

# 1921-1945

The initial American Legion Home in Laurel was started in 1921, designated as The Claggett-Johnson Post. Little is known about this Post; records indicate that the Post was rechartered in 1932 and named Laurel Maryland Post 60. However, records indicate the Post assumed a position of importance in the community; it was the largest Post in the Southern Maryland District. The Post received citations for "Distinguished Service", the Safford Cup (1933), the Abbott Membership trophy and a National Citation for Community Service.

An Installation program for November 16, 1933 shows J. Bryan Hobbs as commander with past Post commanders V. Cockey, H.P. May and L. L. Lee in attendance. As noted previously, not much is known of the Post activities. However, records indicate J. Bryan Hobbs election as Department Commander in 1936 which attests to the Posts performance during these years.

Both the old Post and the rechartered Post met in the Laurel Armory. With the onset of World War II a recreational center was established to meet the needs of nearby Fort Meade troops. As a small country town of three thousand, Laurel formed a recreational center at C and Main Streets (now the Laurel Meat Market). This soon proved inadequate and a center was opened at the Laurel Armory on March 22, 1941.

Again, the center proved inadequate for the influx of troops to Fort Meade. A USO Club House was built on the present site of the Post Home and officially opened on January 10, 1942.

The citizens of Laurel and the surrounding area lent their full support to the center and it became a popular place for the new Army recruits and even the local military personnel who came home on furlough.

After the war a significant number of ex-servicemen joined the post and it became apparent that we needed a new Post home. A constitution and bylaws was formed which declared a Board of Directors as lifetime members! This was rewritten under Post Commander Jack Whittaker in 1948. The new constitution and bylaws (with periodic updates) has remained in effect to the present date.

As noted previously the USO home at 2 Main Street was purchased and a permanent residence was established. All types of furniture was needed. Tom Marr (Life Member) was invaluable in his assistance in furnishing the Post home. As an employee of the Surplus Property Disposal facility at Fort Meade Tom aided the Post in obtaining virtually all of the furnishings including a walk-in refrigerator, chairs, tables, kitchen equipment, etc.

It soon became apparent that a reliable source of income was of paramount importance. Twenty-five slot machines were installed under a lease agreement, they were purchased when the Post obtained sufficient funds. They became quite popular; the chairman of the slot committee had so much work to perform he was assisted by other Post members. Notes indicate that the proceeds were emptied into a wheel barrow and wheeled into the office to be counted!

With the additional income the Post was able to purchase the first ambulance used by The Laurel Rescue Squad and hosted affairs to raise funds for a Community swimming pool and other projects. The Post home was used as a meeting place by the Christian Church of Laurel, as a Synagogue by a Jewish group, a Naval Reserve Group, a VFW Post, a DAV Post, and subsequently by the Laurel Boys & Girls Club and Red Cross for blood drives. The Post is also designated as a Disaster Center.

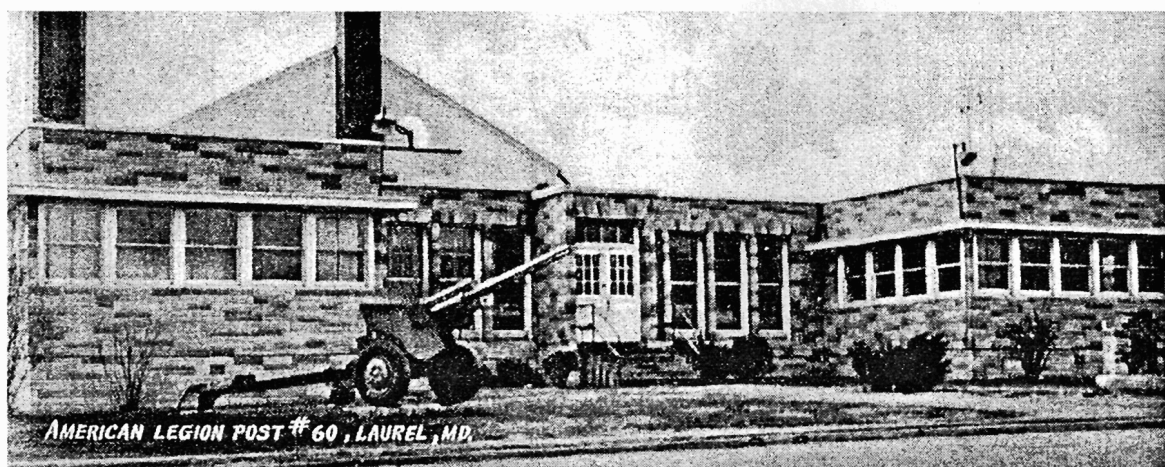
It is further noted that during these years the Post sponsored an extensive athletic program. Equipment was purchased for teams engaged in baseball, basketball, football, bowling and pool. During this period the basketball team of 47-48 were Tri-county champions with Brad Anderson the leading scorer. The football team had several memorable games which were hard hitting and, yes, some injuries! Members S. Warner, W. Castile, C. Stravinski, J. Baker, J. Atcheson, K. Turner, J. Anderson and H. Beall participated. The Junior League baseball team, managed by C. Morton was successful as well

with R. McKittrick, C. Lee, E. Musgrove, and B. Cole listed as finishing the season as runner-up in the Southern Maryland District League.

For the less athletic members there were bowling and pool contests. In addition, during these years the Post sponsored a Sons of The American Legion Squadron, a total of three Boy Scout troops, a Cub Scout Pack and an Explorer Unit. During this period, Laurel Post 60 established itself as an important community asset, a position they have held to this date.

Harry Allen was elected as Post commander for the year 1944-1945. A highlight of this era was a concert in which a band from Greenbelt participated. Speeches were made by Doctor and Mrs. Harlan Randall (Maryland's first President of The American Legion Auxiliary). Performances were given by Brooke Johns (radio entertainer), by Jack Thompson Sr. and Jr., by Buster Flester and his Rythomanians, as well as Gene Saltzberrys Musical Group.

The Post sponsored a Beauty contest to raise funds for the Rheumatic-Fever-Heart campaign which was most successful.





*CDR J. Bryan Hobbs  
1932-1934*



*CDR John Curtin  
1935-1936*



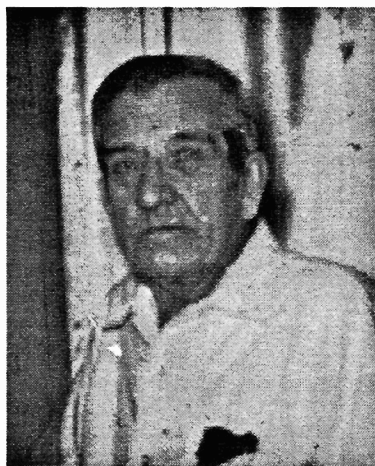
*CDR William McCormick  
1939-1940*



*CDR James Copeland  
1940-1941*



*CDR Charles Hasllip  
1942-1943*



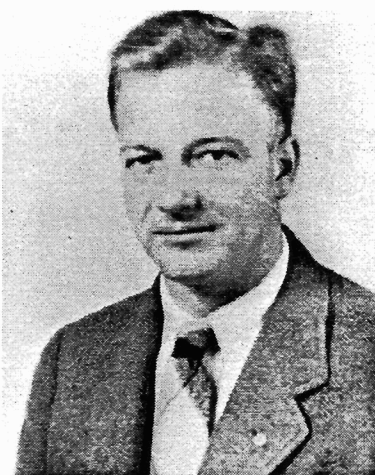
*CDR John Six  
1943-1944*



*CDR Roy Armstrong  
1945-1946*



*CDR Harry Allen  
1946-1947*



*CDR John Whittaker  
1947-1948*

# 1946-1960

Harry was succeeded by W. L. Anderson for the year 1945-1946, and again in 1946-1947. The Post continued to prosper, maintaining its leadership role in community-based activities.

In 1947, Jack Whittaker took the reins as the first World War II veteran to command the Post. Highlights were: a band concert with performances by Jack Thompson Sr. and Jr., Buster Flester and his musical group, Gene Saltzberrys Musical Group, and addresses by Doctor and Mrs. Harlan Randall who was subsequently elected as Maryland's first National President of The American Legion Auxiliary.

During Benjamin Flack's term the Post began a bingo program. It is noteworthy to report that the Post still had slot machines. Therefore the intermission period for bingo was extended so the players could play the machines in addition to playing Bingo!

The Post also hosted The Maryland State Police which featured Colonel Carey Jarman as a featured speaker. The Post hosted a 40 & 8 dance which featured the Charlie Barnet Orchestra. Next was a donkey baseball game with the playing (or lack of playing!) of J. A. Ballenger, Scaggs, Kaiser, H. Smith, C. Morton, H. Lines, K. Clark, J. Mitchell, J. Diggs, W. Leisher and A. Smith. Proceeds went to maintain the Montgomery Street municipal baseball field.

Charles Little commanded the Post during the 1949-1950 period which saw installation of key locks to exclude nonmembers from

entering the Post; this had become a problem that was dealt with immediately. This satisfied requirements of the liquor board and members were issued key cards.

The entertainment calendar featured a showing of "The Nurenberg Trials", an oyster roast (tickets were \$2.00), a Queen of Hearts dance, a bowling tournament and a program on National Defense hosted by Auxiliary members R. Hiatt, F. Nichols, and H. Kidwell. In March, the Post organized a band with F. Tuozzo, G. Stutzman, J. Murphy, B. Flester, F. Gosnell, J. Brady, F. Graziano, A. Harding, J. Harding, W. Gray, L. Hansbrough and D. Bowen. Captain Chester Whiting led the band, performing at Laurel parades and in Annapolis where Governor McKeldon was the principal speaker.

Seven boys were sponsored to Boys State, Ben Elliott was selected as one of the Color Guard which served as President Trumans honor guard at Friendship Airport (now BWI).

Maynard Nelson was the next Commander (1950-1951). The Post hosted a gigantic fireworks display for July where the band performed. In November the Post was burglarized; next we were honored by a visit from National Commander Earl Cocke. He is a World War II Veteran who was wounded during the Battle of The Bulge (nine bullet wounds!)

Post activities included: an open house, a variety show which featured J. Thompson and C. York with a cast of 50, an oyster roast



### *Unit 60 Installation (Date Unknown)*

(\$2.50), a dance with the Charlie Barnett group, fund raiser for an iron lung project and a presentation of the colors by the Post Color Guard at the Laurel Race Course: L. Miles, P. McGee, H. Lines, A. Sumner, M. Nelson and J. Nicholson participated.

Our next commander was Edwin Dove. His tour was highlighted by a Moonlight Cruise on the Potomac (H. Lines is reputed as having invited the town of Laurel as it was a community affair!), another donkey baseball game and an extended Civil Defense program.

Three Boys Staters were chosen; over 200 youths led the parade in Laurel to promote the Youth programs of both the Post and Auxiliary. The Bingo program encountered difficulties in securing help; this was solved by a member securing approval to run the program and give the Post a percentage of the profits.

Next in line was G.R. "Russ" Walters, a member of the Maryland State Police. His staff included J.D. Anderson (Silver Star) and Norman "Bud" Wilson (Bronze Star). This highly decorated staff was instrumental in securing an all-time "4-Star" status not to be equaled for ten years. A TV set was donated to E. Metzger, member who was seriously wounded in a traffic accident. Three youths were sponsored to Boys State. Post 60 was chosen as host for National commander Louis Gough during his visit to Maryland. National Auxiliary President Rae Ashton was also in attendance.

Our next three commanders, Bill Gray, J.D. Anderson and Harry Lines continued the programs that were so successful in the past. Commander Lines was the motivating force behind the basketball, baseball and football