

HOW AMERICAN LEGION POST #39 WAS NAMED

The American Legion began at a caucus of veterans of the American Expeditionary Forces, March 15-17, 1919 in Paris, France.

A second caucus was held in May, 1919 in St. Louis. From these two meetings the American Legion was launched.

In Warner the Public Safety Committee invited all returned veterans to a banquet, reception and dance to be held in their honor at the Town Hall, on May 8th, 1919 at 6:30 p.m. They were asked to come in uniform.

Several meetings of veterans were held with Dr. Lloyd Cogswell as chairman and an application for a charter to Post 39 was filed on August 14, 1919 with the N H State Chairman of the American Legion. The charter was approved August 23rd. The list of members of Post 39 for 1919 totaled 35. Later an Honor Roll with 49 names of Warner veterans was placed on a tree in front of the Town Hall.

At a meeting held at the Warner Town Hall on September 19, 1919 an election of officers was held. Clayton Dow was elected Post Commander and Harold Dow, Adjutant. Official business at this meeting was recorded. "After some discussion, Post #39 was named by majority vote of members present for Lawrence O. Wilkins who died in France."

Information on Lawrence O. Wilkins

Lawrence O. Wilkins was born in Washington, DC January 24, 1893, the son of Frank G. and Florence Ordway Wilkins. He was a grandson of the late Nehemiah G. Ordway of Warner, former governor of the Dakota Territory.

Although he spent most of his life in Washington, he was a legal resident of Warner where his family maintained residence and a home in Lower Warner. His sister, Nancy Sibley Wilkins, was the last occupant of the property.

Lawrence attended George Washington University and was employed for several years in the terminal and cold storage ice plant of the Washington Market Company.

On the entrance of the U. S. in the war he enlisted in a technical unit, Ice Plant Co. 301, Q.M.C. for which his experience fitted him.

This company reached France in January 1918 and was detailed to equip and put into operation the great food refrigeration plant and cold storage warehouse which was the central depot for the Quartermaster Department of the A.E.F.

Lawrence Wilkins died in the line of duty by accidental drowning in the Rhone River near Lyons, France when he and a group of men were engaged in dismantling a refrigeration plant. He was given a soldier's funeral and buried in the American corner of the Guillstiere cemetery in Lyons.

At the request of his family, his body was brought home to Warner from France. He was buried with full military honors by Post 39 in Pine Grove Cemetery on Sunday, June 5, 1921 after an impressive ceremony in the Town Hall. The commander with whom he served in France attended the funeral.

The following tribute from the War Department was received by his family:

United States Army

In memory of Lawrence O. Wilkins

Ice Plant Co. 301, Q. M. C.

“He humbly laid down his life for the cause of his country. His name will ever remain fresh in the hearts of his friends and comrades. The record of his honorable service will be preserved in the archives of the American Expeditionary Forces.”

John J. Pershing,
Commander-in-Chief

POST NAME CHANGED TO WILKINS – CLOUES POST #39

The story of Edward Cloues, Ensign, U S Navy

At a regular meeting of the Lawrence O. Wilkins Post #39 on Thursday, February 8, 1946, the following resolution, presented by Harold B. Henley, was adopted:

“Resolved that the name of the Lawrence O. Wilkins Post #39, be, hereby, changed to read Wilkins-Cloues Post #39, American Legion. This will be discussed and voted on at our March meeting.”

Action was taken on this resolution at the March 14, 1946 meeting and was passed unanimously to add the name of Ensign Edward Cloues, U.S. Navy, who had been killed in action at Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

According to a Concord Monitor news item of December 12, 1941 “the death of Ensign Cloues is the first war casualty definitely ascribed to Merrimack County. He would have been 24 years old on Christmas Day.

Eddie was the son of Alfred & Harriet Cloues of Main Street, born in Warner on December 25, 1917. He was also survived by two brothers, Alfred S. Cloues Jr. stationed at Camp Lee, Virginia, for basic training and later receiving a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant and served in the Pacific Theatre and William J. Cloues, a senior at Simonds Free High School who after graduation attended the Coast Guard Academy as an officer candidate.

Eddie had graduated as Valedictorian of the Class of 1935 at Simonds Free High School where he had been prominent in athletics and a member of the school orchestra. He was president of his class for four years, and, as a senior, president of the student body. He spent one year at the University of New Hampshire while awaiting his appointment to the Naval Academy.

Ensign Cloues was appointed Midshipman from New Hampshire on June 29, 1936 and after receiving his commission from the Naval Academy at Annapolis he was assigned to the Battleship U.S.S. Arizona at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, where he reported for duty on June 29, 1940.

He was on duty when the Japanese attack occurred Sunday morning December 7, 1941. His body is still entombed along with 1,200 other naval personnel on the Arizona at Pearl Harbor. On that fatal weekend, Ensign Cloues was to be on liberty in Honolulu, but had traded for ship’s duty with another Ensign whose parents were visiting from the mainland.

Two of his 1935 classmates also died in the line of duty. John H. Mills, U.S. Navy of Warner killed in Sicily and Capt. Kenneth "Bunk" Brown, U.S. Marine Corps, of Bradford killed at Tarawa.

There were six young men from Warner killed in the service of their country in World War Two. Their names are on the bronze plaque at the entrance to the Town Hall. This plaque also has the names of 98 other men and women who were residents of Warner during their service in World War Two.

Ensign Cloues had the first warship to be named for a New Hampshire hero of the war. His mother, Mrs. Hattie B. Cloues, christened the destroyer escort USS CLOUES DE-265 in memory of her son at the Boston Navy Yard on August 10, 1943. Ensign Cloues was awarded

THIRD NAME ADDED TO THE POST 39

Lyman W. "Ted" Bigelow III

Teddy, as he was called by most everyone, was born on June 21, 1931. He grew up in Warner and graduated from Simonds Free High School in the Class of 1949. Ted was a tall, blonde youth who was very popular with his classmates during the four years and was an outstanding athlete.

His parents were Lyman W. "Waldo" Bigelow Jr. and Josephine P. Bigelow of Warner. Each of his parents made significant contributions to the Town of Warner and to the people of this entire region during their lifetime. Waldo was the General Manager of the Henniker Crutch Company in town; a Deputy Fire Chief & 44-year member of the Warner Fire Department; Forest Fire Warden; Selectman; Precinct Commissioner; Town Moderator for 19 years; and a Representative in the NH House for 20+ years. Jo Bigelow was a superb English Teacher & Coach at Simonds Free High School for decades. Ted was their oldest child. He also had a sister, Phyllis and a brother Robert. In March 1950 he joined the U S Army and after taking Basic Training he volunteered for duties at The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery and was assigned to COMPANY "A" of the 1ST BATTALION, 3rd INFANTRY REGIMENT, which was also referred to as "THE OLD GUARD". He became one of the soldiers who performed guard and other special duties from this prestigious post.

When war broke out in Korea in 1950 Ted had been promoted to Corporal and in September 1951 he was promoted to Sergeant. Later in 1951 Ted was transferred to Camp Desert Rock, Nevada, where he was involved as an observer in "Exercise Desert Rock", an objective regarding the tactical deployment of atomic weapons.

He was later transferred to a duty station in the Pacific with the 10th Military Police Company guarding war prisoners on Koje Island. He did not like this duty assignment and asked to be transferred to an Infantry Unit in Korea. In September 1952, Sergeant Bigelow was assigned to the War Zone in Korea.

On October 31, 1952, Sergeant Lyman W. "Ted" Bigelow III was killed in action. He was 21 years old.

For his services he was awarded the Purple Heart Decoration; the Combat Infantryman's Badge; the National Defense Service Medal; the Korean Presidential Unit Citation; the Republic of Korea War Service Medal with a Bronze Service Star; and the United Nations Service Medal.

Ted's uncle, Sergeant John Bigelow, U. S. Army, was also killed-in-action in France during World War Two.

ADDING THE 4TH NAME TO POST 39

William R. Pearson

On May 28, 2007, The Wilkins-Cloues-Bigelow Post 39 American Legion in Warner, New Hampshire added the name "Pearson" to its Official Legion Charter to honor the memory of Sergeant William R. Pearson who was a resident of Webster, NH.

Sgt. Pearson, a highly-decorated member of the elite US Air Force Pararescuemen (PJ's) was killed in the line of duty during the crash of a helicopter (Jolly Green 67) on April 6, 1972, along with five other crewmembers, while on a rescue mission on Quang Tri, South Vietnam. The object of their rescue attempt was downed Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Iceal Hambleton, whose call sign was "BAT 21". Two books and a movie have been created surrounding the mission of the rescue of BAT 21. The bodies of all six Jolly Green 67 crewmembers were recovered and officially identified over 22 years later. In 1997 they were laid to rest with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

Post 39 previously had carried the names of Warner Area servicemen who had died in World War I (Lawrence Wilkins); World War II (Edward Cloues) and the Korean War (Lyman "Ted" Bigelow). The Wilkins-Cloues-Bigelow-Pearson Post 39 American Legion covers an area which includes: Warner, Webster and Bradford, NH.

Post 39 Commander Paul Violette said: "The addition of Sgt. Bill Pearson's name to our Legion Post was long overdue and we didn't want to let his memory and the reasons and causes he served be forgotten. He was a true hero and one who made the ultimate sacrifice for all of us. Sgt. Pearson was highly decorated for his military service, having been awarded the:

Silver Star Medal for Gallantry in Action

Distinguished Flying Cross (2 times)

Air Medal (6 times) For Meritorious Achievement in aerial flight, and

The Purple Heart

Sgt. Pearson also qualified for numerous other campaign medals and commemorative medals for his service in Southeast Asia. During his first 11 months in Vietnam, Sgt. Pearson was directly involved with rescuing 116 servicemen.

Special recognition of Sgt. William Pearson's distinguished duty to our country and additional historical remarks on the other three veterans who are included in the Post's name were presented during the Memorial Day Observance Program at the Town Hall in Warner at 8:30 AM on May 28, 2007.

Bill Pearson's father, Robert Pearson, was a US Marine Veteran of World War II, having served in the Pacific Theater; and Mr. Pearson also was a member and Past Commander of Post 39. Bill's brother, Robert Jr., was also a US Marine Veteran of the Vietnam War. Along with his mother Betty Pearson, Sgt. Pearson also had 2 sisters and 2 other brothers. The entire family still resides in Webster.