



AARON A. WEAVER CHAPTER 776



Chapter Purpose - To preserve the proud legacy of the Purple Heart

2025-26 Officers

Cdr: Richard Hunt
Sr. Vice Cdr: Gary Bain
Jr. Vice Cdr: Jerry Frease
Finance Off: Joe McClister
Judge Adv: Mike Krebs
Sgt-at-Arms: Robert Gibson
Trustee 2-yr: Nate Love
Trustee 1-yr: Bill Merryman
Adjutant: Curt Ebitz
Service Off: Joe McClister
Welfare Off: Mickey Hunt
Historian: Curt Ebitz
Chaplain: Troy Allen
Americanism Off: Will Korber

Chapter Activities Completed

September 11. Chapter 776 Cdr. Richard Hunt was a guest speaker at the City of Inverness September 11 Remembrance Ceremony.

September 13. Chapter 776 Cdr. Richard Hunt, Patriot Ebitz, Patriot Merryman and Honorary Member Mills were volunteers supporting the Citrus County Veterans Foundation 21st Annual Golf Tournament that netted over \$12,500 to benefit local honorably discharged veterans and their surviving spouses with urgent financial needs.

September 20. Chapter Patriots participating or attending the West Citrus Elks Veterans Community Outreach were Patriots Ebitz, Korber and Merryman.

September 24. The Chapter's Associate ladies monthly no-host luncheon at the Central Café in Inverness boasted a record attendance with 12 Associate ladies: Carol & Kay Allen, JoAnn Allen, Sandy Cross, Annie Fair, Mickey Hunt, Nancy Krebs, Pat Michael, Vikki Pietras, Shirley Platt, Deborah St. Martin & Penny Tharp.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2025, 1 p.m.

Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, Crystal River.

Bimonthly Meeting

The chapter's bimonthly meetings are held the third Tuesday of September, November, January, March, May and July. The meeting is 1:00 p.m. at the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce Building, 915 N. Suncoast Blvd. (U.S. 19), Crystal River, which is located on the east side of the highway approximately 1/4 mile north of the Crystal River Airport. Any member desiring to place an item on the agenda should e-mail Adjutant Ebitz at info@citruspurpleheart.org or call 352-382-3847.

October 10. Chapter 776 Patriots attending a no-host fellowship breakfast at Socos House of Eats in Homosassa were Cdr. Richard Hunt, Jerry Frease, Will Korber, Joe McClister and Colby Dawson, aide to Congressman Bilirakis.

October 22. The Associate ladies no-host fellowship luncheon exceeded its September record-setting attendance with 14 ladies enjoying lunch at Marianna's Stinky Rose in Hernando. Attending were Carol & Kay Allen, JoAnn Allen, Barb Mills, Sandy Cross, Annie Fair, Kim Frease, Mickey Hunt, Nancy Krebs, Pat Michael, Vikki Pietras, Shirley Platt, Deborah St. Martin, and Penny Tharp.

November 1. Participating or attending the Homosassa Veterans Memorial Veterans Day Tribute organized by Chapter 776 Honorary Member Darrick Buettner were Cdr. Richard Hunt & Mickey Hunt, JoAnn Allen, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Annie Fair, Jerry Frease, Chuck & Micki Kanehl and Mike Krebs.

November 1. Attending the Citrus County Veterans Appreciation Week Military Ball were Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Jerry & Kim Frease, Richard & Mickey Hunt, Mike & Nancy Krebs, and Honorary Members Darrick Buettner & Barb Mills.

See Chapter activities continued, page 3

Member News

It is with sadness to report the deaths of Patriot **Philip Guy Bailie** and Associate **Louis C. "Sonny" Haskins II**, son of Chapter 776 Past Commander J.B. Haskins. The Chapter's heartfelt condolences are extended to each of their families and loved ones. (See page 2).

Congratulations to Patriots **J.B. Haskins** and **Will Korber** on their selection by the Citrus County Veterans Appreciation Week Committee as Honorary Marshals for Citrus County's Thirty-third Veterans Day Parade. Patriot Haskins is a Navy Korean and Vietnam veteran and recipient of two Silver Stars and three Purple Hearts. Patriot Korber is a USMC Vietnam who miraculously survived a gunshot wound to the head during the battle for Hue.

Patty Stevenson, Chapter 776 Auxiliary member, was hospitalized in September at Tampa General Hospital Seven Rivers in Crystal River with renal failure and infection. Please keep her in your thoughts and prayers as she begins her long road to recovery.

Chapter 776 Proud Supporter **Jennifer "Jen" Dooley-Huston**, campaign coordinator for the Chapter 776/Tax Collector fundraiser partnership that benefits the Citrus County Veterans Foundation (CCVF) resigned from her position as the County Tax Office Operations & Benefit Coordinator effective October 10. Jen accepted an HR position with the Hillsborough County Tax Collector Office. She will relocate to Hillsborough County spring of next year to be near her son, Jonathan, who is pursuing a master's degree in library science at the University of South Florida. Jen's positive attitude, *See Member page 2*

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infectious smile and enthusiastic support will be missed.

Chapter 776 members **Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz** celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in October at the 125-year-old British Colonial Hotel in Nassau, Bahamas, the same hotel where they honeymooned in 1965. Being a first for the hotel, Curt & Mari-Elain were treated royally with a chauffeured sedan from and to the airport, room upgrade to a spacious suite with ocean view, two celebratory dinners and a photo shoot.

A heartfelt salute to Chapter 776 Patriot **Lee Helcel** for fulfilling his decade long quest to place a headstone on the unmarked burial location of his half-brother "**Harry**" so that his short life will be always remembered. At age 10, Harry went missing for about five days and was ultimately found murdered in a barn behind his parents' house. The unsolved mystery remains a Brooksville, PA mystery.

A job well done to Chapter 776's honorary members **Janice Warren, Barb Mills** and **Darrick Buettner**. Janice's faithful support of the Chapter 776/Tax Collector Office fundraising partnership has raised over \$300,000 for the CCVF. Barb, founder of Operation Welcome Home, hosted a veterans appreciation lunch at The Depot Pavilion on Veterans Day for approximately 200 veterans and spouses. Darrick flawlessly organized and oversaw the execution of the Veterans Tribute at the Homosassa Veterans Memorial.

A special Chapter 776 thank you to the following Patriots for volunteering to participate in this year's Veterans in the Classroom program: **Jerry Frease, Curt Ebitz, Frank Hayes, Chuck Kanehl, Mike Krebs, Richard Hunt, and Rob Coughlin**.

Our gratitude is extended to **John Hillary, Chapter 535, Lakeland**, for generously helping the family of Chapter 776 Departed Patriot Philip Bailie in arranging for military burial honors.

Patriot **Ralph McClure** is under weekly VA wound care for his lower

Member continued

left leg that appears to be related to his Vietnam landmine wound and aggravated by neuropathy.

**Departed Patriot Philip Guy Bailie**

Born in St. Charles, Virginia, Patriot Philip Guy Bailie of Hernando was called home September 10 at the age of 91 after a fatal fall in his summer home in Asheville, North Carolina. At age 15, he enlisted in the Army and saw combat duty during the Korean War with the 2d Raider Company, General Forces Headquarters, 10th Corps, Eighth Army, a provisional unit consisting of six officers and one hundred enlisted men that conducted special operations deep behind enemy lines. Only 16 years old, Bailie was shot through the arm when his unit

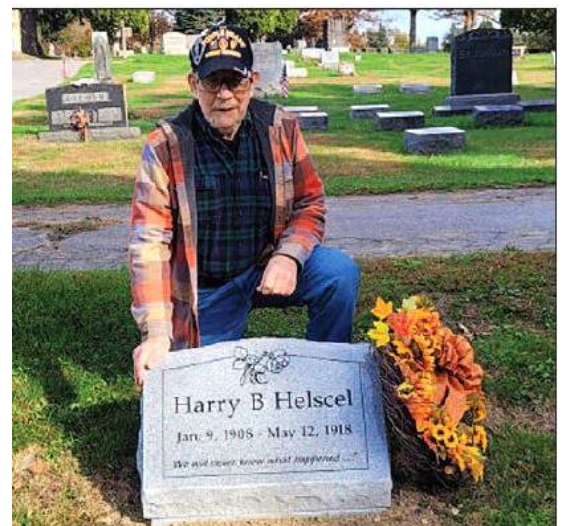
was ambushed while conducting operations in North Korea. Miraculously, he was transported by helicopter to the rear battle area to recover. After fulfilling his military service obligation, he joined the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) where he served with distinction for 35 years. A devout Christian, he not only proclaimed the Gospel, he daily lived out the Gospel. He is survived by his sons Daniel, James, and Douglas, six grandchildren, and six great grandchildren.

Departed Associate Luis C. "Sonny" Haskins II

Born in Fort Worth, Texas, Associate Luis Haskins, the son of Chapter 776 Past Commander J.B. Haskins, passed away in Pensacola, Florida on August 20 at the age of 68, following a long battle with cancer. Affectionately known as "Sonny," he was a veteran of the U. S. Army. He lived a life full of adventure, with a passion for surfing, Volkswagens, and helicopters. He will be remembered for his generosity and unwavering dedication to his family and loved ones. He was preceded in death by his mother Donna "Anita" Haskins and is survived by his beloved wife, Linda; son, Josh Haskins; daughter, Naomi Simpkins; father, J.B. Haskins; mother, Betty Bombatch; sister, Teresa Davis, and five grandchildren.



After a decades long quest, Patriot Lee Helcel placed a headstone on the unmarked grave site to honor and remember the unfulfilled life of his 10-year old half-brother, Harry, who was murdered in Brookville, PA in 1918.





The Citrus County Tax Collector Office and Chapter 776 fundraising partnership recently raised \$13,916.02 for the benefit of the Citrus County Veterans Foundation (CCVF). Left front row: Jerry Frease; Barbra Mills; Teresa Williams, TCO; Bonita Tholund, TCO; Tammy Smith, TCO; Lydia Walters, TCO; Curt Ebitz; Mari-Elain Ebitz; Richard Hunt. Left back row: Terri Harrison, CCVF; J.J. Kenney, CCVF; Ann Fair; Joe McClister; John McGee, CCVF; Chuck Kanehl.

Patriot McClister and Ann Fair carried the National Colors and the Order's Colors at the Massing of the Colors Ceremony held in conjunction with the Veterans Appreciation Week Concert performed by the Nature Coast Community Band.

Chapter activities continued Completed

November 2. Patriot McClister and Ann Fair carried the National Colors and the Order's Colors at the Massing of the Colors Ceremony held in conjunction with the Veterans Appreciation Week Concert performed by the Nature Coast Community Band. Other Chapter members in attendance were Cdr. Richard Hunt, Carol & Kay Allen, Fred Daniels, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Frank & Carol Hayes, Barb Mills.

Future

November 18, 1:00 p.m. Chapter 776 bimonthly meeting, Citrus County Chamber of Commerce Building.

December 7, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Annual Pearl Harbor Dinner and Holiday Social, Citrus National Golf Club(formerly Southern Woods Golf Club).



CHAPTER 776 SCHOLARSHIPS

Chapter 776 offers two competitive scholarship opportunities for School Year 2026-27 for local graduating seniors.

The Aaron A Weaver Chapter 776 MOPH College of Central Florida Endowed Scholarship for enrollment at the College of Central Florida and the Sergeant Dennis Flanagan Memorial Scholarship for enrollment at any accredited college. Each scholarship is \$2,000. For more information, contact Adjutant Ebitz at info@citruspurpleheart.org or 352-382-3847.

Are You A Military Retiree or Retiree Spouse?

Beginning in 2026, the old-style, blue ID cards will no longer be accepted, regardless of the printed expiration date. In order to maintain base access, please visit your nearest DEERS/ID card office to obtain a new ID. You do not need to wait until expiration date. If you're unable to make it to a military installation, you can also request a new card through the RAPIDS ID Card Office Online: <https://idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/>. This policy applies to ID cards of all colors (except the new white ones). They should all be updated in order to maintain benefits and base access.

From the Commander

Greetings Patriot Family!

In addition to the Badge of Military Merit, General George Washington had two Honorary Badges of distinction. The following is from his order: "Honorary Badges of distinction are to be conferred on the veteran Non commissioned officers and soldiers of the army, who have served more than three years with bravery, fidelity and good conduct, for this purpose a narrow piece of white cloth of an angular form is to be fixed to the left arm on the uniform Coats. Non commissioned officers and soldiers who have served with equal reputation more than six years are to be distinguished by two pieces of cloth set on parallel to each other in a similar form— should any who are not entitled to these honors have the insolence to assume the badges of them they shall be severely punished. On

See Commander Continued

Commander Continued

the other hand, it is expected those gallant men who are thus designated will on all occasions be treated with particular confidence and consideration."

This appears to me to be the origin of what we call service stripes or hash marks. Please note this was reserved for enlisted troops as was the Badge of Military Merit. At the Veterans Appreciation Week Military Ball, there was a reenactment of the presentation of the Badge of Military Merit by General Washington (From the Sons of the American Revolution) in period clothing to our own Patriot Curt Ebitz.

I want to thank those Chapter members who participated in the Citrus County Veterans Appreciation Week events and congratulate Patriots Haskins and Korber on their selection as honorary marshals for the Veterans Day Parade.

Don't forget to mark your calendar to attend the Chapter's annual Pearl Harbor commemorative dinner and holiday social December 7 at the Citrus National Golf Club. In the spirit of "the more the merrier," Chapter members are encouraged to bring family and friends as their guests.

Wishing all a bountiful Thanksgiving and a wonderful Christmas holiday.

Richard Hunt
Commander



Citrus National Golf Club

2025 Pearl Harbor Dinner & Holiday Social

Chapter 776's annual Pearl Harbor Dinner and Holiday Social will be on Sunday, December 7, 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the *Citrus National Golf Club (formerly Southern Woods Golf Club)*, 1501 Corkwood Blvd., Homosassa, FL 34446, off of County Road 480. Dress is "dress up" casual or Purple Heart attire.

A buffet dinner will be served at 5:00 p.m. comprised of 8 oz. Prime Rib with Potatoes au Gratin, Chicken Marsala with Rice Pilaf and Green Beans Almondine, house salad with Ranch or Balsamic dressing, Rolls, Red Velvet Cake, Coffee, Tea and Sodas. A bar will be available for credit card purchase (no cash) of alcoholic beverages. featuring "Happy Hour" prices for liquor, beer, and wine.

For the event to be held at the club, a minimum of 30 attendees is necessary.

Cost of meal, to include gratuity and tax, is \$44.00 per person.

Please return the coupon below with your check made payable to "Chapter 776 MOPH." Must be **received no later than Saturday, November 29.**

Mail to: Curt Ebitz, 89 Douglas St., Homosassa, FL 34446.



Name: _____

No. of Guests: _____

Total amount of check: \$ _____

Check number: _____