



Below is a copy of Acting Commander Gary Bishop's Annual Report as delivered to the membership at the May 17, 2017 General Membership meeting:

Sons of the American Legion  
Veteran's Memorial Squadron 347  
Annual Report— May 17, 2017  
Acting Commander Gary Bishop

I quote from Squadron 347 Bylaws in Article III Duties of Officers, Section #2 Duties of the Squadron Commander, "He shall act as Chief Executive Officer of the Squadron and file an annual report reviewing the past year's Squadron business and make recommendations for the coming year. This report shall be read at the annual Election meeting."

The following is my Annual Report to you, our Membership. I complete this report to the best of my knowledge of Squadron business for the fiscal year July 1, 2016 up to today, recognizing my limited role prior to elevation to Acting Commander on March 14 of this year. I will break this report down into brief summaries of the major areas of responsibility and concern.

**Membership:** Obviously, as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander for the past 18 months, this is the area of most knowledge for me. Our Squadron achieved 100% membership on December 22nd, 2016, well ahead of Detachment expectations. We are currently at 588 members, up from the previous year's total of 524. However, we will fall short of my personal goal of a membership level of 600. On a positive note, we gained 110 new and transfer members. Unfortunately, we have not renewed 34 members from 2015 and 52 members from 2016. For the coming year there needs to be a focus on member retention that I hope can be achieved through better new and transfer member orientation and inclusion, as well as the scheduling and conduct of at least one New Member Initiation Ceremony.

**Kitchen:** I felt a discussion of the kitchen is required since the majority of our charitable donation funds come from the dedicated work completed by our kitchen volunteers. Monday Burger Night, Thursday Italian Night, and Pro Football Sundays remain the lifeblood of Squadron income. Virge Woodie on Mondays, George Worton and Angelo Speziale on Thursdays, and Dave Ratcliff on Sundays lead a cadre of volunteers too numerous to mention in bringing high quality, reasonably priced and satisfying food service to the 347 Legion Family on these days. However, these wonderful and reliable volunteers would welcome additional support from our members. Also, discussions have begun on improving kitchen ordering, securing for each night alternating weekly leadership, providing set and easy to follow recipes and SOPs for operating the kitchen on our nights. A Committee will be set-up to review food costs and menu item pricing. The Squadron did purchase a freezer exclusively for our use, alleviating a crowded walk-in freezer condition. The Post has also funded an expansion of the walk-in refrigerator and has purchased 5 new fryers and a new warmer. There is a new Kitchen Manager, Paul Holzinger, who happens to also be a Son, and he is seeking a new Assistant Manager (for anyone interested). Please consider joining the kitchen staff for one night a month, or that occasional 5<sup>th</sup> night that pops up.



**Finance:** As you are aware, the Squadron had turnover in the finance and accounting area. Danny Adams has worked diligently with Ken DeMello in Post Finance Office and myself to align Squadron finance and accounting activities with Post procedures, and with generally accepted accounting principles. Danny sorted through a lengthy audit process with Ken and has converted our tracking system to Quickbooks software along with converting to an account structure as recommended by the Post. Additional requirements have been placed upon us when requesting checks or petty cash, but these changes coincide with Post Finance recommendations. Danny utilized an available computer for organizing all finance and accounting information and reports.

**Administration:** Squadron Adjutant is doing a fantastic job in this area. Doug White has established a completely updated, information packed website for Squadron 347. If you have not reviewed our new website, you should do so <<http://florida-legion.com/sons>>. Doug also continued the effort of Tim Standfest to have accurate email addresses for members and we now use email for effective communications. Doug also worked on the Post and Auxiliary web pages, which will be launched after July of this year. Of course facilities wise, the Sons organization now has a separate office. We have added a couple of new 4 drawer file cabinets and a large double door cabinet to hold office supplies plus Sons' handbooks and pamphlets. A lock-box for holding keys has been installed with identifying and labeling keys still underway. I have worked to purge the office of a multitude of items that had no functional value and were accumulated over the years. I am still working to clean up our offsite storage unit. After the Post Commander repainted the Hall and provided a defined area and emblem for each Legion Family group, Doug White organized and re-hung our awards. Also, Doug is developing a display method for our annual Detachment Awards that are currently trophies.

**Americanism:** In keeping with Sons' core values, Squadron 347 accomplished much in this area. For the first time we reached an agreement with the Post to sponsor one young man from their selection process to Boy's State. Sponsorship costs \$500 and we designated Sons 347 member Matthew Duncan as our desired selection. The Squadron give 1 recognition standard flag and 250 small flags away and/or placed on Lady Lake Cemetery for Memorial Day. Our Squadron is in the process of awarding \$8,000 in college scholarships to students at Lake Weir and Belleview High Schools. We provided \$660 in new swords and a specially designed storage case to the Junior ROTC of Lake Weir High School. Doug White designed and built the storage case. Our Squadron sponsored a local Scout troop for \$500 and both Lady Lake Little League baseball and soccer for \$250 each. Our members reported 19 pints of blood donated. We provided \$750 each to the food pantries at Village View and St Theresa's. Finally our members volunteered 11,116 hours of community service! However, I am sure our members contributed even more to our communities than reported. We need to develop a better method of getting members to report and take credit for all of the great things they do within the community.

**Children & Youth:** In this area our Squadron provided \$2,000 to the Child Welfare Foundation. We increased our giving to Special Olympics in the tri-county area by 50% to \$3,000 while working 268 volunteer hours. We donated \$500 to the Legacy Scholarship Fund. We also hosted a carnival for ARC Sunrise.



**Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation:** Squadron members conducted wellness visits to ailing veterans, wrapped and delivered Christmas gifts to VA Hospital in Orlando, and hosted monthly coffee and donuts at the Local VA Center. Our donations were valued at almost \$12,000 and included 1,175 volunteer hours. We donated \$2,500 to local Honor Flight, \$2,000 to Gainesville Fisher House, \$2,500 to Habitat for Humanity earmarked for Veterans Village, \$2,000 to Operation Shoebox, \$1,000 to Combat Veterans to Careers, \$500 to Veterans Urns, and \$500 to USA Cares. Our Squadron is also nominating Gary Blanchard for Detachment VA&R Volunteer of the Year Award, recognizing his efforts on behalf of all Veterans.

**Entertainment & Activities:** As 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Commander, George Worton worked to further our support for Veterans and our 347 Legion Family as our Squadron ran several events during the year both to provide an entertaining outlet for our Family membership as well as an effort to raise donation funds. Mike Hicks continued his successful running of the Valentine's Day Dance. Richard Duncan coordinated the Halloween Dance. Gary Blanchard organized our first Crab Race. The dances are on the calendar for the coming year along with 3 crab races. The Squadron can improve these events by improved advance advertising and better handling of tickets. The crab race included burgers, and if held on Monday we need to add kitchen volunteers and utilization of the rear grill for crab race burgers - keeping the front kitchen serving only the Lounge as normal.

**This, That, and Other:** A few miscellaneous comments to conclude my report. Other officers not specifically mentioned provided steady support throughout the year. I recommend that the incoming Commander name and announce to the membership all known committee chairmen in July, so that interested members can contact chairmen directly and build their committees. Attendance at monthly General Membership meetings needs to increase, and your suggestions for doing so are welcome. On a related topic, general volunteer participation levels need to increase especially with respect to cross-training back-up volunteers, as none of us is getting any younger and we all want continuity of our Squadron and our activities. Related to that issue, we have a paucity of candidates on our ballot tonight, which has only one contested position. We need to create an environment and atmosphere that encourages more participants. We have fun in the kitchen and at our events! Come and see for yourself. And finally, I am sure our new Commander and other Officers will welcome other recommendations you may have and are willing to bring forward. Bring ideas and a willingness to execute them. A final area for improvement; I neither understand nor condone the apparent air of animosity and strain in relations within the 347 Legion Family. The Post, Auxiliary, and Squadron make up the Family. Please do your part in having open, unbiased, and respectful conversation with all of our Family members and amongst our own members. Mutual cooperation will undoubtedly increase our success in helping Veterans, their families, and our youth.

**In Closing:** Squadron 347 has had a very successful year. Your efforts resulted in donations of nearly \$33,000. Many positive changes have occurred across our organization and our future looks bright. You should be very proud of your accomplishments and proud of your organization. Thank you for all you have done and all you will do in the future for the Sons of the American Legion Veteran's Memorial Squadron 347.



Respectfully Submitted: May 17, 2017,

Yours in God and Country,  
Gary V Bishop Acting Commander, Squadron 347

cc: Tim Tierney, Commander, American Legion Post 347