



2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter, Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)



WEBSITE: www.2-1-196th.com

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Volume 9

“A Soldier Once And Always”

July 2019

Commanders Corner: Fellow Legionnaires of 2-1 Infantry, Summer is here and I hope it has started off well for you and your families. I expect that you had the chance of attending a Memorial Day Service and thought of those who did not come home. And as we move into Summer, please have a great time during any Independence Day events you have over the 4th of July. Remember our first Veterans, those who enlisted in the Continental Army and those that served in state militias, made it possible for these United States to exist in the first place. So have a great summer celebration in their memory!



Keep our “Veterans’ Reunions” in mind this year, that 2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Regiment veterans attend:

Our Chapter under the Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA) is having their 2019 Reunion, 2-6 October 2019 at the Crown Plaza Providence/Warwick (Airport) at 801 Greenwich Ave, Warwick, RI 02886. See the ADVA website for additional information: <https://americal.org/cmsaml/index.php/reunions.html>.

The 196th Light Infantry Brigade Association is having their 2019 Reunion, 22-25 August 2019 in Lombard, IL, at the Westin Hotel (west of Chicago). See: <https://www.196th.org/reunion2001/reunionp.htm>.

I look forward to meeting some more Alpha 2-1INF vets at either of the reunions. I will be bringing my A/2-1INF guidon flag to both. See you there!

God bless you and your families, and hope you have a great summer, and start of another school year for the grandchildren. Remember our collective extended family, those Americans serving in our Armed Forces all over the world, and especially to the memories of those that gave the ultimate sacrifice.

Got a comment, idea or complaint, contact me at Commander.2.1.jgw@gmail.com.

John

Keep safe and may the bond of battle never be broken!

Health and Fitness: Walking is the best way to strengthen your joints and bones and maintain their mobility and flexibility. In fact, walking on a regular basis can give you sturdier bones and joints, prevent loss of bone mass and even reduce the risk of fractures. According to the Arthritis Foundation, walking has many other benefits, including relieving pain in your joints, stiffness and even inflammation. To help your joints and bones stay healthier and stronger, make sure you walk moderately on a regular basis for at least 30 minutes.

Chapter Members: As a lot of you know there is an annual veterans reunion held at Kokomo, Indiana in September each year. This year will be the 37th annual event and it is always a rewarding time. I have been up there for about 33 years and it is great to get together with guys from my unit, friends that come each year and to meet veterans from other outfits and new people in general. This year, I am assisting the Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA) with setting up and running a “recruiting” booth in the main vendor tent. If any of you are planning on going to Kokomo, we could use some volunteers to help man the tables. We have it set up for 2 hour shifts so it won’t take much of your time away from the other events at the reunion. We will also be promoting membership to our chapter and the 2019 and 2020 ADVA reunions. Duties will consist of just making sure our flyers are always available and, if you are so inclined, to interact with folks who drop by our tables. The reunion will be held Sept. 19-21, 2019. If you want to sign up for a couple of hours you may contact me at chuckhol2@gmail.com or use our easy sign-up sheet on the web at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0b4da9a72da4f58-adva>. We already have some volunteers, so the sooner you sign up, the better choice of hours will be available. Thanks, Chuck Holdaway

Web Site Update: A new link has been added to our web site that is pretty interesting (to me at least). It gives a rundown by date of events in Vietnam from 1968-1975. The link is http://www.2-1-196th.com/httpdocs/Htms_Nam/Links2.htm. Chuck Holdaway

ADVA 2019 National Reunion: The 2019 National Reunion dates have been set and Registration forms are available in the latest issue of the Americal Journal and on our WEBSITE. The location is Newport, RI and the dates are October 2-6, 2019. Headquarters hotel is the Crown Plaza Providence/Warwick. Reunion guests can stay at a price of \$109.00 per night plus tax. Reservations can be made by calling 401-732-0261. Remember to tell the reservation clerk that you are attending the 2019 ADVA Reunion. The Reunion code is ADV Tours have been scheduled for Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Be sure to make your arrangements early because there are just so many rooms reserved for this occasion. Remember what has happened during prior reunions when the rooms are all taken and some of us had to stay at an alternative location. Act now!

196th LIB Reunion: Some members will also be interested in attending the 196 LIB National Reunion that will be held at the Westin Lombard Yorktown Center, 70 Yorktown Center Lombard, IL August 21-25, 2019. The Brigade holds its Reunion every 2 years. Activities have been scheduled by the Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. You can make reservations for this reunion electronically at www.afr-reg.com/196lib2019. Due date for registration is July 24, 2019.

Soldier is about to be the Iraq War's First Living Medal of Honor Recipient: On his 29th birthday, back in 2004, Staff Sgt. David Bellavia almost single-handedly fought off a nest of insurgents during the second Battle of Fallujah, in Iraq. Later this month, he's set to see the Silver Star he received for that action upgraded to a Medal of Honor, which would make him one of now seven Operation Iraqi Freedom Medals of Honor, all which have been awarded posthumously to date. The White House began reaching out to Bellavia's friends about attending his ceremony this week, as first reported by The American Legion's Burn Pit blog, and confirmed to Army Times by another individual familiar with the effort to upgrade Bellavia's award, who was not authorized to speak on the record. His actions date back to Nov. 10, 2004, when the squad leader with A Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, and his platoon set out to clear a block of buildings that had served as firing positions for jihadists during the battle. Upon entering the 10th building, they were set upon by insurgents. Bellavia, carrying an M249 squad automatic weapon, briefly retreated outside to call in a Bradley Fighting Vehicle for back-up, then went back in and began clearing the building room by room. He shot and killed four insurgents and wounded several others, before going hand-to-hand with one. Bellavia's is one of less than 100 valor awards to be upgraded after a 2016 Defense Department review of more than 1,300 Global War on Terror combat-earned awards. He left the Army in 2005, but in the years since, supporters have mounted a campaign to get that Silver Star upgraded. President awarded the MOH on June 25, 2019.

Chief Dons New 'Army Greens' While Attending D-Day Events:

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley donned the service's new Army Greens uniform during an event honoring the 75th anniversary of Operation Overlord. Previously known as "pinks and greens," the uniform was inspired by those worn by World War II-era officers and is now expected to be worn Army-wide as early as 2020. Milley wore the uniform to an event commemorating the liberation of Europe from Nazi forces that began on June 6, 1944, commonly known as D-Day. "We had the honor to meet with several Veterans of D-Day and it was deeply humbling to visit with these heroes of freedom," the chief of staff wrote. The new Army Greens will be fielded to soldiers reporting to their first units as early as next summer, the Army said in a November press release announcing the change late last year. However, the mandatory wear date for the uniform won't be until 2028. The current Army Blues uniform will serve as a formal dress uniform under the new plan, while the Army Greens will become the everyday business-wear uniform for soldiers. The Army's combat uniform, known as the Operational Camouflage Pattern, will remain the service's duty day and field uniform. The new uniform will come at no additional cost to the American taxpayer, the Army said in its announcement, adding that the uniform will be produced domestically.



"Stoney" Stonerook, B 2/1, recommends reading Brutal Battles Of Vietnam. He tells me there are articles of the battles many of us were in including Heip Duc. The book can be found at the VFW store web site.

Internment for Julius Deriscavage: On July, 15, 2019, B 2/1, 196th infantry man, Julius "Ju-ju" Deriscavage will be interred at Arlington National Cemetery. Ju-ju, a Silver Star recipient for his heroic conduct at the battle of Tam Ky in 1968, was one of the founding members of our chapter and served as an At-large chapter council member for several years. He devoted his time, ideas, opinions, and money for the betterment of the chapter throughout his membership and will be greatly missed by all who knew him. A memorial tribute will be put on by his family on July 14th at *105 Fardale St., SE, Vienna, VA, 22180*. *If you would like to attend, please contact Dave Kalinock at (703)346-2342 or dkalinock@aol.com* so planning may be made regarding attendance numbers. Vienna is located near Arlington Cemetery and is a convenient area to stay if you are planning to attend Ju-ju's services.



Esper Named Acting Defense Secretary: Secretary of the Army Mark T. Esper, the man who made the case for the Army's renaissance, will become acting secretary of defense, President Donald Trump announced June 18. Esper will fill the job as Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan is taking himself out of contention to become the permanent secretary. Trump said Shanahan has done a "wonderful job" since stepping in on Jan. 1 to replace retired Marine Gen. James N. Mattis in the top Pentagon post. Shanahan's nomination for the permanent defense secretary job had never been sent to the Senate for consideration. Esper, who has served as Army secretary since Nov. 20, 2017, is a former infantry officer who has also served in the Army National Guard and Army Reserve. He retired as a lieutenant colonel. He is a former Raytheon executive who also worked for the Aerospace Industries Association and as a congressional staff member. A strong advocate for leap-ahead modernization, Esper has expressed a sense of urgency in getting the Army to move. "We must act now to ensure we are ready today and even more lethal tomorrow," he said at the October 2018 Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition. "We are in a renaissance," he said. "This renaissance means we look at everything differently. We turn it upside down and inside out." The move by Pres. Trump means yet another change to the Army's top leadership ranks. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley has been announced as Trump's pick to be the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs; his confirmation hearing before the Senate is still pending. Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James C. McConville has been confirmed to be the next chief, while Lt. Gen. Joseph Martin will become the next vice. Also on the way is a new senior enlisted soldier for the Army—Command Sgt. Maj. Michael A. Grinston has been selected to succeed Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey. President Donald Trump has announced his intent to nominate David Norquist as deputy secretary of defense, and Ryan McCarthy as secretary of the Army.



2/1 LOCATOR

** Send your locator notices to **Locator c/o P.O. Box 2639 Key West, FL 33045**, or jhughesgroupins@aol.com. – email. Okay to include photo, name / nickname, rank, home origin if known, and time of Vietnam service.

Meet the next Sergeant Major of the Army: The 16th Sergeant Major of the Army will be Command Sgt. Maj. Michael A. Grinston, the Army announced. Grinston currently serves as the senior enlisted leader for U.S. Army Forces Command — the service's largest command and provider of expeditionary land forces. He is a combat veteran who has been awarded two Bronze Stars with Valor and who has served in every leadership position from team leader to division command sergeant major, the service said. He will succeed Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel Dailey, who has served in the role since January 2015. Grinston will be sworn into his new role during a ceremony at the Pentagon on Aug. 16, 2019. "I look forward to working with Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Grinston," Secretary of the Army Mark Esper said in the release announcing the change. "The Army is in the midst of a renaissance, and he is a great choice to carry on our readiness, modernization and reform efforts." During a six-hour firefight in Bayji, Iraq, Grinston earned one Bronze Star with Valor after braving a barrage of rocket-propelled grenades while running from vehicle to vehicle to give orders because the radios weren't working, according to a 2005 Stars and Stripes article detailing the fight. He earned his second Bronze Star with Valor during a separate patrol that was ambushed in Iraq during which he rallied his troops and counterattacked, killing 10 insurgents and wounding 10 more with no casualties to his own forces, Stripes reported at the time. Grinston's deployments include two tours each to Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, as well as Desert Shield, Desert Storm and to Kosovo.



Army Selects First Female General to Command Infantry Division: The U.S. Army National Guard has selected the first female officer to command an infantry division, marking another milestone for women serving in combat units. Brig. Gen. Laura Yeager will assume command of the California National Guard's 40th Infantry Division during a June 29 ceremony at the Joint Forces Training Base at Los Alamitos, California. Yeager, who currently commands Joint Task Force North, U.S. Northern Command, at Fort Bliss, Texas, has served more than three decades in the Army. Yeager will take command from Maj. Gen. Mark Malanka, who is retiring, according to the release. The 40th Infantry Division was formed in 1917 and participated in World War I, World War II and the Korean War. More recently, 40th ID soldiers have deployed to Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and numerous other locations around the globe, the release states

Veterans Gain Victory: Vietnam-era Navy and Marine Corps veterans appear to be set to claim disability benefits related to Agent Orange exposure. The Department of Justice will drop its appeal of a federal court decision awarding benefits to Blue Water Veterans. According to a filing with the Supreme Court, officials will not argue for overturning the January 2019 decision that undid the Veterans Affairs (VA) policy of denying benefits to those Navy/Marine veterans. Vietnam veterans who served in or off the shores of Vietnam and have any of the following medical conditions are encouraged to contact the nearest Veterans Affairs (VA) office so staff can file for potential compensation on their behalf:

- AL Amyloidosis
- Chronic B-cell Leukemias
- Chloracne (or similar acneform disease)
- Diabetes Mellitus Type 2
- Hodgkin's disease
- Ischemic Heart Disease
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Parkinson's disease
- Peripheral Neuropathy, Early-Onset
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers (including lung cancer)
- Soft Tissue Sarcomas (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma).

Vietnam veterans who have one of the conditions listed above and never filed a claim with the VA are encouraged to contact their County Veterans Affairs office to file to potential compensation. If veterans suffer from one of the conditions that was previously denied, or if the disease has shown progression, the staff can file to reopen the claim for reconsideration or for an increase to the disability rating. Blue Water Navy veterans who previously filed a claim for any of the above medical issues need to allow the VA office to file to reopen their claims in light of a recent court decision. Navy/Marine veterans who were within the 12-mile limit off the coast of Vietnam and have one of the Agent Orange-related conditions but never applied for compensation need to file an initial claim immediately.

US 'Candy Bomber' Back in Berlin after 70 Years: When in 1948 US bombers started dropping tiny, improvised parachutes loaded with sweets into Berlin during the Soviet blockade, one little German girl wrote to complain. Mercedes Wild, now 78, recalled how she protested that the constant drone of airlift planes disturbed her chickens -- and during the Soviet blockade of West Berlin, eggs were a valuable commodity. Then Gail Halvorsen, the US pilot who dreamed up the candy drops, wrote back, enclosing sticks of chewing gum and a lollipop with his letter. His gesture sparked a long-lasting friendship between Halvorsen, Wild and their families which mirrored the post-World War II German-American relationship, she told AFP. "It wasn't the sweets that impressed me, it was the letter," she said. "I grew up fatherless, like a lot of (German) children at that time, so knowing that someone outside of Berlin was thinking of me gave me hope." "Candy bomber" Halvorsen insists that the real heroes of the Berlin Airlift -- the mammoth logistical operation to air-drop supplies into West Berlin after the Soviet Union blockaded it -- were inside the city. "The heroes were the Germans -- the parents and children on the ground," the 98-year-old US air force veteran said, calling them "the stalwarts of the confrontation with the Soviet Union". The frail ex-pilot was back at Berlin's former Tempelhof airport, now a public park, for a commemoration of the daring aviation feat by western Allies in 1948-49, officially known as 'Operation Vittles'.

VA Ordered to Stop Posting Firings, Discipline on Website After Union Win: The union representing 260,000 Department of Veterans Affairs employees recently won a "cease and desist" arbitration ruling against the department's posting of lengthy lists of firings, suspensions and other disciplinary actions in violation of the Privacy Act. The ruling found that the VA was guilty of an "unfair labor practice" against the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) in the website postings of "Adverse Action Reports" that allowed for the easy identification of workers targeted for disciplinary procedures. In his ruling, Andrew Strongin, an arbitrator with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, directed the VA to "remove the AARs from its website and cease and desist publishing the AARs in that or like manner until such time as it achieves compliance with the Privacy Act." Strongin wrote that the VA began posting the lists in a "public relations" effort to restore its image following the wait times scandals of 2014 but, in the process, "flagrantly disregarded the agency's own General Counsel's advisory opinion and the rights of those employees" who were listed. The AARs included the type and date of the disciplinary action, as well as the grade, level, position and category of the employees, making them identifiable in violation of the union's contract and their privacy rights, according to the AFGE. The VA's actions were taken "in a pursuit to shame employees and erode veterans' trust in the VA," AFGE President J. David Cox Sr. said in a statement. "VA leaders should be focusing on improving veterans' access to quality health care at VA facilities, not publicly shaming employees and violating their privacy."

VA Implements Smoke-Free Policy: In striving to provide a healthy and safe environment at our facilities, VHA is implementing a smoke-free policy for all VHA health care facilities and property assigned to VHA that is under the charge and control of VA. The policy applies to cigarettes, cigars, pipes, or any other combustion of tobacco, including but not limited to electronic or e-cigarettes, vape pens or e-cigars. Under VHA Directive 1085, all VHA health care facilities will be smoke-free for patients, visitors, contractors, volunteers, and vendors effective October 1, 2019. The implementation guidance will contain a phased implementation schedule which is expected to start on July 1, 2019. VHA Directive 1085.01 Smoke-Free Policy for Employees is currently in negotiations at the national level with national union representatives, the VA Central Office of Labor Management Relations, and national VHA representatives. An implementation date will be determined upon completion of the negotiations.

Remains of sailor killed at Pearl Harbor identified: The remains of a sailor killed during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 have been identified as a 23-year-old Colorado man. The Loveland Reporter-Herald reports that the U.S. Defense Department says Baker 2nd Class David L. Kesler, of Berthoud, was on board the battleship Oklahoma when it was hit by multiple torpedoes and capsized on Dec. 7, 1941. Kesler was among 429 crewmen on the ship who died in the attack. To identify Kesler's remains, agency scientists used DNA and anthropological analysis as well as circumstantial and material evidence.

After leaving the Army, I applied for a hunting permit but was told I would first need to take a hunter's safety course. "I'm a Veteran, trained in handling firearms," I said. "Why wouldn't I get a waiver?" The clerk replied, "Because we teach you not to shoot people."

VA Mission Act Urgent Care Supplemental Option: Urgent care in VA or the community is for minor injuries and illnesses not requiring emergency department care. Urgent care does not replace the important continuity and relationship that Veterans have with their health care team. VA now offers a new local community urgent care benefit as a supplemental option, in addition to continuing to provide same day services in primary care and mental health, and expanded telehealth to Veterans in their homes. If a Veteran arrives at an urgent care network location and has any difficulty receiving care, the Veteran can call 866-620-2071 to receive assistance. Most importantly, Veterans can contact their local VA facility 24/7 for advice or send a secure message to their care team. If a Veteran chooses to utilize the new urgent care supplemental option, it is important that they go to an urgent care within the newly established VA contracted network of providers. It is also important to know the following details about the prescription component of the benefit: If the urgent care provider issues a prescription, the Veteran can fill a 14-day supply of that medication at the VA or in a contracted pharmacy within the VA network. If the Veteran chooses to fill an urgent care prescription at a pharmacy outside of the VA network, the Veteran will be required to pay for the prescription at the time of pick up and then file a claim for reimbursement at the local VA medical facility.

Army to Promote Hundreds of PSYOP Soldiers at Fort Bragg: The Army's 1st Special Forces Command is scheduled to promote 300 psychological operations sergeants at a record-breaking promotion ceremony May 31 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. "It will be the largest single promotion ceremony ever conducted for an Army Special Operations military occupational specialty," according to a recent news release from 1st Special Forces Command. Maj. Gen. John Deedrick, commander of 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne), will preside over the ceremony, which will result in a redesign in the rank structure for PSYOP units within the command, the release states. A recent review found that the current PSYOP rank authorizations were inadequate to account for soldiers with extensive training and education in influence theory, human dynamics, psychology, sociology, language, culture and politics, according to the release. PSYOP noncommissioned officers are expected to operate successfully in austere environments and have a primary mission to persuade local populations to support U.S. military forces. They are expected to interact with U.S. ambassadors, senior country team members, and host-nation officials on a daily basis, the release states. "That extensive investment in PSYOP soldiers, combined with the operating environments in which these soldiers perform and the importance and sensitivity of their missions, warranted an increase in rank,"

New Research Finds Another Agent Orange Link: New findings from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine conclude that "sufficient evidence" exists linking hypertension and related illnesses in veterans exposed to Agent Orange and other defoliants used in Vietnam, Thailand and South Korea in the 1960s and 1970s. The new research findings that strongly suggests a positive link with veterans' high blood pressure to wartime exposure to chemical defoliants could expand Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability benefits for scores of Vietnam-era veterans. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine recommend adding high blood pressure to the list of 14 presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure, a group that includes Hodgkin's Disease, prostate cancer, Type II Diabetes and Parkinson's Disease just to name a few.

WWII sailor's remains to be buried: A sailor killed 75 years ago in World War II is finally back home in Georgia. Navy Reserve Seaman 2nd Class Deward W. Duncan, Jr. was killed in action in the South Pacific in 1944. He was 19. Duncan was assigned to Aviation, Construction, Ordnance, Repair, Navy Fourteen, Standard Landing Craft Unit 4 when a Japanese air raid on Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands, dropped a bomb near his tent Jan. 14, 1944. Duncan's name is recorded on the Tablets of the Missing, along with others killed or lost in WWII. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for. Duncan's remains were flown to Atlanta, where they were later escorted to the Rest Haven Cemetery in Walton County. Duncan will be buried with full military honors on Saturday in his family's plot.

Border Patrol says military has contributed to more than 100,000 apprehensions along border:

The U.S. Border Patrol chief told lawmakers Thursday that support from National Guard and active-duty troops has been invaluable for her short-handed organization, crediting servicemembers for contributing to the apprehension of more than 100,000 migrants since October. Chief Carla Provost, who has led the Border Patrol since August, said National Guard forces deployed mostly in Texas and Arizona have aided in some 94,000 apprehensions in fiscal year 2019 and active-duty troops operating mobile surveillance cameras have contributed to another 15,600 apprehensions in that time. Provost, who was testifying alongside senior defense officials before a House subcommittee on border security, pledged she would continue to request the Pentagon's help at the border as long as Border Patrol remained short-handed. "I have been forced to divert 40% to 60% of Border Patrol's manpower away from the border as we process and care for nearly 435,000 families and children that have flooded across our southern border so far this year," Provost said. "I know every agent I am forced to pull away from border security directly harms our ability to achieve [control of the border]. ... I wish I could tell you when our operations will return to normal, but as long as we face this crisis I will continue to ask for [the Defense Department] support." Provost stressed the military's role in those apprehensions was primarily through surveillance, as law enforcement duties are solely conducted by Border Patrol agents.

New Coffee Company is Giving a 'Hand Up' to Homeless Vets:

Next time you invest in your weekly coffee supply, maybe consider buying it through a company that offers homeless and at-risk veterans an employment lifeline. That's the goal of Veteran Roasters, whose core mission is to hire and train veterans for jobs in the coffee industry, through the proceeds it earns selling America's favorite caffeinated beverage. "Our focus is to provide opportunities to those whose transition back after their service didn't go as they hoped or planned," said Veteran Roasters founder Branden Marty. "It's a neat environment because everyone has a similar experience, so you can easily connect with people." As Marty put it, Veterans Roasters isn't giving veterans "a hand out, we're giving them a hand up." The money they earn through coffee sales goes directly back into their charitable arm, Rags of Honor 1, which funds their ability to hire veterans and help pay for their life needs like housing and child care. Coffee isn't the only beverage Marty is trying to parlay into a successful small business. Veteran Roasters recently partnered with Chicago Cubs Manager Joe Maddon to help create a new beer that they dubbed "Joe Maddon's Try Not To Suck" German Lager. All of the proceeds from beer sales will go toward ending veteran homelessness and joblessness via Rags of Honor 1.

Legion wins Bladensburg Memorial Supreme Court Case: In a landmark victory for The American Legion, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 7-2 on June 20 that the 40-foot memorial can remain on public land in Prince George's County, Md., where it has stood since 1925. "This was not just about a single cross," American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad said. "This was about the right of a community to honor its fallen heroes. And that's why the World War I veterans of Bladensburg sacrificed their lives, to protect the freedom of others." In 1925, The American Legion and Gold Star Mothers erected the memorial as a tribute to 49 Prince George's County veterans who died during World War I. The cross shape was selected by the Gold Star Mothers to represent their sons' resting place in Europe. For decades, the memorial stood peacefully until the American Humanist Association (AHA) filed suit, claiming the memorial violated the First Amendment. The Bladensburg memorial was funded privately and the property where it stands was in private hands when it was erected. However, now it sits on land owned by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, a governmental agency. "The American Legion does not consider these crosses which honor so many veterans to be religious memorials," Reistad explained. "But even if it were, freedom of religion is also a cherished right protected by our First Amendment. Americans can feel more confident today that veterans memorials, cemetery headstones and patriotic monuments throughout our country are safer as a result of this ruling." The American Legion was represented at the Supreme Court by the legal teams at First Liberty Institute and Jones Day. Aligning with them was the state of Maryland, which owns and maintains the memorial. "This is a landmark victory for religious freedom," said Kelly Shackelford, the president, CEO and chief counsel to First Liberty. "The days of illegitimately weaponizing the Establishment Clause and attacking religious symbols in public are over. Our founders would have been appalled at this attempt to make the government hostile to our religious heritage, history and symbols. The attempted perversion of our Constitution is now over, and every American now has more freedom than they have had in decades, with a government no longer hostile to people or expressions of faith." Michal Carvin, lead counsel for The American Legion, partner at Jones Day and First Liberty network attorney, said, "We are grateful for this historic victory for the First Amendment. This decision simply affirms the historical understanding of the First Amendment that allows government to acknowledge the value and importance of religion."

US World War II veteran receives France's medal of honor on D-Day anniversary:

Stan Friday had not been back to Normandy, France, since he and Allied forces stormed its beaches to liberate Europe from Nazi Germany. For years, the World War II veteran would not talk about what he'd seen 75 years ago on June 6, 1944, also known as D-Day. This week, Friday, 96, of Pennsburg, Pennsylvania, packed his things, however, and then traveled with a group of U.S. World War II veterans to Normandy for the 75th anniversary of D-Day as the world and its leaders prepared to honor them and pay tribute to the fallen. In a surprise to Friday on Thursday, French President Emmanuel Macron awarded him and four other U.S. veterans the Legion d'honneur, France's highest award for merit. More than 156,000 Allied troops came ashore that fateful day and more than 4,000 had been killed as they reached 50 miles of Normandy coastline. Of the Allied troops who'd died on D-Day, 2,501 were Americans, including Friday's friend.

