

The Sunflower Picket

Recipient of the 2006 Marshall Hope Award for Best Department Newsletter

www.suvcwks.org

Publication of the Department of Kansas, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

MEMORIAL DAY – REMEMBERING THE BOYS IN BLUE



The graves of Union Civil War soldiers who died while confined in the prison at Andersonville, Georgia. This photograph is of Section H in Andersonville National Cemetery.

Our Federal Charter reminds us our purposes as Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War is to perpetuate the memory of the Grand Army of the Republic and of the men who saved the Union in 1861 to 1865; to assist in every practicable way in preserving, and making available for research, documents and records pertaining to the Grand Army of the Republic and its members; to cooperate in honoring all those who have served our country patriotically in any war; to teach patriotism, the duties of citizenship, the true history of our country, and the love and honor of our flag; to oppose every tendency or movement that would weaken loyalty to, destroy, or impair our constitutional Union; and inculcate and broadly sustain the American principles of representative government, equal rights, and impartial justice for all.

NEW BROTHERS, APRIL 1, 2025 – MAY 31, 2025

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date Joined</i>	<i>Ancestor</i>	<i>Camp</i>
Piatt, Dennis Lee	4/30/2025	Private Abram Foland	Humboldt Camp 9, Humboldt
Smithback, William Andrew	5/17/2025	Private Peter C. Brooks	Pvt. John N. Eckes Camp 10, Winfield



OUR FALLEN BROTHERS

"The faults of our Brothers we write upon the sand, their virtues upon the tablets of love and memory."



<i>Name</i>	<i>Deceased</i>	<i>Ancestor</i>	<i>Camp</i>
Boyd, Robert Dean II, PDC	4/25/2025	Private John Boyd	Humboldt Camp 9, Humboldt
Gilliland, Donald Darrel	4/28/2025	First Lieut. David Henry Danhauer	Old Abe Camp 16, Topeka

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DEPARTMENT POLO SHIRTS (Available for a Short Time Only)



Department of Kansas polo shirts are available now until June 30 through online ordering from the company “Your Promo Partners” who have set up a password protected webstore for us. Shirts are produced under SUVCW Merchandise License (license number 2025-004).

Refer to the flyer attached at the end of the newsletter for details.

FROM THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Kent M. Melcher, PDC

Brothers, I want you to know that the idea for the Brother Robert Dean Boyd, II, Membership Challenge was initiated by a unanimous vote of your Department Council. Brother Tom Schmidt recommended a membership drive as a 2025-26 objective. He suggested that we name the effort to honor our recently departed PDC, who served in 2022-23 as Department Commander. It was my privilege and honor as Commander to issue Special Order No. 2 to muster the camps to action.



Growing our membership in the coming year will not only honor Brother Robert but will also provide an added reason for celebration at next year's Department Encampment. In 2026, we will celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the reconstituting of the Department of Kansas. Think what it means when we record an increase of eighteen new members (three new members per Camp), or even more. It will be my pleasure to preside at that Encampment!

While our Camps always welcome new members with gratitude and gracious inclusion into our fraternity, we must recruit with intentionality if we are to strengthen the purposes and work of our order. As the proverb goes, "Many hands make light work." I will add that younger members increase longevity.

At next year's Encampment, I will be seventy-eight years old. For some time now I have become aware that our most active brothers seem to be of the "older generation." To keep our Department strong, we need to recruit the next generation of Sons (who are now mostly great-great, or even 3X great, grand-sons) of the Boys in Blue.

It also seems obvious that besides recruiting new members, we also need to bring younger brothers into Department roles. One of my objectives as incoming Commander was to ask new brothers to become active at the Department level. By "learning the ropes" they will, in time, transition into leadership positions. A favorite saying of mine, which I learned many years ago at a leadership event for pastors, is this, "The best leaders empower new leaders."

I know all of us want the PDC Robert Boyd, II, Membership Challenge to be a success. But how can we meet the challenge? I suggest that we commit to this saying in our minds: "The most effective recruitment is one person to another." That doesn't mean that we don't need to utilize

modern media to inform the public who we are and what we do as Sons. Facebook and other social media, simple ads in Memorial Day and Veterans' Day newspaper pages, and letters to the editor (be careful never to touch on politics or religion if you identify yourself as a SUVCW member) are all good ways to "go public".

But we must never lose sight of the fact that the most effective way to bring new brothers into the SUVCW is through personal contact and personal invitation into our fraternity. Some of us are pretty good at telling our stories spontaneously. Others, maybe not so much. So, here's another learning from my previous work in planting and developing new churches. It's called the "Elevator Speech", a thirty-second "window of opportunity", as if you are in an elevator.

For example, you may be wearing a shirt with a SUVCW logo, and someone asks simply what the logo means. In those few seconds you have their undivided attention. Develop and memorize a basic statement of who we are, where we come from, the important work that we do, and when and where we meet. Give them your "business card." Yes, that's right, get a few cards made, carry them with you, and point out the national SUVCW and Department website addresses on the card. Be ready to answer follow-up questions.

Finally, INVITE: "I hope you will consider becoming a member. If I can help in any way, my email address is on my card. I would love to hear from you."

So, brothers, the PDC Robert Dean Boyd, II, Membership Challenge is underway. Make it your personal challenge to recruit at least one new member this year.

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,
Kent M. Melcher

CAMP STRENGTHS, MAY 31, 2025

As of May 31, 2025, the Department of Kansas listed **164** brothers, including two juniors and six dual brothers. This is a net change of **zero** within the Department of Kansas since March 31, 2025, which gives the Department a reportable strength of **156**.

Additionally, Camp 9 and 10 are both credited with one gain towards the PDC Robert D. Boyd II Award.

<u>Camp Name & Number</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Net Change</u>
Corp. Patrick Coyne Camp 1	29	0
Sgt. Samuel J. Churchill Camp 4	26	0
Franklin Camp 5	44	0
Humboldt Camp 9	11	0
John N. Eckes Camp 10	19	+1
Old Abe Camp 16	35	-1

DEPARTMENT OF KANSAS 164 0

2025 NATIONAL ENCAMPMENT

August 7, 2025, through August 10, 2025

The 144th National Encampment of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War is scheduled to be held Thursday, August 7 through Sunday, August 10 at the Sonesta Hotel Houston IAH Airport, 425 N. Sam Houston Parkway East, Houston, Texas.

SUVCW business meetings are held on Friday and Saturday. The pre-encampment Council of Administration meeting is being held Thursday evening.

Optional tours (to be announced) are available on Thursday at additional expense. The traditional "campfire" and entertainment is Friday evening at no additional cost. The Allied Orders Banquet is held on Saturday evening (additional cost).

A post-encampment Council of Administration meeting will be held on Sunday morning.

2026 DEPARTMENT ENCAMPMENT

March 28, 2026

The 2026 Annual Department of Kansas Encampment is scheduled for Saturday, March 28, 2026, at Topeka. This is the thirtieth anniversary of the Department, and the Department will host the Encampment.

Please put this on your calendar as we close out our first thirty years and begin the next.

Additional details about the 2026 Department Encampment will be provided as they become available.

DEPARTMENT OFFICERS REPORTS

SENIOR VICE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

James D. Thornton, PCC

Brothers,

As I write this, our country is in the middle of preparing to celebrate its 250th anniversary as a free and independent nation. But we must also remember that the United States barely made it to eighty years as a nation.

As those thirteen original states grew and expanded, regional and cultural differences threatened to tear their alliance apart. These differences in beliefs ultimately exploded into violence less than eighty years after coming together. And this brutal conflict began right here in our own backyard. It was in 1855, right here in Kansas, during what became known as "The Wakarusa War" that Bleeding Kansas erupted. Those armed confrontations would spread across the land, eventually growing into an all-out national Civil War six years later. And these United States were barely eighty years old.

Just think about that for a moment. After only eighty years our land nearly became two nations – the United States of America and the Confederate States of America. It’s possible that living here in Kansas we could have Canada to the north and the CSA to the south. We would need a passport to visit Arkansas!

Now remember this – it was our ancestors who fought and sacrificed to preserve the Union. It was our ancestors who believed our nation should hold together because we were stronger together. It is thanks to our ancestors that our nation survived and is now preparing to celebrate 250 years as a unified democratic nation.

The soldiers who served the Union could not realize the impact they were having on history. They could not envision the difference they were making on future world history and events. The line “One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all” holds true meaning thanks to their actions.

We should be proud to be “Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War” for we are the descendants of those who preserved this nation we enjoy today. And being members of the Department of Kansas holds special meaning as it was here, in the Lawrence area, where it all began 170 years ago during the Wakarusa War.

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

Jim Thornton, PCC

JUNIOR VICE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC

One of the duties of the Junior Vice Department Commander, as stated in the job description, is to assist with the recruitment and retention of Brothers (Members, Associates and Juniors). At our May 5, 2025, Kansas SUVCW Department Council meeting I proposed a membership challenge for each camp to recruit (3) new brothers (Member or Associate) for their camp during the period of April 6, 2025, through March 21, 2026. Each camp that meets the goal will be recognized with a presentation at our Department Encampment on March 28, 2026. The council endorsed my proposal, and the result was the issuance of Department Special Order 2. You can go to our website at www.suvcwks.org and locate it if for any reason you have not seen it by now.

My thought process in putting the recruiting challenge together was multi-layered. Almost all the recruiting of new members is done at the camp level by individual contact with people that members know or at events (recruiting table, etc.). We should be recruiting potential new members at any opportunity. The camps are the life blood of our organization, and we need to have new people

joining on a routine basis. Hopefully some of these new members will be regular attendees at camp meetings and camp activities. Make sure your camps are more than just a meeting. Whether its cemetery projects, involvement with the Eagle Scout certificate program, Memorial Day ceremonies, community events and parades or having an interesting speaker at some of your meetings that not only members want to hear but maybe the public as well. Make joining the SUVCW more than just an opportunity to attend a meeting. Camps must be active and involved in the community to keep them relevant. We offer something out of the ordinary. New members are a win-win for the camp and the department.

If a camp focuses on this recruitment challenge and puts a recruiting plan together, they will be successful. If a potential member is not sure about his Civil War lineage, they can join as an associate. We can then help them in researching their genealogy to try and find a Union Civil War ancestor to move their status to a lineage membership. If necessary, we can help with completion of the membership application. Camp secretaries should be up to speed with the requirements of the membership document, but we are here to help.

As I mentioned before, I made this camp recruitment challenge at the May 5 Department Council Meeting, and during discussion on the proposed plan I accepted a friendly amendment to name this proposal after the late Kansas Past Dept Commander Robert Boyd, and I accepted. In his memory, I encourage the camps to accomplish the goal of three new members for their camp. I look forward to recognizing your accomplishment of this challenge at our next Department Encampment.

Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC

Junior Vice Dept. Commander

DEPARTMENT SECRETARY

Alan L. Russ, PDC

A question recently came up concerning how the Department determines who receives the annual recruiting award. The answer is that it is based upon the name listed on the Form 3 as “Recommended by SUVCW Brother” during the period from one encampment to the next one.

Always check the National website at www.suvcw.org in the “Governance & Forms section to ensure you are using the latest official forms.

New Forms

Form 3 – Membership Applications (May 2025)

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

Alan L. Russ, PDC

Department Secretary

TREASURER & CHIEF OF STAFF*Rocky L. Bartlow, PDC*

Now that the flurry of collection of dues and the department encampment is over, things have quieted down to a dull roar (at least THAT part of my life) so there's not much to report, treasurer-wise anyway. However, I thought you might like a report on a recent trip down south.

As 2 Samuel 11 says in the Bible, "it was the spring of the year when kings go off to war" but there being no war for old men like me, my wife and I went to Dauphin Island in Mobile Bay, Alabama, to avoid the cold. It wasn't exactly Spring but that's how the story goes. In late February, on the way back, we were driving home along I-40 in Arkansas and stopped for fuel. While there I realized my ancestor, Corporal Samuel Jasper Hopper, served in the 1st Arkansas Infantry at Fort Smith and was buried somewhere in northwest Arkansas. I looked it up and, lo and behold, the exit to the highway leading up to his cemetery was the next one up the road! So, I asked the wife if it was ok and, getting permission, turned north. She said, "Is it far?". "Nah".

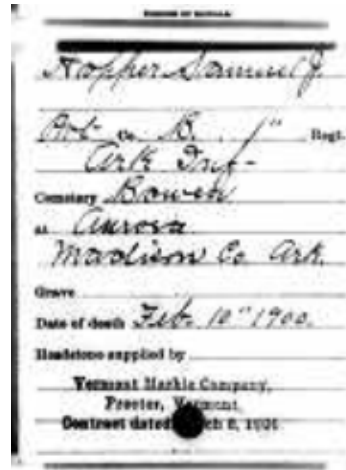
We then drove thirty tortuous miles on a road similar to the Million Dollar Highway north of Durango, Colorado. She said repeatedly, "are we about there?" "Just around the bend dear".

Well, we finally arrived at the little town of Aurora where he is buried and the GPS said, "turn left." Turn left was straight down into a valley but there was a road, thankfully paved, that wound down and across the War Eagle River to a beautiful little cemetery set in a little green field along the river. We wandered around and eventually found his stone. I was dejected to find it falling over and almost unreadable. Having brought nothing with which to clean or reset it, I could only take a picture.

When I got home; however, I realized from a conversation with PDC Russ they would replace broken stones so I contacted the cemetery and they put me in touch with the Brashears Funeral Home who said they would gladly receive the stone and set it for me (for \$165 but I thought that was reasonable). I got the form and had the funeral home sign it (a little snail mail back and forth) and



submitted the form, a document showing the original stone placement in 1900, and a picture to the VA online site. I



didn't hear back for a few weeks and sent an email to ask them if they got it. They said they did and within a few days they replied that they would be sending a new stone to Arkansas!

I'm so glad I took the time and was pleased with the process. It was my first attempt at getting a stone and it was pretty painless. I'm looking forward to getting a picture (and a bill) after they

set the stone. I encourage all brothers to continue the work so the Boys in Blue aren't forgotten!

PDC Rocky Bartlow,

Department Treasurer

DEPARTMENT PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR*Michael J. Hadl, PCC*

I encourage all camps and brothers to have a Facebook page and send me a "friend" request. Also try and get in your local newspaper, local TV or radio on what you do on Memorial Day weekend, Veterans Day and if you participate in Wreaths Across America.

F C L, Mike Hadl

EAGLE SCOUT CERTIFICATE COORDINATOR*Eric L. Crittenden*

Brothers, this will be a brief message as I hope this finds you all doing well. As the Department of Kansas, SUV CW Eagle Scout Certificate Coordinator so far in 2025 I've sent a total of six Eagle Scout Certificates out after receiving applications, with four of them being directed to Jim Thornton and the Franklin Camp who attended the Court of Honor to present the certificates in person in the Kansas City metro area. I also sent a certificate to an applicant in Wichita and there was a member of Coyne Camp who was able to attend and present the certificate in person. I'm very thankful to the members which have made themselves available to attend Courts of Honor for these Scouts as the youth are our future. I hope that every camp is aware of the Eagle Scout Certificate program and is interacting with the troops in your area of Scouting America (formerly known as Boys Scouts of America). If you are presenting certificates, please share photos so we can post them on the Department of Kansas website and social media.

For more information on the program please check out the National SUVCW website with link below or contact me.

<https://suvchw.org/eagle-scout-recognition>

Eric Crittenden – Dept of KS ESCC

CAMP NEWS

PVT. PATRICK COYNE CAMP 1

Wichita

Camp Officers for 2025

Camp Commander	Michael L. Halfman, PCC
Senior Vice Commander	Steven W. Hamlin
Junior Vice Commander	Timothy A. Baxter
Secretary/Treasurer	Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC
Council	Dale L. Rouse, PCC
	James H. Graves, PCC
	Adam P. Harrison
Patriotic Instructor	Randolph J. Colby Jr.
Chaplain	Dale L. Rouse, PCC
Historian	Michael L. Halfman, PCC
Civil War Memorials Officer	Randolph J. Colby Jr.

Following submitted by Camp Secretary Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC.

The camp earlier this year had a two-part program on General and GAR National Commander John A. Logan presented by Camp Commander Mike Halfman which was very interesting and insightful. Brother James Graves brought the May program on his Civil War ancestor Lyman U. Humphrey of the 61st Ohio from his wartime letters. Mr. Humphrey rose to become an officer, lawyer and later to the position of governor of Kansas.

The camp has had two cemetery works this year at Maple Grove cemetery and Highland cemetery. One in April and another in May under the direction of Brother Dale Rouse.



Grand Army of the Republic Section at Highland Cemetery, Wichita

The May workday on the seventeenth was focused on the GAR areas at the cemeteries and included trimming and edging of those areas for Memorial Day ceremonies. The local DUVCW chapter coordinates these ceremonies with the camp.



Grand Army of the Republic Monument at Wichita Courthouse.

The camp is in charge of placing SUVCW wreaths as part of an agreement with Hutchinson native PCinC D. Brad Schall at the GAR Monument at the courthouse in downtown Wichita, Maple Grove Pavillion at Maple Grove Cemetery, GAR Section at Highland Cemetery, GAR Monument in downtown Hutchinson, the Schall Memorial bench at Eastside Cemetery in Hutchinson and GAR section at Oak Hill Cemetery in Lawrence, Kansas. Camp Commander Mike Halfman handled the Wichita sites, PCC Dale Rouse the two locations in Hutchinson and PDC Tom Schmidt the site in Lawrence.

The camp will be providing a color guard at the DUVCW state meeting in Wichita on June 21, 2025. At 1:30 pm after the DUVCW meeting an author, Jerry O. Potter, will

be presenting a program on The Sultana Tragedy: America's Greatest Maritime Disaster.

Following submitted by Camp Commander Michael Halfman, PCC



Today three of our brothers participated in a Memorial Day ceremony conducted by Mrs. John A. Logan Tent 6 of Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War. It was held at Highland Cemetery and repeated at Maple Grove Cemetery. Local historian and Highland Cemetery activist Barb Myers was also on hand and supplied and helped place flags to finish marking the graves in the GAR plot there. The ceremony included a reading, prayer, a statement of rededication to the sacrifice and efforts of our forefathers, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the playing of a hymn. Four generations braved the elements and were present.

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty
Michael Halfman, Camp Commander

SGT SAMUEL J. CHURCHILL CAMP 4

Lawrence

Camp Officers for 2025

Camp Commander	W. Patrick Myers, PCC
Senior Vice Commander	Michael D. Heck, PCC
Junior Vice Commander	George E. Goff Jr.
Secretary	Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC
Treasurer	Michael A. Todd, PDC
Council	Joseph L. Bodine
	Brent D. Whitten
	Paul Jefferson, PCC
Patriotic Instructor	Michael J. Hadl, PCC
Chaplain	Roy A. Lafferty, PDC
Historian	Michael J. Hadl, PCC
Graves Registration Officer	Dennis L. Lawrence, PCC
Civil War Memorials Officer	Paul Jefferson, PCC

Submitted by Camp Secretary Tom Schmidt, PDC

Sgt. Samuel J. Churchill Camp 4, Lawrence, Kansas held a workday at Maple Grove Cemetery at the northeast edge

of Lawrence on Saturday, April 19. They received permission from the City of Lawrence to straighten and clean headstones of the Civil War veterans there. There are well over sixty Civil War veterans buried in the small cemetery.



PCC Dennis Lawrence lifts a headstone for straightening as Brother John Shobe looks on.

Brother Dennis Lawrence had made a tripod with a winch for pulling the stones out of the ground so they could be reset. Brother Mike Todd brought the Wet and Forget product for cleaning. Brother Mike Hadl brought the donuts for nourishment. A number of the camp's brothers attended the event. They straightened double-digit numbers of the headstones and cleaned twelve to fifteen. They are planning another workday in July to try and complete the work at Maple Grove.

Brothers Tom Schmidt, John Shobe and Mike Hadl met with the head of maintenance at KU endowment the first part of May to talk about allowing the Lawrence camp to clean the headstones at Pioneer Cemetery in Lawrence. There are over twenty Civil War headstones on site with the majority of them have served in Wisconsin units. After the meeting the camp was given permission to do so, and this workday will be scheduled this year.

In February the camp held their monthly meeting at the Eldridge Hotel in downtown Lawrence. After a short business meeting, they were given an interesting tour of the historic hotel with details of famous people and events that

were involved at the site. Brother Chris Cardone of the Topeka camp came to the April meeting to talk about his children's book on the Civil War. At the camp's May meeting Brother John Shobe gave a presentation about his four Civil War ancestors. One is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery at Lawrence, and another in Maple Grove cemetery at Lawrence.

The camp met at Oakhill cemetery on Saturday, May 24, to put out over 450 flags on the Civil War veterans' graves. With the help of a local 4-H group and some other volunteers the seven camp members who attended were able to accomplish the task of marking the many Civil War veteran's graves for another Memorial Day. Pioneer Cemetery and Maple Grove cemetery had flags placed under the direction on Brother Mike Hadl on Friday, May 23.

Tom Schmidt, PDC
Secretary Churchill Camp # 4

FRANKLIN CAMP 5 Olathe Camp Officers for 2025

Camp Commander	James D. Thornton, PCC
Senior Vice Commander	Matthew T. Archambault
Junior Vice Commander	Jeffrey A. Winters
Secretary	Daniel W. Stilley
Treasurer	Richard T. Miller
Council	Ronnie R. Thompson
	Richard N. McPherson
	James P. Edgington
Patriotic Instructor	Lane D. Smith, PCC
Chaplain	Floyd E. Guliford
Graves Registration Officer	Joshua S. Gillihan-Young
Historian	Roger B. Miller
Civil War Memorials Officer	James P. Edgington
Eagle Scout Certificate Coordinator	Lane D. Smith, PCC

Following submitted by Camp Commander Jim Thornton, PCC

It Was Almost Overwhelming! So Much To Do!

It has been stressed over and over recently that the SUVCW Franklin Camp should get more involved with the community and get ourselves out there so the public knows who we are and what we do. Well, someone got that message and in a two-week span Franklin Camp found itself buried deep in community



activities. Let's look at where we've been over those two weeks.

It began on Saturday, April 28, with the JROTC Awards Ceremony at Olathe North High School. Commander Jim Thornton attended the ceremony and presented Cadet Thomas Cook with the SUVCW Medal and Award. The SUVCW Award and Medal is presented to a cadet nominated by the unit's instructor who demonstrates exceptional patriotism, academic excellence, and leadership.

This was at 10:00 am. Following this ceremony, Commander Thornton jumped in the car and headed south to Paola for the next event.



In Paola. Jim joined Franklin Camp Brothers Phil Hansen and John Hansen in support of Past Camp Commander Lane Smith who was performing his one-man play, "The Trial of Jefferson Davis." This event was at the request of the Miami County Historical Society and was held in the large meeting room of the Paola Free Library. In a "What-If" scenario, Lane described the possible outcome if Jefferson Davis had actually been brought to trial. Lane's performance was a smashing success.



But the weekend wasn't over yet. On Sunday, April 29, Commander Thornton attended an Eagle Scout Court of Honor at Cure' of Ars Catholic Church for Boy Scout Troop 395. Three new Eagle Scouts were honored and Jim

presented each of them with the SUVCW Eagle Scout Certificate of Commendation. The honored were Zachary Novotny, William Robertson, and Jonas Pepin. The fun was only beginning.

On Friday, May 2, our friends with the Sons of Confederate Veterans Key Camp invited Franklin Camp to join them once again in the Missouri History Day at Lone Jack Battlefield. This is an annual event hosted by the battlefield where busloads of area eighth graders take a field trip to the grounds of the Lone Jack Battlefield and then walk the grounds, stopping at “stations” to learn about different events or time periods in area history. For many years, the Key Camp has staffed the “Civil War Era” station and provided the lecture. Beginning about five years ago, the Key Camp graciously started asking the SUVCW Franklin Camp to join them. The Key Camp also brings out their impressive replica weapons display for the event, which always opens their eyes and gets the students to pay attention. Unfortunately, as Brother Rick McPherson commented, “Sadly, only a few knew anything about the Civil War.” But both the SCV and SUVCW imparted a little more information to them.



Saturday, May 3, brought more opportunities for the SUVCW to get involved with the community. In the morning, Commander Jim Thornton was the featured speaker for the Shawnee Indian Mission Western Academy Lecture Series. Jim presented his program “John Brown’s Last Hurrah in Kansas – The Battle of the Spurs” and answered many questions on the period known as “Bleeding Kansas” from the 1850’s. The event was well attended, and the Shawnee Indian Mission presentation room now features an 85-inch Smart TV which can connect wirelessly to a computer, enhancing presentations.

While Jim was winding up his John Brown presentation, Franklin Camp Senior Vice Commander Matthew Archambault was across town attending an Eagle Scout Court of Honor at Kaw Prairie Community Church. Matthew presented new Eagle Scout Christopher Hutson with the SUVCW Eagle Scout Certificate of Commendation.



The two weeks of community involvement weren’t quite done. To wind up this busy period, Brother Josh Gillihan-Young would attend the Leavenworth High School JROTC Awards Ceremony. Josh presented Cadet Major Jeremiah Purvis with the SUVCW Medal and Award in recognition of his patriotism, academic excellence, and leadership.

We can all now take a breath – until our Memorial Day Ceremony and Quilt-of-Valor Presentations. Thank you to all the Franklin Camp Brothers who stepped up over these two weeks to represent the SUVCW in the community.

Following submitted by Camp Secretary Dan Stilley.

Franklin Camp No. 5 Memorial Day Weekend

The last week has been especially busy. On Thursday, May 22, Department Commander Melcher joined us for our monthly meeting. A lively time was had by all, and Commander Melcher’s company greatly enjoyed. He shared with us the beautiful poem “When The Boys in Blue Are Gone” by John Hendricks. We were so moved by the poem that we included it in our Memorial Day service, as well as several other events. Most importantly, Franklin Camp held our annual Memorial Day Ceremony and Quilts of Valor Presentation on Saturday, May 24, at the GAR Circle in Olathe Cemetery. We presented Quilts of Valor to five local veterans, with their families in attendance. This year’s Memorial Day Ceremony was especially moving and emotional. All in attendance felt the solemnity of the event and were humbled to honor the veterans. We

had eleven brothers in attendance, and the ladies of Prairie Point Quilt Shop joined us as well. Then on Sunday, May 25, Brothers Bill and Dan Stilley attended the installation of a new VA headstone at the unmarked grave of a Union veteran in Kansas City, MO. Pvt. Joel Engler served in the 44th Indiana, and his grave was never marked in Elmwood Cemetery after his death in 1890. Brothers Bill and Dan were humbled to attend and assist with the installation, and Dan shared a few words in remembrance of Pvt. Engler. He also read "When the Boys in Blue are Gone." A member of Westport Camp, Department of Missouri, was in attendance too, but Dan did not catch his name. Past Camp Commander Lane Smith also shared the poem at the Johnson County Memorial Day Service held at Johnson County Memorial Gardens on May 26. To finish the month of May, Brother Dan Stilley is leading the camp on a driving and walking tour of the Battle of Westport on Saturday, May 31.

HUMBOLDT CAMP 9

Humboldt

Camp Officers for 2025

Camp Commander	Rocky D. Ansell
Senior Vice Commander	Randy A. Downey
Junior Vice Commander	Barrett E. Young, PCC
Acting Secretary/Treasurer	Barrett E. Young, PCC
Council	Bridger P. Keyes, PCC
	Barrett E. Young, PCC
	William F. Schomaker
	William F. Schomaker
	Bridger P. Keyes, PCC
	Rocky D. Ansell

Patriotic Instructor
Historian
Civil War Memorials Officer



Robert Dean Boyd II
1954-2025

Submitted by Camp Commander Rocky D. Ansell.

Humboldt Camp 9 has been working diligently at getting the camp back in good standing with the department since the passing of Brother Robert Boyd on 25 April 2025. May the Creator welcome Brother Boyd to eternal peace.

Brother Dennis Piatt has been working on resetting and cleaning the GAR gravestones in the Mount Hope



Cemetery, Humboldt, Kansas. He is also working on the purchase of a GAR statue to be set at the same cemetery. Strong work, Brother.

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty
Rocky D Ansell, Commander

PVT JOHN N. ECKES CAMP 10

Winfield

Camp Officers for 2025

Camp Commander	Terry E. Justice, PCC
Senior Vice Commander	David W. Taylor
Junior Vice Commander	Dustin L. Jones
Secretary/Treasurer	Eric L. Crittenden
Council	Gregg L. Talkington
	Gordon L. Hare
	Kent M. Melcher, PDC
	Kent M. Melcher, PDC
	Joe E. Chrisman, PCC
	Terry E. Justice, PCC
	Joe E. Chrisman, PCC
	Eric L. Crittenden

Patriotic Instructor
Chaplain

Graves Registration Officer
Historian
Civil War Memorials Officer
Eagle Scout Certificate Coordinator

Submitted by Camp Secretary Eric Crittenden.

Greetings brothers from Pvt John N Eckes Camp 10

Eckes Camp 10 has, through the recruiting efforts of Camp Commander Terry Justice, had four total new full members initiated in 2025. In January three new members, being Jeff Palmer, Leroy Barton and Zane Crow, then in May another new full member being William Smithback, who is Terry's son. The camp at its May meeting agreed to sponsor two award banners for the Cowley County Fair 4-H youth livestock show participants this summer which will include the name of Pvt. John N Eckes Camp 10, SUVCW, on the award banners and will be on display for several days for the public to see the camp supports community youth. The camp also sponsored an advertisement in the Courier/Traveler newspaper over Memorial Weekend to remember the American patriots who gave their all to save the union, "We must never

forget”. Eckes Camp is developing an education program focused on youth with the aim of promoting through education the meaning of heritage, history, selflessness, patriotism, etc. with a potential component to sponsor new younger members for a year by paying their dues. The camp will be holding a headstone dedication service for Union Civil War veteran Sergeant Isaac H. Bonsall, 2nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry on October 4th at 10 am in Riverview Cemetery in Arkansas City which all SUVCW members are cordially invited to attend. Mr. Bonsall during the Civil War was one of the few photographers and took pictures of many significant locations including scenes from Nashville, Murfreesboro, Chattanooga and Chickamauga. Mr. Bonsall was a second wave founder of Arkansas City arriving in 1872 where he had a tent photography shop and mentored itinerant photographer William S. Prettyman (famous for his Indian portraits and scenes in the Indian territory); Bonsall served in number of elected capacities, also appointed US Commissioner for Kansas for ten years. Eckes Camp was able to get a headstone marker placed in the past year for Isaac Bonsall who previously didn’t have a headstone marker.

OLD ABE CAMP 16

Topeka

Camp Officers for 2025

Camp Commander	J. Thomas Morgan
Senior Vice Commander	Ronald H. Martin
Junior Vice Commander	Robert J. Reeves
Secretary/Treasurer	Rocky L. Bartlow, PDC
Council	Craig E. Dunstan, PCC
	Ronald H. Martin
	Jack A. Sanders
Patriotic Instructor	K. Kirk Nystrom, PDC
Chaplain	Ronald H. Martin
Graves Registration Officer	Jerry W. Reiman, PCC
Historian	Christopher R. Cardone
Civil War Memorials Officer	Jerry W. Reiman, PCC
Eagle Scout Certificate Coordinator	Gary W. Kraus, PCC

Submitted by Camp Secretary/Treasurer Rocky L. Bartlow, PDC



Old Abe has been busy since the last iteration of the Picket. We started our cemetery workdays in April. This Spring we have focused on Rochester Cemetery in north

Topeka after we were made aware of some stones that were in need. D2 is really doing the job, and we are pleased with the result. Also, a local patron, Tricia Johnson, donated two gallons to us which will really help our work! PDC Bartlow’s headstone jerking device (modeled after Brother Dennis Lawrence’s fine example from the Churchill Camp) broke and has been repaired for another attempt. But we were still able to straighten several stones and cleaned quite a few. We plan to return in June.

Our Memorial Day ceremony was held on May 24 at the GAR section of Topeka Cemetery. By consensus it was the best one in quite a while. We had a good showing from three JROTC units (Highland Park Air Force, Washburn Rural Air Force, and Topeka High Marines) as well as our stalwart Scout troop 183 doing the flag raising. We were encouraged by the youth of the area who are so zealous to help and want to be a part of the service. We even recruited two Scouts to be flag holders, and they have asked to do it again next year!



We had a good crowd in attendance and Topeka Cemetery did their great work providing the flags around the section and chairs for guests. Someone even noted they saw Bill McFarland, area historian and noted author of “Keep the Flags to the Front” in attendance. Local station WIBW was there and did a very nice video piece that included an interview with PDC Kirk Nystrom and was on the 6 pm and 10 pm news.



The ceremony started with a drum and fife section consisting of PCC Jerry Reiman, CC Tom Morgan, Jack Smith and Faith Haller playing a medley of songs arranged

by PCC Reiman. PDC Randy Durbin joined them playing “To the Colors” and “Retreat” for the flag raising.

Several brothers spoke during the ceremony and inspired by PDC Nystrom’s example, started adding that they were there representing their ancestor and giving their name. We plan to add that to future ceremonies. Our speaker was unable to be there at the last minute and so we “arm-twisted” brother Earl McIntosh, dressed in USMC regalia, to speak as a brother of the camp, retired Marine, and candidate for city council. He did a great job at the last minute.



PDC Conrad Fisher gave a rousing reading of a poem written by Dr. H.W. Roby that was given at that exact site when the Gage Memorial was dedicated on May 30, 1895. Probably the highlight of the ceremony was JVC Rob Reves acapella singing of “Hard Times Come Again No More”. Several in the crowd were spotted singing along.

The ceremony ended with “Taps” played by PDC Durbin and laying of flowers and wreaths by the Ladies of the GAR and Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War. PCC Morgan closed the ceremony, thanking the many participants and remembering our veterans who have, and continue to serve, along with their families.

Respectfully submitted,

Rocky Bartlow, PDC
Camp Secretary

DEPARTMENT COUNCIL ACTIONS Between April 1, 2025, and May 31, 2025

May 5, 2025 (Remote) Meeting

1. A regular meeting of the Department Council was held on May 5, 2025, for the purpose of discussing and acting upon the business that came before it.
2. Approved the minutes of the March 17, 2025, Council meeting. Vote: YES: 8, NO: 0. Motion carried.
3. Approved the Proceedings of the April 5, 2025, 29th Annual Department Encampment. Vote: YES: 8, NO: 0. Motion carried.
4. Approval appointment of PDC Thomas E. Schmidt as Department Signal Officer. Vote: YES: 7, NO: 0. Motion carried.
5. Approved donation of \$100.00 to the “Bobby Boyd Memorial Fund” in memory of PDC Robert D. Boyd II.
6. PDC Schmidt moved to not allow advertisements and charity appeals on the Department website. Vote: YES: 8; NO: 0. Motion carried.
7. PDC Schmidt moved the Department put out the challenge to the camps of the Department, with the challenge amended to be named “2025-2026 PDC Robert D. Boyd II Membership Challenge.” Vote: YES: 8; NO: 0. Motion carried.

ORDERS ISSUED

April 16, 2025 – May 31, 2025 General & Special Orders (CinC Kevin L. Martin, PDC)

- G.O. 17 - Shining a Brighter Light on Memorial Day
G.O. 18 – Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)

April 16, 2025 – May 31, 2025 Commander Kent M. Melcher, PDC

DEPARTMENT SPECIAL ORDER 1 (SERIES 2025-2026) April 28, 2025
DEATH OF BROTHER ROBERT DEAN BOYD II, PDC
AND DECLARATION OF PERIOD OF MOURNING

1. It is with sadness and regret I announce the death of Past Department Commander Robert Dean Boyd II on April 25, 2025. PDC Boyd was born on January 15, 1954, at Chanute, Kansas. See below for funeral information.
2. Brother Boyd joined the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War on April 11, 2015, as a charter member of Humboldt Camp No. 9, Humboldt, Kansas. He proudly honored his great-grandfather John Boyd, who served as a Private with Company I, 55th Regiment Massachusetts Infantry (Col'd) from June 15, 1863, until August 29, 1865.
3. Brother Boyd was elected and served as Camp Commander for Humboldt Camp No. 9 for 2018, earning him the honor of Past Camp Commander.
4. On January 13, 2018, Brother Boyd was elected to the position of Junior Vice Department Commander, also being reelected to the position in 2019. On January 18, 2020, he was elected to the position of Senior Vice Department Commander and was reelected to the position in 2021.
5. On March 26, 2022, Brother Boyd was elected to be the Twentieth Department Commander for the Department of Kansas. He served in this capacity until the end of his term on March 18, 2023. At that time, the Department awarded Brother Boyd with the honor of Past Department Commander.
6. Funeral services for Brother Boyd will be on Saturday, May 3, 2025, at 10:30 AM. The funeral will be held at the Covenant of Faith Christian Center, 407 N. Chestnut St., Iola, Kansas. The family would appreciate all SUVCW brothers who can attend to please do so.
7. I am ordering the Department charter and all Department of Kansas camp charters to be draped for a period of 30 days from the date of this order. Additionally, members should wear either the black “In Memoriam” ribbon or the

black band on the drop of their membership badge in accordance with National Regulations Chapter V, Article VI, Section 9.
IN FRATERNITY, CHARITY, AND LOYALTY,

Kent M. Melcher, PDC
Department Commander

ATTEST:
Alan L. Russ, PDC
Secretary

DEPARTMENT SPECIAL ORDER 2 (SERIES 2025-2026) May 8, 2025
2025-2026 PDC ROBERT DEAN BOYD II MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE

1. As Department Commander, the late Past Department Commander Robert D. Boyd II strongly advocated for camps to work to increase their membership levels. To honor his memory, I am instituting the 2025-2026 PDC Robert Dean Boyd II Membership Challenge.
2. The Department of Kansas challenges each camp in the Department to recruit at least three (3) new brothers (Member or Associate) for their camp during the period April 6, 2025, through March 21, 2026.
3. The camp must have recruited at least three (3) new brothers and have submitted the applications to be received by the Department Secretary no later than March 21, 2026.
4. If each camp can meet this goal the Department will have eighteen new brothers. The camps meeting the criteria for this challenge will be recognized for their accomplishment by the awarding of a certificate of at the 2026 Department Encampment.

IN FRATERNITY, CHARITY, AND LOYALTY,

Kent M. Melcher, PDC
Department Commander

ATTEST:
Alan L. Russ, PDC
Secretary

DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

2025-2026

Department Commander	Kent M. Melcher, PDC
Sr. Vice Dept. Commander	James D. Thornton, PCC
Jr. Vice Dept. Commander	Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC
Secretary (term exp. 2028)	Alan L. Russ, PDC
Treasurer (term exp. 2028)	Rocky L. Bartlow, PDC
Council Member (IPDC)	Conrad M. Fisher, PDC
Council Member (2027)	Roy A. Lafferty, PDC
Council Member (2026)	James H. Graves, PCC, Barrett E. Young, PCC
Chief of Staff	Rocky L. Bartlow, PDC
Patriotic Instructor	Michael J. Hadl, PCC
Chaplain	Jeffrey A. Winters
Graves Registration Officer	Joshua S. Young
Counselor	K. Kirk Nystrom, PDC
Eagle Scout Certificate Coordinator	Eric L. Crittenden
Signals Officer	Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE SUNFLOWER PICKET

Who Was William Washington Nixon?

Each year, the Department Commander presents the William W. Nixon Camp of the Year Award to a deserving camp of the Department. This award has been presented since 1997.

So, who was William Washington Nixon, and why is he important to us? Fortunately, Brother Blair Tarr of Old Abe Camp No. 16 researched him for us and submitted an article about him to the Summer 2004 issue of *The Sunflower Picket*. Here is that article.

WILLIAM WASHINGTON NIXON Commander-in-Chief, Grand Army of the Republic 1940-1941

By Blair Tarr, Old Abe Camp 16

William Washington Nixon was the only Kansan to serve as the National Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, having been elected to that post at the Seventy-fourth National Encampment at Springfield, Illinois in 1940.

He was born near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the son of Samuel and Jane (Steele) Nixon. The day was Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1846, a fact that gave him his middle name. Because of his age, William did not enlist until January 30, 1864, as a private in Company I, 2nd Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery. He arrived in Grant's army just before Cold Harbor and served at Petersburg. Nixon was stationed at Farmville, Virginia, at the time of Lee's surrender, and was discharged at Philadelphia on January 29, 1866.

Nixon made one visit to Kansas before settling here for a lifetime. In the Spring of 1866, he and three other young veterans made their way by water from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Kansas City, then on to Topeka. But Nixon backtracked to Iowa where he remained until 1869, when he returned to Pennsylvania. There he married Sarah Hope at Mansfield, Pa., on July 20 of that year. The couple moved to Iowa, starting a family. They settled in Jewell County, Kansas in 1879, on a farm in northeast Buffalo Township – a son still farmed it at the time of Nixon's death in 1944.

Sarah Nixon died on April 1, 1884. William remarried on June 11, 1885, to Maria E. Jones at Bridgeville, Pa. She died in 1927. With both wives, he had a total of eight children. William retired to a home he purchased in Jewell in 1903.

His interest in the Grand Army of the Republic was very strong. He joined in 1880, a member of the S. R. Deach Post 58 of Jewell, Kansas. At its strongest, the Deach post had 154 members. Nixon would be their last member. He was the Commander of the Department of Kansas in 1934-35, and again in 1943. He attended encampments and reunions faithfully, including the 75th reunion at Gettysburg in 1938.

His election in 1940 meant that he would preside over the Seventy-Fifth National Encampment in 1941 at Columbus, Ohio. But his service would not end there. Longevity meant serving in other positions, and at the time of his death he was the National Judge Advocate General.

On the completion of his term as National Commander, a reception was held in his honor at the Memorial Building in Topeka, on April 5, 1941, as well as a parade and dinner at the Hotel Kansan. Martin Phillips, the commander of Capitol Post 1 of the American Legion, was master of ceremonies, while Mrs. Grace Wanner, the president of the

Woman's Relief Corps and secretary of the Grand Army of the Republic, both Department of Kansas, made the arrangements. Five other Kansas Civil War veterans were present: J.P. Fair of Mankato; W.E. Applegate and George Ellis of Topeka; Charles Wingrove of Clay Center; and A.T. Williams of Chapman. An address was delivered by the Honorable William A. Smith, a justice of the Kansas Supreme Court, who represented Governor Payne Ratner.

Among the gifts presented to Nixon was a copper plaque described as bearing his war record. This may be the plaque placed along his military gravestone, which actually commemorates his term as National Commander. He also received a silk lounging robe and an album containing prints of famous paintings.

William Washington Nixon died at his home in Jewell on March 17, 1944, at the age of 98. The services were held at the Methodist Church in Jewell. The American Legion presented a full military funeral at the Wallace Cemetery. The tributes summed up his life – farmer, banker, good neighbor, devout Christian, ideal father, kind friend, brave soldier, the patriot and patriarch of Jewell. He was the last soldier of Jewell County.

At the time of the 1941 reception he commented on what he thought about the war then raging in Europe. "There's nothing today that compares with the Union Army. It's just a machine fight now – a war of machines. They aren't doing any real fighting."

"I wish the world were at peace."

The above account is summarized from the Jewell County Republican, April 10, 1941 and March 23, 1944; the Topeka Capital, April 5, 1941; the Journal of the 62nd National Encampment of the Woman's Relief Corps, 1944; and the Proceedings of the 78th National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic, 1944.

THE SUNFLOWER PICKET

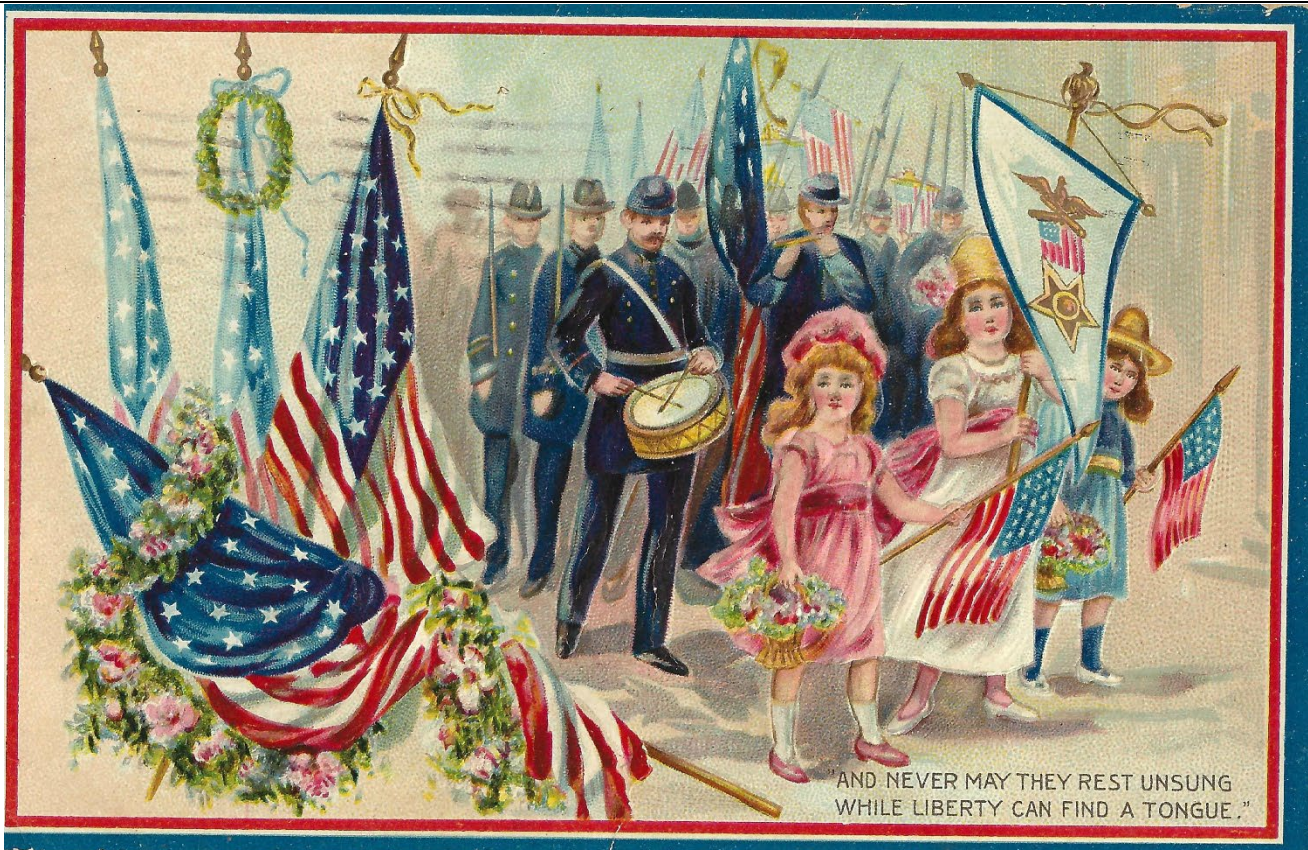
The Sunflower Picket is the official publication of the Department of Kansas, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

All articles are welcome for publication and should be sent to the editor no later than August 31, 2025, for the September 2025 issue.

Editor: Alan L. Russ, PDC

secretary@suvchwks.org

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[Raphael Tuck & Sons "Decoration Day" Series of Post Cards No. 158 (1909)]

Individuals attending events hosted by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, by virtue of their attendance, agree to the usage of their likeness in the Banner, any Camp or Department Newsletter, any SUVCW website and/or on any SUVCW Social Media outlet, promotional brochures, or any other SUVCW material. [G.O. No. 7 (Series 2021-2022)]

DEPARTMENT POLO SHIRTS INFORMATION

NEW!

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1861 **WEBSTORE** 1865

Order at:

bit.ly/sonsofunionvets

Adidas
\$47.99



Port Authority
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CrownLux
\$35.99



Webstore Closes June 30, 2025

For information contact:

Senior Vice Department Commander

Jim Thornton at JDThornton85@live.com

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