

Department Historian Article for December 2025 Badger Legionnaire

While accompanying Commander Bond on his visits to American Legion Posts, I quickly noticed common threads that connect our members and communities. Everywhere we went, there was a shared sense of purpose, a willingness to serve a greater cause, and a genuine concern for others. This spirit was evident during visits to Cameron (Barron County All-Veterans Picnic), Mequon (2nd District Fall Conference), Argyle (3rd District Conference), Cross Plains (Legion Baseball Recognition), and Milwaukee (Zablocki VA Medical Center with American Legion Volunteers and Executive Director McLain).

These experiences reflect Commander Bond's emphasis on Family and Legacy. I saw that legacy come alive in District 2 Historian Tim Yauck's inspiring "Operation Namesake" presentation. Tim is developing a model that other posts can use to share their own stories—capturing, in print, video, and audio, how and why each post was named and honoring their namesakes. His innovative work demonstrates the living history of our organization, and I expect we'll be hearing much more about Tim and his remarkable project.

Tim's initiative, however, underscores—rather than replaces—the importance of documenting post histories and creating Yearbooks. Yearbooks are often the first things members bring out when welcoming potential new members. They tell our story at a glance and convey our pride in service. It's vital to compile these "welcome documents" at the end of each term.

If your post is continuing the traditional "cut-and-paste" method, wonderful—keep that tradition alive. If you're exploring ways to digitize your Yearbook, consider attending the Wisconsin Historians Association's training session, currently planned for Midwinter Training on Saturday, January 17. More details can be found at wilegion.org.

Two thoughts come to mind as we reflect on the role of our historians.

"Historians are vital for recording our organization's spirit, ensuring its legacy, and preserving it for future generations—not just facts."

— Lillian Erwin Fleming, August 1928 (reposted by The American Legion Auxiliary History Blog, September 12, 2024)

"The secret to happiness is freedom... And the secret to freedom is courage."

— Thucydides