

## Brazos Valley Marine Corps League

**February 8, 2021**

General Meeting at Cooper's Bar B Q

At 7:00 p.m., the Sergeant-at-Arms secured the facility, determined that all present were qualified to do so, posted the colors, and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Doc Powell called into the Commandant's phone, which was put on speaker, from the Legacy Rehabilitation Center, where he is presently a resident due to respiratory issues following COVID. He indicated he is with us in spirit! The Chaplain led us in prayer. The Commandant declared the meeting open for the transaction of official business.

Following a Roll Call of Officers, it was determined that a quorum was present.

Commandant Vallejo altered the normal order of business due to the **presence of a speaker, Jeff Murski**, who works for Senator Pete Sessions. Mr. Murski thanked all present for their service. He further indicated that, although Doc Ferguson (located in Waco) is the Veterans' Affairs, Jeff is the local contact here in Bryan/College Station. Should members require his support, his number is 254-744-0337. He noted that the Marine Corps League is well represented at the American Legion – he enjoys attending the Thursday morning coffees. Mr. Murski stressed that Congressman Sessions is very supportive of veterans' affairs, while being a 'straight shooter.'

Roger Martinez, Paymaster, pursued the awarding of scholarships, while noting that this is the first set of **scholarships being awarded** to students at Blinn. Roger introduced Susan Myers, Executive Director of Blinn College Foundation. Ms. Myers shared some information about herself, including extensive involvement with Holocaust Museums and that she is a Blinn graduate. Ms. Myers helped award two scholarships to students Michael Skoworn and Matthew Gochnour. Michael shared that he is pursuing his Associates Degree in Art. Matthew explained that, while he is presently at Blinn, he plans to go on to Texas A & M. (Picture was taken.)

Roger introduced Col. Gerald Smith, Director of the Veteran Support Center at Texas A & M. Col. Smith is responsible for the veterans at A & M. He spoke of the expansion of personnel and needs at A & M, and that his organization is moving into a new 10,000 square foot area. Col. Smith introduced the four scholarship recipients at Texas A & M: Alex Ramirez, Adrian Moreno-Badillo, Isaiah Odell, and Jacob Straus.

*Alex indicated he is a combat engineer Marine, studying civil engineering. He is a first generation Marine and a first - generation college student. Adrian indicated he is 03-11 Marine, a member of the Aggie Band, is a history and politics major, and is getting his boots! Isiah shared he was a 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion -5<sup>th</sup> Marines but moved to 3rd Battalion -5<sup>th</sup> Marines, and is currently an active-duty*

*Marine who attends the Mays Business School. Isiah shared that he started at Blinn and is eager to now be able to get his ring, which means a great deal to him. Jacob shared that he is an 01-51 (admin) Marine, active duty, Reserves, and going to school. All four Marines expressed appreciation of the support of the Marine Corps League.*

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

**Adjutant Report:** Commandant Vallejo indicated that, since November was the Marine Corps Birthday Meeting and December was the Christmas Party meeting, etc. the League suspend the Adjutant report. This was moved, seconded, and passed.

**Paymaster Report:** Paymaster Roger Martinez indicated that he gave a detailed report with receipts at the Leadership Team Meeting. Should anyone have any questions, he would be happy to address them. Otherwise, he would give the membership an overview report indicating savings and checking account balances and noted the \$3000 just distributed in scholarships. Jeremy motioned to accept the Paymaster's Report; Patrick (Red) McClung seconded; and the Paymaster Report was accepted.

**Chaplain's Report:** Chaplain Al Diaz shared that Doc Powell, as noted earlier, is in the rehab facility and will be for another month or two, although he is recovering well. Doc contracted COVID, was released home after four or five days, developed pneumonia, was readmitted, and is now in rehab due to respiratory issues and the loss of 70 pounds. His wife Sally also contracted COVID and is now fully recovered. Leonard Moore had been ill but appears to be recovering nicely. Mary Jean Holcomb is recovering from knee replacement surgery and is present. And, Sandy Moore is having knee problems and shortness of breath issues. Leonard Moore shared that presently, the diagnosis requires two different surgeries.

Commandant Vallejo shared personal comments thanking Ed Holcomb for his support of Benny via discussion, research, attending courses together, and activity level through the course of the year as he awarded Ed Holcomb with The Marine of the Year award.

There are no additional Officer Reports or projects underway due to COVID.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

A guest named Raymond Grange McCreary was an 01-03 Marine who currently resides in Willis and is applying for membership in Brazos Valley Marine Corps League. Membership reviewed and voted in Raymond; Commandant Vallejo swore him into the League; Chaplain Diaz led the group in prayer; and Commandant Vallejo awarded Raymond a challenge coin.

Joe Carter's stepfather was one of the first veterans to be buried in the new Bryan City Cemetery Veterans' Section. While the stone was being delivered, several BVMCL members were present with the family and then set the headstone for them. Commandant Vallejo shared that,

although we are relatively small, we are probably the most active league in Texas. BVMCL received a \$100 donation from the family of Malvin Taylor.

**Chamber of Commerce Membership:** Commandant Vallejo asked the membership to consider whether BVMCL should continue membership with the Chamber of Commerce, which involves a \$100 - \$500 fee. Last year, a member of the Marine Corps League chose to pay the fee for the League. Benny shared that he and Ed Holcomb have consistently attended these meetings, as well as the related 'Business After Hours' meetings, in an effort to network and build community relations for the Marine Corps League. As a result of various types of participation, the Brazos Valley Marine Corps League did receive a donation of \$1000. Should the group elect to continue to be part of the Chamber, Benny would like to have a committee with a chairperson. Lisa Drossard offered to attend the meetings/chair the committee. It was suggested by another member that perhaps a calendar could be posted (of Chamber meetings dates) with various members signing up to attend representing the League on various dates. Questions were asked regarding how often the Chamber meets. Benny indicated this fluctuated; however, the Chamber sends out an email letting people know. He also explained that meetings started at 4:30 and could run as late as 7. Wine, beer, and food was available; although, Benny chose not to drink alcohol while representing the League. Ellen Fuller, Wreaths of America, explained that there are various levels of participation. Benny asked that Lisa explore this and get back with him.

**CBVVO (Coalition of Brazos Valley Veterans Organization)** has a monthly meeting. Again, the membership needs to determine if they want to continue this relationship/ networking. Benny has been attending for the last two years. Ed Holcomb has been attending for years.

**Deceased Marines – Locally:** Three weeks ago, the BVMCL sent Jeanie Sheridan a sympathy card and purchased 50 trees to be planted on Arbor Day in Roger Sheridan's memory. Roger has been a member for a number of years. Does the League choose to continue honoring deceased Marines and their families? Membership indicated yes. Benny indicated he would like to have a committee formed with specific guidelines clarified. This endeavor's purpose should be to honor fallen brothers as well as their surviving family, showing the utmost respect. Current detachment Marine League administrative procedure guidelines indicate the red blazer should be worn. (If you don't have a red blazer, then a suit should be worn.) Normally an Honor Guard would be involved; however, since BVMCL does not have an Honor Guard, we present a Challenge Coin to the surviving family. Benny also suggested that members practice the procedures involved. Steve Ament made a motion to nominate Glen Saunders. Membership has agreed. Pat McClung has also indicated an interest in being on this committee.

**Challenge Coins:** Another 100 challenge coins need to be ordered. This runs \$500. Our goal is not to make money on this. If members elect to present them to other Marines, for instance, the member should pay the cost per coin. However, when presenting coins to surviving spouses, etc., no charges are involved.

**Wreaths Across America:** Ellen Fuller gave a brief presentation about Wreaths Across America, especially during this past year. She thanked the Brazos Valley Marine Corps League for their generous

support. Wreath sales during 2020 reached an all time high of 1836, 300 of which were purchased by members of the League. Selling just over 300 wreaths generated funds for the League. One of the greatest challenges over the years has been locating the veteran's graves. The League has now taking on responsibilities for sections 17, 18, and 28 (the new Veteran's section). Placing flags on appropriate holidays and replacing flags with wreaths in December is an ongoing commitment.

The Four Chaplains awards has grown to the extent that dividing the nation into four regions is being considered. The Texas A & M Veterans Cemetery has come about. An education trailer will be traveling through our area:

March 4	American Legion to honor Vietnam Veterans	Commandant Vallejo would like to have a table here.
March 5	The Ranch	A ribbon cutting Jersey Mikes is also supporting
March 6	Navasota	9 <sup>th</sup> Annual Birthday Bash

**Community Need:** Pat McClung shared a community need with membership, asking if it would be possible for BVMCL to engage in support. The daughter of a policeman has a terminal diagnosis of cancer. Community members are trying to raise funds to assist the family with expenses. A brisket sale is being considered for either April 17, or 24, or May 8. (Following the meeting, a member passed the hat, raising \$221 to be given to the family.)

**Nominees for Five Open Positions:** Although the motion was made that Benito Vallejo run again for Commandant, Steven Ament was ultimately nominated for the position.

Nominated for Senior Vice was Glen Saunders.

Nominated for Junior Vice was Patrick McClung.

Nominated for Paymaster was Roger Martinez.

Nominated for Judge Advocate was Thorin Moser.

Nominated for Adjutant was Mary Jean Holcomb.

It was shared that Olivia Burnside offered and will be appointed to continue as Sergeant of Arms, Thorin Moser as Historian, Ed Holcomb as Web Sergeant, Al Diaz as Chaplain, and Information Officer was Doris Carter. Benny also shared that BVMCL would be moving away from Facebook and going to a URL/creating our own website. A suggestion has been offered that a website be created for us; however, the initial cost and monthly maintenance was something out of our reach, financially.

**Miscellaneous:** Jeremy Williams shared that he was selling patches, \$10 each, to raise funds a "Marines Helping Marines" Fund.

As there was no further business or information to be shared for the good of the League, the chaplain led us in prayer, the colors were retired, and the meeting was concluded at 8:20 p.m.