

The Adjutant's Report

By PCC Gabe B. Mui

In April of 2009, near the end of my second term serving as commander of Lt. B. R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291, I was looking forward to a little R&R (rest and relaxation) after the June installation. At that time, my thirty-nine year career at Consolidated Edison was winding down towards my planned retirement. I was no different than any other future retiree, who had a full to-do list that was put off until retirement – things like pursuing travel both domestic and aboard, hobbies such as photography and golfing, enjoying a sunny afternoon on the beach, and tackling many delayed projects around the house.

Somehow, my planned retirement did not follow the course I had laid out. Our long time adjutant Fang A. Wong, who served so distinctly in that capacity, was headed into uncharted territory. He was preparing to run for the high office of National Commander. His upcoming campaign would not allow him the time to tend to daily operations at the Post. Campaigning for National Commander was no small task. Fang would be devoting all his time and effort to the campaign which would require him to travel back and forth across the country. Chairman of the Board Peter Woo, our most respected leader, approached me and encouraged me to step in to fill the adjutant position since I was planning for my retirement anyway. I was a little apprehensive at first and worried about what a big task it would be to be an adjutant of Kimlau Post. With the encouragement and support from our Chairman and the Post's senior leaders, I put aside my long to-do list and humbly accepted the challenge.

Much to my surprise, I did not envision that I would be serving as the Kimlau Post adjutant for the past six consecutive years. Even though some of the projects around the house that I had put off until my retirement are still on my to-do list, and I occasionally yearn for a sunny afternoon at the beach or on the golf course, my time spent during the last few years serving the veterans and the community, promoting patriotism, interacting with the youth and building camaraderie among our fellow members has been a very rewarding experience.

There was so much to do and learn from the beginning. Fortunately, the support from everyone, and especially from our Chairman, made the transition a little easier and made me feel a bit more comfortable in assuming the adjutant position. The first major task at hand was the monumental undertaking of helping Fang with his campaign effort. The "Committee to Elect Fang A. Wong for National Commander" was formed and chaired by then Commander Harvard Tang and Chairman Peter Woo to coordinate the fundraising. Mailings were sent to every member to solicit their support and donate to this historic event. Everyone was working hard to achieve the best result possible to support Fang's endeavor. Thanks to the overwhelming support and generous donations from our members and the Chinatown community, the fundraising was an astounding success. Fang took his oath at the 93rd National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to become the first Chinese-American National Commander of the American Legion, the largest veterans' organization in the country.

The joyous mood of our members still fresh from celebrating Fang's historic achievement soon turned sorrowful when we learned that our incumbent Commander Robert G. T. Chin was seriously ill. He was admitted to Beth Israel Hospital in late September and soon succumbed to cancer. Commander Chin, who was elected Post Commander only a few months before, passed away in the hospital on October 3, 2011. Our post was left without a sitting commander and scrambled to find a suitable replacement. An emergency meeting was called in November and the Post Executive Committee unanimously endorsed the appointment of Post Vice Commander Mimi Wang to succeed Commander Chin. Commander Wang became the first female commander of our post. This is no small feat and it reflected remarkable progression in our post's proud history. Some of our older members still remember a time in the past when females were not invited to any post functions, and now our post was led by a female commander. Commander Wang was elected by post members to serve another two terms from 2012 to 2014. This attests to Commander Wang's ability and devotion to serve.

The world we are living in is constantly changing and we cannot afford to stand still. Things we were doing well and effectively 20 and 30 years ago may not be as effective now. With more and more people utilizing the internet as a main communication tool, our post recognizes the effectiveness and cost savings of disseminating important information to our members in a timely manner through email. In the spring of 2011, we utilized email communications for the first time to keep up with modern times, and encouraged members to go paperless for the environment. We asked members to provide their email addresses to the post and update their existing ones on file. We started to disseminate pertinent information, job opportunities and announcements via email with great results. We realize that since our post still have a significant percentage of members who do not have access to the internet or are not computer savvy, we continue to send out information by mail because it is vital to those members without this technology.

Membership matters and you have often heard the familiar saying that membership is the lifeline of every organization. That saying especially applies to the American Legion. Strong membership will give the Legion a strong voice in advocating benefits for veterans, which they have earned while they served and defended our country. All of us have to do a better job to recruit new members to restore the vacancies of those who are no longer with us. The declining membership throughout American Legion Posts in recent years is alarming. As the count down to the American Legion centennial anniversary celebration is only five years away, national leadership has put in place a Five-year Plan to aggressively recruit and retain members. Our post's strong membership team has been doing a fine job recruiting new members in recent years. In the last few years, the post felt a greater urgency to maintain a satisfactory level of membership due to the departure of World War II veterans, who Tom Brokaw called "The Greatest Generation," at greater frequency. With the protracted Gulf War continuing since 1990, there is an influx of returning Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Iraqi veterans and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Afghanistan veterans to draw from. We have been steadily adding OIF and OEF veterans to our ranks. To date, a third of our membership is comprised of Gulf Wars veterans. We know that we cannot be complacent on the important task of recruiting and retaining members. We must continue to work hard on it all the time.

The Kimlau Post's Scholarship program has been very successful since its reinstatement in 2003. Each year we award eight scholarships of \$500 to post members and the progeny of post members in pursuit of higher education. The scholarship committee members annually select four high school graduates and four college students based on their scholastic achievements and community service credentials. In addition, a special annual award is giving to a graduating student from Cardozo High School in memory of Specialist (SPC) Roger Ling. SPC Roger Ling, a graduate from Cardozo High School, was the first Asian American who died while serving our country during the fight against terrorism in Iraq. The student must demonstrate outstanding scholastic achievements, civic and patriotic contributions to be selected for the award. In 2013, the scholarship committee unanimously approved to increase the number of scholarship recipients by two for a total of ten students. The scholarship committee is considering whether to add more scholarships and/or increase the monetary award in the near future. In 2014, the post added a new scholarship award with great thanks to the family of Robert S. Wong. The Wong family made a \$5,000 donation to the Lt. Kimlau Post scholarship fund in memory of our long time member who had served in WWII. Robert was born in the United States and traveled to Taishan, China, to study Chinese as a child. His family felt the best way to honor him was to encourage young people to not forget their roots and educate themselves in the Chinese language. They requested the scholarship be given to post members and progeny of our members who study Chinese in school. The Post Scholarship Committee Members have established the criteria to award a maximum of five \$100 scholarships annually until the fund is exhausted.

Superstorm Sandy devastated our area and left many towns and villages in ruin. Many people were impacted by the destruction caused by Hurricane Sandy. Transportation and communications in the New York City and the surrounding coastal area were severely disrupted during the storm. The Post Headquarters was without electricity for a few days. Many of our members sustained heavy losses caused by the flood and wind. Our post

joined the efforts organized by the Queens and Richmond Counties Legion Posts by making a monetary donation to help communities in need. The American Legion National Emergency Fund was created to assist legionnaires in rebuilding their homes and lives after natural disasters. The fund has provided help to many Legion members who suffered losses throughout the region. The fund needs to be replenished to continue to be ready to help in future disasters. We actively solicit and encourage our members to contribute to the National Emergency Fund to support this worthy cause.

Over the past few years, our post has tried to find ways for more accommodating to younger members trying to attend post meetings. Understandably, many of them are either busy raising a family, attending schools or have job commitments that would not allow them to be more involved with post functions and meetings. The post, in addition to our regularly scheduled meetings, initiated a once a month meeting at night to make it easier for members who prefer to spend time with family on weekends. The post also committed to work with the U. S. Marines to start the Toys for Tots program. For the past three years, we have distributed over 2,500 toys to underprivileged children in the Chinatown community. In 2012, we adopted a platoon in the 10th Mountain Division for the second time and sent care packages and letters written by local students to them while they were deployed in Afghanistan. We participated in the renaming of a street and honoring Danny Chen who grew up in Chinatown. Danny encountered abuse from his superior of the unit and later committed suicide while serving in the U. S. Army in Afghanistan. We continue to partner with the Presbyterian Downtown Hospital to offer weekly Tai-Chi classes to members and the local community to learn and practice the ancient exercise. Over 600 people have taken advantage of this program since the Tai-chi classes started more than ten years ago. We participated in many local functions including serving on the board of Chinatown Working Group to plan for the future of the Chinatown area. We currently serve as a board member of the Chinatown Business Improvement District (BID), whose main mission is to maintain cleanliness and to advocate for a better Chinatown community for business and residents. In the BID's annual meeting of January 2014, I was honored to be elected as chairman to succeed my fellow legionnaire and the BID's inaugural Chairman David Louie. David chaired the BID in its infancy and guided the BID through two turbulent, yet highly successful years.

It has been a very busy six years and I am grateful for all that has been accomplished. I can't help but feel a sense of pride that I have contributed to the success of the Kimlau Post. As we are preparing to celebrate the Post's 70th anniversary, I have come to realize that all of the accomplishments in the last six years would not have been achieved if not for the foresight, vision, and strong foundation provided by our past leaders. We have to continue to build on the legacy that was passed on to us and be successful for the next seventy years and beyond. We need the younger members to step forward to take on an active role and to carry the torch in the future. With the large group of young veterans joining our ranks in the past few years, I can envision that the future of our Post will be bright and we will continue to be successful.



幹事報告

梅本立

在二零零九年四月，是我當紐約華裔美國退伍軍人會第二任主席將近完滿之時，我存著滿懷希望在六月卸任後能享受盼望已久的休閒及舒暢生活。恰好那時我正在籌劃結束我在紐約愛迪生電力公司三十九年的工作生涯，多年來因工作繁忙及服務退伍軍人會，累積下很多樂此不疲的愛好如出國旅遊或在國內遊山玩水，攝影，打高爾夫球，或簡單地在明媚的陽光下在海灘享受一個休閒的下午及將延擱已久的家裏維修計劃和鎖碎工作預備在退休後有充分時間能達到完成。

但我的退休後休閒計劃並未如我所設想下實行，因為本會黃宏達幹事正密鑼緊鼓地為籌劃他競選全國退伍軍人會主席職位工作忙碌，他將會到全國各州東奔西跑拜會無數的退伍軍人會，實無暇再兼顧幹事職責。軍人會資深伍覺良董事長知道我退休在即，他便徵求我擔任幹事職位，因為幹事責任重大，我起先對接任幹事職責有點猶豫，擔心我才能未必稱職，但經伍覺良董事長及各前任主席的鼓勵和支持，我決定再一次延遲我享受退休後的休閒生活及家裏的一切事務，勉為其難接受幹事職責。

想不到今年是我擔任幹事職位的第六年，這確實是出乎意料。雖然我仍是嚮往能在陽光明媚的海灘渡過休閒的下午或與朋友去玩高爾夫球及做些推延已久家裏的一些事務，但我想到這幾年來服務於退伍軍人會及社區，有機會盡力推進愛國精神，為年青一輩提供指導，鼓勵同袍間互助互愛及暢談往事，實是難能可貴。

萬事起頭難，初當幹事之時的确是千頭萬絮，幸賴獲得伍覺良董事長及各同袍的信任和支持，只好虛心學習，定下決心去征服一切困難，加強信心及全力以赴的去擔當幹事職責。上任後首要任務是為本會前任幹事黃宏達競選全美退伍軍人總會主席職位籌款工作，新組成的「支持黃宏達競選全國退伍軍人會主席委員會」由鄧遐勳主席及伍覺良董事長為主任及主持一切籌款工作。由他們發起及聯絡紐約華埠各僑團的鼎力支持，及發信向本會會員募捐，希望會員慷慨解囊，踴躍樂捐，以襄盛舉。必須各盡全力，募求獲得一個可觀的款項以支持黃宏達競選成功。黃宏達前幹事在明尼蘇達州的明尼阿波利斯市舉行的第九十三屆全國年會獲選為美國退伍軍人總會主席，他成為有史以來的第一位華人當上這個崇高的職位。

但是好景不長，在各會員為黃宏達晉升為全國退伍軍人總會主席而興高彩烈的時候，卻得到了本會陳東東主席患病的消息。陳東東主席因患腦瘤及肺癌在九月下旬進入以色列醫院治療，他在十月三日因病重不治與世長辭。陳東東主席剛就任才幾個月便不幸逝世，本會立即成為群龍無首，各會員在哀痛之餘，設法去找一位合適人選替代主席職位。本會執行委員會成員遵循本會章程在十一月的緊急執行委員會一致通過由副主席王咪咪繼任為本會主席。王咪咪主席是本會有史以來第一位女性主席。在一些記憶猶新的年長會員來說，本會由一位女性執掌主席一職真有點不可置信。他們仍想像到不久之前，本會從不邀請女性家眷參加軍人會的一切活動，這確證本會一視同仁及顯示了王咪咪主席的才能並深得執行委員會的信任。王咪咪主席不但成功地完成二零一一年的主席任務，她還獲選為二零一二至二零一四年兩任主席，這足以表證王主席的才幹及她對本會的貢獻和服務精神。

由於時代不斷的轉變及改進，在过去二十或三十年辦事有效的措施未必仍是現今最高效率的辦事規則，電郵已受到社會廣泛的採用。有一些機構更以電郵為其維一的通訊方法。電郵的聯絡效率快捷及能節省郵費亦是其接受歡迎最重要的原因。在二零一一年，本會首次試用以電郵方式與會員通訊，並鼓勵會員以環保為懷，節省紙張，盡快將電郵地址寄到本會及核對本會記錄已存有的電郵地址。本會以電郵方式將會務，求職訊息，會員啓事等與會員持續通訊，效果非常理想。本會知道不是每一位會員都享用電郵，所以仍繼續以美國郵政寄出會務通訊。

無論那一個機構或團體能擁有持久的存在，必需要不停地吸收新會員。這對美國退伍軍人會更為重要，因為有龐大的會員人數，影響力增高，向政府爭取退伍軍人為國服務而應得的福利的成數較高。所以我們每一個人都應各盡其力，招募新會員來補替那些先逝的同胞。近年來美國退伍軍人軍會會員人數下降，實是非常令人擔憂。總會極力呼籲各分會努力招募新會員及設法保留舊會員，特別建立及推展五年會員計劃，希望能在五年後的美國退伍軍人會成立百週年紀念慶典時達到理想會員人數。本會因為各會員同心合力，對招募新會員頗有所成。但近年來要維持理想的會員人數受到很大的壓力，那是因為被曾任美國國家電視公司的長期新聞主播湯姆·布羅考稱為「最偉大的一代」的第二次世界大戰同胞先逝劇增所致。自一九九零年持久的伊拉克及阿富汗戰爭，這兩個戰爭引至不少愛國青年奮勇從軍為自由及反恐而戰，捍衛國家，他們是招募為新會員最好對象。本會亦極力招募這一批年青的新會員，至今本會已有三成以上的會員是參戰伊拉克及阿富汗兩個戰爭。我們雖然對招募新會員稍有小成，却絕不能因此而感到自滿，仍需繼續努力，募求得到更好的成績。

本會獎學金自二零零三年復辦後，每年頒發八名五百元獎學金給成績優秀高中畢業生及大學一至四年級學生以鼓勵及表揚會員，伴侶及兒孫勤奮向學。本會為紀念凌志騰戰士，他是第一位來自美國東岸的華人在伊拉克為國捐軀，為了表揚凌志騰戰士效忠國家精神，特設立凌志騰戰士獎學金，每一年頒發給一名凌志騰戰士母校的高中畢業生。得獎者必須具有優越的成績及顯示其愛國精神及對社區服務貢獻。獎學金委員會在二零零三時一致認同及通過增設兩名五百元獎學金，而且將會在短期內研究增加每一名的獎學金款額。本會除了每年頒發十名五百元獎學金，在二零零四年因獲得已故會員司徒旺家人捐贈五千元，本會首次增設五名一百元的司徒旺中國文化獎學金。已故第二次世界大戰會員司徒旺，生於美國，幼時曾回中國讀小學以增長中文學識，其家人為紀念他對中國文化的愛好，特要求本會設立獎學金以鼓勵軍人子弟努力實習中國文化。本會獎學金委員會議決後定下申請司徒旺中國文化獎學金規則及到五千元用盡為止。

百年罕見超級颶風「桑迪」侵襲美東各州，導致嚴重破壞及損傷，風災後遭洪水入侵，海面颳起巨浪，東河和哈德遜河及長島近海地區水位急漲，引致氾濫，交通癱瘓，通訊停頓，數以百萬計的住戶停電，本會會址大樓也停電數日，不少會員的住屋也受到洪水及暴風損壞。本會體念災情嚴重，遭受暴風雨吹襲而受害的民眾極需援助，本會立刻響應皇后區及史丹頓島退伍軍人會發起的風災籌款救助災民，捐款給皇后區及史丹頓島退伍軍人會由他們代交災民。美國退伍軍人總會一向設立有緊急救濟基金，專為退伍軍人們遇到天然災害時援助他們重建家園。這次受害的退伍軍人求助於美國退伍軍人總會緊急救濟基金，得到援助的亦為數不少。因此美國退伍軍人總會緊急救濟基金極需填補，以備在下次遇到災害時能夠再為退伍軍人提供援助。本會亦積極地懇求各位會員以慈悲為懷，救災為念，樂意捐款補充美國退伍軍人總會緊急救濟基金。

在過去數年來，本會一直在尋求更好方法能增強與年青會員聯絡及提供有關本會近況以便增加會員參與本會的一切活動及會議。由於年青會員如非因工作繁忙，或求學上進，或教兒育女，無暇參與會務，所以本會特舉辦了一項每月一次的晚上會員聚會。這晚上會員聚會並不是替代了本會每季的會員大會，而只是為會員提供一個機會以便他們瞭解本會的近況及會務。本會另與美國海軍陸戰隊合作分發兒童玩具，在過去三年來，我們已經分發了二千五百兒童玩具給華埠鄰近的貧窮小孩。在二零一二年本會再一次認領調派阿富汗參戰的一排第十山地師。本會義工們為慰勞戰士，購買零食及日用品，收集小學學生繪寫的生日卡寄給這些正在為反恐及保衛自由的戰士們，感謝他們為國服務。本會極力支持及參與將陳宇暉長大的伊利沙白街一段街道命名為陳宇暉街。陳宇暉是在阿富汗參戰時受到上司及戰友的極端欺凌及非法虐待而引致在悲傷及絕望的情緒下殞命。本會繼續與紐約長老會下城醫院合作舉辦太極班，這十多年來，已有超過六百多名會員和社區人士在本會練習太極拳，他們因此而能強身健體，受益不淺。本會一向對服務社區是不甘後人，凡是有利於社區之事，本會一定踴躍參與。我們是華埠工作小組董事會成員之一，華埠工作小組專長是研究及策劃華埠鄰近區域的改進及保全富有歷史性的樓宇計劃。本會亦是華埠商業改進區董事會成員之一，華埠商業改進區是以清潔街道及促進社區繁榮為宗旨，舉辦各種活動及美化華埠，使居民安居樂業。在二零一四年一月華埠商業改進區年會，我辱蒙愛戴被選為新一屆的董事長，繼承同袍雷光達董事長的職位。雷光達是華埠商業改進區第一位董事長，他領導有方，貢獻良多，使華埠商業改進區兩年來的運作非常成功。

我慶幸在六年的繁忙中能做到不少有利於退伍軍人會的大小事項，想到六年來能盡一己所能和誠懇地為退伍軍人會服務及為會務的進展效勞，不禁感到一點自豪與安慰。當我們預備慶祝本會成立七十週年之時，我領略到本會過去六年來的成就，毫無疑問如果不是前賢具有過人的遠見及他們建下的堅實宏厚基礎是絕對不能達到的。我們應繼續努力為本會服務，體諒前人創業艱辛，各盡所能為退伍軍人會續創輝煌的一頁。本會極需年青會員來補充我們的行列，這群青年人充滿活力及鬥志，必能為本會創造新的理念。幸好年青的一輩源源不絕的參加本會，我深信這些年青的會員定能繼續為本會發揚光大，這豈不令我為本會前途感到欣慰。

