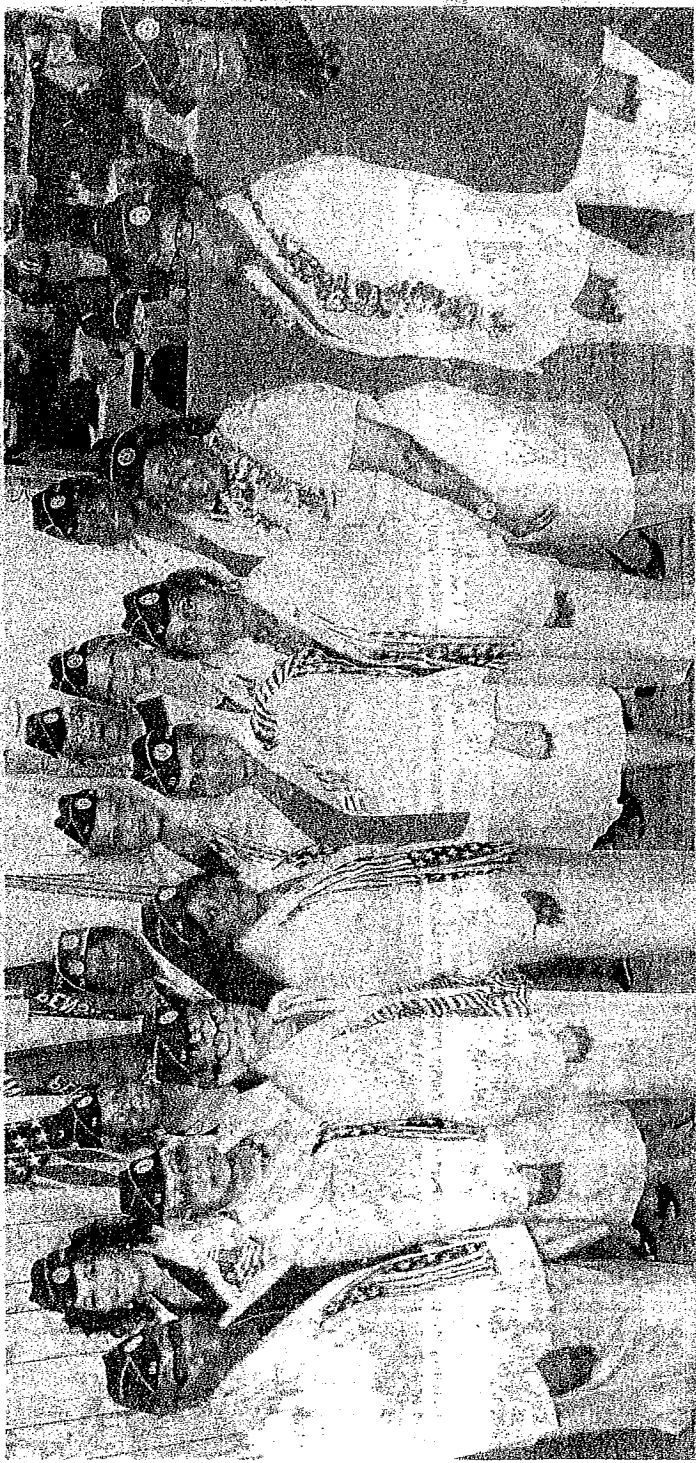


Retired major says Navy is out to destroy Capt. Greg McWherter, 13F

HOMEFRONT

SECTION F

LEAD BY: JIM HAMILTON. PHOTOS BY: GREG McWHERTER. SPECIAL TO THE NEWS JOURNAL



Members and officers of the American Legion Post 193 and Unit 193 Ladies Auxiliary. SPECIAL TO THE NEWS JOURNAL

The power behind the

AMERICAN ★ LEGION ★

By Rob Johnson
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Bessie Bradshaw helps lead a volunteer force that is a tradition at Pensacola's American Legion Post 193, and at other Legion units around the nation.

"The American Legion Auxiliary was formed in 1919 by the wives, the mothers and the grandchildren of the veterans of World War I," said Bradshaw, president of Post 193's female faction.

"Our purpose is to help the legionnaires; we are their right arm," she said.

From encouraging school children to write patriotic essays to collecting and distributing toiletries for homeless veterans, the Auxiliary has a long community outreach. In addition, they supply a certain polish to events such as Christmas and Thanksgiving celebrations.

"They are at the center of everything we do," said Walter Wallace, a Post 193 member and chair of its community relations committee.

ONLINE » PNJ.COM

Most of the Auxiliary's members are the spouses or widows of veterans.

There's clearly a nostalgia factor when they participate in some events, such as the weekly lunches at Post 193 that the women prepare.

"It's a social time. They're so happy. And they look forward to it," said Bradshaw. "Some of them bring their families with them. Just to see their faces is wonderful."

On a recent Tuesday, Bradshaw and three other Auxiliary members were preparing chicken teriyaki, assisted by Wallace, who had made a potato dish.

Bradshaw has been in the Auxiliary



American Legion Post 193 Ladies Auxiliary members Bessie Bradshaw, left, and Olevia Wherry put out food for the Post's weekly luncheon on Tuesday. PHOTO BY TONY GIBERSON/TGIBERSON@PNJ.COM

for more than a decade, since before her late husband, Horace, a Navy retiree, died.

"There's a lot of friendship involved. We're almost like family," said Connie Hendrix, an Auxiliary member since 2000. "I joined under my grandfather. He served in World War II."

The Post 193 Auxiliary typically raises about \$5,000 a year for various charities. One activity that yields the largest share of that income is the November golf tournament. Hendrix said that event may be her favorite activity. "I like charring the golf tournament because you get to mingle with members of other units throughout the area" from Jay to Panama City.

But in every Auxiliary effort, Hendrix said, there's a special mission. "It's all about service to those who served

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AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY AT A GLANCE

MEMBERSHIP

Nearly 1 million women in almost 10,000 American communities.

ELIGIBILITY

Open to wives, sisters, daughters, granddaughters or great-granddaughters of American Legion members or deceased military veterans who served during World Wars I and II, the Korean War,

the Vietnam War, Grenada, Panama or the Lebanon conflicts, or the Global War on Terror. Step-relatives are also eligible.

MISSION

To provide assistance, education and financial support for veterans and their families. To help create a better overall community with a focus on young people.

Source: The American Legion

5 Questions

Lt. Cmdr. Guillermo Patino, a urologist stationed at the Pensacola Naval Hospital since 2012, advocates the use of robotic-assisted prostate surgery to cut down on complications and recovery time. 3F



EDITORIAL

We all should be angry over the number of children getting free or reduced lunches,

VIEWPOINT



It's wrong to blame parents for the failures of Escambia County's School Board,

HOMEFRONT

Auxiliary

Continued » IF

us.” Still, the Auxiliary often doesn't get noticed. The women wear their white uniforms only at ceremonies and sometimes at special events on Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

Each year, on those days, the Auxiliary members are very visible outside supermarkets and at other locations offering red, crepe-paper poppies in return for donations. The flowers are all handmade by veterans as part of their therapeutic rehabilitation. The donations “go directly to assist disabled and hospitalized veterans in our communities,” according to the American Legion's website.

The poppy program's tradition dates back to a line in the poem “In Flanders Fields” written on the battlefield during World War I by Lt. Col. John McCrae.

Auxiliary members at Post 193 pay dues of \$20 a year, and they're subject to strict rules. For example, the Auxiliary's Unit Guide for Florida posts specifies “Appropriate attire for parades.” It states that for the sergeant at arms, “No jewelry is to be worn, except a watch, ring and Auxiliary pin.” Further, “At no time should the Auxiliary pin be used to fasten a scarf, tie, etc.”

Thus the Auxiliary is true to its military roots. Still, some of the organization's rules are gentle, such as the one that cov-ers “reminders” in case a member commits a faux pas during a meeting: “Please remember that we all make mistakes. If, during the course of the meeting, someone makes



As Ladies Auxiliary members Faye Slaughter, left, and Bessie Bradshaw are part of a volunteer force that serves as the “right arm” of the American Legion Post 193 and other units across the country. PHOTO BY TONY GIBERSON/TGIBERSON@PNL.COM

“It’s a social time. They’re so happy ... Just to see their faces is wonderful.”

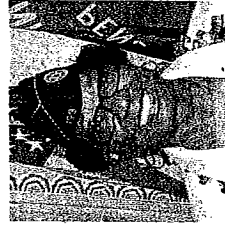
BESSIE BRADSHAW on the weekly lunches for members of Post 193 hosted by the Ladies Auxiliary

a mistake and does not salute the flag properly, passes something between the colors, etc., do not do anything about that at that time to embarrass them. When the meeting is over, politely inform them of their error and explain the correct procedure.”

The Auxiliary also has its standards about the amount of volunteer time expected. At Post 193, each of the 50 or so mem-



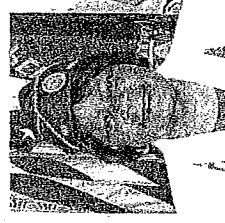
Bessie Bradshaw



Gerrie Bailey



Kathy Collins



Olevia Wherry

tradition, which is personal to most Auxiliary members.

Faye Slaughter has been a member for 15 years. She's a military widow. Her husband served 23 years in the Navy. She just felt comfortable stepping forward to volunteer as part of the Auxiliary. “It makes me feel good. I wanted to do something for my community, and I felt this

would be the best place to do it.”

Among her favorites are working with families in distress at the Ronald McDonald House Charities in Pensacola and helping at the annual “stand down” sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs, at which she offers homeless veterans everything from clean socks to soap.

That effort is typical of

the Auxiliary's roll-up-your-sleeves character. On a recent Tuesday, she was busy in Post 193's kitchen an hour before the weekly noon meal. “It's really not that much work,” she said.

Actually, the Auxiliary's activities do amount to a lot of work, but the members seem to thrive on it.

“I'm proud of what we do,” said Bradshaw.