

A CAPSULE HISTORY OF THE FIRST 80 YEARS

THE BEGINNING YEARS

In eight short years, from 1921 to 1929, the American Legion Auxiliary grew from 11,000 members to over 200,000 members. It was a period of growth for the organization, of new programs for the veterans, and of concern for growing pacifism. It was a time when the Auxiliary was needed in America to spearhead the drive of concern for the veterans and to keep the country alert to the dangers of isolationism. When American veterans banded together in The American Legion to carry on a peacetime program of service to the nation, it was only natural for the women of their families to join them. The women who had served so faithfully during the trying days of the war wanted to continue to serve. The American Legion Auxiliary is the result of that desire.

After the formation of The American Legion, a number of women's organizations wanted to become the affiliated women's organization of the Legion. A special committee was appointed by the temporary National Organization of the Legion to consider these requests.

After careful consideration, the committee determined that a new organization should be made up of the women most closely associated with the men of the Legion. These women would serve with the Legion "in peace as they had in war." The committee had determined that the best way for the Legion to secure an effective auxiliary would be to build a new organization from the ground up. The auxiliary could then carry forward the phases of Legion activities more suitably performed by women.

When the first National Convention of The American Legion was held on November 11-12, 1919, the special committee reported these facts to the convention. The report was approved by the convention, and the following Article was written into the Constitution of The American Legion:

ARTICLE XIII AUXILIARY

Section 1. The American Legion recognizes an auxiliary organization, to be known as the Women's Auxiliary to The American Legion.

Section 2. Membership in the Auxiliary shall be limited to the mothers, wives, daughters and sisters of the members of The American Legion, and to the mothers, wives, daughters and sisters of all men and women who were in the military or naval service of the United States between April 6, 1917, and November 11, 1920.

Section 3. The Auxiliary shall be governed in each Department of The American Legion by such rules and regulations as may be prescribed by the National Executive Committee and thereafter approved by such Department of the American Legion.

Less than one-year later, 1,342 local Units of the Women's Auxiliary to The American Legion had been organized. They were scattered over 45 states. Eleven thousand members had paid a national per capita tax to the National Headquarters of The American Legion. However no Departments had been organized within the 45 states. All this had been accomplished by the time the second National Convention of the Legion was held in Cleveland, Ohio in September 1920.

After the Cleveland convention, National Commander John G. Emery issued a directive stating the no Department of the Auxiliary could be formed until a number of Units had been organized that equaled fifty percent of the number of Legion Posts in the Department. Thus, Department organization began in 1920.

Ms. Pauline Curnick was employed by the National Headquarters of The American Legion to be in charge of the organization of Auxiliary Units. She worked as a clerk under the direction of Russell Creviston, the Legion's Director of Organization.

Minnesota was the first Department to qualify for a charter, and the first Department Convention was held in Minneapolis on November 18, 1920. By the summer of 1921, enough Departments had been organized to permit the National Commander, John G. Emery, to call a National

Convention of the Women's Auxiliary to be held concurrently with the Legion's third National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri.

The Auxiliary's first convention convened on November 1, 1921, with delegates from nearly every state and territory answering roll call. Departments had been chartered in 42 states and the territory of Hawaii. There were 3,653 Units, with an enrollment of 131,000 members. During the year following the Legion's second National Convention, the Auxiliary grew from 1,342 Units to 3,653 Units.

In Kansas City's Grand Avenue Temple, National Commander Emery called the first session of the Auxiliary's Convention to order. Dr. Helen Hughes Hielscher of Minnesota was elected Temporary Chairman of the convention. A national Constitution and Bylaws modeled after that of The American Legion, was adopted. The preamble of The American Legion Constitution was adopted, with the insertion of the phrase, "to participate in and contribute to the accomplishment of the aims and purposes of The American Legion."

It was at this convention that the name of the organization was officially changed to the American Legion Auxiliary. The organization of the Auxiliary was completed in 1921 with the election of Ms. Edith Hobart of Cincinnati, Ohio, to lead the organization in its first year.

An important action was taken at this convention that has remained with the organization. The poppy was adopted as the memorial flower of the Auxiliary.

The American Legion had elected to establish its National Headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Auxiliary established its National Headquarters in that city in temporary headquarters. In 1925, the first Unit of both organizations moved into a new limestone building. Today, the Auxiliary National Headquarters occupies the third and fourth floors of that building.

Ms. Pauline Curnick of Indianapolis joined National Headquarters as the first National Secretary, and Ms. M. Izetta McCoy of Topeka, Kansas, became the first National Treasurer. With the help of a staff of 13 employees, the National Secretary, and the National Treasurer, activities

were launched in the fields of rehabilitation, child welfare and Americanism.

In the year following the first convention, enrollment increased to 190,635 members in 5,375 Units. Departments were organized in 48 states, the District of Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, the Panama Canal Zone and one in Mexico.

In October 1922, the second National Convention was held in New Orleans, Louisiana. Dr. Kate Waller Barrett of Alexandria, Virginia was elected National President. The first States Dinner was held at this convention for 1,300 people.

During Dr. Barrett's year, Auxiliary Units did everything in their power for the hospitalized veterans. These services included visiting veterans in hospitals; providing comfort items to the veterans; and providing hospitality to relatives visiting the hospitalized veterans. Dr. Helen Hughes Hielscher, a leader in early rehabilitation work, sounded a call that was the beginning of the Legion's and Auxiliary's long campaign to obtain the best of care for the disabled veterans. This effort eventually resulted in the establishment of the Veterans Administration and the development of a system of modern Veterans Administration Medical Centers.

In its third year, Ms. Helen Bishop of Massachusetts was elected National President. During her term, the fight for disabled veterans and for the adjusted compensation bill ended with the enactment over the veto of President Calvin Coolidge. In 1924, Children's Billets were established to care for the orphans of veterans.

The Auxiliary had been vigorously fighting against radicalism and pacifism. Through the efforts of the Auxiliary, the first Women's Patriotic Conference on National Defense was held in Washington, DC, in February 1925.

In the same year, strong nationwide support was given to the Legion's campaign to raise a \$5,000 endowment fund for rehabilitation and child welfare. The Auxiliary was given credit for helping the drive to succeed.

The organization continued to grow in 1926, and disabled veterans made four million poppies. The Auxiliary distributed these, and this represented significant progress in rehabilitation work.

The pilgrimage to France for the 1927 National Convention took more than 27,000 Legion and Auxiliary members to Europe. With the Leviathan as flagship, the American veterans and female family members crossed the Atlantic in peacetime. The Salvation Army's "Doughnut Girl" in World War I, Irene McIntyre Walbridge of New Hampshire, was elected National President.

Under the leadership of National President Ms. Lucy Ficklen of Georgia, the first Department Presidents and Secretaries Conference was held in November 1928, in Indianapolis, IN. This conference has proved to be so valuable that it has been held each year since that time.

At this time, the Auxiliary became a major force behind the pilgrimage of Gold Star Mothers and Widows to France. This pilgrimage was made at government expense. With the passage of the Naval Construction Bill, an important victory was won for national security. And the veterans were not forgotten at Christmas in 1928, as 50,000 hospitalized veterans received gifts from the Auxiliary.

A new tradition was established at the ninth annual National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary when the National President was presented with the stand of Auxiliary National Colors under which she had served.

THE DEPRESSION YEARS

By 1929, the Great Depression blanketed the country. The threatening conditions tightened the ties of comradeship among veterans and their families. This need to join together resulted in new membership records for both the Legion and the Auxiliary.

Under a new plan, each Department in the organization provided gifts for all the veterans' hospitals in its state, regardless of the home state of the patient. Nearly 60,000 veterans received gifts from the Auxiliary under this new system.

As the Depression grew worse, aid to unemployed veterans became the first concern of the Legion and the Auxiliary. The organizations worked together for a bill to authorize loans up to fifty percent on Adjusted Compensation Certificates. The World War I “bonus” was not paid to veterans in cash, but in twenty-year insurance certificates called Adjusted Compensation Certificates. The White House blocked the bill: the President vetoed it. The fight continued, and 996,302 unemployed veterans were placed in jobs.

Economic conditions brought a reverse in membership figures. For the first time, the Auxiliary saw a decline in membership, as 9,622 members dropped from the organization. By the end of 1932, there were only 402,441 members. The Depression had made it impossible for many members to pay their dues.

In 1934, a campaign was launched to make good books available to more Americans. The Community Service Committee, established in 1926, carried out this program for the benefit of millions.

The battle of the Adjusted Compensation Certificates continued into 1936. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt vetoed the bill, Congress overrode the veto, and it passed. The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary won the battle. They were also victorious in their fight for increased national defense spending, for more than \$1 billion was appropriated to strengthen the Army and Navy.

In 1937, the Legion and the Auxiliary held their annual conventions in New York City, the largest and most spectacular convention in the history of the organization. Two and one-half million spectators lined the streets of New York City when the 150,000 Legionnaires marched up Fifth Avenue. The gigantic parade lasted 18 hours.

When world peace was threatened in the late 1930s, the Legion and Auxiliary continued their demands for a stronger national defense. Although World War I had occurred twenty years earlier, the needs of the disabled veterans of that war were increasing in 1937 and 1938. In that Auxiliary year, the first Area Rehabilitation Conferences were held, with short course of instruction given by Veterans Hospitals in fifteen states.

In 1938, the Auxiliary began to grow again, and membership reached a high of 460,919. The half-million mark was in sight. The largest Christmas program for veterans took place in 1938, with gifts from the Auxiliary sent to 94,654 hospitalized veterans and to 25,293 families of veterans. The program cost \$236,902 – not a small sum as the country struggled out of the Depression.

The year 1939 was a year of beginnings, and Kansas and Nebraska shared honors for a first in the Girls State program. This was the year the VA Hospital Gift Shops program began spreading quickly to all Departments, becoming a part of the rehabilitation program. Congress suddenly adopted national defense measures, advocated by the Auxiliary for years.

THE WORLD WAR II YEARS

The threat of war loomed on the horizon in 1940, and many changes took place in the decade that followed. In response to anticipated needs of the nation, the Legion's birthday, March 15, 1941, was designated "Registration Day," and Auxiliary members were to register for voluntary service in any emergency that might arise. Approximately 25 percent of all Auxiliary members registered. Members took civil defense courses and campaigned for funds for the new USO, and they collected aluminum, a needed wartime material. A vigorous Americanism campaign was launched, and membership exceeded the half-million mark, a goal the Auxiliary had promoted for several years.

On Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, 9,326 Units pledged the support of 523,000 members of the American Legion Auxiliary to the Commander-In-Chief of the United States. Just two months after Ms. Mary Murrill of Massachusetts had taken office; the United States was again at war.

Auxiliary members in Hawaii distinguished themselves by their service of caring for the thousands of victims of the attack at Pearl Harbor. The newly-formed Emergency Voluntary Service committee provided tens of thousands of Auxiliary members who gave valuable service to the Red Cross, the USO, Civil Defense, Selective Service Boards, Army and Navy relief, and dozens of other agencies that emerged overnight.

Six blood units were purchased and presented to the Red Cross; a book unit and mobile library went to the troops in India via the Red Cross, bearing the name of the American Legion Auxiliary, and blood for the wounded soldiers was donated by the gallon.

The Twenty-Second National Convention in Kansas City was attended by delegates only, and the traditional social events were suspended. Convention action abolished four National Standing Committees: Music; Emblems, Trophies and Awards; Employment; and Education of Orphans of Veterans.

In 1942, the Auxiliary began a campaign to enlist women in the Armed Forces who would relieve men to serve in combat duty. The successful campaign led to the enlistment of 913 of the Auxiliary's own members. The National Executive Committee authorized the disbursement of \$50,000 to pay for the cost of nurses' training for the women who have been unable to afford the training otherwise. The women of the Auxiliary were engaged in nearly every form of war effort activity.

The first women to be eligible for membership through World War II service were enrolled in the Auxiliary in 1943. Action of the Legion's 1942 National Convention gave eligibility to some of the World War II service personnel. Among the first to be eligible were widows and the families of the wounded who had been discharged because of disability. The majority of World War II service-connected women would not become eligible for membership until victory brought honorable discharges to the armed services personnel and the returning veterans were enrolled in The American Legion.

Absorbed in wartime activities, Units tended to neglect membership and 4,520 members were lost. The Child Welfare program took on new problems because of the disruption of family life, and the two organizations spent over \$2 million in 1943 helping half a million children.

In 1943, the Legion initiated action that would benefit the veterans of this global war. Nicknamed the "GI Bill of Rights," this bill was drafted by a committee of Legion rehabilitation experts appointed by National Commander Warren H. Atherton. The Auxiliary began an all-out campaign for the bill, taking the message into cities and towns across America. The effort resulted in the passage of the "Servicemen's

Readjustment of 1944” through both Houses of Congress without a dissenting vote. It was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on June 22, 1944.

Continued wartime activities occupied the energies of the Auxiliary, and in the fall of 1944, the Liberty Ship “SS Moina Michael” was launched in Savannah, Georgia. The ship was named in honor of the woman who had originated the idea of wearing poppies as a tribute to the war dead and whose work had contributed greatly to the development of the Auxiliary Memorial Poppy Program.

The National President, Ms. Helen Lee Gilbert of Connecticut, was attending the United Nations Conference on International Organizations as Associate Consultant to the American delegation when the word came from Europe that Germany had surrendered. Peace in the Pacific followed soon afterwards, and the post-war work began.

The sudden dawn of peace brought new demands for the services of America’s largest patriotic organization of women. The men and women who had won the war were coming home, and thousands of them were disabled. Widows and children of those who would never return would require the Auxiliary’s compassionate aid.

A five-point program was designed to strengthen the loyalty of Americans to democracy. This program encouraged active Americanism in the home, the Unit, in youth and adult groups, and in the community. Enrollment in the Auxiliary climbed to 750,000 members – a gain of 150,000 members in one year.

The years passed and membership grew – the result of the eligibility of World War II service-connected men and women. Girls State Programs were held in every Department, and the first Girls Nation was held on the campus of American University in Washington, DC, in August 1947. During this year, under the direction of National President Ms. Dorothy Pearl of Michigan, the National President’s Scholarships grew from five to ten, and a project was endorsed to raise half a million dollars for heart disease research. In 1947, Pan American Study was made a year-round activity.

Housing for war veterans and their families, rehabilitation of a new generation of disabled veterans, care of needy children, and concern for the prevention of another global conflict were the primary concerns of 1948. The Legion, backed by the Auxiliary, pushed for universal military training. More than 30,000 letters and 1,600 telegrams were sent to congresswomen urging passage of such a bill.

The *National News*, the official publication of the Auxiliary, took on a more important role and was sent to every Senior member. At the winter meeting of the National Executive Committee, \$50,000 was presented to The American Legion for the expansion of the Legion's rehabilitation program.

A station wagon was purchased for use at the US Marine Hospital in Carville, Louisiana, replacing one previously provided by the Legion. There was increased public awareness of the Auxiliary through 12,000 radio broadcasts, and 13 broadcasts went out over the new medium of television. With the National Convention in Philadelphia in 1949, the World War II period of the American Legion Auxiliary ended.

THE COLD WAR YEARS

On the domestic front, the Auxiliary went into action against Communism in the United States. The emphasis on Americanism grew. Layton K. Hurst joined the staff and began work on improving and enlarging the radio script library at National Headquarters.

The 1950s arrived, and with the invasion of South Korea, the Auxiliary again raised its voice in support of the Legion's demand for military training for all young men. In September 1950 President Harry S. Truman announced that the Armed Forces would be increased from 1.5 million to three million. That year a new high in membership was reached, with 975,000 members recorded. A new committee, Civil Defense, was appointed, headed by Past National President Ms. Dorothy Pearl.

The 26th Women's Patriotic Conference on National Defense convened in Washington, DC, on January 24, 1950, and marked the last conference in which the American Legion Auxiliary would participate. The Auxiliary held the position that it could not take part in the adoption of policy

resolutions since the Auxiliary followed the policies established by The American Legion. The rehabilitation program was broadened, with personal gifts from the Auxiliary given to 185,000 veterans in hospitals on Christmas Day, 1952.

The first Women's Forum on National Security was convened on January 24, 1953 in Washington, DC, under the direction of National President Ms. Eve Ashton of Utah. Seven hundred representatives from ten of the largest of America's national patriotic organizations attended this first meeting.

An all-time high of one million plus membership was reached in 1955. The first "Need a Lift?" booklet for students was published that year by The American Legion.

The Washington, DC office was opened in 1956 under the leadership of Layton K. Hurst, Program Coordinator.

The 1950s were marked by the launching of Sputnik by the Russians, the rising to power of Fidel Castro in Cuba, and the ending of the Korean War.

THE TUMULTUOUS SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES

During the 1960s, our membership continued to decline, and it did not recover significantly until 1976. There were constant protests against the government because of our involvement in Vietnam. Young men were refusing to answer the call to military service, and patriotism took a dip until the late 1970s. Construction of the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Crises, and the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy created additional stress throughout the nation.

The National President, Ms. Opal Glynn, visited Saigon during her 1965-66 administrative year, and she was able to see firsthand the ravages of war on our military. In 1966, with the signing of the approval documentation by President Lyndon B. Johnson, Vietnam veterans became eligible for membership in The American Legion. That same year, the Philippines established a Department of the American Legion Auxiliary.

The year 1969 brought many firsts to the American Legion Auxiliary. It was the year the Auxiliary Emergency Fund was made possible by funding from the Helen Colby Small estate. This fund provides temporary financial assistance for members of the Auxiliary. The first voluntary insurance programs were offered to our members.

Granddaughters became eligible for membership in the American Legion Auxiliary during 1970. This change would help the membership grow again toward the goal of one million members.

The 1970 National Convention in Portland, Oregon was full of tension for everyone involved, as confrontations with protesters marred the daily proceedings and created immense security problems. Among all the turmoil, the first National Vice President of the American Legion Auxiliary was elected. Bertha Parker of Oklahoma was the first to hold the office of National Vice President.

During 1973, the first Vietnam POWs were released, and Auxiliary members wearing POW/MIA bracelets watched for their "special" POW to be among those coming home. That same year, the Cavalcade of Memories was established in National Headquarters, with three rooms set aside to display Auxiliary memorabilia.

Our nation endured painful events during 1974-75, with the resignation of both the President and Vice President of the United States and the fall of Vietnam to the Communists as our troops withdrew. Membership in the Auxiliary, however, continued to grow, and it reached the highest count in twenty years during our Bicentennial Celebration year, 1976.

The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary had raised funds for five years to purchase a replica of the Liberty Bell to ride on the American Freedom Train during America's 200-year celebration. Millions of Americans saw the results of that effort as the Freedom Train crisscrossed the United States.

Our Bicentennial was uniquely celebrated by a joint Boys and Girls Nation session in our nation's capital.

The American Cancer Society received a one million-dollar donation from The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary in 1976 as a result of a yearlong fundraising campaign. That same year, the American Kor-Asian Foundation Open-Heart program became a part of the Children and Youth program. Units were asked to contribute funds for airfare to bring children of South Korea to the United States for open-heart surgery.

With the continued energy crisis in the United States, the American Legion Auxiliary focused its attention on solutions by establishing the Energy Conservation Committee during the 1976-77 administrative year. Changes to the National Headquarters Staff occurred during that same year when Ms. Peggy Sappenfield was appointed to the position of National Treasurer following the retirement of Ms. Myner Freeman.

National President Viola Moltzen (1977-78) was seen on national television as she presented a check in the amount of \$261,000 from Auxiliary members to Jerry Lewis for the fight against muscular dystrophy. Special Olympics was added as a regular emphasis in the Children and Youth program during 1978.

Ms. Miriam Junge from the Department of Ohio was appointed National Secretary of the American Legion Auxiliary in 1978 by National President Maxine Bigalow upon the retirement of Ms. Doris Anderson.

The Auxiliary has continued to fulfill its purpose by working hand-in-hand with the Legion. The basic programs of Americanism, Children and Youth, National Security, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, Girls State and Legislative continue to be as important as they were in the 1920s. Committees have been added and dropped, and titles have been changed, but the same basic ideals upon which America was founded remain in the hearts of the women of the American Legion Auxiliary. The Auxiliary is still striving to keep unsullied the idealism that has guided the nation, and to bring to the citizens of America a fuller realization of the responsibility of citizenship.

FOSTERING TRADITION AND NUTURING CHANGE IN THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES

The American Legion Auxiliary faced a new era of challenge as it entered its 60th year of service. In 1982, the American Legion Auxiliary Awareness Assembly was established to inform members about national and international issues pertaining to defense, security, veterans, women and the elderly. The Awareness Assembly replaced the disbanded Women's Forum on National Security. In support of women, the Past Presidents Parley awarded \$69,000 in nursing scholarships that same year.

United States service personnel served in Grenada and in Lebanon between August 24, 1982 and July 31, 1984. Our Armed Forces fought for several reasons: to support democratic reform in the small Caribbean nations, to provide development and defense aid, and to allow peace to take place. Membership eligibility was expanded to include the great-granddaughters of the Armed Forces of this war period.

The "Friends of Our Little Brothers" orphanage in Mexico was visited in 1984 by National President Anna Gear. This orphanage at one time housed nearly 1,200 children. The children relied on their land for food, but an inadequate supply of water hampered their ability to produce the necessary food to survive. The American Legion Auxiliary donated funds to be used for irrigation wells, which brought in a steady supply of water and ensured an adequate amount of food for the children.

A program supporting children closer to home came in the form of an educational comic book called "The Secret of Animal Island." The comic book illustrated safety tips for children. In 1987, it set Auxiliary records for public response, and 1.5 million copies were distributed worldwide.

In November 1989, Auxiliary members watched with joy as the Berlin Wall, the symbol of Soviet domination for many Americans, fell in November. Also, in 1989, the Supreme Court ruled in *Texas vs. Johnson* that flag burning was protected as free speech, thus overturning state flag-protection laws. This ruling devastated veterans' organizations across the country.

Through the years, other conflicts required the assistance of the United States. In 1989, Iraq invaded Kuwait, necessitating United States intervention. On December 20, 1989, the military set its campaign in motion. Known as "Operation Desert Storm," the war was short with relatively few American casualties. Auxiliary membership extended to include female family members of Desert Storm veterans.

The Family Support Network was launched in 1990 for Operation Desert Storm. The network was a national emergency assistance program in which military families called a toll-free telephone number staffed by Auxiliary and Legion members to request help. More than 34,000 telephone calls for assistance were received.

The increasing homeless population in the United States prompted American Legion Auxiliary members to step in and help in the 1990s. In 1992, Auxiliary members gathered in Washington, DC and built the "All Woman" house as part of Habitat for Humanity International's Jimmy Carter Work project.

Continuing to support homeless veterans, National President Linda Boone lead a group of concerned community and service groups to form a "Far From Home" chapter in Indianapolis which established a transitional living program for homeless veterans. Boone also led Auxiliary members in successfully collecting over one million pounds of food and donating this food to assist homeless veterans across the country.

Change at National Headquarters came in 1993 with the retirement of Ms. Miriam Junge of the Department of Ohio from the position of National Secretary. After serving fifteen years in this capacity, she was succeeded January 1, 1994 by Ms. Peggy Sappenfield. Sappenfield's appointment came following a successful seventeen years as the Auxiliary's National Treasurer. The successor to the position of National Treasurer was Ms. Marta Hedding of Indianapolis, who assumed the position on July 18, 1994.

National President Helen Holcomb of Odessa, Texas, introduced Teen Court to Auxiliary members in 1994. Teen Court is an alternative to the formal juvenile justice system, which allows young offenders to be tried

and sentenced by a jury of their peers. Auxiliary members initiated 17 Teen Courts across the country.

In an effort to overturn the Supreme Court's 1989 decision legalizing flag desecration under the First Amendment, the Citizens Flag Alliance was formed in 1994 with the sole purpose of protecting the American flag. This alliance is an apolitical, non-partisan, confederation of organizations and individuals who wished to pass a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration. Nearly 115 organizations and 35 million people joined The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary in this effort. In 1995, the constitutional amendment was narrowly defeated in the Senate by three votes.

At the National Convention in Indianapolis in September 1995, the Auxiliary celebrated its 75th year of service to God and Country. Membership eligibility was extended to include grandmothers.

Syble Deshotel was sworn in as 1995-96 National President. With the theme of "My Country," Deshotel and Auxiliary members increased their presence in local communities. Special attention was placed on domestic abuse issues, assistance for the elderly and disabled and improved care for veterans.

Some of this improved care was provided by Auxiliary volunteers working in the Fisher Houses. The Fisher Houses are comfort homes that provide temporary lodging for family members of military personnel and veterans who receive medical treatment at military or VA Medical Centers. Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher donated \$1.5 million to this project, and Auxiliary members honored them with the Public Spirit Award at the 15th Awareness Assembly session.

American troops were again called to service in 1995 to keep peace in Bosnia. Nearly 60,000 American troops joined United Nations forces on a peace keeping mission. Auxiliary members again became active with the Family Support Network to provide much needed assistance to family members of these overseas service personnel.

Mrs. Phyllis Bachman, of LaFargeville, NY, was elected 1996-97 National President of the American Legion Auxiliary at the 76th annual National

Convention, September 5, 1996, in Salt Lake City, Utah. Mrs. Bachman selected the theme "Promoting America" as she believed that "the issue of respect is fundamental to the preservation of America's priceless heritage." She challenged members to work to strengthen the values upon which our nation was founded. All Auxiliary youth-related programs were emphasized. Specifically, youth scholarship monies; participation in "Make a Difference Day"; existing Auxiliary Junior programs, Freedoms Foundation and the National Junior meeting.

Mrs. Barbara Kranig of Wisconsin was elected National President in 1997. During her tenure as National President, Kranig put an emphasis on strengthening the family. Her special areas of emphasis were food for the hungry, domestic violence, and adequate education for young people, in addition to the hallmark veterans programs. Mrs. Kranig also challenged members of the Auxiliary to be good neighbors, and find ways to meet the needs appropriate to their own communities. One way to accomplish this was through the Auxiliary's two-pronged commitment to the President's Summit for America's Future – a commitment that will extend through the next five years.

Mrs. Virginia Hobbs of Kentucky was elected National President in 1998. Her theme, "Reach for Success", was chosen because she believed that success is a concept which is unique to every individual. A few of the various projects that Past National President Hobbs supported were the Taste of the NFL, Children's Miracle Network, and the USO. Her special project was the World War II Memorial.

Ms. Elizabeth "Lib" Stewart of North Carolina was elected National President at the National Convention in Anaheim, California in September 1999. Ms. Stewart has chosen the theme "Celebrate America 2000" as she leads the organization into the next millennium. The major projects for her year will be Unit Revitalization, continuation of the World War II Memorial fund raising, Taste of the NFL, commitment to Legion Family programs, Junior involvement, the Flag Protection Amendment, and promoting patriotism. Her special project is Breast Cancer Awareness.

The creation of the American Legion Auxiliary was the most appropriate and progressive action The American Legion has ever undertaken. This body of women, affiliated by blood and marriage to those who gave their

lives for their country, has worked side-by-side with the Legion. Its own activities of service for over 75 years have equaled, and in many cases, exceeded its parent organization.

The Auxiliary's unselfish programs, in concert with those of the Legion, are legendary. These programs are dedicated to the men and women who suffered for their country, and they benefit the children whose fathers gave their lives for America. An enormous expenditure of thought and energy has been required to make these programs successful. The women of the Auxiliary have responded with devotion to service seldom equaled and never surpassed by any other organization.

THE UNIT IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

The Unit is the basic element of the American Legion Auxiliary. Every member must join a Unit, and through her Unit membership she is a part of the Department and the National Organization. The Unit is that entity through which the programs of the Department and National Organizations are carried out. The primary purpose of the Unit is to assist The American Legion Post, whose name and number is carries in accomplishing its purpose.

The general tenure of the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary is set by The American Legion. While the programs of the Auxiliary are on-going from year-to-year, the National President sets the theme for her administrative year. Each National Chairman, working with that theme, sets the program emphasis and action for the ensuing year. This information is transmitted to the Units through the Department officers and chairmen.

It is the actions of the Unit members that bring the programs to fruition. These actions are reported to the National Organization through the Departments, and this information is passed on to the general membership.

AMERICANISM

Americanism, a program in its own right, is the overriding principle in every program of the American Legion Auxiliary. Love for and understanding of the ideals and principles of democracy, upon which this great nation was founded, are the most powerful weapons for safeguarding the national security of this country.

Every citizen should have a thorough understanding of the Constitution of the United States. Lack of this knowledge can cause even the most dedicated person to be misled. Basic Americanism is essential in the home, youth and adult groups, the Unit and the community.

The development of deep-seeded personal patriotism within the home is the responsibility of every adult. Expression of patriotism, by word and action, inspires youngsters in the development of high ideals and character, and a true appreciation of our heritage. It is also important to believe in and practice tolerance for others. Careful study of candidates and issues and intelligent voting are not only privileges but are also obligations.

Under the leadership of the Americanism Chairman, the Unit should have a program to study the Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of Independence, and the Flag Code on a regular basis. Special patriotic programs should be planned for the Unit and all patriotic holidays should be observed.

Strong Americanism programs, as well as oratorical and essay contests, should be sponsored in youth groups and in schools. Democracy can be taught in elementary schools by the formation of student councils. Sponsorship of Boy and Girl Scout Troops is also an important Unit program.

Sponsoring citizenship classes and providing the American Creed, Flag Codes, and small flags to the new citizens are other important facets of the Americanism program. Flag study courses enhance the education of the adult foreign born.

Freedoms Foundation in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, is an organization dedicated to communicating to young people the principles upon which

our nation was founded. American history is brought to life at conferences for high school students. Members of the American Legion Auxiliary can send students from across the country to this educational forum where they learn the rights and responsibilities of a democratic society.

Public forums presenting both sides of a question or political campaign are a good way to keep citizens abreast of the issues and views of political candidates. Units should sponsor activities that help the community observe patriotic holidays and events. Unit members can serve as watchdogs in the community to work against subversive activities. Unit members should become involved in community affairs by attending or serving on city councils, school boards, county boards, and by working side-by-side with The American Legion in their Americanism programs.

AUXILIARY EMERGENCY FUND

The Auxiliary Emergency Fund committee was created by a resolution of the National Executive Committee at its meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on November 10, 1969. Funding for this program originally came from a bequest from the estate of Helen Colby Small of Wisconsin to the Auxiliary, the bequest to be known as the Helen Colby Small Foundation.

The Auxiliary Emergency Fund is administered by the Auxiliary's National Secretary and National Treasurer, and a representative from the Legion's Americanism and Children and Youth Division is on the Grant Committee. This fund is used to give financial assistance to members who find themselves in temporary financial hardship.

Action of the 1981 National Convention broadened the concept of the Auxiliary Emergency Fund to include the displaced homemaker. The specific purpose of the Displaced Homemaker Fund is to provide assistance to members who, by reason of divorce, illness or death of a spouse, have been forced to enter or return to the job market and lack the skills, or need to improve the skills necessary for employment.

CAVALCADE OF MEMORIES

Memories made tangible by tokens and mementos can be found throughout the American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters. Located on the third floor, the Cavalcade of Memories houses many keepsakes that pertain to the National Organization. Since its establishment in 1973, it has served as a reminder of the many achievements of the American Legion Auxiliary and its members.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The purpose of the Children and Youth program is two-fold: (1) to assure care and protection for children of veterans of the past seven wars (WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf), and (2) to improve conditions for all children. The accomplishment of these purposes is guided by three deep-seeded principles:

1. To preserve the integrity of the family home.
2. To maintain a “whole” child program which ministers to all the needs of children (physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, intellectual, social and family).
3. To cooperate with and strengthen other sound organizations and agencies which operate for the benefit of children in order to avoid competition and duplication of services.

These programs are accomplished in three ways:

1. By direct aid.
2. By educating the membership and the public on the needs of children, and by recommending ways of meeting their needs.
3. By supporting needed legislation for children through Convention resolutions of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary on National, Department and local levels.

When called upon for direct aid, a Unit is never expected or even encouraged to take over the support of a needy family. Direct assistance can be given while efforts are being made to secure assistance through local, state and federal government agencies that were established for this purpose (i.e., the Veterans Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services and Social Security). The Unit and Post should work together to ensure that all appropriate agencies are contacted. There are often delays in processing applications for assistance, and this should be kept in mind. Sometimes no aid is available, and in such instances the Units can help by providing temporary assistance.

There is a great deal of information about this subject on the American Legion's website under "Children and Youth Programs Piece." If no Unit and Post funds are available, requests for Temporary Financial Assistance can be submitted to the Department and to National.

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation is another section of the Children and Youth Division. Founded in 1954, it was created to provide funds for research, special projects, public education, etc., which benefit children and youth and are carried out over and above the regular program.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Improvement of the conditions of life in the community has been a prime concern of the American Legion Auxiliary Unit since 1926. Under the direction of the Community Service Committee, many community projects have been completed throughout the United States. The watchwords of the Community Service program are and always have been "initiate, cooperate, but never duplicate."

Every Unit of the American Legion Auxiliary is expected to work on at least one project of Community Service each year. This project may be in any of the following categories: health, recreation, safety, beautification, libraries, community councils, etc. Cooperation with other organizations in any worthwhile community project is encouraged.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

The Constitution and Bylaws Committee has the charge of recommending changes in the Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules. The National Committee also makes recommendations to the Departments and Units in reference to their Constitution and Bylaws. All recommendations for change should be submitted through the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

It is the responsibility of the Unit committee to keep the Unit Constitution and Bylaws current with the National and Department amendments, and to help the membership to be aware of and understand the amendments.

EDUCATION

Once entitled "Education and Scholarships Committee," the Education program is primarily concerned with assuring the availability of advanced education to any student having the desire and ability to pursue higher education; encouraging the membership of both the Legion and Auxiliary to take an active role in the development and maintenance of top-grade school systems, and encouraging students to pursue careers in areas where personnel shortages exist. These concerns and goals are accomplished by a close working relationship between National, Department and local levels of our organization. Among the activities carried out by the Education Committee to accomplish these goals are the following:

1. Initiating and supporting state and national legislation establishing scholarship opportunities.
2. Publicizing "Need A Lift?" on state and local levels, particularly at the local high schools.
3. Keeping the membership informed of the goals of the Education committee.
4. Encouraging students to plan for college and apply early for scholarships.
5. Helping students to be aware of career opportunities that are available.
6. Keeping the National Education Committee informed as to state law changes and new scholarships that are available.

FINANCE

The financial structure of a Unit is exceedingly important. An adequate budget takes into account the financial needs of various programs of the Unit and the income the Unit can expect. A close check must be maintained to ensure that the two remain in balance.

GIRLS STATE

Girls State began as a part of the Americanism program in 1937 by action of the National Convention. It was established as a separate committee at the 1946 National Convention. It is a non-partisan, non-political attempt to teach and instill by the learning-by-doing process in which the delegates live together as self-governing citizens, learning the duties, privileges and obligations that good citizenship entails. Girls State is administered by the individual Departments under the guidance of the National Chairman.

Each Unit has the final decision in the selection of a representative to Girls State. Although the American Legion Auxiliary has complete control in directing the Girls State program, we do welcome contributors from other organizations and businesses to enhance the program. When Unit funds are limited, many community organizations are called upon to contribute to the sponsorship of one or more delegates. This is an excellent way for the community to learn about one of the important programs of the American Legion Auxiliary. After each annual session, every delegate is expected to report to her school, her sponsoring Unit, and her contributing sponsor (should there be one), on her activities and impressions of Girls State.

Girls Nation is a permanent extension of Girls State, with two delegates from each Girls State going to Washington, DC for a week-long session on national government. They are privileged to meet with many high government officials, as well as United States Senators and Representatives. In most cases, they also meet with the President of the United States. Girls Nation is under the direction of the National Girls State Chairman.

JUNIOR MEMBERS

Juniors are members of the American Legion Auxiliary and are grouped separately by age so that they may receive training consistent with their age. Under the guidance of a Senior advisor (chairman), they are taught Americanism and work in areas of Children and Youth, Community Service and Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation. When Juniors elect officers, their titles are of honorary nature and they have no executive power.

Although the Foreign Relations country study and doll-dressing contest have been discontinued on the National level, the Department may continue these programs if they so desire.

As they are the future of the organization, it is essential that these young girls be taught a love for and understanding of the aims and purposes of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Programs and methods of training are contained in the Junior Activities Handbook and the Junior Leadership Correspondence Course which is available from each Department Headquarters.

LEADERSHIP

The Leadership Program is important to each Unit, as the Unit is only as strong as its leadership. Thus, it is necessary to develop leaders who are knowledgeable in all phases of Auxiliary work and in the Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules of the Unit, Department and National organization, as well as the guidelines for specific programs. Instruction is available from the organization on how to plan and implement a project from start to finish.

LEGISLATIVE

The legislative activities are carried out on National, Department and local levels, with direction from The American Legion. A full-time staff in

The American Legion Legislative Division works in Washington, DC keeping abreast of current legislation, usually relating to veterans' benefits, children and youth and national security, and opposing such legislation that could undermine these benefits.

In all matters of legislation, The American Legion Auxiliary follows the action of The American Legion, never endorsing any measure until The American Legion has first endorsed it, and never following a policy which does not coincide exactly with The American Legion's stand. The national policy of the American Legion Auxiliary is formed by the National Convention which always takes action on legislative matters which are identical with that of The American Legion's National Convention, giving The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary a joint program.

If a Unit is interested in securing or blocking some piece of legislation, it should present the matter to its American Legion Post and secure its support. The Post may then carry the matter to the Department Convention for consideration of The American Legion Department. If it receives endorsement, the American Legion Auxiliary Department will follow suit, and if it is a national matter, the Department will carry it to the National Convention.

"The Spirit of America" eNewsletter published by the American Legion Auxiliary, and the *"Dispatch"* published by the American Legion, keep members of the American Legion Family abreast of current legislation and the position of The American Legion.

Members of the American Legion Auxiliary stand ready at all times to launch letter-writing campaigns on the local, state and national levels when called upon by The American Legion.

LIASON TO THE CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation was created in 1954 (1)
To contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of

children and youth through the dissemination of knowledge about new and innovative organizations and their programs designed to benefit youth; and (2) To contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth through the dissemination of knowledge already possessed by well-established organizations, to the end that such information can be more adequately used by society.

Serving with the Board of Directors of the Child Welfare Foundation is a Liaison Committee of three appointed by the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary; a Liaison Committee of three appointed by the National Chapter of the Eight and Forty, and a Liaison Committee of three appointed by the National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion.

Every year, in mid-October, the Foundation Board of Directors meets in Indianapolis, Indiana, to consider grant requests. Our Board is authorized to expend whatever funds are available toward achieving its purposes. The Foundation makes grants to nonprofit institutions, organizations and agencies that are tax exempt and, in the opinion of our Board, have the ability to accomplish our two primary purposes.

The primary sources of Foundation funds are contributions from our individual members, as well as, Posts, Units, Salons, Squadrons, Departments, Districts and national contributions from the Legion, Auxiliary, Eight and Forty and Sons of The American Legion.

MEMBERSHIP

The lifeblood of the American Legion Auxiliary is its membership. The only form of membership that is authorized is active membership. There can be no awarding of honorary membership. If the veteran relative of the candidate is living, he or she must be a member of The American Legion. There are two classes of membership: Senior and Junior.

Eligibility for membership is set by The American Legion and is limited to:

1. Mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters, and grandmothers of all men and women who were in the Armed Forces of the United States during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January

31,1990; August 2,1990, to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the government of the United States, all dates inclusive, or who, being citizens of the United States at the time of their entry therein, served on active duty in the Armed Forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any of the said periods, and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge.

2. Women who, of their own right, are eligible for membership in The American Legion.

Each Unit of the American Legion Auxiliary is the judge of its own membership, subject to the restrictions of the Constitution and Bylaws. No person who is a member of an organization that advocates the overthrow of the United States government by force or violence, or who subscribes to the principles of any group opposed to our form of government, shall be eligible to become or remain a member of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Because all of the programs of the Auxiliary are so dependent upon a strong membership, an effective membership campaign is imperative. Many suggestions are offered to the Units, but the Unit ultimately decides what works best for them. Of course, personal contact always seems to work best. Membership solicitors must be well informed about the American Legion Auxiliary. There are many aids available from The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary to promote membership.

It is the Unit's responsibility to educate new members about the American Legion Auxiliary, and this cannot be stressed too strongly. Being knowledgeable about the programs and having the feeling of belonging engenders enthusiasm in new members.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The National Security of this nation is the utmost concern to every member of the American Legion Auxiliary. The Auxiliary believes the

National Security is directly dependent upon adequate National Defense. Past history has shown that this concern has been well founded. Every member should be fully informed about National Security and be able to disseminate this information to all citizens of the community. Forums, lectures, videos, slide presentation, and movies can be used for this purpose. *The Firing Line*, published by The American Legion, contains much current information on this subject.

The American Legion Auxiliary was one of fifteen women's patriotic organizations that made up the Women's Forum on National Security that met annually in Washington, DC to study the current national security situation. The final Women's Forum on National Security was held in 1981. The American Legion Auxiliary, not to be deterred in its concern for National Security, promptly organized and sponsored the Awareness Assembly which convened in 1982 and has been held annually in Washington, DC since then. The Awareness Assembly is open to all members and the public.

PAST PRESIDENTS PARLEY

The purpose of the Past Presidents Parley is to keep those who have served as Presidents of Units, Departments and the National Organization in active service to the Auxiliary. The care of disabled ex-servicewomen is its special charge. Other activities may be assigned on the Department and local levels. To be a member of the parley, one must be a member in good standing in her Unit.

POPPY

The American Legion was the first national organization to adopt the poppy as a memorial flower. This action was taken at the National Convention held in Cleveland, Ohio on September 27-29, 1920. The American Legion Auxiliary adopted it at the October, 1921 National Convention that was held in Kansas City, Missouri.

These are the only poppies that are handmade by hospitalized veterans. The veterans are paid for every poppy. All proceeds realized from the distribution of the poppies are used by the Legion and Auxiliary exclusively for the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation work, and for the families of the veterans.

This program provides the public the opportunity to join with The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary in expressing appreciation to the veterans who survived, in remembering those who gave their lives for the security of this nation, and in giving aid to those veterans and their families who are in need. All of this is expressed by the wearing of the memorial poppy.

The young people of the nation are invited to participate in Poppy Poster Contests, which are held in schools. The Units of the American Legion Auxiliary throughout the United States sponsor these contests.

The publicity campaign for poppy distribution is widespread and provides an excellent opportunity for the public to learn about the work being done by both the Legion and the Auxiliary.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Ideally, the Public Relations Committee is made up of three members: the Chairman, who directs all phases of the program; a Vice Chairman, who works directly with the press; and a member who works directly with the newspaper, radio and television media. The committee has the responsibility for making the public aware of the image of the American Legion Auxiliary. Direct and friendly contact with the media opens many doors. Well-written, informative, and timely articles are important. They are welcomed by the media and will keep the community aware of the activities of the American Legion Auxiliary. The Public Relations Chairman works closely with every other chairman so special projects receive good advance publicity.

The *Heart of America Awards* were created to recognize talented print and broadcast professionals who make positive contributions to American women, children and families by informing the public about timely issues, by providing valuable or thought-provoking information, or by promoting a better and more positive image of women and children within our society. The Public Relations committee assists in the promotion and judging of these awards.

The American Legion Auxiliary is fortunate to have a first-class publication, the *HomeFront*, which goes to every Senior member at no

additional cost, along with *National News* which is included in *HomeFront*. These publications bring up-to-date information about the Units and Departments to the entire membership.

The American Legion Auxiliary was founded for the purpose of assisting veterans and their families, and the families of those who gave their lives for this country. Over the years it has grown, and it continues to be responsive to the needs of those persons.

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee constantly updates the program and disseminates the information to the Departments and Units through bulletins.

The Unit VA&R Committee is comprised of as many members as is necessary to oversee the various phases of the program. Often, in working with the families of the veterans, the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Chairman and the Children and Youth Chairman work together. A close working relationship between the Post and the Unit is essential.

The various phases of the program include aiding the veteran and his/her family, providing Hospital and Field Service Volunteers, home service, gift shops, and assisting in job placement for veterans.

Seeking out direct aid for veterans and their families requires close cooperation between the Post and the Unit. Veterans and their families who are seeking assistance should be referred to the Post Service Officer. He has the resources and knowledge to research the veteran's benefits that are available in each case. The Post and the Unit can provide temporary assistance, but aid from other agencies should be sought as well.

American Legion Auxiliary Hospital Volunteers have contributed millions of hours of service to patients in all 173 Veterans Administration Medical Centers and in contract hospitals. Volunteers serve as patient escorts, receptionists, workers in the pharmacies and libraries, and as visitors to patients. They also provide comfort items to the veterans.

In order to work in the hospitals, the volunteers must take an orientation course that is provided by the VA Director of Volunteers and the Auxiliary. The volunteer can work on a regularly scheduled basis, or on a part-time basis. The volunteers work under the direction of the Hospital Representative who is appointed by the Department President. She is the liaison between the VA and the Auxiliary.

Field Service Volunteers work with veterans in nursing homes, geriatric day care centers, halfway houses, and in their own homes. Among the services provided by these volunteers are visiting and entertaining the veterans and transporting the veterans to doctors, recreational activities, church, shopping, etc. They also provide services to the veterans' families.

The Guide for Volunteers contains the rules and regulations of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Program and a description of the duties for all volunteer groups in rehabilitation. This booklet is available through the Department Headquarters.

By action of the 1975 National Convention, a new method of reporting the number of volunteers, hours and cost of material and supplies was initiated to record the services provided to veterans by volunteers in the volunteers' own homes. Home Service provides true record of service given by all American Legion Auxiliary volunteers for reporting to the Congress of the United States, and it also recognizes all volunteer hours of service given by our National Organization. Home Service relates to those hours worked by members in their own homes sewing, cooking, etc., for veterans and their families, and other hours that are not counted as part of the Field Service or Hospital Volunteer hours.

Gift Shops are held at VA Medical Centers each year. Through the Gift Shops, gifts are provided to the hospitalized veterans' immediate family members as gifts from the veterans. The Units of the Auxiliary contribute these gifts and there is no cost to the veterans. The Gift Shops are staffed by Auxiliary volunteers.

Job fairs and other job placement services are provided by The American Legion Posts, and Unit members assist in this program whenever possible.