

CHAPTER XIX

VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS

Two veterans' organizations today are honorably dedicated toward a better and more prosperous town of Jaffrey and since their formations have been assuming a vital role in community service to achieve that end. They are the John Humiston Post No. 11, The American Legion, and the Jaffrey Memorial Post No. 5613, Veterans of Foreign Wars. They are not rival organizations. A large part of the membership of one are also members of the other, and there is a commendable spirit of cooperation between the two organizations, extending into a mutual feeling of responsibility toward the town of Jaffrey and its people.

JOHN HUMISTON POST NO. 11, THE AMERICAN LEGION

The local American Legion Post received its temporary charter on June 13, 1919, with Frederick C. Sweeney, Capt. Ewing W. Hamlen, Homer J. Deschenes, Glenn A. Hunt, Joseph Parent, Louis A. De-Foe, William W. Hilldreth, Joseph D. Donahue, Philip J. Taylor, Arthur Christian, Meddie J. Taylor, Antonio A. Gelinas, Oliver St. Pierre, Urgel St. Pierre, and Ruck J. Charlonne as charter members. William W. Hilldreth was Commander under the temporary charter until August 8, 1920.

A permanent charter was granted under the name of the James B. Mathewson Post No. 11, The American Legion, on August 10, 1920, and Jeremiah W. Sullivan became Commander. In 1922 the name was changed to John Humiston Post No. 11, in honor of the first Jaffrey man to lose his life in action overseas. He was killed in France on June 16, 1918.

The regular meetings of the Post were held at the Union Hall Annex until 1935 when the Post was able to move into its new hall which had been under construction for some time on Webster Street, then known as KK Road. The new building was dedicated on June 20, 1936, with New Hampshire Governor H. Styles Bridges on hand for the service of dedication. Senator Charles W. Tobey was also present for the occasion and both he and Governor Bridges were speakers. George H. Gentsch was Commander at the time.

On August 11, 1949, an addition to the Legion Hall was started and was in use the following January. But, as all the labor was done by the members and friends, the addition was not completed until October, 1950.

During the fiftieth year since granting of the permanent charter in 1920, the present officers are: Raymond Wallace, Commander; Carl Hall, First Vice Commander; James Baird, Second Vice Commander; Arthur Lambert, Finance Officer; Homer J. Forcier, Service Officer; Ernest J. Pratt, Adjutant; Ernest J. Pratt, Historian; and John Whipple, Chaplain. All but Pratt are veterans of World War II.

THE JOHN HUMISTON UNIT NO. 11,
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

The John Humiston Unit No. 11, American Legion Auxiliary, is a sister organization to the Legion Post, and through the years has been a loyal supporter of the Post in all the projects for community service. It has given the woman's touch to the meetings of the Post by serving the refreshments at the close of their meetings. It has also rendered its own contribution of public service, as indicated by its many committees: Americanization, Child Welfare, Civil Defense and National Security, Constitution and By-laws, Communications, Community Service, Education and Scholarship, Girls State, Foreign Relation, Juniors, Legislation, Rehabilitation, Past Presidents' Parley, Music, and Membership.

The regular meetings are held simultaneously with the Post in the downstairs hall at the Legion Building. The Post meetings are held in the main auditorium up-stairs. Among its membership the unit now has seven Gold Star Mothers.

The present officers are as follows: President, Lorraine Scribner; vice president, Pauline Halfpenny; secretary, Jean Eaves; treasurer, Katherine Christian; chaplain, Marion Taylor; sergeant-at-arms, Annette Schultze; historian, Agnes Fields.

An annual January highlight of the unit activities is its birthday party for the Legion Post. The Unit was founded in 1921.

JAFFREY MEMORIAL POST NO. 5613,
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

When the veterans of World War II returned home after the war, their spirit of service had not terminated with the laying down of their weapons. Two Jaffrey veterans, John A. Crawford and John F. Reddy, seriously pondered the idea of further service to perform locally, and called a meeting at the Willis Guest House in Squantum Village for December 7, 1945. Forty returned veterans attended the meeting to discuss the feasibility of forming a Veterans of Foreign Wars post in Jaffrey and what service to the town and its

people such a post could render. V.F.W. posts were springing up in towns and cities all around and to the Jaffrey group it seemed the expedient thing for Jaffrey, too. The town had over five hundred World War II veterans.

The meeting was attended by Chief of Staff of the District Emile Carrier of Nashua, New Hampshire, who outlined the origin and purpose of V.F.W. posts and encouraged the local group to go ahead to obtain a charter and elect officers. Present at the meeting also were Fred D. Story of Keene, New Hampshire, the District Commander of Cheshire County, and Alfred Brooks, also of Keene, who was connected with the Department Color Guard.

The following officers were elected: Commander, John A. Crawford; senior vice commander, John F. Reddy; junior vice commander, Robert R. Rich; and quartermaster, Alphe Lamothe. Another meeting was scheduled for January 4, 1946. Meanwhile, others wishing to join were allowed to do so by contacting Alphe Lamothe at Duncan's Drug Store.

Meanwhile, interest in the newly formed organization mounted and when the charter was closed at the January meeting, the Post had 136 charter members. Its present membership is 156, additional members being sought.

From then on the Post took an active part in community service and improvement, receiving several citations, and at the town's 175th Anniversary Celebration in 1948 the Post was awarded a plaque for community service as part of the celebration. It was one of three Posts so honored, the others being the posts in Meredith and Warner. The presentation was made by Commander Chase to the Jaffrey Memorial Post Commander John A. Crawford. Unfortunately, this plaque was lost in the fire which destroyed the interior of the Post home on January 8, 1951.

In making the presentation Commander Chase emphasized that the Jaffrey Post was fulfilling its motto of "Honor the dead by helping the living." He added that the local post was one of the most active and best organized in the State and had performed outstanding civic benefits since it was organized two years earlier.

The first and outstanding project of Jaffrey Memorial Post 5613, V.F.W., was the community ambulance service for the benefit of Jaffrey and Rindge residents. The sponsorship of the ambulance fund, upon the suggestion of Commander John A. Crawford, became a reality at a meeting early in 1948 and got under way on March 12. On Monday night, March 15, the late George E. Emory,

who had become interested in the project, called the V.F.W. ambulance committee to his home and there presented a check for one thousand dollars to the committee as a starter toward the acquisition of an ambulance. Coin boxes were placed in the local business places for donations and donations were also solicited by mail. The response was very gratifying to the sponsors and the project has been justified by the enthusiastic support annually given to it by the spring penny sale, at which the sum of money received increases every year. In fact, no other drives for funds are held, as sufficient funds are raised at this single annual event, which has now become one of the town's springtime highlights. At the 1970 Penny Sale, held in April, about \$4,000.00 was realized. The sale was again chairmanned by George Robinson, with Oren Letourneau and George A. Hart as co-chairmen, and Rene Forcier as treasurer.

The first ambulance was a second-hand Buick, with a small amount of equipment. Ford and Chevrolet ambulances followed the Buick. The success of the annual penny sales has made it possible for the V.F.W. to procure a fully equipped Cadillac ambulance. The big question today is: "How did the town ever get along without one?" The answer, a disconcerting one; "The hearse often was pressed into use as a substitute."

The twelve-member committee appointed at the start of the ambulance project, headed by John A. Crawford, included Girard Bibeau, Joseph P. O'Brien, Alonzo Christian, Henry Rivard, Joseph Christian, Joseph Record, Charles McCabe, George St. Pierre, Arthur G. Blair, Alphe Lamothe, and Armand Del Rossi.

The ambulance is maintained and operated by the V.F.W., and is parked next to the Jaffrey Police cruiser in the municipal building garage. The original dispatcher was Alphe Lamothe, who at that time was employed as a clerk in Duncan's Drug Store, a central and convenient location. Following his retirement, Frederick Simmons carried on for eleven years. Today, David Vinal, operator of Hillcrest Home, Inc., and Justin Ball are in charge. A list of drivers is maintained at all times, and the service is immediately available when needed. The service is free to the residents of the two towns, and the drivers, who receive training in proper procedures and the use of the equipment and necessary first aid, volunteer their services without monetary remuneration — their only reward being the knowledge and satisfaction of a service rendered in the cause of a human need. And the needs are many, as indicated by the following specimen months during the summer of 1970.

June — called out twelve times, 439 miles covered, 20 hours and 35 minutes driving time.

July — called out twelve times, 526 miles covered, eighteen hours driving time.

August — called out nineteen times, 573 miles covered, 27 hours driving time.

With their first major project, the V.F.W. Ambulance, successfully launched and functioning as planned for the benefit of the Jaffrey and Rindge residents, the Jaffrey Memorial Post No. 5613, V.F.W., looked around for its project number two. This they found at Shattuck Park on Thorndike Pond, which for some years had been somewhat neglected and needed repairs and improvements. This project was undertaken in the 1950's and the visible results are praiseworthy. Shattuck Park was left to the Town of Jaffrey by the late Henry Shattuck.

After taking over the management and improvement of the Park, the V.F.W. members repaired the hut and extended the beach from about twenty feet to about one hundred feet, under the chairmanship of Robert Record. Part of the swamp was filled in. Today no cars are allowed on the beach itself, with all parking restricted to the parking area. Arthur Lambert, a member of the National Guard, was able to arrange for volunteer assistance from that organization by way of bulldozers and donated man hours.

With project number two now relegated to the list of Veterans of Foreign Wars accomplishments, the members of the local post turned their full attention to project number three, the Babe Ruth Baseball league. They realized that boys between the ages of thirteen and fifteen were too young for organized baseball but needed direction and initiation into this great American sport. Four men, Robert Record, George White, Robert MacDonald, and Robert Murray, started the league in 1962 and it has continued to the present time under the direct management of Jaffrey's ardent baseball enthusiast, Leon H. Hunt. The interest in the league by the youth of Jaffrey has been gratifying to the sponsors. In 1969 thirty-six or thirty-seven boys tried out for the team, for which fifteen were selected. After the boys have played with the league, they are presented with jackets from the V.F.W. Post. Each year, as a special feature, the boys of the Babe Ruth League are guests at a cookout. When they reach the age of fifteen, they automatically become eligible for the American Legion and High School baseball.

It was only natural that after launching their third major pro-

ject, the Jaffrey Memorial Post No. 5613 should look for a fourth major project for undertaking. This they found in the unsightly piece of land between the new U.S. 202 highway and Cheshire Pond. With the straightening of the highway, the old 202 highway following the contours of the head of the pond was abandoned, with a strip of land on one side belonging to Charles H. Howard, Sr. During his commandership, Duviglio Ascani assigned his adjutant, Charles A. Baldwin, to contact the State of New Hampshire authorities regarding the procurement of the old roadway. This the state sold to the Post in 1962 for one dollar during the commandership of Robert Record. Previously, the Post had been presented the land bordering on the road by Charles H. Howard, Sr.

After a lapse of a few years, the work on the new project was resumed under the management of Alphe Lamothe. Although the area is small, the Memorial Post has an ambitious program outlined for its development and beautification, and the eyesore of years will eventually become one of the beauty spots of the town. The plot has been graded and landscaped with the planting of shrubs and flowers. A boat launching and landing place for the shore of the pond is in the planning stage, as is also a flagpole to be erected by spring. Tables have already been provided for the accomodation of travelers on U.S. 202 where they may stop for a picnic or rest. A stone has been placed in the center, on which an appropriated plaque will be placed. The small park will be called the Howard Park, in honor of Charles H. Howard, Sr., donor of much of the land. Dedication plans are under consideration, probably in the spring.

Funds for the various projects are largely derived from dues and from profits of the Post canteen. Poppy Day sales also furnish money, the last one bringing \$490.00, which was equally divided between the Post and Unit for relief work among the members. Funds are also used in the purchase of flags donated to churches and where needed. John A. Crawford, Sr., is in charge of the flag program.

The Jaffrey Memorial Post No. 5613, V.F.W., has now achieved a 100 per cent membership under the commandership of Peter Bourque for 1971. It is one of three New Hampshire Posts to attain this distinction for the coming year.

The 1970 officers of the Post are as follows: Commander, J. Peter Bourque; senior vice commander, Nelson Letourneau; junior vice commander, Kenneth Elliott; quartermaster, Maurice Christian; adjutant, Charles A. Baldwin; historian, Robert Lambert; chaplain,

Arthur Lambert; patriotic instructor, John A. Crawford, Sr.; loyalty day chairman, Alden Bacon; service officer, Rene Forcier; youth committee, Arthur Lambert; Americanism, John A. Crawford, Jr.; publicity officer, Edward Sasner.

JAFFREY MEMORIAL POST NO. 5613,
V.F.W., AUXILIARY UNIT

The Jaffrey Memorial Post No. 5613, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary Unit was organized on May 17, 1946, with forty-nine charter members. Its first slate of officers were: President, Katherine Reddy; Senior Vice President, Priscilla Allord; Junior Vice President, Marion McNear; Treasurer, Barbara Croft; Secretary, Charlotte Duval; Chaplain, Beryl Allen; Conductress, Olive Lamothe; Guard, Adelaide Forcier; Historian, Winifred Haynes; Patriotic Instructor, Lucille Christian; Trustees, Lauraette Sawtelle, one year, Marion Harvey, two years, and Marguerite Eames, three years; Color Guard, Margaret Arnold, Mildred Lane, Margaret Fish, and Frances Forcier.

The Unit meets at the Post Home the second Monday of each month. Its activities include a great deal of child welfare work, collection of gifts to veterans' hospitals, and numerous other services. These services are best told by a listing of the various committees as follows: Americanization, Child Welfare, Civil Defense and National Security, Constitution and By-laws, Communications, Community Service, Education and Scholarship, Girls' State, Foreign Relations, Juniors, Legislative, Rehabilitation, Past Presidents Parley, Music, and Membership. In January the Unit gives a birthday party Post.

The present organization of the Auxiliary Unit consists of the following: President, Olive Bourque; Senior Vice President, Elizabeth Letourneau; Junior Vice President, Lucille Facticeau; Secretary, Margaret Jarvis; Treasurer, Rita Forcier; Chaplain, Alice Smith; Patriotic Instructor, Cecile Crawford; Historian, Melvina Martin; Guard, Agnes Field; Conductress, Lena Record; Trustee, Arlene Ouellette; Color Bearers, Alice Christian, Elizabeth Ascani, Virginia Baldwin, and Elizabeth Ellis.