AARON A. WEAVER CHAPTER 776



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

Next Meeting
Tuesday, Nov. 17 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.

2026-27 Officers

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

Chapter Activities

Completed

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

September 25. The Chapter's Associate ladies monthly no-host luncheon at Glory Days in Lecanto was attended by Mari-Elain Ebitz, Annie Fair, Kim Frease, Carol Hayes, Jean Henniger, Nancy Kreps, Vikki Pietras, and Shirley Platt.

October 2. Chapter 776 Patriots attending a no-host fellowship breakfast at the Metro Diner in Lecanto included Curt Ebitz, Cdr. Richard Hunt, Jerry Frease, J.B. Haskins, Will Korber, Mike Krebs, Joe McClister, Earl McMillan, Bill Merryman and special guests Department of Florida Cdr. Richard Weltz and Colby Dawson, aide to Congressman Bilirakis.

October 20. Margarita Grill Restaurant, at the confluence of the Halls and Homosassa rivers, was the site for the Associate ladies October no-host luncheon. Enjoying the view and

Chapter Activities page 2

Departed Associate Carol Allen



With her daughter Kimberly by her side, Carol W. Allen of Inverness, Florida, passed away following a long illness on September 20, 2026 at the age of 81. Carol was born July 3, 1945, in Port Huron, Michigan and was a graduate of Port Huron High School and St. Clair County Community College. She married the love of her life, Richard I. Allen, in August 1968, sharing 56 years.

Carol's boundless talents were channeled

See Carol Allen page 2

Member News

It is with sadness to report the death of Associate **Carol Allen**, widow of Departed Patriot Richard "Rick" Allen. The Chapter's heartfelt condolences are extended to her surviving daughter Kimberly "Kay" Allen.

A congratulatory salute to Chapter 776 Sr. Vice Cdr. **Bill Merryman** on his induction into the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame on November 6 at the State Capitol Building in Tallahassee. Bill joins fellow Chapter 776 members Curt Ebitz and Richard Hunt as Florida Veterans Hall of Fame inductees.

A reconciliation of the Chapter's roster discovered the unreported deaths of the following Chapter 776 Patriots: **William Taylor Jr.**, 87, Brooksville, died September 1, 2011; **Walter Marshall**, 93, Sugarmill Woods, died February 22, 2019; **Angel Otero**, 70, Spring Hill, died June 18, 2020; **Clifford Benjamin Jr.**, 71, Hernando, died November 15, 2022; **Donald Johnson**, 90, Inverness, died December 5, 2022; **Ronald Roop**, 91, Spring Lake, MI, died July 25, 2023; **William Prior Sr.**, 101, Brooksville, died May 12, 2025.

Congratulations to Chapter 776 Jr. Vice Cdr. **Jerry Frease** on his recent election as the Department of Florida Jr. Vice Cdr. Patriot Frease also serves on the Department of Florida Finance Committee.

Warm congratulations to Patriot **Claude Gregoire** who celebrated his 75th birthday with a garden party at his home that was made special with the exchange of wedding vows with his wife of 27 years, Sherry.

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

See Member page 2

Chapter activities continued

Completed

conviviality were Kay Allen, Mari-Elain Ebitz, Annie Fair, Mickey Hunt, Pat Michael, Barb Mills, and Shirley Platt.

October 25. Patriot Claude Gregorie and Associate Ann Fair paraded the Chapter's Colors at the Veterans Appreciation Week Massing of the Colors Ceremony and Nature Coast Community Band (NCCB) Salute to Veterans concert. Also attending were Chapter members Fred Daniels, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Jerry Frease, Richard & Mickey Hunt, Joe McClister, Earl McMillan, and Barb Mills.

October 30. A no-host fellowship breakfast at Joe's Family Restaurant in Inverness was enjoyed by Jerry Frease, J.B. Haskins, Cdr. Richard Hunt, Will Korber, Earl McMillan, prospective member Michael Bensing and Dept. of Florida Sergeant at Arms Chris Fortin.

Future

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

January 19, 1:00 p.m. Chapter 776 bimonthly meeting, Citrus County Chamber of Commerce Building.

Associate Carol Allen

into a variety of creative and professional endeavors throughout her life, including working as a hair stylist, serving as Executive Secretary of the Lewiston Chamber of Commerce, owning a custom sign shop, Signs by D'Sign, and volunteering her design talents to the Military Order of the Purple Heart, which earned her Chapter 776 Associate of the Year honors in 2015. She will be remembered for her creativity, her sense of humor, her generous spirit, devotion to family, and service to others.

Carol was preceded in death by her husband, Departed Chapter 776 Patriot Richard Allen and daughter Michelle LaBonte. She is survived by her daughter, Kimberly "Kay" Allen; brother in-law Bill (Terri) Maples, and numerous dear friends. Interment will be with her beloved husband at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida.

Member continued

Chapter 776 Associate **Curt Ebitz Jr.** has joined the ranks of Chapter 776 authors with his soon to be published book entitled "Whatever the Mission." The book chronicles the lives of he and his wife, Amy, as Marine officers faced with the challenges of balancing the mission of the Corps with the mission of raising a family amid wartime deployments and their advancement up the leadership ranks to Colonel. The Chapter's other two authors are Departed Patriot Stephen Raymond, "Too Dead to Die" and Associate Nancy Weaver, "American Soldier."

Many thanks to **Claude Gregoire** and **Ann Fair** for stepping up to carry the Chapter's national and organizational colors at the Veterans Appreciation Week Massing of the Colors Ceremony done in conjunction with the Nature Coast Community Band's musical salute to veterans on America's 250th anniversary.

Our gratitude is extended to Department of Florida Commander **Richard Weltz** who joined Chapter 776 Patriots at their October 2 fellowship breakfast and to Department of Florida Sergeant at Arms **Chris Fortin** who attended the October 30 fellowship breakfast. Both rose early to drive from the Tampa area for the breakfasts.

Chapter 776 Chaplain **Gary Bain** is struggling with health issues. Please keep him in your prayers.

Associate **JoAnn Allen** is making steady progress in her recovery from a severe stroke earlier this year, recently enjoying dinner out with family members.

Departed Patriot Ronald Roop

A former resident of Beverly Hills, Patriot Ronald Roop passed away peacefully at his Spring Lake, MI home on July 25, 2023 at the age of 91. Born in Detroit in 1932, he spent most of his youth in the Grand Rapids area. He enlisted in the Army at age 17 and saw combat in Korea where he was wounded in action while serving as an infantryman with the 25th Infantry Division. Ron was an avid reader and a motorcycle enthusiast, traveling to most of the states to attend motorcycle rallies. He is survived by his wife of 36 years, Katherine, and a blended family of 7 children, 11 grandchildren, 4 step-grandsons, 30 great-grandchildren, 2 step-great-granddaughters. Ron was laid to rest in Pilgrim Home Cemetery, Holland, MI.

From the Commander

Hello to All,

Time certainly flies....

The Nature Coast Community Band recently put on an amazing concert honoring Veterans. A number of our Chapter Members were in attendance. Our Nation's and Chapter's Flags were proudly carried by Claude Gregoire and Ann Fair in the processional of 12 organizations lead by the Grand Flag in a massing of the Colors. If you missed it, a plan to attend any of their free concerts would be a great idea.

Pearl Harbor Day and our Annual Dinner is rapidly approaching. It will be an evening combining the memory of The Day of Infamy and camaraderie with fellow members, family and friends. Some amazing things will be available for auction, all proceeds benefiting the Chapter. Of course some of the awesome baked goods that will be available might satisfy a sweet tooth or two...

On November 10, three of our Chapter members will be honored with a permanent display in the County Courthouse recognizing the Florida Veteran Hall of Fame inductees from Citrus County.

Veterans in the Classroom is an activity that some of our Members participate in. It is something that I ask all of you to consider doing next year. I find it to be very rewarding.

As always, Chapter 776 continues to do many things, both among our family and in the community. I am humbled and so very proud to be among this fantastic group.

Thank you,
Richard Hunt
Commander

Departed Patriot Walter J. Marshal

A Charter member of Chapter 776 and former resident of Sugarmill Woods, Walter Marshal was a World War II Marine Corps veteran serving in the Asiatic Pacific Area from July 1943 to August 1944.

As a member of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, he saw combat action at Tarawa and Saipan. During the fighting on Saipan, he received a gunshot wound to the right thigh and shrapnel wounds to the face.

He was one of 17 members who gathered at the initial meeting to form Chapter 776 and stepped forward to generously make the first donation to establish the Chapter's checking account with a $100 gift.



Citrus National Golf Club

2026 Pearl Harbor Dinner & Holiday Social

Chapter 776's annual Pearl Harbor Dinner and Holiday Social will be on Monday, 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 blazer and tie.

A buffet style dinner will be served at 5:00 p.m. with choice of 8 oz. Prime Rib and potatoes au gratin or Chicken Marsala, and rice pilaf, with fresh green beans almondine, house salad w/ranch or balsamic dressing, rolls, cheesecake with strawberry sauce, coffee, tea and soda. A bar will be available for credit card purchase (no cash) of alcoholic beverages, featuring "Happy Hour" liquor, beer and wine. **A minimum of 30 attendees is required to reserve the club.**

Cost of meal, to include gratuity, is $46.00 per person.
Please return the coupon below with your check made payable to
"Chapter 776 MOPH." Must be received no later than Wednesday, November 25.

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

Name: _____ **No. of Guests:** _____

Total amount of check: $ _____ **Check number:** _____



Cdr. Hunt presented Chapter attendees at the Hernando County Vetfest Purple Heart dinner with framed group photos taken at the event. Left: Cdr. Hunt, Patriots Frank Hayes, Bill Merryman, Gary Bain, Claude Gregoire and Adj. Ebitz.

Patriot Claude Gregoire and his wife of 27 years, Sherry, celebrated his 75th birthday with an exchange of wedding vows.



Patriot Claude Gregoire and Associate Annie 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.





Cdr. Richard Hunt presented a $1,000 donation to Operation Welcome Home President Barbara Mills. Left: Curt Ebitz, Adjutant; Barbara Mills, Operation Welcome Home; Cdr. Hunt; and Bill Merryman, Sr. Vice Commander.



Bill Merryman, on behalf of Aaron A. Weaver Chapter 776 Military Order of the Purple Heart, recognized Janet Richards, American Legion Post 155, for her noteworthy initiative and dedicated leadership in fostering a collaborative network to efficiently allocate community resources for combating veteran homelessness.