

THREE RIVERS VFW POST 1324

A Brief History



February 17, 1925 was the muster date for VFW Post 1324 in Oregon City, Oregon, by 58 founding members and was named Waldo Caufield. W.N. Davis was the first Commander of the new Post.



Waldo Caufield, who grew up in Oregon City, was a sergeant in the U.S. Army during WWI, attached to the 1st Division Headquarters Group. He was killed in action on Oct. 2, 1918. Sgt. Caufield, along with a few others, were cited by the general commanding the troops “for extreme bravery for remaining on duty as observers in front line trenches under violent shell fire.” Sgt. Caufield was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart, WWI Victory Medal and the French Croix De Guerre, which Post 1324 proudly displays to this day. Sgt. Caufield is buried at Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and Memorial, Lorraine, France. In the summer of 1930, the US government invited Mary S. Caufield, Sgt. Caufield’s mother, to sail on the steamship SS America to make a pilgrimage to his gravesite in France, which she did. In the 1850’s, the Caufield’s were one of the founding families of Oregon City, of which Waldo was a favorite son.

Post 1324 received a Citation of Merit on June 12, 1926, from the Department of Oregon for “loyal and ever ready service to the Department and VFW, also for the financial assistance as well as personal assistance in organizing and installing St. Helens Post 1440”. Signed by then Department Commander, A. P. Rutherford.

On May 22, 1935, Post 1324 Ladies Auxiliary was founded and has been a vital asset to the Post ever since.

VFW Post 1324 used to hold its meetings in the old Oregon City Courthouse, but in 1949 it found a permanent home when it moved into the newly constructed Clackamas County Veterans Memorial Building, *it was built by the members of Post 1324*. The City of Oregon City donated the land to VFW Post 1324 where the now building stands. It is located at 104 Tumwater Drive in Oregon City. Also, at the same time a historical marker was dedicated to “The Memory of All Who Gave Their Lives for the Preservation of American Freedom” in Clackamas County for the Spanish American War, WWI, and WWII. This marker can be seen on the outside of the building on the river side entrances. Elvion Morgan was Post commander during this time.

Roy Dalby, Commander of Post 1324, on Dec. 5, 1951, discussed with the Oregon City Commission the need for a place to hold Memorial Day services and to erect a permanent memorial for veterans of all wars. The city commission approved the request and VFW Post 1324 was instrumental in erecting the Veterans Memorial Area at Mountain View Cemetery located in Oregon City. Memorial Services have been held at this location by VFW Post 1324 since 1925. *Today, VFW Post 1324 is also part of the Oregon City Planning Commission to renovate the Veterans Memorial Area within the near future.*

VFW Post 1324 took part in a renovation of McLaughlin Promenade which was completed in September 1972. At that time twelve lights on metal standards and a flagpole were added. Also, a metal plaque was placed there by the local Kiwanis Club, where Post 1324 is listed on the plaque. McLaughlin Promenade is a 7.8-acre linear park on the bluff above downtown Oregon City and provides spectacular views of the Willamette River, downtown Oregon City. At its south end is the Clackamas County Veterans Memorial Building, where VFW Post 1324 is located. Edison Miles was Post commander during this timeframe.

On Nov. 2, 1983, Post 1324 received from the VFW Commander-in-Chief a “Perpetual Post Charter, No. 4299, for reaching the required number of Life Members, to warrant this distinction”. Hugh (HB) Roberts was Post commander during this time.

On May 31, 1996, the Albert DeForrest Fromong VFW Post 3506 of West Linn, Oregon merged with VFW Post 1324 and was renamed Waldo Caufield/Fromong VFW Post 1324. Frank P. Dobbins was post commander during this time.

February 17, 2000, VFW Post 1324 received from the VFW Commander-in-Chief the Diamond Jubilee Award for “75 years of dedicated support for programs and purposes of the VFW”. Neil Birch was post commander during this time.

On May 18, 2005, the Harold E. Moore VFW Post 9259 of Gladstone merged with the Waldo Caufield/Fromong Post. So that none of the three merged Posts took precedence over the other, VFW Post 1324 was renamed **Three Rivers VFW Post 1324**. The *three rivers* being the Willamette, Clackamas, and Tualatin rivers, which flow through the cities of Gladstone, Oregon City and West Linn. Neil Birch was Post Commander during this time.

In 2010, VFW Post 1324 member Jim “Chief” McDonald took over the Chairmanship of the Post’s Buddy Poppy Distribution program. Under his guidance and organizational skills, the program was extended to the 2 weeks prior to Memorial Day, with poppy distribution by Post members at local stores in Oregon City, Gladstone, West Linn, and Happy Valley. VFW Post 1324’s Buddy Poppy distribution funds raised since then have increased dramatically to the point of surpassing all other VFW Post’s in the world consistently for several years. Jim McDonald is a Korean War veteran and VFW Gold Legacy Life member.

2014 saw VFW Post 1324 received the National Outstanding Community Service Award. D.J. Ruger was post commander during this time.

On December 31, 2016, Boy Scout Troop 220 became a Chartered Partner with VFW Post 1324. It holds its meetings and other activities at the Post. BSA Troop 220 will celebrate its 103 year of existence on June 25, 2021 and it has the distinction of being the oldest continuous Boy Scout Troop west of the Mississippi River. D.J. Ruger was Post commander during this time.

There have been 76 Commanders at Three Rivers Post 1324 since its founding in 1925. The following have gone on to be Department Commanders; Barney O. Garrett (1929-30), Glenn Jack (1931-32), George W. Watts (1943-44).

The longest serving Post Commander was Neil Birch, (1999 to 2012). His guidance and leadership during this challenging timeframe literally kept the Post solvent, along with vital support of the Post Auxiliary.

Three Rivers Post VFW 1324 has made All-American and All-State four times since the turn of the century: in 2012-13, 2013-14, 2016-17 and 2018-19.

There are 24 post members remaining that are WWII and Korean War Veterans.

There are 23 Legacy Life Members at Post 1324.

Since the start of the new century the Post has made great strides in improving the Veterans Memorial Building, both to the exterior and interior, with the vision of the older veterans turning it over to another generation of veterans that will carry the work of the VFW well into the 21st Century. Each year VFW Post 1324 conducts fund raising events during 4th of July weekend and Veterans Day weekends. The funds generated are put toward building preservation. Past Post Commander Bill Trumble, 2017-2018, who passed away in 2020, is to be credited with getting the building fund drive started.

In a proactive move to make the Post more family friendly, the canteen bar was removed, and remodeled into a multipurpose room. Over the course of the next several years, the following upgrades were also accomplished; installation of a new roof, new siding, new paint to the exterior and interior, remodeled the kitchen, new “on demand” water heater installed, new hall divider curtain in main hall, new acoustic ceiling tiles, LED lighting installed, and the hall floor was refurbished.

On Veterans Day, 2015, VFW Post 1324 members decided that the Larry Dahl Memorial needed to be relocated from its obscure, and overgrown location at the Museum of the Oregon Territory. Specialist Four, Larry Gilbert Dahl (June 10, 1949 – February 23, 1971), a native of Oregon City, was a U.S. Army soldier and a recipient of the United States military's highest decoration—the *Medal of Honor*—for his actions in the Vietnam War. It became a reality in 2017 when it was moved to the Circle of Honor at the Clackamas County Buildings at the Red Soils Campus. On Sept. 11, 2017, the

memorial was rededicated along with a new tradition, orchestrated by VFW Post 1324 members, of having a Patriot Day Ceremony in our community.

Another project that members of VFW Post 1324 have been involved in is the new Tyrone S. Woods Memorial Park, *it is near completion with plans to be open and dedicated on May 15, 2021.* Oregon City High School graduate and retired US Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Tyrone S. Woods, and former SEAL, lost his life in the service of his country while trying to protect a CIA facility in Benghazi, Libya, early on the morning of September 12, 2012. He was killed alongside his friend and fellow officer, Glen Doherty. Past Post Commander D.J. Ruger led the efforts in getting this project approved by the Oregon City Parks and Recreation Department.

March 2020 saw most of VFW Post 1324 plans for that year seriously curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are looking forward to 2021, with the hopes of finally getting back to a more normal way of doing things. Some events that VFW Post 1324 look forward to are as follows:

Friday night *Pie & Coffee* from 5 to 8 pm.

Monthly Post & Auxiliary business meetings at the Post, always on the second Wednesday of each month at 7 pm.

February 17th (1925): Post 1324's Birthday.

Loyalty Day (May 1st): flag retirement ceremony at Post.

Buddy Poppy Distribution: Mid May through Memorial Day.

Memorial Day: Observance at Mountain View Cemetery, Oregon City, 11:00 am. Open House at Post, with tours, displays of military memorabilia.

Patriot's Day (September 11th): Public ceremony at the Red Soils Campus, Oregon City. This ceremony not only honors the victims of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, but also recognizes other people in other organizations of the community that have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

POW/MIA Recognition Day (3rd Friday in September): Evening *POW/MIA Service of Remembrance* at the Post.

Veterans Day (November 11th): Open House with tours, display of military memorabilia.

Christmas Party and Raffle: Mid December, open to public, dinner, and prizes. *Auxiliary's biggest annual fund raiser event.*

The VFW Post 1324 Honor Guard also looks forward to continuing the rifle salute at Willamette National Cemetery's monthly "For Whom the Bell Tolls" ceremony. We also hope to resume our various other honor guard functions as well.

On a final note, Three Rivers VFW Post 1324 hopes to continue its service to veterans and to the community at large. In 2025 Three Rivers VFW Post 1324 will celebrate its 100th anniversary. We look forward to the future and our continued desire to maintain the relevance of the Veterans of Foreign Wars among our nation's veterans, old and young, and adapting to their needs well into the 21st Century.

Gregory A. Arnold

EMCS(SW), USN (Ret.)

Current Post Commander

Written January, 2021

Current photos of our building.

