

DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS
MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART OF THE U.S.A.
13-15 JUNE 2013
EL TROPICANO HOTEL, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

MINUTES OF THE 2013 DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

The Department of Texas, Military Order of the Purple Heart, held its Annual Convention on 13-15 June at the El Tropicano Hotel, 110 Lexington, San Antonio, Texas.

The Convention was opened in a joint session with the LAMOPH by Commander Thomas J. Terry. All officer of the Department were present or accounted for. Guests included National Commander Bruce McKenty, MOPHSF board member Jeff Roy, LAMOPH State President Beth Oakley, National Public Relation Officer John Bircher and several Past Commanders of the Department of Texas. Bill Crumlett was appointed acting-adjutant to take minutes of the Convention.

After the opening ceremonies, McKenty addressed the convention. He is very appreciative of the opportunity to provide this year of service and the veterans he has met along the way. It is great to be back in Texas. It has been a good year for the Order. He urged the Department of Texas convention delegates not to forget that our primary mission is to help veterans.

Dan Thornhill, MOPH 1836 Commander, welcomed delegates to the Convention.

Crumlett read a Proclamation from Mayor Julian Castro welcoming delegates to San Antonio.

Terry said so much more service is provided now to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans versus than what was provided Vietnam veterans a generation ago. The current veterans have benefited from what happened to Vietnam Vets. He urged all to make no discouraging remarks and display a good attitude, we all have the choice each day on what attitude we show.

Welfare Officer Pete Rosie said he has received VAVS reports from only seven chapters. All chapters need to send in their report. Volunteering is one of the most rewarding activities one can do. VAVS/welfare funds are available, but Chapters need to establish a clear record of what is needed. Make sure the needy beneficiary is a veteran - does not need to be PH. Receipts are needed for all requests for reimbursement or expenditures. Members can go to a VA volunteer service office, there are a large variety of volunteer services needed.

Other members commented on Viola sales for chapters which have been excellent. Some companies such as AMMCO provide free services to veterans. They came to us and provide a free transmission job in all 50 states. Free 60 minute phone cards are available for distribution. SWR funds and VAVS funds are available. SWR funds come from the Service Foundation and VAVS funds from National - they are virtually the same. The yellow post card from PCI is completely legitimate. We are trying to update our roster. PCI is doing this at no charge to us - they make their money by selling the completed book to members.

SVC Brown commented that documentation is required to support all expenditures of both SWR and VAVS funds. This is not harassment but needed to support MOPH non-profit status to the IRS. Grants based on membership can be up to \$44,000 for Texas this year. Chapters must have *at least two funds or accounts*. The welfare fund must be kept separate from the general operating account. Again, reimbursement will only be made upon receiving a valid receipt. Chapters should call or email SVC Brown before making there next request.

National Public Safety Officer Smart asked that the Department appoint a Department Public Safety Officer. He reminded members of the web site for the First Responders Program and distributed a hand-out.

Past National Commander and Service Foundation representative Jeff Roy addressed the Convention. The PHSF Executive Committee consists of all past National Commanders. There has been some tension between the MOPH and the MOPHSF lately and challenges with the IRS. The Charity Watchdog gave the MOPHSF a very low rating without an understanding we are the primary fund raising arm of the MOPH. It takes \$30M a year to operate and it has been tough raising funds. 90% of our funds come from car donation program. We are joining the Independent Charities of America to raise our image and learn from others. We are re-starting the mailing label program which is also supposed to be a fund raiser - we have lost money in the past on the program. We are partnering with major firms such as USAA. Members who get a USAA-PH credit card benefit the Order each time they make a purchase. We have made a \$500,000 grant to the Intrepid center for PTSD and TBI at Ft. Campbell - the largest grant in our history.

There continues to be confusion about the Wounded Warrior program which is receiving many endorsements of celebrities - it has been very successful at raising fund. Their slogan, "we are wounded warriors" is partially misleading, but it is hard to speak against it. Many of the beneficiaries of the program suffer from disabling injury or illness unrelated to combat. Our best arguments are we do not have leaders making six-figure salaries, they do not have NSOs across the Nation, and they can not claim 100% *combat* wounded warriors like the MOPH.

The PH stamp has proven to be the most popular stamp in the history of the USPS and they plan to continue to issue it indefinitely.

Wayman Falkner gave a status report on the Department's Memorial Trailer and display. He listed the schedule for the remainder of 2013. The trailer can only be scheduled through him - please do not commit the trailer without getting a confirmation from him. He needs financial help to operate and maintain the trailer.

National Public Relations Director John Bircher said Texas is a crazy state and he loves it. He urged the Department to get the word out on recruiting and to support both transfers in and out.

Commander Terry asked acting-adjutant Crumlett to administer elections for Department Officers for the 2013-2014 year. All candidates for elected office were either present or had written to Terry accepting their office if elected. Crumlett called the role of Chapters. Those present and eligible to vote were:

- 393 El Paso
- 542 Dallas
- 553 Amarillo
- 723 Katy
- 768 Denton
- 814 Kerrville
- 1836 San Antonio
- 1849 Fort Worth
- 1876 Harker Heights
- 1919 Austin
- 1952 Nacogdoches
- 1991 Beaumont
- 3077 Victoria
- 4077 Waco
- 5077 McAllen

There being no contested positions following nominations, a motion was made and passed to approve the election for the elect offices of Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Finance Officer, Judge Advocate, Inspector and Sergeant-at-Arms by acclamation. The acclamation so approved the nominees.

The elected officers for the Department of Texas for 2013-2014 are as follows:

- Antonio Roman, Commander
- Gilbert Brown, Senior Vice Commander
- Richard Whitehead, Junior Vice Commander
- William Bacon, Finance Officer
- James Gulley, Judge Advocate
- John Footman, Inspector
- Octavio Laquna, Sergeant-at-Arms

The appointed officers were named by new Commander Antonio Roman. National Commander Bruce McKenty swore in the newly elected and appointed officers

USAA wealth manager Jeffrey Hopkins spoke about the advantages of working with USAA. They have offices in several locations and try to deal face-to-face with clients. He has the full power and resources of USAA behind him in advising clients on financial issues. We have the new affinity USAA Mastercard which is a partnership between USAA and the MOPH.

Cheri Smith from the Texas Veterans Commission spoke on the many benefits offered by TVC and distributed literature on their programs.

NSO Gilbert Ochoa distributed the 2012 edition of *Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors* to attendees and presented information on changes to VA benefits and a discussion on VA claims processing . There is a current backlog of 2 million claims so no one should expect quick service. He outlined the priority that claims will be handled. He urged veterans to get their DD214 registered at the courthouse.

Steve Hudson with the Texas Veterans Land Board addressed attendees and discussed VLB benefits. He distributed information on their programs.

Dr. Stephen Maxner, Director, Texas Tech University Vietnam Center and Archives spoke on the progress and activities of the Center. It has grown considerably and is a tremendous asset to the Nation and to veterans.

The National Conference in Rogers, Arkansas on 6-10 august, 2013 will be extended one day so Department and Regional officers have time to hold regional meetings.

Commander Roman addressed attendees at the close of the final business session. He had three messages: 1)He is dividing the Department into three sectors, the Commander, Sr. Vice and Jr. Vice will be expected to visit all the Chapters in their sectors, and foster communications, recruiting and fund raising. 2) On fund raising we must learn to rely upon ourselves in the future. 3)We are going to get back to having fun - he has already begun organizing participation in fishing tournaments, the Texas hot air balloon festival and a car show. Chapter 768 in Denton will host the mid-year convention in Denton on October 10. Bud Nettles had asked for the 2014 annual convention for Chapter 1952 in Nacogdoches but this will need to be confirmed. There was discussion about bidding on the National Convention for Texas for 2017. A committee will need to be formed.

Adjutant Crumlett said he has two goals for the year 1) to establish and maintain a first class web site for the Department and 2) update the Department constitution and Bylaws.

Respectfully submitted,

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