

The Rising Star

Volume 2008, Issue I

January-February 2008

Special points of interest:

- We are at 81% of our goal for 4-star membership status.
- We're still visiting our Veterans at Walter Reed we need people to make the visits and provide donations.
- We are holding Post dinners on a regular basis each month.

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Commander's Message



My fellow Legionnaires:

By the time you read this, it will be 2008. This would be an appropriate time to review some of the programs that were initiated in 2007.

First and most obvious is our new pavilion. After several years of struggling to get a building permit, it finally became reality in August of 2007 after several dedicated volunteers pitched in and built our new pavilion. If you have not yet seen it, you should make a point to drop by the Post and admire our newest structure.

Our visits to Walter Reed Hospital were begun in 2007 and our attendance has grown beyond our expectations. If you have a few hours once a month, please sign up on our roster to visit our wounded warriors. It will be an experience you will never forget. It gave me a whole new opinion of our "younger generation".

During 2007, our Boy Scout Troop 1688 elevated two members of this Troop to Eagle Scout status. The 49th and 50th Eagle Scouts of this Troop are such an outstanding accomplishment.

During the past year, our Post has "adopted" the G2 of the 29th Infantry Division Maryland National Guard based at Laurel, Maryland. We were pleased to host a Christmas party for

the families and members of this Detachment on December 1. What a great group of dedicated soldiers these folks are. We look forward to future cooperation with this Unit.

Among the many activities in December was the dedication of our Blue Star Memorial Christmas Tree. This idea was conceived by Skip Powell and immediately gained acceptance and within 3-4 weeks we removed some dead trees in the front of our Post and planted a live 15 foot Douglas fir. This project was co-chaired by Skip and Nick Muller. On December 8, we had a tree lighting ceremony that was well attended and several members of the public hung Christmas ornaments to remember their loved ones who are serving or have served our country. We intend for this to become an annual tradition and it got off to a great start.

Among the new initiatives this past year was the appointment of a public relations officer. Richard Beckwell has been functioning as our Public Relations officer and we now have newspaper coverage for most of our events. Richard prepares news releases for several newspapers so the public will be aware of all of the good things we do here at Post 66.

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Post Officers

Commander	Dick Lanham
1st Vice Commander	Mark Ryan
2nd Vice Commander	Brian Goldman
Adjutant	<vacant>
Finance Officer	Charlie Milstead
Chaplain	Toni King
Judge Advocate	Richard Beckwell
Historian	Ray Hart
Service Officer	Eddie Thompson
Sergant-at-Arms	Sonny Frank
Executive Committee	Brian Frye
	Roger Goll
	Jr. Martin
	Clif Morvant
	Tom Murphy

American Legion
Disney-Bell Post 66
9605 Old Laurel-Bowie Road
Bowie, Maryland 20720

Phone: 301-464-9814
Fax: 301-805-6832
Email: alpost66@comcast.net
Website: www.alpost66.org

We welcome your news, ideas, suggestions, comments, questions, or thoughts for the next issue of The Rising Star.

Email info to: alpost66@comcast.net

or drop it at the Post attention: Ray Hart

by: February 15, 2008.

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Finally, I would be remiss if I failed to inform you of our hugely successful Toys for Tots campaign. Thanks to the continuing efforts of Pat Lamb, more than 1000 toys were collected for distribution to needy children who otherwise would have had a very bleak Christmas. This is about the 12th year that Pat has single-handedly taken on this responsibility. I can't say enough about the dedication Pat has shown to this annual cause. Toys were donated by several organizations including the Boy Scouts, Berwyn Rod and Gun Club, D.A.V. Chapter 7, the S.A.L., the Auxiliary, the American Legion Riders, and our Post. Several individuals donated toys and cash for the purchase of more toys. Most of our lounge area was covered with the more than 1000 toys, including 5 bicycles. Well done, Pat!

It is my sincere wish that all of you have a very healthy, happy, and peaceful New Year.

God Bless You All and God Bless America.

Dick Lanham
Commander

Bowie Interfaith Food Pantry.

The Post has been a longtime collection point for items for the Bowie Interfaith Food Pantry. The collection box always has some extra space in it for your donations. Please bring non-perishable boxed or canned goods. Look for the white Rubbermaid container in the lounge area.

Monthly Meeting Schedule

- SAL Squadron 66 2nd Monday
- Post 66 Executive Committee 2nd Wednesday
- Auxiliary Unit 66 3rd Wednesday
- Post 66 - Membership 4th Wednesday
- American Legion Riders 4th Thursday

All Meetings Begin Promptly at 7:30 p.m.

JANUARY and FEBRUARY 2008 POST 66 HAPPENINGS**ORGANIZATIONAL MEETINGS**

Wednesday	January 9th	Executive Committee Meeting; 7:30 p.m.
Monday	January 14th	S.A.L. Meeting; 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday	January 16th	Auxiliary Meeting; 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday	January 23rd	General Membership Meeting; 7:30 p.m.
Thursday	January 24th	American Legion Riders Meeting; 7:30 p.m.
Monday	February 11th	S.A.L. Meeting; 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday	February 13th	Executive Committee Meeting; 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday	February 20th	Auxiliary Meeting; 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday	February 27th	General Membership Meeting; 7:30 p.m.
Thursday	February 28th	American Legion Riders Meeting; 7:30 p.m.

DINNERS AND SUCH

Friday	January 4th	Steak/Shrimp Night - Honor Guard; 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Friday	January 11th	Friday Night Dinner - Auxiliary; 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Saturday	January 12th	Shrimp Night; 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Friday	January 18th	Friday Night Dinner - S.A.L.; 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Friday	January 25th	Friday Night Dinner - Honor Guard; 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Friday	February 1st	Steak/Shrimp Night - Honor Guard; 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Friday	February 8th	Friday Night Dinner - Auxiliary; 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Saturday	February 9th	Shrimp Night; 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Friday	February 15th	Friday Night Dinner - S.A.L.; 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Friday	February 22nd	Friday Night Dinner - Honor Guard; 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Friday	February 29th	Friday Night Dinner - Auxiliary; 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

OTHER POST ACTIVITIES

Saturday	January 19th	Chili Cook-off - S.A.L.; entries by noon, judging at 1:00 p.m., and eat afterwards.
Friday	February 8	Valentine's Dance - S.A.L.; 8:00 p.m. to 12:00 Mid-night
Tuesday	Every Week in Jan. and Feb.	Sandwich Night - S.A.L.; 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Sunday	Every Week in Jan. and Feb.	Post Turkey Shoots and Auxiliary Breakfasts; orders for Breakfasts start being taken at 7:30 a.m. and the Turkey Shoots start at 9:00 a.m.
Holidays and Celebrations	Throughout the Month in Jan. and Feb.	Federal Holidays are January 21st and February 18th. Celebrations are Mardi Gras on February 5 and Valentine's Day on February 14.

Check the calendar on the Post website or contact the Post for the most up-to-date information

Auxiliary Unit 66



Happy New Year to all Liberty Belles and Ringlets. 2008 is upon us and Unit 66 is ready to "rock n roll" and move forward in this new year.

Our poppy lady, Brenda, is making great strides in getting donations for the poppies and has reached her goal of \$300.00 before 2007 year's end. She will be continuing in her efforts to raise monies with the poppies so if you see Brenda, stop, make a donation for a Poppy, and help a Vet.

The first taco night was very successful. February 29th is the next scheduled night. Laura and her crew do a wonderful job so come on out and have a wonderful meal, a relaxing margarita, and enjoy an evening at the Post.

With the passing of Anna

Thompson, the Unit suffered a GREAT loss not only as our Treasurer, but also as a long time devoted member of the Auxiliary. She will be greatly missed. She has left some very big shoes to be filled and the Auxiliary will be working hard to accomplish all that Anna did for Unit 66 and the entire American Legion Auxiliary.

The first step was to find a person to serve as the Treasurer and at our November meeting, Susan Beckwell was voted in as Treasurer. Congratulations to Susan.

The Auxiliary dinners are doing well this year. They are the second Friday of each month. Each month there is a different meal being served and our members are doing an excellent job in preparing the meals. So take a night off from the

kitchen and come on up and enjoy the meal offered by the Auxiliary. Remember to sign up by the Wednesday before the dinner

A reminder that unwanted cell phones are still being collected. If you have a cell phone you no longer use or want you may place it in the donation box that is located at the far wall by the bar.

Don't forget that we are always looking for new members to join us. New members mean new ideas and energies that can benefit not only our unit but also the entire Auxiliary. Membership applications are kept behind the bar.

Judy Williams
Secretary, Auxiliary Unit 66

S.A.L. Squadron 66



Happy New Year! Hopefully the last few weeks of 2007 left everyone enjoying the company of family and friends. It probably also left some of us with a few extra pounds. Not to worry, there will be plenty of calorie burning snow shoveling ahead, unless of course, you were the winner of our snow blower raffle. Thanks to all who bought tickets and even though we didn't win, it doesn't mean we can't bribe the winner with free drinks for driveway clearing! Also, a special thanks goes out to Chuck Flinn who donated this year's tree for the first annual

Blue Star Tree lighting for families of service men and woman serving, past or present.

Friday night dinners are in full force every third Friday of the month through May. The menu includes "half-baked chicken", mashed potatoes with gravy, a veggie, and a roll. If once a month just doesn't cut it for you, sandwich night is held from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. every Tuesday through April 29th. There are lots of items to choose from, so come hungry and try them all!

Here's one tip guaranteed to keep you warm during the cold winter

months. Come to our events! We will be holding our annual Chili Cook-off on January 19th. There is a hot and mild category with awards for the top three winners in each group. Chili entries should be brought to the Post at 12:00 Noon. Judging will begin at 1:00 p.m. followed by eating. An entry sheet will be at the Post. Cost to eat is \$5.00 per person and tickets will be available at the door. Bring your own Beano!

Our Valentine's Dance will be held on Friday, February 8th

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American Legion Riders



Well, our ride season is over. For those of us who don't have garages, and who are fair weather riders, our bikes have been put into storage and we are waiting for warmer weather. While some of the bikes may have been put up for the winter, we have still been busy.

- We rode in the parade for the 25th anniversary of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Wall.
- We participated in the Veterans Day ceremony at Bowie Veterans Memorial Park.
- We had a successful raffle with our Support the Troops blanket which was won by our own Susan Beckwell who donated it to one of our wounded soldiers at Walter Reed. The monies we raised with this raffle will help with the charities we support.
- We provided financial help and supported the activities of the Post's Blue Star Christmas Tree.
- We supported Operation Christmas Tree operated by the Armed Forces Foundation by purchasing seven Christmas trees. Each is a 2-foot potted tree with lights and ornaments. These trees were shipped to our troops serving overseas in Iraq.

- We have been running a 50-50 at the Sunday Turkey shoot to increase our funds so that we can donate more to the charities we will support next year.
- We are currently working on our ride schedule for next year.

On behalf of all Post 66 American Legion Riders, I would like to thank all members of Post 66 for supporting us in our efforts this past year. We could not have contributed or participated as much as we did had it not been for the help of all members of the Post, whether by encouragement, by participating in our raffles, or purchasing 50-50's.

We hope that you had a good Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, and that 2008 will be prosperous for all.

Tom Atkins
Director

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from 8:00 p.m. until 12:00 Midnight. A DJ will provide the tunes for you and your Valentine to dance to. Tickets are \$10.00 per person. Finally, one last event to keep in mind is our annual Bull and Oyster Roast. The Bull and Oyster Roast will be held on March 8th. Details will be available at the Post as the event nears.

A reminder that our monthly meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Also, you should have your 2008 membership card by now. If not, it's time to pay those dues!

On a more somber note, the S.A.L. lost Dave Maxwell, one of its long time members, on December 4, 2007. Dave served as Commander of the S.A.L. multiple times during his membership here at Post 66, before I ever really started getting involved. Dave continued to support the S.A.L. over the years and enjoyed helping out with our annual car show. At our last show in September 2007, Dave was at his usual place, helping me at the registration table. I think he kept things more organized than I did. He and his help will surely be missed.

James S. Clark III
Commander

Pavilion Volunteers - Thank You!

The entire Post owes a debt of gratitude to the following dedicated volunteers who worked so hard during the month of August to build our beautiful new pavilion. They are listed below in no particular order.

Don Suloman; Tom Murphy; Ron Sullivan; Roger Goll; Jim Vane; Bob LaMountain; Nick Muller; Pete Chambers; Brian Frye; Lois Van Sickle; Joyce Suloman; John O'Toole; Joe Clark; Skip Powell; Darby McNeil; Flickie Martin; John DeGregory; Junior Martin; Sam Clark; Ron Cole; Rich Hill; and Dan Healy.

American Legion Post 602, Spring City, Pennsylvania - Don G. Suloman; John Case; Dan Platt; Blaine Seponski.

This new pavilion will stand for years as a testament to the spirit of volunteerism that is so prevalent at Post 66. We appreciate all of their hard work and sweat which resulted in the savings of approximately \$20,000.00 to the Post.

Blue Star Service Banners

There are few causes more important to those of us in The American Legion, than supporting our military and their families, both during and after times of war. One way we show our support is through the free distribution of Blue Star Service Banners that celebrate and honor the families of America's service men and women.

Ninety years ago, Army Capt. Robert L. Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry had two sons serving in Europe. He wanted to show his pride in what his sons were doing, so he designed a simple banner consisting of a white field surrounded with a red border. On the white field, up to five blue stars would be placed to indicate the number of family members that were serving in the war theater.

The following was read into the Congressional Record by an Ohio Congressman on Sept. 24, 1917: "...the Mayor of Cleveland, the Chamber of Commerce and the Governor of Ohio have adopted this service flag. The world should know of those who give so much for liberty. The dearest thing in all the world to a father and mother - their children."



During World Wars I and II, Blue Star Service Banners were widely displayed but soon fell out of favor. After September 11, 2001, The American Legion pledged to rekindle the spirit of pride in our military by providing Blue Star Service Banners to the families of active duty members.

The Blue Star Service Banner is displayed in the front window of a home and shows a family's pride in their loved one's service to this Country to include the National Guard and Reserves on active service. It also acts as a reminder to the community that preserving America's freedom and way of life, demands sacrifice from not only the service person, but their family as well.

If you would like a Blue Star Service Banner, please provide us with your address and phone number, and the names(s) of the family member(s). A Post Officer will deliver the Blue Star Service Banner to your home.

A special Blue Star Service Banner Corporate Flag is available for companies that have employees that have been called to active duty.

Richard Beckwell
Judge Advocate

Merry Christmas to Maryland National Guard Members

On December 1st, members from Detachment 3, Headquarters/Headquarters Company, 29th Infantry Division, Laurel Armory, and their families, came to Disney Bell Post 66 to enjoy a holiday banquet that also welcomed home members returning from duty overseas. Acting Sergeant Major Richard Linden said that an activity such as this has not been done in several years and his troops were excited about it. SSG Samara Scheckman arrived a couple of hours early with a dozen fellow soldiers to decorate the hall with lights and festive table decorations.

Post Commander Dick Lanham conducted the opening ceremonies with an introduction of the MDNG command staff that included Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence Horlamus, Commander, Maryland Division Detachments; Lieutenant Colonel Donald Vogus, incoming G-2; Major Christopher French, acting G-2; Sergeant Major

Edward Siebold, returning G-2 Sergeant Major; and Master Sergeant Richard Linden, acting G-2 Sergeant Major. Following the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance, Commander Lanham explained the meaning of the items placed upon the POW/MIA table that was in front of the dais. Afterwards, 1st Vice Commander Ryan offered the assemblage the use of 45 blue ornaments and invited everyone to place a decoration on the Blue Star Memorial Tree in memory of a family service person, past or present.

Commander Lanham was given a plaque that expressed the gratitude of Det.3, HHC, 29thID, to Disney-Bell Post 66, for the use of the hall, and our assistance in coordinating the event.

Richard Beckwell
Judge Advocate

Toys for Tots

Thanks to all who participated, and donated to this most worthy project.



Daytona 500 Party

Join us for a great time of fun, food, and racing at the Second Annual Post 66 Daytona 500 Party to support American Legion Racing, Team Johnson Motorsports and the 76 Freedom Car. This year, we will be part of a Nationwide effort to promote Legion racing as Legion Posts throughout the Country will be hosting parties in this fund raising event.



Tickets are only \$30.00 and include: draft beer, reduced drink prices, continuous buffet table, cash prize drawings every 25 laps, door prizes, and much more. There will be raffles for great prizes, racing pool tabs, 50/50, pools and much more. Also, as part of a promotion for Eagle Vision cleaning products (a team co-sponsor), chances will be sold for a Daytona Party pack that includes over \$200.00 worth of merchandise PLUS an opportunity to win a 2007 Chevrolet Monte Carlo with the 76 Freedom Car paint scheme. Now how cool is that?

The party will begin at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 17, 2008, and end at the checkered flag. Tickets will go on sale at the Post on January 1, 2008. Last year, everyone had a great time so you don't want to miss this one. Let's Go Racing!

ADULT: A person who has stopped growing at both ends and is now growing in the middle.

Historian/Webmaster Notes

This summer we replaced the large picture collage frames on the back hallway wall with a large glass enclosed bulletin board. We change the pictures on this board often with updates from recent Post events. Take a look the next time you are in the Post and maybe your picture will be displayed.

Our website was first published in the summer of 2001. We now receive about 35,000 hits per month. In plain talk, there are a lot of you (or somebody) looking at our website, so it must be popular.

I will post a web page soon that will list some of the things that we sell, give away, recycle, and need for the Post. We will call it the "General Store" and hopefully it will inform you about some additional opportunities here at the Post. Recently I also posted an updated Veteran's Fact Sheet on the "About Us" page. It is produced by the Census Bureau and has an interesting breakdown of information about the 24 million military veterans in the United States.

Finally a BIG thank-you to my unseen helpers who contribute photographs of Post events. I am not able to be everywhere and I and the Post appreciate the additional photos. During the past couple of months, I would especially like to recognize Linda and Dan Healy, Carol Williams, Skip Powell, Tom Murphy, and June Gray. The website, bulletin board, and our annual scrapbook would not be as complete without this additional help.

Ray Hart
Historian/Webmaster

Help Needed!

The Post supports many GREAT causes. Your help is needed and appreciated.

Oratorical Contest. 2 - 3 individuals are needed to help set the dates and judge the presentations.

Baseball Committee. 3 -5 individuals are needed to start working the 2008 Legion baseball season. They will order equipment, recruit assistant coaches, and attend county and department organizational meetings. Additionally the Post needs to support the team throughout the season.

Scholarship Committee. 3 - 4 individuals are needed to validate the application procedures, set the submission dates, and grade the applications. They will follow up on presentation of certificates and checks to the individual winners.

Youth Shooting Program. We are still looking for someone interested in organizing a youth shooting program (.177 Air Rifle). Crossman and the NRA have support initiatives for these programs which helps to lower initial overhead.

Individuals interested in helping with these important tasks should contact Brian Frye, Executive Committee, Patriotism & Youth Committee. Call the Post at 301-464-9814 and leave a message to contact Brian.

"Senility Prayer"

...God grant me...The senility to forget the people I never liked, the good fortune to run into the ones that I do, and the eyesight to tell the difference." Have a great New Year!

Job Opportunity

(There is no pay but great benefits!)

Our 2003 National Champion, Post 66 Honor Guard, is looking for four to five additional people to join the Post 66 Honor Guard. All members of the Legion family (Post, Auxiliary, S.A.L.) who are at least 18 years old are eligible. No experience is necessary, we will provide training.

The Honor Guard participates in a number of ceremonies and activities. These include Legion ceremonies (Post and District), City of Bowie events, funerals, civic dedications, and others.

Uniforms and ceremonial accessories are provided.

Call the Post at 301-464-9814 and leave a message for Darby McNeill or Nick Muller, and they will promptly contact you to discuss this very important Post activity.

NOTICE

Pursuant to State law enacted by the General Assembly and signed into law by the Governor, effective February 1, 2008, smoking is prohibited anywhere in our Post building. If you wish to smoke, you must step outside to do so.

THIS IS THE LAW.

A BIG Thank You!

Thank you for electing me as the Auxiliary Unit 66 Treasurer. I'll be taking the reins and getting everything into place. I'd like to establish a electronic dialog with the Auxiliary members, and I will add your e-mail address to the membership list.

You can contact me at smbaux66@verizon.net. If you don't have e-mail, you contact me via snail mail sent to 12009 Tulip Grove Drive, Bowie, MD 20715.

See you at the next meeting, if not sooner.

Susan M. Beckwell
Auxiliary Unit 66 Treasurer

Wounded Warrior Visits

The next monthly wounded warrior visit to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, but will be scheduled during January 2008. Please sign up at the bar if you can attend.

We meet at the Post at 11:30 a.m. for a 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. visit.

Also, please donate your gently used books for our soldiers. Bring them to the Post and mark the bag "Walter Reed Visits." We also are collecting toiletries for the families staying at Malone House.

Call Roger Goll at 301-262-8589 for information.

More About Membership Renewals

When is your membership renewal due? The short answer is not later than December 31st of each year. If your membership card does not have 2008 printed on it, you have not renewed. If you have not renewed your membership yet, do it now, the Post will be checking cards for service after January 1st.

We are currently at 81% of our goal for continuing 4-star status. We need an additional 182 members to renew their memberships. Our next goal is to be at 90% by January 15, 2008.

Are you forgetful about membership renewals? Think about a Paid-up-for-Life (PUFL) Membership. You will never have to remember annual dues again.

MS and Military Service

Preliminary evidence suggests that combat veterans could have an increased risk of developing multiple sclerosis (MS). A recent study identified 5,345 cases of MS among U.S. veterans that were deemed "service-connected," and more than 25,000 veterans currently receiving treatment through the Veterans Hospital Administration have been diagnosed with MS. In addition another study found an unexpected, two-fold increase in MS between 1993 and 2000 among residents on Kuwait, which suggests an environmental trigger for MS. The Society based its request for \$15 million through the CDMRP on this and other compelling evidence.

Reprinted from: MS Connection, Volume 2007, Issue 4

President's Day (Third Monday in February)

Until 1971, both February 12 and February 22 were observed as Federal holidays to honor the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (February 12) and George Washington (February 22).

In 1971, President Richard Nixon proclaimed one single Federal holiday, the Presidents' Day, to be observed on the third Monday of February, honoring all past presidents of the United States of America.

Please Note: The Federal statute designates this day as Washington's Birthday, President Nixon issued a proclamation declaring the holiday as "Presidents' Day" in 1971. President Nixon erroneously believed that a Presidential proclamation on the matter carried the same weight as an Executive Order.

Since that change in 1971, the common term has been "Presidents' Day".

Mardi Gras (February/March)

(It takes place at the end of a long carnival season that begins on January 6. The climax is on the day before the Christian season of Lent, called "Shrove Tuesday.")

Mardi Gras, from the French words meaning "Fat Tuesday," combines religious tradition with a carnival or festival to welcome spring.

In 1829, some young men returned to New Orleans, Louisiana, from a visit to Paris. Carrying on a lively French custom, they dressed in costumes and masks and paraded through the narrow streets of the French Quarter of New Orleans. More people joined and followed them until they caught the attention of the ladies of the town, who leaned over their balconies and threw chocolates and kisses to them. From that time on, masked walking parades became fashionable in New Orleans in the spring-time.

The festivals became more organized and elaborate. In 1857, a group of people calling themselves "The Mystick Krewe of Comus" made their way through the streets on floats pulled by horses. One float was carrying the king of the Krewe

on a throne and another carried a devil sitting among flames made from paper and representing hell.

Later, a person of true royal blood found his way into the festival. Alexis Alexandrovich Romanov, the brother of the heir to the Russian throne, visited New York and fell in love with an American actress named Lydia Thompson. He followed her to New Orleans, where the Mardi Gras was being planned. When the planners discovered that a royal person was attending the noisy festivities a float was added for a new king, "Rex."

That year, 1872, set the pattern for the boisterous fashion in which the Mardi Gras is celebrated today. Purple, green and gold became the official holiday colors. The Grand Duke Alexis was surprised and honored to sit on the float and play the role of Rex. Alexis and Lydia probably never even met, but they began a tradition. Rex and his queen are chosen each year to ride on the largest float. They are masked and in costume. Those around the royalty, called "maskers," toss "throw-outs" to the crowd in response to the traditional cry, "Throw me something mister!"

The "throw-outs" are large tin coins, plastic beads and other trinkets.

The holiday had become a full carnival by the time Alexis participated. The word "carnival" comes from the Latin and means "take away the meat." It is a time of merry-making and intense fun because "Fat Tuesday" is the last day that Catholics can eat meat before Lent. "Ash Wednesday" officially marks the beginning of Lent, the forty-day period of fasting before Easter. Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "lengten-tid" (a lengthening time).

Although Mardi Gras in New Orleans may be considered by some a minor version of "carnival" in Brazil and other Latin countries, Americans are no less enthusiastic in having a good time and enjoying themselves to the fullest during the festivities!

It is a Federal holiday in Alabama, Florida, and in eight Louisiana counties.

Shamelessly reproduced from:
<http://stockholm.usembassy.gov/holiday/celebrate/mardi.html>

American Legion
Disney-Bell Post 66
9605 Old Laurel-Bowie Road
Bowie, Maryland 20720

Phone: 301-464-9814
Fax: 301-805-6832
Email: alpost66@comcast.net
Website: www.alpost66.org

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**HAPPY NEW
YEAR!**