonight's meeting and will be voted on at next month's General Assembly meeting.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Memorial Day Services are being planned.

Non-members must sign in when visiting the Home. Members must show their membership card when ordering.

End-of-Year Committee Reports will be due soon.

S/M Ronald Lamon is continuing to work on the Flag Raising Ceremony at Whispering Pines Cemetery on 25 April 2026 at 1200. He is also seeking assistance in the event he is unable to attend.

Motion to adjourn made by PRPSE Fred Bolz, seconded by PNC Laurie Bailey. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 1816.

**FRA LOW COUNTRY BRANCH 269
GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING
MARCH 19, 2026**

Shipmate President Don Barton called the regular meeting of Low Country Branch 269 to order on Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 1900, in accordance with Article FRA Rituals.

Visitors: Auxiliary members

Shipmates Initiated: Ernie Culbreath

Minutes: Published in the newsletter. The minutes stand as approved.

Communications: None

Treasurer's Report:

The report for the period of January 28 – February 27 as follows:

General Checking: \$1,958.59

Savings Account: \$5,199.62

Convention Checking: \$0.00

Certificate of Deposit: \$12,357.60

Total: \$19,515.81

All bills received to date have been paid.

Continuous Membership:

March 2026

William Cole – 55 Years

Bryan Wright – 20 Years

Thomas Clark – 50 Years

Jeannette Gombash – 15 Years

Bruce Garrabrant – 40 Years

Danny Trapp – 15 Years

Francis Jones – 40 Years

Howard Hogue – 10 Years

Gary Gardner – 25 Years

Leo Kelley – 10 Years

Paul McHugh – 20 Years

Crystal Koch – 10 Years

Joe Lunn – 10 Years

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Americanism/Patriotism – PNC Laurie Bailey

Dates in History March/April:

25 March – National Medal of Honor Day

29 March – Palm Sunday

29 March – Vietnam War Veterans Day

01 April – CPO Grade Established (1893)

05 April – Easter

05 April – Gold Star Spouses Day

09 April – Passover Ends at Nightfall
09 April – National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day
11 April – Submarine Force Day (1900)
13 April – National Borinqueneers Day

This year's essay contest is complete. Branch 269 had two individuals whose essays went to the regional level. National essays have been received for grading.

USS Hobson Memorial ceremony will be on 26 April. The Memorial Day ceremony will be on 25 May.

By-Laws: PRPSE Fred Bolz

The Branch Bylaw changes will be read under New Business.

Legislative Service & VAVS: PRPSE Fred Bolz

Newsbytes are posted on the bulletin board.

The VA issued a fraud alert, which was read.

Hospital, Welfare, and Rehabilitation: Bobbi Sutton

Cecil Rash is recovering from having his right leg amputated below the knee due to a bad foot infection.

Robert Bailey is recovering from surgery for a pinched nerve in his spine.

Jerry Stout had surgery to correct an obstruction and continues on immunotherapy.

Rick Wise is still on chemo and has a PET scan on April 10th.

Tom Lawson is home on 24/7 oxygen and hospice care. SUBVETS have built him a ramp for his house.

Howard Crawford was in a very bad golf cart accident and is in critical condition. He will have a leg amputated.

We have members on the binnacle list that are not mentioned every month, but keep everyone in your prayers.

Membership and Retention: Ken Wallace

Total active members: 703

New Join/Reinstated: Don Blair, Steven Blaisdell, Oscar Diano, Heather McGuire

Past Due: Matthew Aguilera, Elijah Cales, Raymond Cotton, Jaiden Moore, Robert Newton, Kevin Patton, William Teague, Joe Travis, Gary Williams

Ready to Renew: John Aguilera Jr., Bryan Alfaro, Darryl Barrickman, Jennifer Beilstein, Ginger Bevis, Jeffrey Bolduc, Ronald Bowers, Edward Bowles, David Chapman, Ernest Culbreath, Richard Davies, James Delaney, Joe Eudy, James Evans, Roger Fincher, Larry Fowler, Jericho Garcia, Jeannette Gombash, Charles Gravley, David Horton, Charles Humbard, Thomas Ishee, Lynnette Jordan, John Keile, Roy Kingdom, Robert Koscianski, Ray Marshall, Verne Merrill, Larry Mole, Eugene Morris, Donald Moseng, John Murphy, Stephen Nogle,

Gerald Ott, Arthur Raymond, Savannah Sellers, Cecil Skipworth, Ernest Sweat Jr., Michael Welch, Mervin Wiands Sr., Richard Wise, Fredrick Wolstencroft, Jack Wrbanich, Donald Wright, Fay Wright, Robert Yancey

Term NPD: David Aldrich, Dominador Jimenez, Roger Little, Willie McDonald, Timothy McNally, Ray Phillips Jr., Edward Stank

Term Dec: Joseph Perillo

Active Unit Members:

Youth Activities: Ed Peters
Nothing to report.

Public Relations: John Tharp
Nothing to report.

Ways and Means: Larry Pepper
Get your 50/50 and steak dinner tickets.

Golf: Larry Pepper
Had to cancel the March golf tournament due to security issues. Working to schedule next tournament.

Budget and Finance: Glenn Little
Balances as of 17 MAR 26: Total Cash Balance \$19,515.81; Total Branch Inventory \$4,764.39; Net Worth Branch 269: \$24,280.20. The next quarterly audit is scheduled for July 2026.

Home Committee Report: PNC Laurie Bailey

Financial Reports

Balances as of 14 March 26: Checking \$7,135.89; Savings \$50,483.50; Credit Card \$11,981.33; Pending Deposits \$740.00; Registers/Change Funds \$1,500.00; Cash Reserve Fund \$6,000.00; Total Funds \$77,840.72

Building and Grounds / Special Events Manager's Report:

Golf tournament was cancelled due to base restrictions.

Indoor picnic for 4th of July.

Reports of marijuana smoking outside the Branch Home were discussed. Bartenders will notify pool teams that this conduct is prohibited and may result in loss of access to the Branch Home. The Home pool teams will also assist with enforcement.

Old Business

S/M Frank Strunk submitted information about the Chess Club. Information has been added to the website and sent out via email. Has had four people sign up so far.

New Business

The Home was the subject of a law enforcement action by SLED. Signs will be posted stating that membership IDs are required. Implemented an increase of 25¢ on all drinks at the bar.

CPR/AED training will be at the Home on 28 March at 0900.

Upcoming Events

St. Patrick's Day – 17 March 2026 – Corned beef and cabbage were served

Easter – 5 April 2026

Kentucky Derby – 2 May 2026 – Decorate and party

Memorial Day – Guest speaker, Admiral Ishee; will place flags on graves at Plantation Memorial

Good of the Order

Appreciation was expressed to Jeff Finer for the excellent job he did preparing the food for the Mid-Year Meeting. Appreciation was also expressed to Home Managers S/M Larry Pepper and PNC Don Muccheck for their continued efforts in helping keep the Branch Home operating smoothly.

Next meeting will be held: 13 April 2026 at 1800

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

April 26, 2026, will mark the 74th anniversary of the loss of the USS Hobson. A memorial service will be conducted at the Home on April 26, 2026. Letters were sent to 18 organizations throughout the tri-county region. National President Rick Fetro will be the keynote speaker. PNP Virgil Courneya will be present for the service. Representing the Auxiliary will be NFS Pat Suckow, PNP. American Legion Post 166 will provide the color guard. On April 25, 2026, at approximately 1200, a wreath will be placed at the Hobson Memorial. A reception will be held following the service.

NEW BUSINESS

Two changes to the Branch Bylaws were read and will be voted on next month.

Committee reports are due by the end of the election year.

Officer nominations will begin next month. All positions will be open.

The USS Yorktown will host a Vietnam War Veterans Memorial on 29 March at the Vietnam Experience Center.

On May 6th, high school seniors who are enlisting will be sworn in aboard the USS Yorktown. The welcome reception will begin at 1730, and the ceremony will begin at 1830.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

The Board of Directors approved the allocation of \$29.61 to Laurie Bailey for completion of the Essay Contest and \$84.00 to the Home for steak dinners.

The Auxiliary will have a yard sale on Saturday, March 21st, from 0800 – 1400.

A gentleman has medical equipment available for individuals with disabilities. Members interested should contact S/M President Don Barton.

Tom Beach's wife is looking for oxygen supplies for her son. Let S/M Nick Nichols know if you have any equipment.

S/M Ronald Lamon is continuing to work on the flag raising ceremony at Whispering Pines Cemetery on 25 April 2026 at 1200. He is also seeking assistance if he is unable to attend.

Unit Report: Food items for the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center are still needed. The Unit will be going to the Veterans Victory House in the fall and will have a bin available for donations.

Awards were presented to two members in recognition of their efforts during Toys for Tots.

There being no further business, the President called for adjournment. All shipmates stood and observed a moment of silence in tribute to departed shipmates.

Meeting adjourned at 2008.



Fraud Alert for Veterans

⚠ DO NOT PAY FOR VA OR COMMUNITY CARE APPOINTMENTS UP FRONT

DO NOT PAY FOR VA OR COMMUNITY CARE APPOINTMENTS UP FRONT

Protect yourself from a recent scam targeting Veterans.

A Veteran recently received a fake letter claiming he had a VA appointment and was asked to pay for the visit.

- VA later confirmed he was not enrolled in VA health care, and no appointment had been scheduled.
- The letter and payment request were fraudulent.

Remember:

- Veterans should never pay for any VA or Community Care appointment before or at the time of the appointment.
- VA does not charge upfront fees for appointments.
- VA does not send payment requests by email, text message, or phone.
- Community Care appointments are authorized by VA and are free to Veterans except standard VA co-pays when applicable.

If you receive a suspicious letter, call, or message:

- Do not send money or share personal or financial information.
- Contact your local VA medical center directly to verify any appointment.
- Report suspicious activity to your facility's Integrity and Compliance Officer, Integrity and Compliance Helpline at (866) 842-4357 or VHAOICHelpline@va.gov, VSAFE at 1-833-388-7233 or the VA OIG Hotline at 1-800488-8244.

Your VA team is here to ensure your care is safe and legitimate.

SEE SOMETHING. SAY SOMETHING.

General instances of non-compliance, including potential fraud, waste and abuse:

Office of Integrity and Compliance Helpline

VHAOICHelpline@va.gov or 866-842-4357 (VHA-HELP)

Veterans who suspect they have experienced fraud:

VSAFE Fraud Hotline <https://vsafe.gov/> or 833-38V-

SAFE

Reports made to VA OIC or VSAFE may be referred to the independent Office of Inspector General (OIG) for investigation into fraud or other wrongdoing or for its oversight of VA programs and operations.

Choose VA

VA

CAHNGE FRA BRANCH 269 BY-LAWS Article V II COMMITTEES AND THEIR DUTIES

Whereas, at the 97TH National Convention Springfield, Missouri Article VIII Section 816(b) was changed designating additional duties of the Hospital, Welfare and Rehabilitation Committee.

Whereas, Low Country Branch 269 by-laws ARTICLE VII Section 706(a) Committee on Hospital, Welfare, and Rehabilitation does not adequately define these duties.

Whereas, Article VII Section 701(a) be amended by adding the following verbiage from NC&BL ARTICLE VIII S section 816 (b)

Therefore, be it resolved that Low Country Branch 269 By-Laws ARTICLE VII Section 706(a) be added after the last word "regulations." to read: Duties of the committee shall be to manage and oversee the VA Volunteer Services (VAVS/ Center for development and Community Engagement (CDCE), providing education and outreach of the same to the membership of the Association, including VA MHA policy and regulations associated with this program, to report on the number and activities of designated VAVS/CDCE representatives of veteran cemeteries, or veteran homes, and to annually recognize outstanding service by a Shipmate in service to veterans in the area of hospital, welfare and rehabilitation.

And be it further Resolved: Change Section 706(g) to read "The Committee is required to attend all VAVS/CDCE meetings.

And be it further Resolved: to change Article VII Section 706(g) to be Section 706 (h)

This is to certify that this resolution was proposed at a regular meeting of Branch 269 Goose Creek, South Carolina on _____ day of _____, was read, debated, and adopted by _____ vote at a subsequent meeting held on _____ day of _____

President

Secretary

Change FRA Branch 269 By-Laws

Whereas, at the 97th Nation Convention Springfield Missouri Article VIII Section 820 Duties of the National Committee on Veterans Service was changed

Whereas, FRA LOW COUNTRY BRANCH 269 BY-LAWS are not in compliance with the change made at the National Convention,

Whereas, Article VII Section 702(b) Veteran Service be changed

Whereas Article VII Section 702 (c) does not apply

Therefore, be it resolved that FRA BRANCH 269 By-Laws be changed to read:

ARTICLE VII Section 702(b) Committee members shall be VA accredited Veteran Service Office representing the FRA

And be it further resolved: ARTICLE VII Section 702© Read: Duties of the committee shall be: to oversee the FRA Veterans Service program, providing education and outreach of same to the membership of the Branch, including the policies and regulations associated with the program; to solicit Shipmates to become involved in departments of veterans affairs/services on the local, state or level, including VA regional offices, and to annually recognize outstanding service to veterans in the area of Veterans Service.

And be it further resolved:

That ARTICLE VII Section existing Section 702© be replaced with the above verbiage.

This is to certify that this resolution was proposed at a regular meeting of Branch 269 Goose Creek, South Carolina on ____ day of _____ was read, debated, and adopted by a _____ vote at a subsequent meeting held on ____ day of _____

President

Secretary

FRA LOW COUNTRY HOME COMMITTEE MEETING

MARCH 16, 2026

PNC Laurie Bailey called the FRA Low Country Home Committee meeting to order at 1800 on Monday, March 16, 2026.

Board Members Present: Shipmates PNC Laurie Bailey, Sarah Ihme, PNP Don Muccheck, Tim Bailey, John Tharp, Ken Wallace, Ken Hutchison, and Ryan Stevenson; Ladies Kim Vandiver, Sue Peters, and Dee Wallace

Other Members Present: Shipmates President Don Barton, Larry Pepper, Bob Zauner; Auxiliary members Marilyn Tharp; Kitchen Manager Jeff Finer

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the February meeting were approved as posted, with no corrections or objections.

- **MOTION:** PNP Don Muccheck moved, and S/M Tim Bailey seconded that the minutes be approved. Motion carried.

Financial Reports

S/M Ken Hutchison assisted PNC Don Muccheck with the cash audit.

Balances as of 14 March 26: Checking \$7,135.89; Savings \$50,483.50; Credit Card \$11,981.33; Pending Deposits \$740.00; Registers/Change Funds \$1,500.00; Cash Reserve Fund \$6,000.00; Total Funds \$77,840.72

Net Profit (Loss): January \$7,256.44; February \$3,992.82

- **MOTION:** Lady Kim Vandiver moved, and Lady Dee Wallace seconded to accept the financial reports. Motion carried.

Building and Grounds / Special Events Manager's Report:

There will be a cooler of cheer drawing for St. Patrick's Day. We have had donations for another cooler of cheer for a potential 4th of July drawing.

Golf tournament was cancelled due to base restrictions.

Indoor picnic for 4th of July.

Reports of marijuana smoking outside the Branch Home were discussed. Bartenders will notify pool teams that this conduct is prohibited and may result in loss of access to the Branch Home. The Home pool teams will also assist with enforcement.

- **MOTION:** PNP Don Muccheck moved, and S/M Tim Bailey seconded that the Manager's report be accepted. Motion carried.

Membership and Security:

FRA HQ reports 703 active Branch members

Old Business

S/M Frank Strunk submitted information about the Chess Club. Information has been added to the website and sent out via email. Has had four people sign up so far.

Suggestions for the next home improvement project have been put on hold for now.

Setting up a professional kitchen cleaner for deep cleaning once a month is on hold for now.

ServSafe training deadline has been extended until 01 May.

New Business

The Branch Home was the subject of a law enforcement action by SLED. Discussion addressed the impact on branch operations and necessary follow-up actions. Signs will be posted stating that membership IDs are required. Home Manager S/M Larry Pepper recommends an increase of 25¢ on all drinks at the bar.

- **MOTION:** S/M Tim Bailey moved, and Lady Dee Wallace seconded to increase drink prices by 25¢. Motion carried

CPR/AED training will be at the Home on 28 March at 0900.

Upcoming Events

St. Patrick's Day – 17 March 2026 – Corned beef and cabbage will be served

Easter – 5 April 2026

Kentucky Derby – 2 May 2026 – Decorate and party

Memorial Day – Guest speaker, Admiral Ishee

Good of the Order

Appreciation was expressed to Jeff Finer for the excellent job he did preparing the food for the Mid-Year Meeting.

Appreciation was also expressed to Home Managers S/M Larry Pepper and PNC Don Muckcheck for their continued efforts in helping keep the Branch Home operating smoothly.

Next meeting will be held: 13 April 2026 at 1800

- **MOTION:** Lady Dee Wallace moved, and S/M Tim Bailey seconded, that the meeting adjourn. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 1849.

PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTION ELIGIBILITY



WHAT IS PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTION?

For some conditions and certain disabilities, VA automatically assumes (or “presumes”) that your service caused your condition. We call these presumptive conditions. This is because of the unique circumstances of a specific Veteran’s military service. If Veterans are diagnosed with a presumptive condition and meet the service requirements for the presumption, then disability compensation may be awarded.

Additionally, when a Veteran’s cause of death is a presumptive condition and the service requirements are met, the Veteran’s surviving spouse, dependent children, or parents may qualify for service-connected death benefits, to include Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and burial benefits.

WHAT ARE PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS?

Presumptive conditions are established by law or regulation, which provides a link to the Veteran’s military service, reducing the evidentiary burden on the Veteran. These conditions are considered to have been incurred in or aggravated by military service if manifested to a certain severity level within a specific timeframe, if applicable—even if there is no evidence of such disease during military service. Veterans who served in recognized locations during timeframes in which toxic exposure occurred do not need to prove actual exposure or a link between the claimed condition and exposure.

CHRONIC (LONG-LASTING) CONDITIONS

The following chronic conditions are presumptive if the disease manifests in the specified timeframe and the Veteran served continuously for at least 90 days.

WITHIN ONE YEAR OF RELEASE FROM ACTIVE DUTY:

- » Anemia, primary
- » Arteriosclerosis
- » Arthritis

- » Atrophy, progressive muscular
- » Brain hemorrhage
- » Brain thrombosis
- » Bronchiectasis
- » Calculi of the kidney, bladder, or gallbladder
- » Cardiovascular-renal disease, including hypertension
- » Cirrhosis of the liver
- » Coccidioidomycosis
- » Diabetes mellitus
- » Encephalitis lethargica residuals
- » Endocarditis
- » Endocrinopathies
- » Epilepsies
- » Hodgkin’s disease
- » Leukemia
- » Lupus erythematosus, systemic
- » Myasthenia gravis
- » Myelitis
- » Myocarditis
- » Nephritis
- » Other organic diseases of the nervous system
- » Osteitis deformans (Paget’s disease)
- » Osteomalacia
- » Palsy, bulbar
- » Paralysis agitans
- » Psychoses
- » Purpura idiopathic, hemorrhagic
- » Raynaud’s disease
- » Sarcoidosis
- » Scleroderma
- » Sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral (ALS)
- » Syringomyelia
- » Thromboangiitis obliterans (Buerger’s disease)
- » Tumors, malignant, or of the brain or spinal cord or peripheral nerves
- » Ulcers, peptic (gastric or duodenal)

For more information visit:
www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

WITHIN THREE YEARS OF RELEASE FROM ACTIVE DUTY:

- » Tuberculosis
- » Hansen’s disease (leprosy)

WITHIN SEVEN YEARS OF RELEASE FROM ACTIVE DUTY:

- » Multiple sclerosis

ANY TIME AFTER RELEASE FROM ACTIVE DUTY:

- » Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)

CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH HAZARDOUS EXPOSURES

Veterans may have been exposed to chemical hazards or other hazardous materials if they served in specific locations during a specific time period.

- » **Vietnam Era Veterans:** The following conditions are presumptive due to herbicide/Agent Orange exposure for Veterans who served in specific locations and time periods:



PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS	LOCATIONS AND TIME PERIODS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chloracne or other acne-form disease consistent with chloracne* • Soft-tissue sarcoma, other than <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Osteosarcoma ○ Chondrosarcoma ○ Kaposi’s sarcoma, or ○ Mesothelioma • Non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (NHL) • Porphyria cutanea tarda (PCT)* • Hodgkin’s disease • Respiratory cancers of the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lung ○ Bronchus ○ Larynx, or ○ Trachea, and • Multiple myeloma • Prostate cancer, and • Acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy* • Type 2 diabetes mellitus (also known as Type II diabetes mellitus or adult-onset diabetes) • Chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL) • AL amyloidosis • Ischemic heart disease (IHD) (including, but not limited to, acute, subacute, and old myocardial infarction; atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease including coronary artery disease (including coronary spasm) and coronary bypass surgery; and stable, unstable and Prinzmetal’s angina) • All chronic B-cell leukemias (including, but not limited to, hairy-cell leukemia and chronic lymphocytic leukemia), and • Parkinson’s disease • Early-onset peripheral neuropathy • Parkinsonism • Bladder cancer • Hypothyroidism • Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS) • Hypertension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Republic of Vietnam (to include territorial waters within 12 nautical miles of shore) from January 9, 1962, to May 7, 1975 • Service in the Air Force or Air Force Reserve when the individual concerned regularly and repeatedly operated, maintained, or served onboard C-123 aircraft known to have been used to spray an herbicide agent during the Vietnam era • Korean DMZ from September 1, 1967, to August 31, 1971 • Thailand at any United States or Royal Thai base, without regard to where on the base the Veteran was located or what military occupational specialty the Veteran performed, from January 9, 1962, to June 30, 1976 • Laos from December 1, 1965, to September 30, 1969 • Cambodia at Mimot or Krek, Kampong Cham Province, from April 16, 1969, to April 30, 1969 • Guam or American Samoa, or in the territorial waters thereof from January 9, 1962, to July 31, 1980 • Served on Johnston Atoll or on a ship that called at Johnston Atoll from January 1, 1972, to September 30, 1977

Note: Conditions marked with an asterisk (*) must have manifested within one year of exposure.

» **Gulf War and Post-9/11 Veterans:** The following conditions are presumptive for Veterans who served in specific locations and time periods:



PRESUMPTIVE INFECTIOUS DISEASES	LOCATIONS AND TIME PERIODS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manifest within one year of separation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brucellosis ○ Campylobacter jejuni ○ Coxiella burnetii (Q fever) ○ Nontyphoid Salmonella ○ Shigella ○ West Nile virus ○ Malaria (or when accepted treatises indicate the incubation period began during a qualifying period of service) • Manifest at any time after separation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mycobacterium tuberculosis ○ Visceral leishmaniasis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service in the following locations (Southwest Asia theater of operations) and the airspace above during the Persian Gulf War on or after August 2, 1990: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Iraq ○ Kuwait ○ Saudi Arabia ○ the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia ○ Bahrain ○ Qatar ○ the United Arab Emirates ○ Oman ○ the Gulf of Aden ○ the Gulf of Oman ○ the Persian Gulf ○ the Arabian Sea ○ the Red Sea • Service in Afghanistan on or after September 19, 2001



UNDIAGNOSED ILLNESS AND MEDICALLY UNEXPLAINED CHRONIC MULTI-SYMPTOM ILLNESSES	LOCATIONS AND TIME PERIODS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic disability resulting from an undiagnosed illness or combination of undiagnosed illnesses that exists for six months or more • A medically unexplained chronic multi-symptom illness (MUCMI) that exists for six months or more, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chronic fatigue syndrome ○ Fibromyalgia ○ Functional gastrointestinal disorders, including irritable bowel syndrome (structural gastrointestinal diseases, such as gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), are not included) <p>Note: Signs or symptoms that may be manifestations of undiagnosed illness or medically unexplained chronic multisymptom illness include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fatigue ○ Skin symptoms ○ Headaches ○ Muscle pain ○ Joint pain ○ Neurological or neuropsychological symptoms ○ Symptoms involving the upper or lower respiratory system ○ Sleep disturbances ○ Gastrointestinal symptoms ○ Cardiovascular symptoms ○ Abnormal weight loss ○ Menstrual disorders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service in the following locations (Southwest Asia theater of operations) and the airspace above (unless otherwise noted) during the Persian Gulf War on or after August 2, 1990: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Iraq ○ Kuwait ○ Saudi Arabia ○ the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia ○ Bahrain ○ Qatar ○ the United Arab Emirates ○ Oman ○ the Gulf of Aden ○ the Gulf of Oman ○ the Persian Gulf ○ the Arabian Sea ○ the Red Sea ○ Afghanistan* ○ Egypt* ○ Israel* ○ Jordan* ○ Turkey* ○ Syria* <p>Note: *airspace not included.</p>



CONDITIONS BASED ON PRESUMED EXPOSURE TO BURN PITS/FINE PARTICULATE MATTER

LOCATIONS AND TIME PERIODS

- Asthma
- Chronic sinusitis (to include rhinosinusitis)
- Chronic rhinitis
- Brain cancer
- Gastrointestinal cancer of any type
- Glioblastoma
- Head cancer of any type
- Kidney cancer
- Lymphoma of any type
- Melanoma
- Neck cancer of any type
- Pancreatic cancer
- Reproductive cancer of any type
- Respiratory cancer of any type
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Chronic bronchitis
- Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis
- Emphysema
- Granulomatous disease
- Interstitial lung disease
- Pleuritis
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Sarcoidosis
- Urinary bladder cancer, including over-lapping sites of the bladder
- Ureter cancer, including the ureteric orifice, and urachus
- Acute leukemias
- Chronic leukemias
- Multiple myelomas, including monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance
- Myelodysplastic Syndromes
- Myelofibrosis

- Service in the following locations (Southwest Asia theater of operations) and the airspace above during the Persian Gulf War beginning August 2, 1990:
 - Iraq
 - Kuwait
 - Saudi Arabia
 - the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia
 - Bahrain
 - Qatar
 - the United Arab Emirates
 - Oman
 - the Gulf of Aden
 - the Gulf of Oman
 - the Persian Gulf
 - the Arabian Sea
 - the Red Sea
 - Somalia
- Service in the following locations, including airspace above, beginning September 11, 2001:
 - Afghanistan
 - Egypt
 - Jordan
 - Lebanon
 - Syria
 - Yemen
 - Djibouti
 - Uzbekistan

» **Veterans Exposed to Mustard Gas and Lewisite:** The following conditions are presumptive for Veterans who were exposed to specific vesicant agents during active military service under the circumstances described:



PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS	EXPOSURE TO VESICANT AGENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic conjunctivitis • Keratitis • Corneal opacities • Scar formation at the exposure site • Squamous cell carcinoma of the skin • Nasopharyngeal cancer • Lung cancer (except mesothelioma) • Laryngeal cancer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-body exposure to nitrogen or sulfur mustard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic laryngitis • Chronic bronchitis • Emphysema • Asthma • Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-body exposure to nitrogen, sulfur mustard, or Lewisite
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute nonlymphocytic leukemia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-body exposure to nitrogen mustard

» **Veterans Stationed at Camp Lejeune:** The following conditions are presumptive for Veterans who served at least 30 days (consecutive or nonconsecutive) at Camp Lejeune from August 1, 1953, to December 31, 1987:



PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult leukemia • Aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes • Bladder cancer • Kidney cancer • Liver cancer • Multiple myeloma • Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma • Parkinson's disease

- » **Radiation Exposed Veterans:** The following conditions are presumptive due to ionizing radiation exposure for Veterans who meet the service requirements including, but not limited to the following:



PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS	SERVICE REQUIREMENTS*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All forms of leukemia, except chronic lymphocytic leukemia • Thyroid cancer • Breast cancer • Pharynx cancer • Esophageal cancer • Stomach cancer • Small intestine cancer • Pancreatic cancer • Bile duct cancer • Gall bladder cancer • Salivary gland cancer • Urinary tract cancer (kidneys, renal pelves, ureters, urinary bladder, and urethra) • Brain cancer • Bone cancer • Lung cancer • Colon cancer • Ovarian cancer • Liver cancer (except if cirrhosis or hepatitis B is indicated) • Bronchioloalveolar carcinoma • Multiple myeloma • Lymphomas (except Hodgkin's disease) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onsite participation in a test involving the atmospheric detonation of a nuclear device • Service in Hiroshima or Nagasaki from August 6, 1945, through July 1, 1946 • Service before February 1, 1992, at a diffusion plant in Paducah, Kentucky, Portsmouth, Ohio or Oak Ridge, Tennessee • Service before January 1, 1974, at Amchitka Island, Alaska • Service in a capacity which would qualify the individual for inclusion as a member of the Special Exposure Cohort • Cleanup of Enewetak Atoll from January 1, 1977, through December 31, 1980 • Cleanup of the Air Force B-52 bomber carrying nuclear weapons off the coast of Palomares, Spain from January 17, 1966, through March 31, 1967 • Response to the fire onboard an Air Force B-52 bomber Thule Air Force Base in Greenland from January 21, 1968, through September 25, 1985

* The service requirements listed above are not all inclusive. Refer to [38 § C.F.R. 3.309\(d\)](#) for detailed information regarding service requirements.

- » **Former Prisoners of War (POWs):** The following conditions are presumptive for former POWs at any time after separation from service:



PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avitaminosis* • Beriberi (including beriberi heart disease)* • Chronic dysentery* • Helminthiasis* • Malnutrition (including optic atrophy associated with malnutrition)* • Any other nutritional deficiency* • Pellagra* • Psychosis • Any of the anxiety states • Dysthymic disorder (or depressive neurosis) • Organic residuals of frostbite, if it is determined that the Veteran was interned in climatic conditions consistent with the occurrence of frostbite • Post-traumatic osteoarthritis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritable bowel syndrome* • Peptic ulcer disease* • Peripheral neuropathy, except where directly related to infectious causes* • Stroke and its complications • Cirrhosis of the liver* • Atherosclerotic heart disease or hypertensive vascular disease (including hypertensive heart disease) and their complications (including myocardial infarction, congestive heart failure, arrhythmia) • Osteoporosis* (if the Veteran has a diagnosis of PTSD then the requirement of at least 30 days of internment or detainment does not apply) <p>Note: Conditions marked with an asterisk (*) require at least 30 days of internment or detainment.</p>

TROPICAL DISEASES

The following conditions are presumptive for Veterans who meet the required active-duty service requirements:



PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS	SERVICE REQUIREMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amebiasis• Blackwater fever• Cholera• Dracontiasis• Dysentery• Filariasis• Leishmaniasis, including kala-azar• Loiasis• Malaria• Onchocerciasis• Oroya fever• Pinta• Plague• Schistosomiasis• Yaws• Yellow fever• Resultant disorders or diseases originating because of therapy administered in connection with such diseases or as a preventative thereof	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 months or more of active, continuous service before January 1, 1947• 90 days or more of active, continuous service on or after January 1, 1947, or during any period of war

OTHER DISEASES

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is also subject to presumptive service connection within fourteen days following the date of separation from a qualifying period of service:

- » active duty from March 1, 2020, until January 5, 2024
- » active duty for training (ADT) under Title 10 or full-time National Guard duty (as defined in Section 101 of Title 10) under orders issued on or after March 13, 2020, until January 5, 2024
- » certain periods of inactive duty for training (IADT) during which COVID-19 is presumed to have been incurred occurring between March 13, 2020, and January 5, 2024.

Marine Who Crawled Under Bridge To Plant Explosives Approved For Medal Of Honor

Marine Capt. John Ripley hung 500 pounds of explosives on the underside of a key bridge to stop an enemy offensive. He swung hand-over-hand for three hours while under fire from snipers and tanks.

... Matt White

(TASK AND PURPOSE 05 MAR 26) Matt White

A Marine who single-handedly destroyed a major bridge in Vietnam, swinging hand-over-hand across its steel girders to plant explosive charges even as an enemy tank fired at him, now appears set to receive the Medal of Honor.

Marine Capt. John Ripley's three-hour, one-man assault on the Dong Ha Bridge in April 1972 has long been a hallowed story in the Marine Corps. Fellow Marines, friends, and advocates have pushed for decades to see the Navy Cross he was awarded for the battle upgraded to a Medal of Honor. Those efforts appear to be nearing success, after the Senate approved special legislation that cleared the way for the award to be presented to him posthumously after his death in 2008

Final approval now falls to President Donald Trump.

A one-man assault

In April 1972, Ripley was a senior advisor to the 3rd Vietnamese Marine Battalion when the unit suddenly found itself in the path of two North Vietnamese Army divisions and a column of tanks in what was later dubbed the Easter Offensive. Ripley was ordered to stop the oncoming force, which was far larger than his own and backed by armor. "Hold and die," were the words passed over the radio.

To do that, he slung explosives around his shoulders and climbed into the steel I-beam girders beneath a key bridge over the Cua Viet River.

"I'm dangling under the bridge and hanging by my arms with a full load of explosives," he told the U.S. Naval Institute. "I would drop down out of the steel, grabbing the flanges of the I-beam; swing sideways, and leap over to hand walk all the way out over the river

From the far bank, the North Vietnamese tried to dislodge him with sniper fire and, eventually, a tank, which fired a round at his spot under the bridge. The round ricocheted and exploded on the riverbank.

"Boy, when that 100mm round went off with me in the steel of the bridge, what a racket," Ripley said in 2008 when he was inducted into the U. S. Army Ranger Hall of Fame. He later credited his knowledge of explosives at Dong Ha to training at the Army's Ranger School.

For more than three hours, Ripley swung hand over hand beneath the bridge, making five trips out over the water. He eventually placed 500 pounds of explosives. To stave off exhaustion, he constantly recited a simple prayer: "Jesus, Mary, get me there;

get me there,” he told The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property in a 2008 interview.

Throughout, he later said, he expected to be killed.

“The idea that I would be able even finish the job before the enemy got me was ludicrous,” Ripley said in a 2007 interview with the U.S. Naval Institute in 2007. “When you know you’re not going to make it, a wonderful thing happens: You stop being cluttered by the feeling that you’re going to save your butt.”

After rigging the final blasting caps to a time-fused cord, he hurried off the bridge just moments before it blew, throwing him through the air.

“I’m lying on my back, looking skyward, and I can see enormous chunks of this bridge going through the air,” Ripley told the U.S. Naval Institute. “It was a tremendous feeling.”

The downed bridge created a logjam of North Vietnamese tanks that U.S. bombers and warships were able to hammer. The Easter Offensive failed, and Võ Nguyên Giáp, who had led the Vietnamese communists to victory over the French decades earlier, was replaced as the commander of the North Vietnamese armed forces.

Reconnaissance Marine and college leader

By the time Ripley acted at Dong Ha, he had been through an exhaustive series of top training schools and assignments with elite foreign units.

As a Force Reconnaissance Marine, he graduated from the Army’s Airborne, jumpmaster and Ranger schools, scuba training, and the Marines’ Amphibious Warfare School. After his first tour in Vietnam, he took exchange assignments with the British Royal Marines, attending their Commando Course, and attached with both Singapore Commando brigades and Nepalese Gurkha troops. Ripley also served a tour with the British Special Boat Service, completing Mountain and Arctic Warfare Courses in Norway (later as a senior commander, he took several battalions of Marines to Norway for training).

Only then did he return to Vietnam in 1971.

Ripley retired in 1992 as a colonel. He became the president of a small college in Virginia and served as the Director of Marine Corps History and Museums Division. At the Naval Academy’s Memorial Hall, a diorama depicting Ripley’s action is on display to represent all graduates of the school who fought in Vietnam.

<https://taskandpurpose.com/news/marine-john-ripley-medal-of-honor/>



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125 N. West Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-2754

Phone: 703-683-1400
Toll-Free: 1-800-FRA-1924

www.fra.org

