



# The Centennial

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December 2023

## AMERICAN LEGION NEAL THOMAS JR. CENTENNIAL POST 209



Post 209 Family Members at the Naturalization Ceremony to Present New US Citizens Their First US Flag.

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[www.legion209.org](http://www.legion209.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/AmericanLegionCentennialPost209/>



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<b>Jr. Vice Commander:</b>	Jerry Hopper	(918) 953-9980
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<b>Service Officer:</b>	Brian Murphy	(719) 930-4147
<b>Judge Advocate:</b>	Marvin Weaver	(719) 638-4763
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<b>Chaplain:</b>	Bob "Odie" O'Donnell	(719) 432-6018
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### American Legion Auxiliary Unit 209 Officers 2023-2024

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<b>Treasurer:</b>	Kellie Hayes	(719) 494-7167
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### Sons of The American Legion Squadron 2023-2024

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### American Legion Riders Post 209 Officers 2023-2024

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<b>Treasurer:</b>	Kellie Hayes	(719) 494-7167
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## From the desk of the Commander

December already, this year has flown by again. Seems like the older you get the quicker the years go by. Hard to believe that I, like probably many of you have not even began to shop for Christmas.

I always get a little nostalgic when December gets here. I remember times as a little kid and the excitement of Christmas approaching. When we lived in New Mexico we never had any dreams of having a white Christmas because, well it is New Mexico and you couldn't get much more south than living in Alamogordo. Most years it was just our family that celebrated the day because our extended family lived a bit away and we normally went to visit them in the summer.

I do remember two years in a row when we went up to Cheyenne for Christmas. We went up to visit because dad was getting ready to transfer to Galena, Alaska for a year and with it being a remote site we would not be going with him. Mom's family all lived in Cheyenne at the time with the exception of Uncle Dick. That meant we had my other four Aunts and Uncles along with my cousins coming over to Grandma's for presents and dinner. When my brother and I got up, Christmas morning looked like a toy store had exploded in Grandma's basement. The presents came so far out that you could not even think about getting close to the tree. It seemed like it took forever to get all the presents unwrapped (and when you're a little kid that seems like years).

The next year since dad was not back from Alaska, Grandma and Grandpa sent Aunt Cathy down to help mom drive up for Christmas. They did not want the three of us by ourselves for Christmas so we got in the car a couple days before Christmas and went back to Cheyenne. We left at night to drive up and we had a fun time. We were singing Christmas songs most of the way up, of course Neil and I did sleep a lot of the time but when we were up, we were singing.

We moved to Washington DC after dad got back from Alaska. He was stationed at Bolling AFB. The thing I remember most about living out in the DC area was that our older brother Sean had joined the Air Force and was stationed at Shaw AFB in South Carolina. Instead of him flying home to Colorado at Christmas to see his mom he would come up and spend the holiday with us. We always looked forward to him coming because we were out of school then and a few of the days we would ride in to work with mom at the Pentagon. We would wait until about 9am to go down and get on the metro to ride into the mall in DC. We would spend the day going around to the Smithsonian Museums, Arlington Cemetery and visit the memorials on the mall. We spent all day once in the National History Museum (which may be why I love history so much). Neil and I really enjoyed the time that we got to spend with our older brother, he unfortunately is no longer with us having passed away in 2010, but I will never forget the times we had together.

Don't forget that we will be having our Annual Post Christmas party this year on December 9<sup>th</sup> starting at 4pm. It will be pot luck like normal and we will be having a special guest joining us so make sure and bring the kids. Prior to the party we will have the Post open for those that want to watch the Navy vs Army game at 1pm. We had a good time watching the game together last year and hopefully this year the final is correct with Navy on top.

**GO NAVY! BEAT ARMY!** Thank you for all you do to help veterans and our Post.

*Marvin Weaver, Jr.*

**Post 209 Commander**





## From our Post Adjutant

As we approach the end of our membership year, I need to make one more plea for you to renew **now** if you haven't yet, and to renew earlier next year.

Regardless of when you joined, your membership is by the calendar year, 1 January to 1 December of said year. Now, there are some caveats to that. If you join after the first of the year, say March, you only get 10 months before your membership expires, but you still get the 12 magazines that your initial dues pay for so that expires the following March.

We start mailing out those expensive renewal reminders in July in an attempt to get all of our almost 2 million members renewed by 1 January. So, in that process new members who join after July 1<sup>st</sup> actually get enrolled in the following membership year, say 2024 in this case, getting up to 18 months for their first year. But, your magazine subscription ends halfway through in July of 2023 so if you don't renew that next July you will miss out of a couple issues until you do renew.

Why the push? From our officer's guide; "If dues are not paid by January 1 of each calendar year, the member becomes delinquent. If dues have not been paid by February 1, the member is suspended, but nevertheless a member with no privilege except that of reinstatement..." If still not paid by June 30<sup>th</sup>, "...the member is dropped from the roll by constitutional mandate and membership forfeited."

So, The American Legion and the Post spend a lot of funds to try and get everyone renewed by the first of January. All we ask is that you please renew with that first notice in July, or as soon thereafter as possible. If you do wander into the suspended ranks, you have no vote in anything the Post brings forward or place at conferences and conventions. Please renew as soon as you can. My favorite way to do that, other than becoming a Paid Up For Life (PUFL) member, is to renew online at <https://mylegion.org/PersonifyEbusiness/Membership/Renew#legion-org> and check the block for automatic renewal. Then every July the card you just used gets charged and you are renewed, no fuss no muss, easy peasy, and all that. If you know your membership number you will not need to sign in to MyLegion. If you do not know your number and you have a MyLegion account you will need to sign in or you can contact me to get your membership number.

If you do not want to renew online you can send a \$45 check to the Post address on the cover page or bring in cash or check on Tuesday during Adjutant Hours (0900-1400). You do not have to wait on a renewal notice!

The first of January is coming up quick, does your card say 2024?

"Always Forward"

*Doug Millison*  
Adjutant





## From our Senior Vice Commander

I wish the best to all our post and family members as we enter your holiday season and transition to the new year! Coming up, watch the events calendar for times and dates for December. The regular dinners and meetings will be scaled back so that you can take this time to spend with your family and friends. Also, don't forget to come out to the Post for our annual Post Christmas Party on December 9th! The party will be a potluck; rumor has it, we will have a special guest in attendance. If you are bringing kids 12 and under, be sure to RSVP with their names and ages via the website or to [jackiebowen2005@yahoo.com](mailto:jackiebowen2005@yahoo.com).

Membership is going well this year, but we have more work to do. We are currently over 725 new and renewed members (70%) and have already exceeded the December goal, but memberships become delinquent 31 Dec. There is a 30-day grace period, but please don't wait! Check your card. If it doesn't say 2024, you have not renewed yet. Send in your renewal today! You can bring it by or mail it to the post at 3613 Jeannine Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80917. If Doug is there (usually on Tuesdays), he will try to give you your new membership card before you leave. You can also renew online at <https://mylegion.org/PersonifyEbusiness/Membership/Renew#legion-org>. Instructions for all Legion family renewals are on the website at <https://legion209.org>, just click the "Join-Renew-Transfer" button in the top right corner.

Finally, a great Christmas present could be membership in The American Legion if you have a friend, neighbor, or family member who qualifies for membership in any part of the Legion family (American Legion, Sons of the American Legion or American Legion Auxiliary). You know why you joined. Share that reason and pass that along as a gift to someone you know!

*Steve Hayes*

**Senior Vice Commander**



## From our Sons of The American Legion Commander

Over the weekend, your Detachment had their annual awards banquet. Congratulations to Squadron 209! We received more than any other squadron in the Detachment with a total of nine awards. It was an honor to represent us and accept so many well-deserved awards. Without your hard work and dedication this would not be possible. We showed the Detachment who we are and where we are heading. This last year was amazing, and I hope for even bigger and better things in the year to come. Happy holidays everyone.

*Rob Barry*

**SAL Commander**





## From our Service Officer

Merry Christmas to my fellow Legionnaires! At the season of giving is upon us, consider this Christmas donating to a charity that you believe in instead of spending a bunch of money on an item that may be broken or thrown away by next Christmas! We belong to the best and largest Veteran Service Organization on the planet! POST 209 is a phenomenal Post! All the Officers in this Post are Volunteers and we do all we can to help other veterans! There are always items that are needed here at OUR Post! Consider a monetary gift, or donate an item that you feel we could use! (Ask our Commander or one of the other officers they will know what we need!) I wish you all a blessed Christmas! Let's make 2024 a great year! Also, consider sending a Care package to a Soldier or Sailor serving abroad. It will brighten their day, and many can't be home at this time of year! Thanks for all you do to make this such a great Post! Let me know how I can assist you as the Service Officer of Post 209! I'm here to help! Merry Christmas!!

*Brian J Murphy, LCSW, MSW*

**VA/DoD Liaison Program**

Office: 719-526-9675 Cell: 719-930-4147

Brian.Murphy3@va.gov or Brian.J.Murphy44.civ@mail.mil



## From the desk of the Unit President

Happy Christmas!

I hope everyone enjoyed their Thanksgiving and are ready for Christmas now! Christmas is my most favorite holiday! I love the feeling of warmth, spending time with family, the food & goodies, all of the lights and colors! It is magical and I hope you feel that magic as well.

As a reminder, there will not be a general membership meeting in December nor will there be any Friday night dinners. We will have the Christmas party with our annual potluck dinner on December 9th! If you plan to bring a child between the ages of 0-12, please send Jackie their name, age, and gender. Also, we ask that you bring a new, wrapped gift for them with their name on it, (*just a small gift nothing expensive please*) so Santa can give it to them during his visit.

Happy birthday to all of our members celebrating their special day in December!

*Royce Hepper*

**Unit President**

**American Legion Auxiliary**





## From our Chaplain

*The Thrill of Hope*  
By Shawn McEvoy

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. [Romans 15:13](#)*

*"A thrill of hope; the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn." ~ O Holy Night*

Does Christmas thrill you?

Children get excited at the coming of the season, and often we might feel a bit of a charge through experiencing their amazement, but the chores we go through to provide that for them are often the very things that rob us from knowing the wonder for ourselves. Plan the party, trim the tree, max out the MasterCard, wrap, ship, take a trip. And that's assuming we aren't one of the multitudes who find themselves with a case of the Holiday Blues.

So, if Christ's coming into this world offers hope, and hope, as the song says, provides a thrill, how do we locate that experience amid the distraction and disillusionment of December?

Well, that's the cool thing about Hope. Just as total darkness can't hold back the light of a tiny flame, so does even the smallest increment of Hope provide joy and purpose.

Here are a few scriptures I've been mulling over on the subject:

*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" ([Hebrews 11:1](#)).*

Notice the parallel between "things hoped for" and "things not seen?" Talk about a paradox; try applying "assurance" to something your five senses can't detect. It's a challenge. The plus side is that hope, through Christ, is available no matter what you see or feel. It's above your circumstances.

If you have any spiritual needs (prayer, praises, blessings, death in family, etc.) I am here for you. If you just need someone to talk with for any reason, I am here for you. I don't have to know you or your family. Just reach out to me at [bob.odonnell@comcast.net](mailto:bob.odonnell@comcast.net) or 719-432-6018.

*Bob "Odie" O'Donnell*  
Chaplain Odie



## From our American Legion Riders

Below you will find the next installment of the Rider of the Month. This month the spotlight is on Scott "Paparazzi" Lauden. Scott has been an active member with ALR 209 for over four years. If there is something happening at Post 209, you will probably see Paparazzi there!

## The December 2023 American Legion Rider of the Month

**NAME:** Scott Laudan,

**ROAD NAME:** PAPAARAZZI (Picture taking contest at Twisted Apes Bar & Grill)

**RIDES:** 1994 Harley Davidson Road King

**YEARS IN ALR:** 4 Total in ALR 209

**PART OF:** American Legion and American Legion Riders

**OFFICER:** Road Captain, (Former Treasurer, Senior Road LT)

**DETAILS:** Scott “Paparazzi” Laudan Is originally from a small town south of Kansas City, Kansas. He enlisted in the Army after High School and served as a Combat Medic. Paparazzi ended his enlistment from the Army and has been living in Colorado Springs for the last 32 Years. Scott is an avid outdoorsman who loves hiking, camping, hunting, and ATVing. After years of outdoor adventures, he decided to branch out and start a new motorcycle hobby in 2006. Scott purchased his first motorcycle and taught himself to be a rider and novice motorcycle mechanic. When he is not organizing and leading rides, you will see him riding with a flag during mounted Color Guard details. Paparazzi can also be found tending bar or cooking during events at the American Legion at Post 209!!



*Jerry “RACO” Shay*  
President, American Legion Riders







## From our Post Historian



**Raymond "Jerry" Murphy**, born and raised in Pueblo, Colorado, graduated in 1947 from Pueblo Catholic High School. After finishing a degree at Adams State College in 1951, Murphy was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Assigned to 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division, Lt. Murphy was sent to the ongoing war in Korea. Murphy earned the Silver Star in November 1952 for courageously leading his infantry platoon against a heavily fortified enemy position.

On 3 February 1953, near the Imjin River, Lt. Murphy commanded the reserve platoon supporting a company assault on well-entrenched Chinese communist troops on a strategic Ungok hilltop. As the attack stalled and no wounded were returning, Murphy moved his platoon forward. Realizing most of the officers and NCOs

were dead or seriously wounded, Lt. Murphy took command of the company amidst the confusion, and began to organize a heroic rescue effort. Under intense enemy machinegun and artillery fire, Murphy made countless runs up the hill to recover dead and wounded Marines, until it was believed all had been evacuated. Although severely wounded, Murphy commanded an organized company withdrawal as he personally provided cover, maneuvering across the hillside and firing on the enemy to prevent further casualties. Returning to the base of the hill, it was learned a machine gun crew was missing.

He organized a search party and ascended the slope again, recovering the bodies of the dead Marines. Only after he was certain all the Marines were accounted for did he leave the battlefield. Murphy sustained numerous wounds but refused treatment until everyone else had been treated. Murphy was medically evacuated and returned stateside. For his leadership and fortitude under fire that saved countless American lives on that Korean hillside, he was presented the Medal of Honor by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in a 27 October 1953 White House ceremony.

*"The veterans were his second family...I think Jerry looked at his job with the VA as a way to keep taking care of his guys, just like he did in combat."*

Murphy went on to marry and have four children, and he spent most of his civilian career in service to other veterans after settling in New Mexico. He served as the director of veteran services at the Department of Veterans Affairs center in Albuquerque. After retirement in 1997, he continued to serve at the center as a volunteer, pushing veterans in wheelchairs to their medical appointments. Murphy's lifelong dedication to his fellow veterans was recognized in 2008, when the Albuquerque VA hospital where he had worked was renamed the Raymond G. Murphy VA



Medical Center. Murphy died on 6 April 2007, at the age of 77. He was buried at the Santa Fe National Cemetery wearing his VA hospital volunteer smock.



**Robert M. Gilchrist** grew up in Littleton, Colorado and spent a year at the University of Colorado at Boulder before entering the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1959. Upon graduation from the Academy in 1963 and completion of pilot training, Lt. Gilchrist was assigned to the 431st Tactical Fighter Squadron at Ubon Royal Thai Air Force Base in eastern Thailand, flying missions over Vietnam.

On 7 October 1966, 1st Lt. Gilchrist was flying his 98th combat mission as part of Operation Rolling Thunder. 1st Lt. Gilchrist, as F-4C Phantom II aircraft commander, and pilot 1st Lt. Eugene M. Pabst, took off as the second in a flight of two aircraft on a strike mission against enemy targets in North Vietnam. While attacking an enemy truck convoy, the lead aircraft

in the flight dropped flares then pulled up to observe Gilchrist's aircraft making its attack. During the run, the lead aircraft witnessed rocket fire on the enemy convoy from Gilchrist's Phantom, then a fireball in the area where the aircraft should have begun to pull out from its dive. Upon further investigation of the area, the flight leader saw a fan-shaped fire in the vicinity, where the pull out should have been. Search and rescue teams searched the area but saw no parachutes and detected no rescue beepers. Neither of the Phantom's two crew members could be located following the incident; attempts to recover their remains were unsuccessful. After the incident, and while carried in the status of missing in action (MIA), the U.S. Air Force promoted 1st Lt. Gilchrist to the rank of Major.



According to an Air Force Academy tribute, Robert Gilchrist was scheduled to return stateside to be married following his 100th mission.

Major Robert Michael Gilchrist, USAFA Class of 1963, is one of 41 USAFA graduates still Missing in Action in Southeast Asia from the Vietnam War. Today, Major Gilchrist is memorialized on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. His name is also inscribed along with all his fallen comrades on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, DC. He is memorialized at the US Air Force Academy and has an "In Memory Of" headstone in Fort Logan National Cemetery, Denver Colorado.

Thank you for your service Robert – You are not forgotten.

*Kurt Skinner*  
Historian





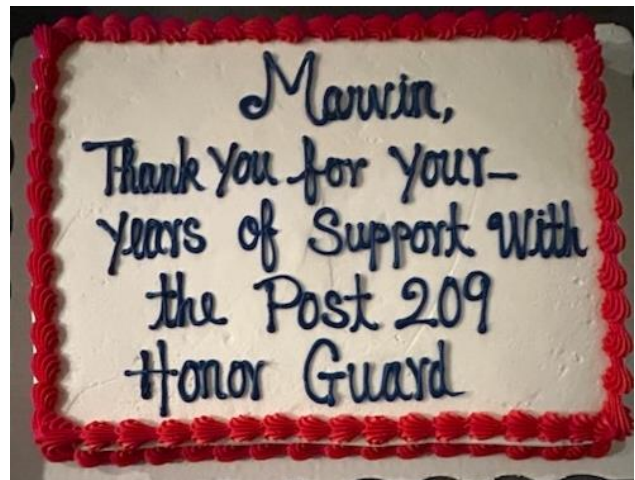
## From our Color/Honor Guard Captain

The Honor Guard saw November starting out with carrying the American Flag and Legion Family Banners in the Veterans Day Parade on November 4<sup>th</sup> in downtown Colorado Springs. Some of the Honor Guard members attended the Naturalization Ceremony on November 7<sup>th</sup> at the Pikes Peak Library 21C, supporting fellow Honor Guard member Kurt Skinner's Americanism initiative to present American Flags to the newest American citizens in Colorado. The team also Posted the Colors for the Veteran's Day Program at The Classical Academy on November 10<sup>th</sup>. The last big event of the year for the Honor Guard is supporting Wreaths Across America again this year at Pikes Peak National Cemetery on December 16<sup>th</sup>.

As with all teams and activities, people come and go. The Honor Guard has lost a few key, and very active members this year. One very longtime member, Marvin Weaver, has been a member of the team basically longer than he can remember (when asked what year he joined, he does not know). Marvin initially planned to retire back in March of 2022. Then it became March of 2023 because he was not ready to give up supporting the Honor Guard. March 2023 came, and went, with Marvin still hanging in there. In July, Marvin decided it was time to 'retire'. Normally, a presentation of a certificate of appreciation would have been done much sooner; however, the



team did not want to do a simple certificate for Marvin. So, at the Holiday Dinner on November 17<sup>th</sup> the team presented Marvin with a plaque in appreciation for all that he has done over the last \_\_\_ years supporting Veterans, the Post, and the Community as a member of the Honor Guard. Of course, there was also a cake to celebrate as well (you must get a cake to celebrate, right?).



As we wind down to the end of the year, the Honor Guard team wishes everyone a safe and enjoyable holiday season. We look forward to supporting the Veterans, the Post, and the Community in 2024.

Like and Follow “The American Legion Neal Thomas, Jr. Centennial Post 209 Honor Guard” Facebook page. The link is: <https://legion209.org/honorguard209/>

*Joel W. Haas*  
Honor Guard Captain



## From our Junior Shooting Sports Program

The Fall JSSP courses, the Marksmanship Course and the Young Guns Basic Course, concluded Thursday November 9<sup>th</sup>. The Awards and Pizza Party was held to celebrate the accomplishments of our youth shooters. The Young Guns graduated nine (9) students, with Gabby Kanaby earning the Top Shot Award and having the only Eagle Eye Award. The Marksmanship Course for NRA Qualification Air Rifle awarded: 2 students with Pro-Marksman and Marksman; 1 student Pro-Marksman, Marksman, and Sharpshooter; and 3 students Sharpshooter. There are 2 students working very hard towards their Expert qualification that were also recognized for their efforts. The Marksmanship Course for Qualification Air Pistol saw the first recipients of awards: 1 student with Pro-Marksman; and 1 student with Pro-Marksman and Marksman. Three instructors also worked towards qualifications to “practice what they preach” with: 1 instructor Pro-Marksman; and 2 instructors Pro-Marksman and Marksman.

The Young Guns Annual Turkey Shoot was held on Friday November 17<sup>th</sup> following the Holiday Dinner. There were three categories of shooters: men, women, and youth (17 and under). The winners for each category received a turkey (obviously) and a \$75 gift card. Second place for each category received a \$50 gift card. Third place in each category received a \$25 gift card.



1<sup>st</sup> Place from left to right: Gabby (Women), Ian (Youth), Jim (Men, Perfect Score of 50)



2<sup>nd</sup> Place from left to right: Joel (Men), Ben (Youth), Dee (Women)



3<sup>rd</sup> Place from left to right: Tom (Men), Noah (Youth), Valerie (Women, Not Pictured)

There is an NRA Basic Rifle Course being scheduled for Saturday January 6<sup>th</sup>. The location is TBD and will be sent out via the Weekly 411 email once confirmed. The cost will be \$50 to cover all costs associated with the course (books, lunch, ammo, etc.) and a minimum of four students is required to hold the course. If you are interested in attending, or just learning more about it, please email: [jwhaas.al209@gmail.com](mailto:jwhaas.al209@gmail.com). This is the first of three courses required to be an NRA Basic Rifle Instructor. The NRA Basic Instructor Training Course and NRA Basic Rifle Instructor Course are also required. Following a successful completion of the first course, a reasonably priced option is being looked into for the remaining two courses to help keep the costs to students down. The cutoff for reserving a seat is Monday December 4, 2023 to allow for enough time to get

materials from the NRA.

The Spring 2024 JSSP courses are taking applications for the Marksmanship Course starting Wednesday February 7<sup>th</sup> (4:45pm – 6:00pm, 5:45pm – 7:00pm, or 6:56pm – 8:00pm) and Young Guns Basic Course starting Thursday February 8<sup>th</sup> (6:15pm – 8:00pm), with a cost of \$30 per youth shooter for either course. If there is a youth interested in learning how to safely handle a firearm and basic shooting skills, they are invited to sign up for the Young Guns Basic Course. If there is a youth that has already completed Young Guns, they are invited to sign up for the Marksmanship Course. Please go to <https://legion209.org/young-guns/> to download an application, complete the application, and send it to Jesse Wade (jssp209@gmail.com) to sign up for either class. Please feel free to reach out to Jesse or myself (jwhaas.al209@gmail.com) with any questions you may have regarding the Junior Shooting Sports Program.

The Young Guns Basic Course provides youth ages 10-18 years old (boys and girls) the opportunity to learn about firearms safety and basic shooting skills. During Young Guns, NRA Basic Rifle Instructors teach the safe handling of firearms, shooting positions (prone, kneeling, and standing), how to zero a rifle, and how to score targets. At the end of the course, the youth have a competition shoot against the others in the course in order to show off the skills they have learned. The Marksmanship Course provides graduates of Young Guns the opportunity to further develop their shooting skills.

Like and Follow “Centennial Post 209 Young Guns Shooting Sports” Facebook page. The link is at the top of the Young Guns website: <https://legion209.org/young-guns/>

*Joel W. Haas*  
**JSSP Instructor**





## Post 209 Honors New Citizens with First US Flags

“Helping legal immigrants prepare for citizenship and assimilation into American society is in the best interest of our nation and has been a long-standing and proud tradition of The American Legion since its founding.” – *Mark Avis, National Americanism Commission*



### *Chairman*

Looking for a tangible way to "foster and perpetuate a 100% Americanism," Neal Thomas Jr.-Centennial American Legion Post 209 committed itself to honoring newly naturalized American citizens in their Colorado Springs community. In a demonstration of support for legal immigration and pride in U.S. citizenship, Post 209 decided to present each newly naturalized citizen with their first U.S. flag to proudly display at their homes. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) naturalization ceremony, conducted November 7 at the 21c Pikes Peak Library in Colorado Springs, offered the perfect venue for the presentations.

Colorado Springs's own America the Beautiful Chorus opened the ceremony with a moving rendition of The Star-Spangled Banner. Colorado Springs Mayor Yemi Mobolade reminded the audience that in 2017, he too became a new U.S. citizen in that very room. He echoed the words from Mitt Romney's 2012 national convention speech: "Optimism is uniquely American. It is what brought us to America. We are a nation of immigrants. We are the children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the ones who wanted a better life, the driven ones, the ones who woke up at night hearing that voice telling them that life in that place called America could be better."



Post 209 member Joe LaChat presents an American flag to a new U.S. citizen.

The 34 newly naturalized U.S. citizens, born in 20 different countries, then swore their oaths of allegiance to "support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic." As new citizens they pledged their allegiance to the U.S. flag and the Republic for which it stands. After receiving their official certificates of naturalized U.S. citizenship, the new citizens were presented with their "first flag." In an impressive demonstration of civic engagement, 22 members of The American Legion Post 209 family participated in the flag presentations. In addition to the 3' x 5' all-weather flag, each citizen also received an American Legion U.S. Flag Etiquette booklet. The effort was entirely funded by American Legion Post 209 through individual donations.

Following the ceremony, which was conducted on election day, the League of Women Voters were on hand to assist in voter registration, which provided the new American citizens their first opportunity to exercise a fundamental duty of citizenship by voting.

Our post involvement in this U.S. citizenship ceremony was very rewarding, and we intend to establish the "first flag for new citizens" initiative as an ongoing Americanism program at Post 209. I would encourage other American Legion posts in every state to find similar ways to participate in naturalization and citizenship programs in your communities. As members of the nation's foremost veteran service organization, we can powerfully demonstrate our ongoing commitment to American values and civic engagement by celebrating with our community's newest U.S. citizens as they pledge "to support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America."



Post 209 Past Commander Lino Calica presents an American flag to a new U.S. citizen.

*Kurt Skinner*

**Post Historian  
Americanism Committee Chairman**



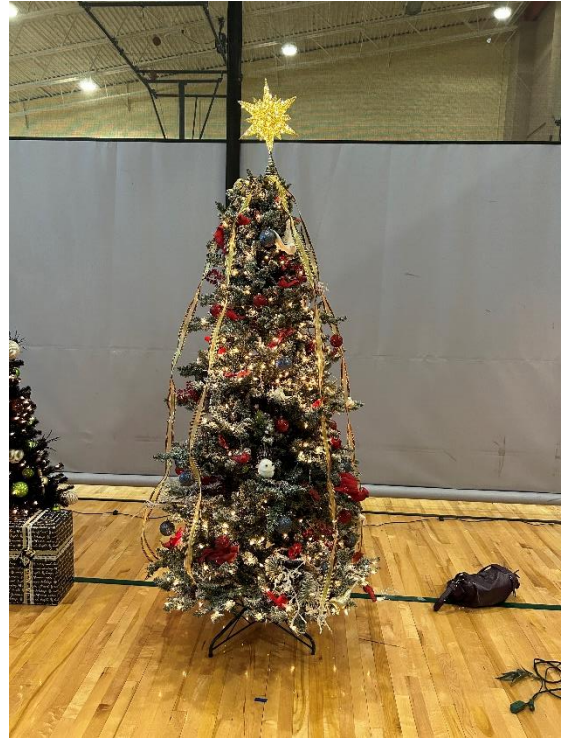


## Meridian Ranch Festival of Trees!

Sons of the American Legion Squadron 209 Commander, Rob Barry entered the annual Meridian Ranch Festival of Trees in Peyton. This is the 6<sup>th</sup> year the folks at the Meridian Ranch Recreation Center sponsored this Festival. Rob did an amazing job getting a very nice 8' Christmas tree donated as well as all the decorations that adorned his entry. Our tree was auctioned and the proceeds will go to support the Children's Welfare Foundation (CWF).

Bidding is still ongoing at the time of this writing, with bids starting at \$150. The final day for the Festival is 25 November, but this newsletter will be in final review or publication before we know how much money our Squadron raised for this great charity.

Thanks Commander Rob, and job well done!



Merry  
Christmas!





## UPCOMING EVENTS



SAL



# SAFETY INITIATIVE

Sons of the American Legion  
Squadron 209 will replace and install  
smoke detector batteries at no cost for  
veterans in financial need or with  
physical limitations

Contact SQ 209:  
Rob Barry  
719-930-5725  
colo.rsb@yahoo.com



Made with PosterMyWall.com



Join us to **CELEBRATE** the opening of our **COLORADO SPRINGS CLINIC.**

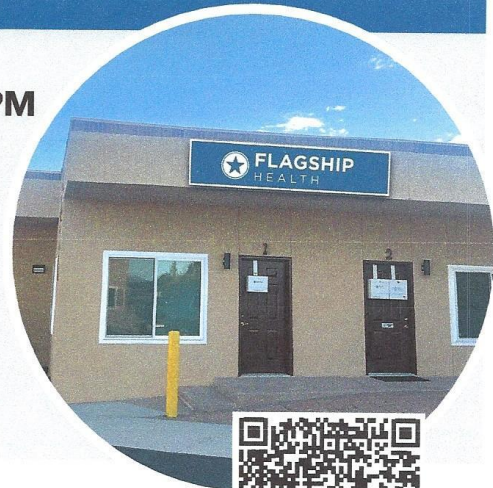


## GRAND OPENING | OPEN HOUSE

**TUESDAY, 05 DEC 2023 | 4:00-7:00 PM**

American Legion Post 209  
3613 Jeannine Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80917

**LEARN MORE** about the comprehensive primary care and social model being built for our senior and veteran community.



R.S.V.P. HERE 

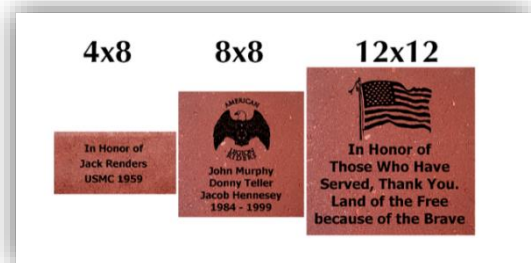
**Say goodbye to healthcare complexity.  
Say hello to community, camaraderie, and care.**

[WWW.FLAGSHIPHEALTH.ORG](http://WWW.FLAGSHIPHEALTH.ORG) | *Creating Healthy Senior Communities* | *Enabling Veterans to Thrive*

## Walk of Honor



- **What are the costs for the individual bricks?** Prices vary depending on size, style, and lettering desired but typically range from \$90 to \$200, depending on size.
- **What are the costs for the corporate/veteran supporter bricks?** Again, prices vary depending on size, style, and lettering but typically range from \$250 to \$500.
- **What is the difference between individual and corporate bricks?** Individual bricks are for veterans and family members wishing to purchase a brick to honor their veterans. The corporate bricks are for our veteran-friendly supporters and businesses who want to show their continued support for our nation's heroes by purchasing a brick.
- **Is the brick purchase restricted to members of the Post 209 families?** No. We encourage members to buy a brick for themselves for their veteran loved ones or to show their support for our veterans.
- **Where do I go to buy a brick?** We have a link on our website. Just visit [legion209.org](http://legion209.org) and click on "Walk of Honor." Or, you can visit <http://polarengraving.com/ALPost209> to buy your brick. The site is user-friendly and will walk you through the design and purchase. In addition, you will see a preview of your brick before finalizing the purchase.
- **How do I pay for the brick?** We have the site set up to accept payment via PayPal or check. PayPal is an extremely safe way to purchase a brick, and you don't need a PayPal account to use it.
- **Where will the brick be shipped?** All bricks will be sent to the post. We will notify you when it arrives, and you are welcome to stop by and see the brick you have purchased.
- **What will become of my brick?** It will be placed near the flagpole at the post. If you are a landscaper or know a good one (preferably a veteran), have them contact our Adjutant.
- **How long will this fundraiser effort last?** We plan only to sell as many bricks as needed for the first phase of the landscaping project.
- **Will I have an opportunity to buy a brick later?** Quite possibly, depending on what is decided/approved for the next phase of our project.



**Order your brick(s) now to ensure you get one in Phase One of our projects. If you buy multiple bricks, let our Adjutant know, and we will ensure they are all placed together.**

# Celebrate

At  
American Legion  
Neal Thomas Jr. Centennial Post 209

Host your next event with us! With over 2,500 SQFT of venue space this is the perfect location for your next social event!



## Rental Features:

- 6 Hour Rental
- In House Catering Available\*
- Fully Stocked Bar\*
- Muti-Room Sound System
- Dance Floor with Lighting

If you and your family are looking for an affordable option for a wedding, corporate event, retirement party, or any other event, we here at The American Legion Post 209 are ready to assist you in all your event planning needs.

Starting at  
**\$350!**



For More Information

[www.legion209.org/contact\\_us](http://www.legion209.org/contact_us)

(719) 599-8624

3613 Jeannine Drive Colorado Springs, CO 80917

\*Additional cost may apply



## Bringing A Little South to the West

While writing last month's article about Country Cooking, it brought back some fond memories about other meals I enjoyed as a child, and even today. My favorite meal is breakfast. I rarely eat breakfast nowadays, but it's only because I don't make time for it.

We didn't have Pop Tarts growing up. Nor did we have frozen waffles that you could put in a toaster to heat up. If we wanted/needed something fast to eat before heading off to school, we'd fix a bowl of cereal. And in my house, we normally had a choice of Cheerios or Bran Flakes. I couldn't eat either without a spoonful (or two) of sugar sprinkled across the cereal before pouring milk. The stores probably carried other brands/types, but it never found its way into our cupboard. And when milk was scarce, I'd pour a little Carnation cream in the bowl and add water. It added a little more sweetness to the cereal. Yum, Yum!

But weekends made it a very special breakfast occasion. Mom had time to prepare and serve a huge breakfast, or especially when we visited the grandparents in Arkansas, we could always count on a large and filling breakfast. This was a meal that today would have lasted all day, but as a kid it was just enough to get me to lunch.

The breakfast always consisted of eggs (mine was over-easy), crisp bacon or sausage patties (I never had or even saw link sausages until I went into the Army), homemade biscuits, freshly sliced tomatoes, white milk gravy (no meat mixed in), grits, and either grape, strawberry, blackberry, or muscadine jelly or jam canned by my grandmother. For those unfamiliar, muscadines grew wild in the south. They were large, round, purple, sweet, and tasted very much like grapes. They were a very popular source for jams and jellies, or just eat them right off the vine, and many people who knew how to do it, would make muscadine wine.

Now before I get to the best part of the meal, I feel compelled to educate people living in the west on the proper (and only) way to eat grits. Put them in a bowl, and while they are still hot, mix butter into the bowl. Lots of butter. Sprinkle some salt on top, stir the grits to mix the butter and salt, then sprinkle a little more salt on top. That's it! I've seen people put sugar and milk in grits, and it makes me ill just watching them ruin a good dish.

To finish off this great meal, we'd typically have Sorghum Molasses. As with grits, there's only one way to really enjoy Sorghum. You serve it warm, pour it on your plate, mix in a pat of butter, and stir it up with a butter knife until the butter is melted into the Sorghum and you're left with a milky looking substance. Take a biscuit and pull it in half, then drag the biscuit through the Sorghum. If you want to look proper, take your butter knife and run it through the Sorghum, then spread it on the biscuit. If you've mixed the Sorghum and butter properly, getting it to stay on your butter knife should be no problem. There's not a better or sweeter way to finish off a breakfast.

Even living here in Colorado, it's pretty easy to find a place that serves grits. But I don't think I've seen anyplace west of the Mississippi (other than Arkansas or Missouri) that offers Sorghum on a breakfast menu. They don't know what they're missing.

*Jay Bowen*  
Past Commander





## Salty Dog

### Sailor's Night Before Christmas – Author Unknown

Twas the night before Christmas, the ship was out steaming, Sailors stood watch while others were dreaming.

They lived in a crowd with racks tight and small, In a 80-man berthing, cramped one and all. I had come down the stack with presents to give, and to see inside just who might perhaps live.

I looked all about, a strange sight did I see, No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree. No stockings were hung, shined boots close at hand, On the bulkhead hung pictures of a far distant land. They had medals and badges and awards of all kind, and a sober thought came into my mind.

For this place was different, so dark and so dreary, I had found the house of a Sailor, once I saw clearly. A Sailor lay sleeping, silent and alone, curled up in a rack and dreaming of home.

The face was so gentle, the room squared away, this was the United States Sailor today. This was the hero I saw on TV, defending our country so we could be free.

I realized the families that I would visit this night, owed their lives to these Sailors lay willing to fight. Soon round the world, the children would play, and grownups would celebrate on Christmas Day. They all enjoyed freedom each day of the year, Because of the Sailor, like the one lying here. I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone, On a cold Christmas Eve on a sea, far from home.

The very thought brought a tear to my eye, I dropped to my knees and started to cry. The Sailor awakened and I heard a calm voice, "Santa, don't cry, this life is my choice." "Defending the seas all days of the year, so others may live and be free with no fear."

I thought for a moment, what a difficult road, to live a life guided by honor and code. After all it's Christmas Eve and the ship's underway! But freedom isn't free and its sailors who pay. The Sailor say's to our country "be free and sleep tight, no harm will come, not on my watch and not on this night.

The Sailor rolled over and drifted to sleep, I couldn't control it, I continued to weep. I kept watch for hours, so silent, so still, I watched as the Sailor shivered from the night's cold chill. I didn't want to leave on that cold dark night, this guardian of honor so willing to fight.

The Sailor rolled over and with a voice strong and sure, Commanded, "Carry on Santa, It's Christmas, and All is Secure!"

*Marvin Weaver, Jr.*  
Post 209 Commander



## PROGRAMS FOR KIDS

### Young Guns



NRA-Accredited members of Sons of The American Legion are sponsors and instructors for the Young Guns program. This basic rifle safety and marksmanship course are offered to boys and girls ages 10-18. Shooting is indoors, using air rifles.

<https://www.facebook.com/AmericanLegionCentennialPost209/>

### Scouting Programs

The Post 209 family is the charter partner with the following Boy Scouts of America (BSA) units:



- Cub Scout Pack 24 (Boys and Girls): p24@legion209.org
- Scouts BSA Troop 77 (Girls): t77@legion209.org
- Scouts BSA Troop 79 (Boys): t79@legion209.org
- Scouts BSA Troop 187 (Boys): t187@legion209.org
- Venture Crew 762 (Young men and women ages 14-20): c762@legion209.org

### Boys and Girls State



Boys State and Girls State are for high school juniors going into their senior year with at least one semester left.

- BOYS STATE [www.colegionboysstate.org/](http://www.colegionboysstate.org/)
- GIRLS STATE <http://alacolorado.com/girls-state.html>

### Oratorical Contest



This Nationwide contest is designed to develop a more profound knowledge and appreciation of the Constitution of the United States on the part of high school students.

[www.colegionoratorical.org](http://www.colegionoratorical.org)

### Eagle Scout of the Year



The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year nomination window is from **1 November to 1 March**. Nomination packets must be received by each applicant's respective The American Legion department (state) headquarters no later than 1 March.

<https://legion209.org/Scouting/>

# DECEMBER 2023

















For the most current version see:  
[https://www.legion209.org/coming\\_up/](https://www.legion209.org/coming_up/)

December 2023						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2  Department Oratorical Contest; Goldenview Classical Academy
3	4 Troop 77 Mtg. 6:00pm	5 Flagship Health Open House! 4:00pm-7:00pm Post 209	6	7 Executive Cmtee Meeting 6:00pm   Venture Crew 7:00pm	8	9 Potluck Post 209 Christmas Party! 4:00pm    
10	11 Troop 77 Mtg. 6:00pm	12 Honor Gd. Trng  6:00pm	13 Navy B'day (original)! Flagship Health Education Summit 1:30pm-3:30pm	14  Venture Crew 7:00pm	15	16 Wreaths Across America! 10:00am
17	18 Troop 77 Mtg. 6:00pm	19	20 Space Force B'day!	21 Start of Winter  Venture Crew 7:00pm	22	23 Healing Warriors! 9:00am - 1:00pm
24	25 Christmas	26 SAL Monthly Mtng 5:30pm 	27	28  Venture Crew 7:00pm	29	30
31	Notes: There will be no Friday night dinners in December to allow our great staff of volunteers time to spend with family.					



# JANUARY 2024

For the most current version see:  
[https://www.legion209.org/coming\\_up/](https://www.legion209.org/coming_up/)

January 2024						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> New Year's Day	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>  Venture Crew 7:00pm  Ex. Cmte Meeting 6:00pm 	<b>5</b> Barnyard Dinner Night! 6:00pm <b>RSVP Required!</b> 	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Troop 77 Mtg. 6:00pm	<b>9</b> Honor Gd. Trng  6:00pm	<b>10</b> Flagship Health Education Summit 1:30pm-3:30pm	<b>11</b>  Venture Crew 7:00pm	<b>12</b> ALR Dinner 6:00pm <b>RSVP Required!</b> 	<b>13</b> Membership Meeting B'fast - 9:00/Mtg - 10:00  
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Martin Luther King Jr. Troop 77 Mtg. 6:00pm	<b>16</b> ALR Exec. Mtng  ALR 6:30pm.	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>  Venture Crew 7:00pm	<b>19</b> Chicken Fried Chicken Dinner 6:00pm <b>RSVP Required!</b> 	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Troop 77 Mtg. 6:00pm	<b>23</b> ALR/SAL Monthly Mtng SAL 5:30pm ALR 6:30pm  	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> Honor Gd. Trng  6:00pm  Venture Crew 7:00pm	<b>26</b> Mid-Year Conference Longmont Post 32 ALA Dinner 6:00pm <b>RSVP Required!</b> 	<b>27</b> Mid-Year Conference Healing Warriors! 9:00am-1:00pm
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> Troop 77 Mtg. 6:00pm	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	Notes: <b>No Dinner on 19 January. Most of the help will be at Mid-Year Conference.</b>		