



LAVA LEDGER



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Message from the Department Commander

Talofa Comrades,

Welcome to the Special June 2025 Edition of the Lava Ledger—our one-year anniversary issue and my final message as your Department Commander.

What began as a flicker of an idea turned into a steady lava flow of connection and pride across our VFW and Auxiliary 'ohana. It's been a wild, meaningful, and humbling ride—one I'll never forget.

This issue also marks the transition to our new Department Commander, Jason Seal. I leave the helm knowing Jason will lead with heart and purpose... and hopefully fewer stumbles than I had early on!

To our Post Commanders, Officers, staff, and dedicated volunteers—mahalo nui loa. Your commitment made this year one for the record books.

Speaking of records...

- 102% Membership – Ranked #13 in the Nation!
- 30% of Posts earned All-State honors
- We're on pace for the most All-American achievements in our Department's history!



Department Commander's Message

Huge congratulations to our All-State Commanders:

Lam (110), Lewis (849), Gilbert (1572), Teofilo (3830), Kalani (12122), Boucher (12138), and Worthen (2875)

And to our All-State Quartermasters:

Carter, Albrecht, Bragg, Chang, Wong, and Kemper—you kept the books tight and the mission tighter. Bravo Zulu!

Comrades of the Month

To Chaplains Stanley Fernandez and Lopaka Correa—you were more than spiritual support. You were my wingmen, my calm in the storm, and the heartbeat of our ceremonies. Thank you both for lifting us all with grace, strength, and the occasional well-timed joke.

National Award Nominees

Let's give it up for our top civilian honorees whose applications have been forwarded to the National Convention in Columbus this August to compete at the National level:

- Margaret Russo – Distinguished Historical Award
- Natalie Rauch & Julie Wojszynski – Patriotic Awards
- Micah Gauthier – Fraternal Award
- Zhenson Noji – JROTC Award

You represent Hawai'i with excellence. Just don't forget the malasadas on the way back.

Convention Mahalos:

To every sponsor who helped power our 87th VFW and 66th Auxiliary State Convention—thank you from the bottom of our hearts (and stomachs). You helped us deliver a convention full of camaraderie, culture, and plenty ono grinds. (Full list in the newsletter.)

If we missed your name, please accept our apologies—and an open invite to next year's plate lunch.

Final Thought

As I wrap up this chapter, I leave you with "The Man in the Glass"—a poem that reminded me daily to lead with integrity, laugh often, and stay true to the one person you can't fool: yourself.

Fa'afetai ma ia fa'atasi le Atua – Thank you, and may God continue to walk with you.

With deep aloha and gratitude,

Your Outgoing Commander

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Polynesian Pride ~ "Where Veterans Matter Most!"



Department Milestones & National Recognition

In this edition, we proudly welcome VFW National Chief of Staff Jeff Carroll and keynote speaker Clifford Victorine, Executive Assistant to Hawai'i County Mayor Kimo Alameda.



Department Milestones & National Recognition

We are especially proud to announce that the Department of Hawai'i has achieved the Commander-in-Chief's recruiting goal with 102% membership, ranking 13th in the nation, and setting a new benchmark in our history.

Now for the part that really gets my blood pumping like a double espresso:

- We hit 102% membership—#13 in the nation!
- Over 30% of our Posts earned All-State honors!
- We're on track for the highest All-State/All-American achievement in our department's history!



All-State Honors Roll Call

More than 30% of our Posts earned All-State honors, with many now poised to achieve All-American status—the highest combined recruiting percentage and percentage of All-State and All-American achievement in the history of the Department of Hawai'i. Congratulations to our All-State Commanders:

- Post 110 – Adriel Lam
- Post 849 – Stacey Lewis
- Post 1572 – Benjamin Gilbert
- Post 3830 – Fa'amanu Teofilo
- Post 12122 – Gerard Kalani
- Post 12138 – Rodney Boucher (Co-Captain)
- Post 2875 – Jesse Worthen (Co-Captain)

All-State Quartermasters:

- Post 94 – Leslie Carter
- Post 3830 – Duane Albrecht
- Post 12138 – Joseph “Frank” Bragg
- Post 1572 – Frederic Chang
- Post 2875 – Tim Wong
- Post 849 – Christopher Kemper

Mahalo nui loa for your dedication, drive, and aloha. You've made history—and the best is still ahead.

Comrades of the Month: Department of Hawai'i Chaplains

Comrades of the Month: Chaplains Stanley Fernandez & Lopaka Correa

We proudly recognize Department Chaplain Stanley Fernandez and Deputy Chaplain Lopaka Correa for their exceptional service to the VFW Department of Hawai'i. Their unwavering dedication to spiritual care, respect for tradition, and support for our veterans and families has been nothing short of extraordinary.

They ensured our ceremonies were conducted with the highest reverence, in full alignment with the VFW Manual of Procedure—preserving the dignity of our sacred rituals. Beyond the formal duties, they offered quiet strength, heartfelt counsel, and comfort when it was needed most.

As Department Commander, I was truly blessed by their constant support. Their presence gave me strength through the toughest parts of the journey. They weren't just Chaplains—they were my spiritual wingmen.

Mahalo Nui Loa and Fa'afetai Tele Lava, Chaplains—your impact will be felt for years to come.



National Civilian Awards – Hawai'i Honorees

We proudly recognized our Department of Hawai'i recipients of the top VFW National Civilian Awards. Their nominations have been submitted to compete at the National level, with winners to be announced at the National Convention in Columbus, Ohio this August.

Congratulations to the following honorees for their outstanding service and contributions:

- Margaret Russo – VFW Distinguished Historical Award
- Natalie Rauch – VFW Department of Hawaii Distinguished Patriotic Award
- Julie Wojszynski – VFW Department of Hawaii Distinguished Patriotic Award
- Micah Gauthier – VFW Department of Hawaii Distinguished Fraternal Award
- Zhenson Noji – VFW Post 3830 & Department of Hawaii JROTC Award

We're proud to have such exceptional individuals representing Hawai'i on the national stage!



87th VFW and 66th Auxiliary Hawai'i State Convention



87th VFW and 66th Auxiliary Hawai'i State Convention



87th VFW and 66th Auxiliary Hawai'i State Convention



87th VFW and 66th Auxiliary Hawai'i State Convention Hospitality House!!!!



87th VFW and 66th Auxiliary Hawai'i State Convention



87th VFW and 66th Auxiliary Hawai'i State Convention



Mahalo to Our Convention Sponsors:

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the sponsors who generously supported our 87th VFW and 66th Auxiliary State Convention. Your charitable contributions played a vital role in the successful planning, coordination, and execution of the convention—from logistics to hospitality. With sincere appreciation, we recognize the following sponsors:

- Pepsi Beverages Company – Hawai'i
- KTA Super Stores – Puainako Center
- Costco Wholesale
- Subway Hawai'i (Kea'au)
- Waiākea Hawaiian Volcanic Beverages
Kōkua Initiative
- Jade Food Products Inc.
- Mt. View Bakery
- Kona Brewing Company
- Low International Foods
- Punalu'u Bake Shop
- Safeway Kona
- CMU & Associates, Inc.
- Hilo Trolling Club
- Volcano Winery
- HPM Building Supply – Hilo
- Big Island Beef Jerky
- Big Island Delights
- Hawai'i Forest & Trail
- Big Island Candies
- Erbschloe / Post 3830
- Trader Joe's (Gift Basket Items)
- HST Co. Attn: Daryl Lee Smith
- Hawai'i Linen Supply
- Kilauea Military Camp Staff ATTN: Joyce
Faulkner and the entire Reservations, Food
and Beverage and Housekeeping Team
- Hawai'i County Executive Assistant to Mayor
Kimo Alameda – Mr. Clifford Victorine
- 30MM Telescope Project Officer – Keoki Kai
- Miss Olga Arianoff
- St. Joseph School, Danie Velená
- 291st CBCS, Hawai'i Air National Guard – LTC
Krystelle Kenny
- Marlene & Archie Hapai
- Teresa Fuata
- Joshua "JT" Taueu
- Jan Kama
- VFW Post 3830 (Pāhoa)
- VFW Post 12122 (Kona)
- VFW Post 3875 (Hilo)
- Aiona Car Sales Attn: Pat Aiona
- Cassie Ale
- Anita Loando-Acohido
- Pat & Mike Sauer
- Duane & Cecilia Albrecht
- Vince Pelanca
- Lance & Charise Dolera
- Bill Krieger
- Walter Giraitis
- Sandra Ackerman

*Disclaimer: This list includes names received at the time of publication and may not capture every generous donor. To all those who contributed—your support did not go unnoticed. We offer our warmest aloha and deepest thanks. Please accept our apologies if your name is not mentioned here.

Quote of the Year: "The Man in the Glass"

By popular demand, I'm sharing the poem I recited during my closing remarks—one that's guided and grounded me throughout my time in command. It's served as both a mirror and a moral compass, and I hope it speaks to you as powerfully as it has to me.

"The Man in the Glass" by Dale Wimbrow

When you get what you want in your struggle for self,
And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself,
And see what that man has to say.
For it isn't your father or mother or wife,
Who judgment upon you must pass;
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.
He's the one to please—never mind all the rest—
For he's with you clear up to the end,
And you've passed the most dangerous, difficult test
If the man in the glass is your friend.
You may be like Jack Horner and "chisel" a plum,
And think you're a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.
You can fool the whole world down the pathway of years
And get pats on the back as you pass,
But your final reward will be heartache and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass.



Department of Hawaii Commander Benedict Fuata



That's a wrap, Comrades.



Mission Complete.

Membership 102% crushed.
Conventions successfully closed.
Veterans served!
Mic dropped!
Malasada secured.

Aloha 'oe — it's been an honor!

Fa'afetai ma ia fa'atasi le Atua –
Thank you, and may God be with you!

