

\* Chapter I \*

Inception of Post#303

Once a Soldier always a Soldier, this feeling seems to remain part of an Ex-Soldier even after getting back to civilian life, and so, a few hardy souls of World War One and Two Veterans decided that Bonita Springs Fla. a small peaceful town of the South-West Gulf Coast of Florida needed an American Legion Post so that all comrades could get together for some old time reminiscence and maybe a good Bar-B-Q who knows...

It was during the Spring of 1956 that the idea for a Post began producing results; Ed Illshe a Legionnaire in the Fort Myers Post (Post 38) about 25 miles North of Bonita heard about the wish for a Post and visited Thomas Kehoe who was the 8th District Commander at the time, he also contacted more Bonita Veterans and did all the leg work for the Issuing of a Charter.

These Pioneers of Post #303 deserve a great deal of credit for their early vision of what we now take for granted, men like Ed Illshe, Fred Worth Sgt.at Arms, Tom Hunter, Gerry Gulder, Arnold Petersen, Tom Reahard, Bob Parrett, Ted Whittman and most of the Charter list that follows shortly will live forever in this Post History and in the minds of many Bonita residents.

Commander Kehoe from the 8th District was naturally very interested and within a few months was able to prepare for the first Post Installation of Bonita Springs Fla. Temporary Officers were elected and duly sworn in by Commander Kehoe on June 20, 1956, a celebrating Ham Supper was prepared by the Auxillary shortly after the 1st meeting and a new American Legion Post was Borne.

1956

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Installation

1957

of Officers

The American Legion Post #303



\* Commander Thomas Hunter \*

Max Brauner	Ist Vice Commander
Robert Garrison	2nd Vice Commander
Louis G. Warren	Adjutant -Historian
Robert A. Lawhon Jr.	Finance officer
Herbert G. Warriner	Sgt. at Arms
Herbert Messerer	Ass. Sgt. at Arms
Carl Bartholomae	Chaplain
Paul DeLeon	Service Officer

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The Installation day was held on June 20, 1956 at the Community Pavilion in central Bonita Springs.

A very tasty Ham supper prepared by the Auxillary was the opening gong of this memorable day and a few guests, wives and friends of the Legionnaires participated.

Chaplain Carl Bartholomae gave the Invocation and introduced Commander Thomas Kehoe from the 8th District, Com. Kehoe had guided every step of the new American Legion John Murphy Post from the Inception and was now ready for the first Installation.

After introducing Tommy Thompson, Sarasota; Sgt. at Arms Fred Worth, from the 8th District and Ed Illshe, Fort Myers, Commander Kehoe installed Thomas (Tom) Hunter as the first Commander of Post #303 Bonita Springs, and proceeded to install the rest of the Officers. One more Invocation followed the installation and the new Commander Tom Hunter retired the Colors.

A new American Legion John Murphy Post #303 was thus Born in Bonita Springs and the pride of its Legionnaires and residents.

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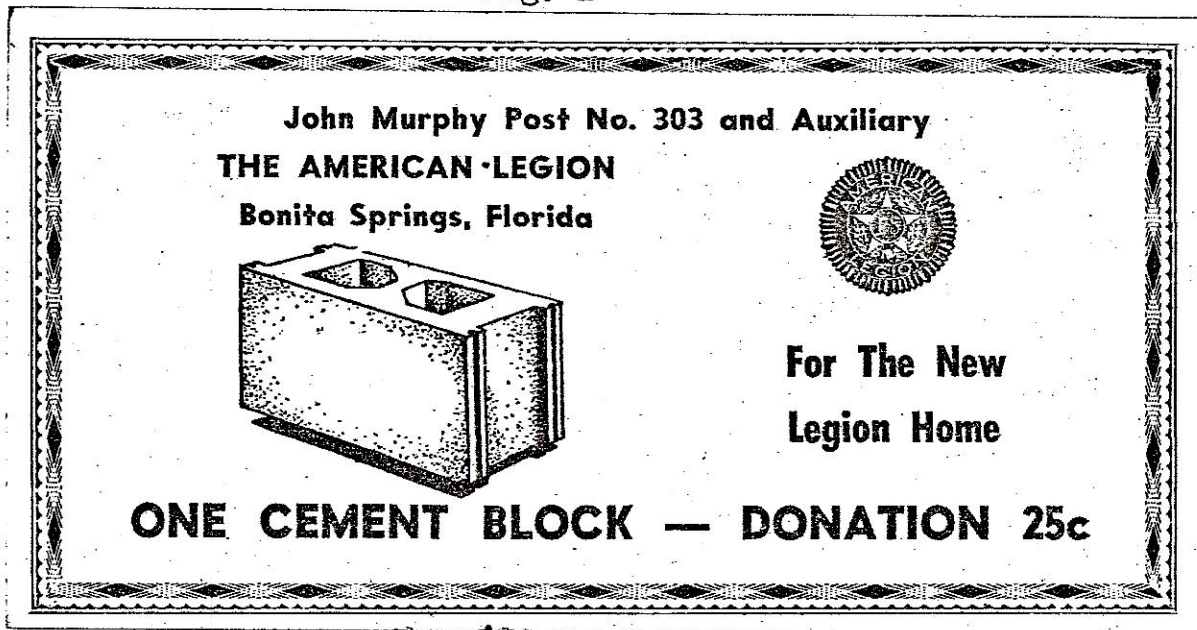
The American Legion John Murphy Post #303 was now a reality but the Charter for the Post was not issued until August 15, 1957 under the next Administration, the first Commander Tom Hunter, however, a very energetic man wasted no time in formulating many important drives for the benefit of the new Post.

First on the agenda was a Building Fund, money was needed for just about every thing, all the original members and many Bonita residents were encouraged to promote all kinds of ideas in order to bring in money for both Land and Building for the Post.

The Auxillary as always did more than their share in the promotions, Bar-B-Qs, Cake Sales, Dances, Auctions and other functions were carried out in the centrally located Community Pavilion.

One good gimmick to get donations for the Post was the selling of small slips of paper with the picture of a Cement Block, each Block for 25 cents, however, every body bought more than One Block see Fig.I below,

Fig. I



\* Chapter I \*

The Inception of the John Murphy Legion Post 303 is rather impressive if we evaluate the generosity of the Bonita residents as well as the prospective residents, including the Historian, who purchased Blocks from out of town before retiring to Bonita Springs.

Much credit is also rightfully due to Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Parrett, Publisher of the Bonita Banner, a weekly Newspaper that did much to promote, advertize and encourage donations for the Post, their untiring efforts continue unbending to this day, and is deserving of the utmost gratitude from all Bonita Legionnaires and residents.

The first 4th of July celebration by the Post was held at the Community Pavillion, and consisted of a Covered Dish Supper with an admission of 50 Cents for all participants, followed by Door prices and a Dance in the evening, with another 50 Cents admission, all of which added quite a few dollars to the Building Fund, thanks to all the workers and especially to the Auxillary for all the Cakes and the many other articles they auctioned off.

Another worthy Project by Commander Tom Hunter and the Post, was the start of a Birthday Bank in Memory of Deceased Comrades, and called for the donation of one dollar by every Legionnaire on his Birthday for the purchase of flowers, cards and books to the free Library.

Plans for the 1956-1957 administration also included a Memorial Day Ceremony to take place at the Bonita Cemetery with Colors, Auxillary and Prayer by the Post Chaplain, and an Essay Contest on Americanism for the local School 7th, 8th and 9th Grades, with Medals to be given at Graduation, a very busy but a worthy good start for first Commander Tom Hunter.

\* Chapter I \*

\* A Memorable Gift to Post \*

It was during the fall of 1956 that a most pleasant surprise greeted all the Members of the Post, one of the first worry to buy the Land for the Post was eliminated, a real gift from the sky was the offer from Mary and Everett Reahard of part of their land for the erection of the Post, needless to point out the excitement of all the Legionnaires that the Post Bldg. would soon be a reality, all promotional affairs were now stepped up, material was soon needed for the Building, Tables, Chairs, a Bar-B-Q Pit was now within their grasp and every man and woman in town boosted their effort to help the cause for the new American Legion John Murphy Post 303.

A Building Committee was soon formed and preliminary steps were taken to arrange for a Ground Breaking and Dedication Ceremonies at the location of the new Post, on one of the meetings it was decided to have the Dedication on the 30th of December 1956 which turned out as planned.

Tom Reahard (Reahard's son and a Legionnaire) acting for his father Everett who was also a Post member, presented the property to Commander Hunter and Mary Reahard pledged complete cooperation and support for the new Legion Home, Commander Kehoe from the 8th District delivered a very impressive speech and John and Jerry both sons of Lieutenant John Murphy did the first Spade Turning of the ground. Commander Hunter then Dedicated the property and Building in Memory of all the Comrades who died in the Service of our Country.

Post Chaplain Carl Bartholomae gave the Benediction which was followed by a silent Tribute to the Dead.

Ground Breaking Dedication Ceremonies  
December 30, 1956



L. to R. Commander Tom Hunter, Jerry Murphy, Mrs. L. Essary  
John Murphy Jr. and 8th Dist. Sgt. at Arms Fred Worth



8th Dist. Commander Tommy Kehoe Speaking, far Right

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Present for the Dedication in addition to those named were; Mrs. Louis Essary mother of John and Jerry Murphy and Sgt. at Arms Fred Worth from the 8th District, also Aux. Mary Warden and a few Bonita residents were part of this Dedication.

The start of the new year 1957 found Commander Hunter just as busy as ever with more of the same but with an added problem to be solved, the problem was that of the location for the Post, the Dedication of the ground emphasized this fact, and it became more evident every day that the location for the Post was a little out of the way and not close enough to a main thoroughfare, a few months were spent on this problem until Ted Whitman and Bob Parrett made the motion that the ground could be sold with the approval of Mary and Everett Reahard and that the proceeds be used to buy ground in a different location, the motion was approved by all Legionnaires and the suggestion relayed to the Reahards, the Reahards consented readily as long as it was for the benefit of the Post.

The land was disposed in 1958, but since this took place under the following administration, it will be proceeded in Chapter 3 under Gerhard Gulder 1957-1958 administration, however, Chapter 2 deals with the complete story of the Land donation.

Time was running out for Commander Hunter and preparations for the next Installation were in order but before closing this Chapter Praise for Commander Hunter is also in order, as a first Commander, Tom Hunter was a superb Pioneer that faced and overcome all problems, to this day we praise and Salute Past Commander Tom Hunter.... Membership for 1956-1957 was 31.



\* Chapter 2 \*

- Land Gift by two Reahard families -

For the sake of simplicity and to prevent confusion, the gift of the land for the erection of the American Legion John Murphy Post building is all inclusive in this Chapter in addition to the recounting during the course of the three years that it took place. The Historian wishes to emphasize "first" that two Reahard families donated land for the Post, and "second" that two Reahard brothers ( Everett and Jean Reahard ) married two sisters ( Mary and Carmen ) Mary and her husband Everett which was also a Charter member of the Post, donated the first land ( a 130 by 200 ft.) plot on Winsdor Road Bonita Springs during the Summer of 1956. This land was dedicated inMemory of John Murphy to whom the Post was named on December 30, 1956.

The donation of the land was of great inspiration to the Post members and the kind thought and generosity of Mary and Everett Reahard will long live in the minds of the Legionnaires and the residents of Bonita Springs.

The only drawback was the location for the Post, the location was ideal for a private home but not close enough to a main thoroughfare that could easily be seen by the general public. This fact became apparent during the Dedication and grew more evident during the following months until Ted Whitman and Bob Parrett bothe Legionnaires made the suggestion that the original ground could be sold and the proceeds used to buy ground in a more suitable location. This idea was soon voted on and approved but was also submitted to the Reahards for their approval which turned out to be very agreeable if it was for the benefit of the Post.

\* Chapter 2 \*

A plan was soon devised for the disposal of the land but to facilitate the sale it was decided to sell chance tickets to every body, this was a more reliable way of selling it since all Legionnaires could help in the disposal of the tickets.

Before parting with the land, however, the Post had to be sure of the next location, and this location was already in agreement by most Legionnaires being only a few hundred foot from the Beach Rd. a main highway to the Beach, ironically this location was owned by the other Reahard family ( Jean and Carmen Reahard ) who were living in Fort Myers at the time.

Ted Whitman here played a major role in contacting Jean and Carmen Reahard in Fort Myers and once more an unexpected streak of luck received an open arms welcome in the History of The American Legion John Murphy Post #303.

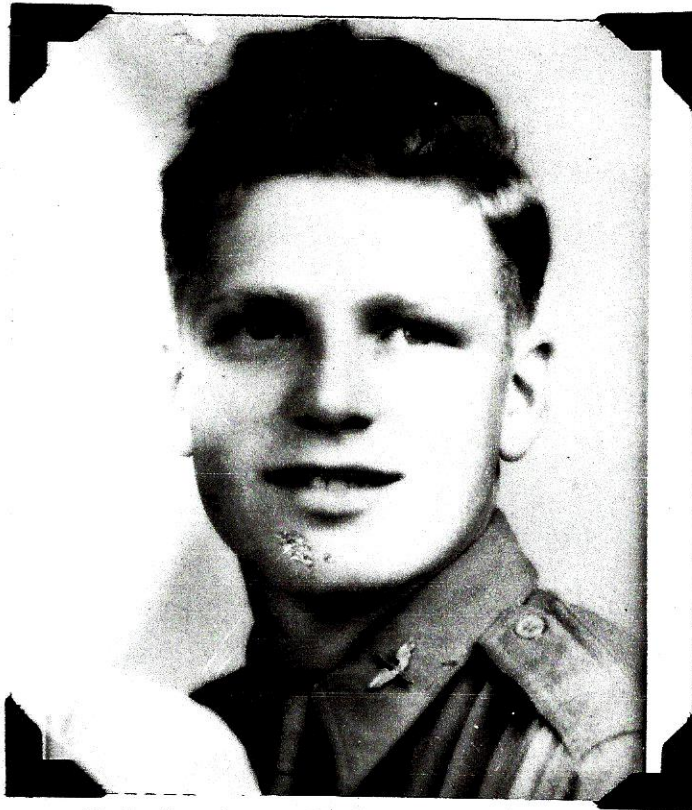
Jean and Carmen turned out to be just as generous as their brother and sister Mary and Everett and offered to donate a 180 by 155 Ft. plot on Imperial Road, Imperial Shores, Bonita Springs for the erection of the Post with the sole provision that the building of the Post be started within two years.

Needless to say, the offer was accepted with a great deal of gratitude by all Legionnaires and both Reahard families can be said to form the foundation of the John Murphy Post #303.

Once the Post was assured of the next location, the sale of the tickets for the disposal of the original plot was started and many of the Legionnaires, Auxillary and some Bonita residents took part in this sale. The lucky winner in 1958 turned out to be an out of townner that received a good pece of Florida land

\* Chapter 2 \*

for the price of a chance ticket. Ted Whitman in the mean time kept taking numerous trips to Fort Myers in order to obtain the proper description of the plot and be ready for the issuing of the Deed. Ted Whitman also proposed to the Post that they form a Corporation for the sole purpose of Building ownership, the Corp. would consist of all members of the Post and the Auxillary. The idea of the Corp. gained the approval of every body during one of the meetings and was submitted to Jean and Carmen Reahard in Fort Myers so that when the Deed was issued, it was duly made to the American Legion Club Corp. which is still in existance today. The Deed was issued on January 29, 1960 and Dedicated in Memory of Ist Lieutenant Bernard Schams ( son in law of Jean and Carmen Reahard ) Lieutenant Schams was killed in action over Polish Silesia in 1944.



Ist Lieutenant Bernard Schams

Imperial Shores, Bonita Springs, Florida

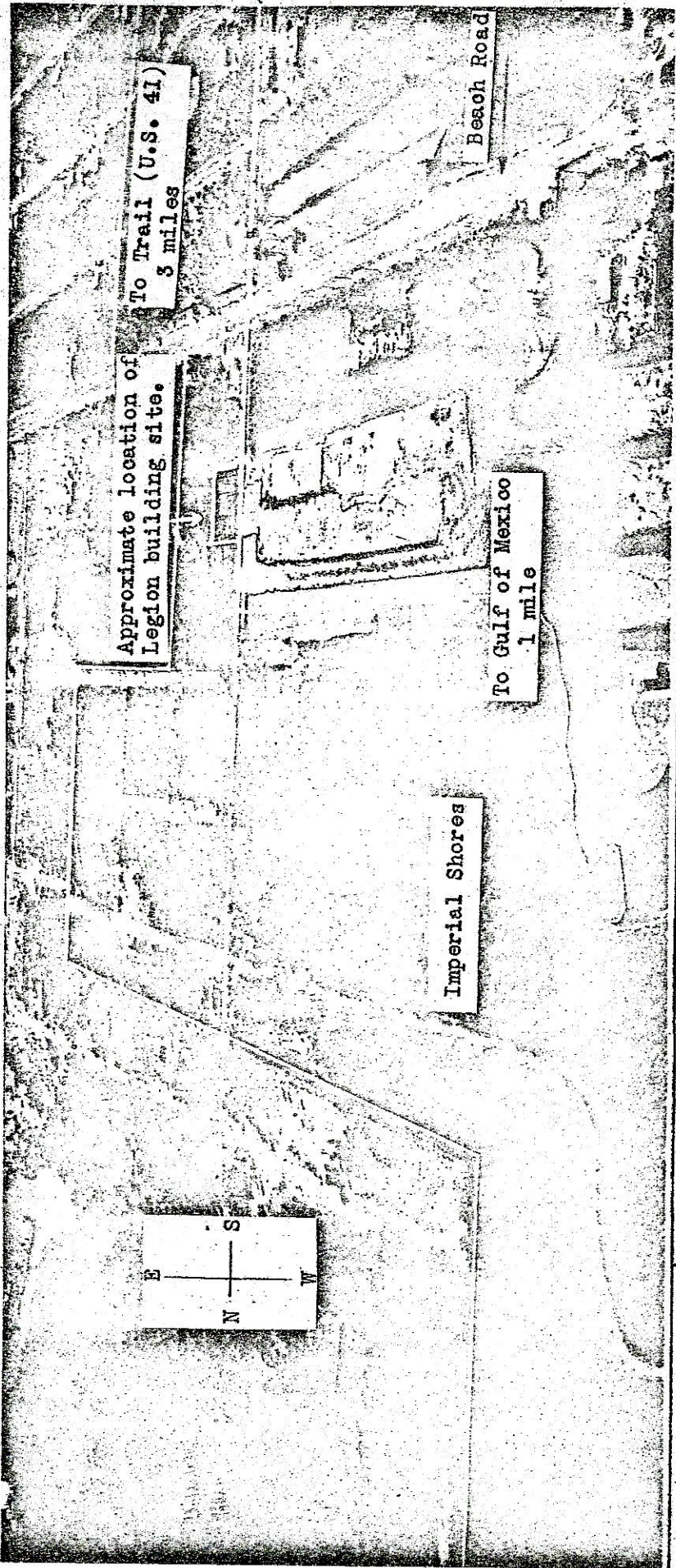
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# REARHARDS DONATE LEGION

# BUILDING SITE

*Bonita Banner*





# BONITA BANNER

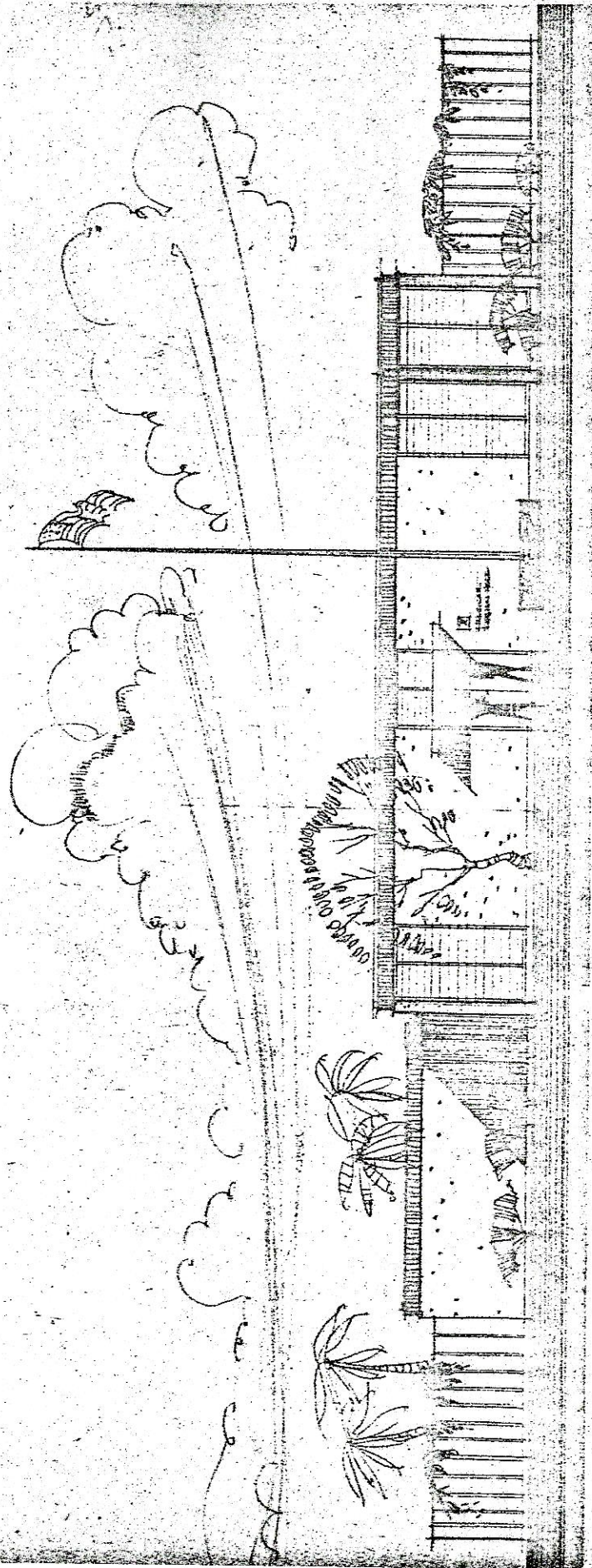
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Vol. I. No. 43 Published Weekly Thursday, October 29, 1959 Price Five Cents WY.2-2143

## PROPOSED LEGION HALL

*Bonita Banner*



Architect's conception of the proposed American Legion Home at Bonita Springs

The above drawing is by Don Nick, architect, of Bonita Springs and Naples and is his conception of how the new John Murphy Post 303 American Legion building will look when completed. The building site is in Imperial Shores, a subdivision about a mile from the Gulf of Mexico on the Beach Road. The owners of the development, Jean and Carmen Reahard, donated the site to the local Legion Post.

\* Chapter 3 \*

As mentioned in Chapter I, the location for the Post was not suitable for the Post and that Mary Reahard (the donor and now Aux. Presitent) gave permission for it's disposal, so plans had to be formulated on how best to dispose of the land; in 1957 land sales in a small town did not move too fast and for this reason it was decided to sell chances so that every body could participate, this plan proved very successful since the Building Committee and the rest of the Legionnaires and Auxillary kept selling tickets to any body that would listen.

The tickets were all sold by the start of 1958 and the lucky winner turned out to be an out of townner who got a nice piece of Florida land for the small price of a ticket.

While the land was being disposed, the Committee and especially Ted Whitman and Bob Farrett (Legionnaire and News Paper Publisher) kept looking for a better location for the Post, this did not take too long and a certain location near the Beach Road a very busy thoroughfare looked very inviting, less than two miles to the Beach and visible from the Beach Road, the Committee and every Legionnaire were in total agreement that the location was just right and decided to locate the owner.

Ironically the owner turned out to be another Reahard, Carmen sister of Mary Reahard and Carmen's husband, brother of Everett Reahard, in other words two sisters married two brothers, so the next move was for Ted Whitman to contact Mr. & Mrs. Jean Reahard who were living in Fort Myers at the time, ( Jean is Carmen's husband) the Reahards were Contacted with a pleasant surprise;

\* Chapter 3 \*

A pleasant surprise and another streak of luck for the John Murphy Post #303 received an open arms welcome in the History; Jean and Carmen Reahard would not sell but would donate a nice 180 by 155 Foot plot for the erection of the Post on Imperial Road, Imperial Shores, Bonita Springs only a few hundred foot from the Beach Rd. with the only provision that the Building would be started within two years, this was easy to do and needless to say, the offer was accepted with a great deal of gratitude by all the Legionnaires. Ted Whitman soon began taking numerous trips to Fort Myers to consult with the Reahard in order to obtain the proper description of the Land and get acquainted with the issuing of the Deed; the Deed, however, was not issued until January 29, 1960, and so the continuation of this Land deal will be taken up under the next Commander Petersen Administration; ( Chapter 2 deals completely with the Land Donations by both Reahard families )

It was now Summer in 1958 and Commander Gery Gulder kept stepping up the usual promotional affairs for the Building Fund, the 4th of July was again marked with a Covered Dish Supper at the Community Pavilion with the Auxillary contributing much of their time and effort in donating Cakes and other articles to be Auctioned off for the Building Fund.

The 39th Anniversary of the Founding of The American Legion was also celebrated with a Covered Dish Supper and Dance, many articles were sold and Marion Gulder the Commander's wife made and donated a nice Stole which was won in a drawing by Ray Wear a reporter for the Fort Myers News Press and a great booster of the Post, Ray in turn auctioned off the Stole for \$6.00, the whole affair

\* Chapter 3 \*

that day bought in \$61.00 for the Building Fund.

All Drives of the previous administration were continued and most remain to this day, but some new projects were added, the Post started a Boy State and the Auxillary a Girl State, an Oxygen Tent project was adopted with Arnold Petersen as Chairman and bought in Memory of the late John Beaver, an Automatic Shotgun and a Camera were awarded on one of the Covered Dish Supper and Markers were placed at the outskirts of the town announcing Legion Meetings.

Commander Gery Gulder was a reliable and hard working man, too modest to tell this Historian any thing about himself, but always diluding answers with ( we did ) or ( the men did ) however, the Historian Knows better and there is much more to be said about Commander Gulder during the construction of the Post Bldg. and other projects, but this will be taken up in the following Chapters, in the mean time let us all remember Commander Gulder as one of the outstanding and devoted Pioneer of the American Legion John Murphy Post #303 and March on to the next Installation of 1958-1959.

Membership for 1957-1958 was 85.



\* Chapter 4 \*

With Commander Arnold Peterson ready to go, new drives were started but the main important ones from the last administration were still in progress and had to be continued, the Building Blocks were still being sold and the second land donation was still being resolved. As pointed in Chapter 3, when Ted Whitman heard of the willingness of Jean and Carmen Reahard to donate land in the new location, he immediately got busy attending to numerous details back and forth to Fort Myers in reference to the Plot and the Deed. In the mean time during one of the Meetings, Ted made the motion that a Corporation be formed for the sole purpose of Building ownership and that the Corp. would consist of all Post Members and the Auxillary, this idea was given a good deal of thought and after due consideration, it was put to a vote and approved by all involved; it was also decided to call it " The American Legion Club Corp." and to submit the information to the Reahard in Fort Myers for their approval. The Reahards accepted the idea readily and the Deed which was issued in January 1960 was made to The American Legion Club Corp. This will be continued under the next administration.

To proceed with Commander Petersen, one of the first move was the Dedication of the American Flag and the Legion Flag on June 21, 1958, Bill Frice of Fort Myers and Commander Petersen were the speakers, Past Commander W. Richards, E. Quig and Chaplain R. Yent of Fort Myers and local Chaplain Glen Liles also participated in the Ceremony. Another worthy project was the " Get out the Flag " move, this was an effort to get all stores and residents in Bonita Springs to display the American Flag on all appropriate Helydays,

\* Chapter 4 \*

for this drive a Committee was formed with C. Bartholomae, Harry Rattenbrock, Dewy Elrodt, Ted Whitman, and Gery Gulder as Chairman, Commander Petersen in charge of buying the Flags.

This Committee worked hard and was very successful with people in general, they also sold many of the Flags which added to the Bldg. Fund. Other worthy projects were the collection of different articles to be given as gifts to the patients of the Bay Pines Hospital in St. Petersburg Fla. for Christmas, Boys State and Girls State, Prices given to Public School for Assai Contest and numerous others. The Auxillary did a great deal of work with their promotions and cakes baking, one of their Covered Dish with Dutch Auctions brought in \$43.56 for the Building Fund.

The Post received the annual Americanism Citation and a Citation by the National Headquarters for the Early Bird Membership which showed a 28% increase over the previous year and by Feb. 1959 Membership was up to 109.

A sad loss in January 1959 was the passing of Carl Bartholomae Finance Officer and this accounts for the two names in the Officers list, Carl was a wonderful person, one of the Post Pioneers, and will always be remembered; Ted Whitman then became Finance Officer. The start of the new year was still busy for the Post and some more worthy deeds were carried out, a \$50.00 donation for the Bonita Library for their own much needed Building Fund and a \$50.00 donation were given to the Fire Department for their running expenses. Another project of Commander Petersen was a drawing for a shot Gun and a Spinning Reel outfit, donations \$1.00 each with 676 tickets that brought in \$536.00 for the Building Fund.

\* Chapter 4 \*

Memorial Day services were held in the local Cemetery and Auxiliary Chaplain Mrs Jean Hogue placed the Wreath on the Veterans grave with Reverent Robert Baily Officiating.

The next Installation was now being planned for June 10, 1959 and so Commander Petersen term is about to close.

All in all Commander Petersen was a very dedicated Legionnaire and a good mixer, this term turned out to be his first term since he was to be elected again Commander for 1967-1968 one more Chapter will have to be written before the end of this History.

1958-1959 Membership 109