

2007-2009 Commander Report

By PPC Gabe B. Mui (梅本立)

It was an honor and privilege to have served as commander of the Lt. B. R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291. In my tenure, LY2007-2009, there were many difficult tasks to perform and many rewarding moments to savor. I was fortunate enough to have a hard working team that was capable of helping me to carry out my duties and responsibilities. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the officers who dedicated themselves in serving the Post, the veterans and our community.

There were fond memories and exciting times when I served as commander. There seemed to be countless number of events and happenings that required my attention and participation. Just to name a few, the post collaborated with the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) to raise relief funds for the earthquake victims in Sichuan, China. The American Legion National Commander, Marty Conatser, made a visit to our Post. We installed a new security monitoring system to better protect our Post and the building. I was honored at the Chinese Center on Long Island's Annual Honoree celebration. Later that same year, I was honored by Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi and received the Nassau Meritorious Award. We also worked closely with various city agencies on the Kimlau Square redevelopment project to ensure pedestrian safety and a better traffic flow pattern. The Post was also graced with a visit by the widow of General Chennault, a WWII hero and the leader of the famed 14th (Flying Tigers) Air Force. Our post members attended the 25th Anniversary Celebration for the Department Adjutant, Richard Pedro. He received recognition for his long and distinguished service to The American Legion Department of New York.

During my first year, in conjunction with the National Convention at Reno, Nevada, we organized a weeklong bus trip for over fifty people (Legion, Auxiliary, SAL, family and friends) to tour nearby national parks and other scenic places. We also arranged to visit The American Legion Cathay Post 384 in San Francisco, California to renew our friendship with our fellow veterans. The warm welcome we received from Cathay Post Past Commander Bok Pon, Commander Dale King, and other officers/members was truly a great example of what the American Legion stands for. They welcomed us to their post and honored us with a banquet style dinner. The ensuing discussions left us with a sense of camaraderie and a promise to continue to work closely together in the future to advance our mutual causes for Chinese-American veterans.

In October 2007, Captain Wilem Wong, a member of our Post informed me that his unit, HHC, 353rd Civil Affairs Command (CACOM), would soon be deploying to Iraq. Civil Affairs Units are used to reestablish the basic and essential services to the local community or affected areas after the destruction of fighting during an insurgency. Their main task is to restore a normal quality of life to the locals by helping set up the necessary infrastructure so the government can function effectively. The unit was preparing for a pre-deployment family day to brief the soldiers and their families on how to cope with a family member's deployment to battle in Iraq. Without hesitation, our Post adopted the unit to provide assistance to the soldiers and their families during their deployment and also agreed to be a major sponsor of the family day event. I attended the family day event in Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn along with several officers. The family day event activities were presided over by Brigadier General Sands, the Commanding General of the HHC, 353rd CACOM. As part of the ceremony, we distributed Blue Star Banners to the soldiers in appreciation of their services and wished them all a safe return home.

In November 2007, we were honored to have the General Richard Cody, Army's Vice Chief of Staff (VCSA), visit our Post. General Cody is the second highest ranking Four-Star General Officer in the Army. He came to our Post to address some new changes by Congress that would affect thousands of active service members. General Cody recognized the increasing importance of the Reserve and the National Guard units. He said the repeated deployment of these units puts a heavy burden on what he called the Citizen-Soldiers and their families. He emphasized that our Nation must do our best for them. He thanked the men and women in uniform and the American Legion for their continued support. The post was honored to have the VCSA visit and share his vision of the Army's future.

In February 2008, our Post was once again invited to participate in the Chinese Lunar New Year celebration by the then Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao, in Washington D.C. We were grateful for Secretary Chao's invitation and her continued support and respect for Chinese-American veterans. In addition to the Chinese New Year invitations, Secretary Chao also invited the Post to the Department of Labor for the unveiling of her portrait when she stepped

down from her position as the U.S. Secretary of Labor.

In May 2008, it was an incredible honor to receive an invitation to the celebration of the Asian-Pacific Islanders Heritage Month at the White House in Washington D.C. Edward Chin, Jia M. Wu and I were invited to represent Chinese-American veterans from our area to join President George Bush, Jr. and other distinguished Asian-Pacific community leaders for the celebration. In President George Bush's speech, he praised the long history of Asian-American contributions to our country. This was an extraordinary event and we were excited to have a chance to be a part of it.

At the 90th American Legion National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona (August 2008), we ran into members of the Phoenix Chinese-American Post. They invited us to a nice luncheon with their families, where we were joined by General Cha, Secretary General of the Republic of China Veteran Affairs Commission, and his staff. Friendships were rekindled and many heartfelt exchanges were passed amongst the Post members.

The Post adopted a platoon of the 10th Mountain Infantry Division in 2009, when the whole unit was deployed to Afghanistan. The 10th Mountain Division is stationed at Fort Drum, in Watertown, New York. Members of the Post prepared and sent care packages containing candy, books, magazines, and non-perishable goods to the soldiers while they were in Afghanistan. The Post also coordinated with two schools in Chinatown (3rd and 4th grade students) to write letters of appreciation and draw patriotic pictures for the soldiers and included these items with the care packages. The unit returned back to the States in January 2010. Major Corbari came to the Department's mid-winter conference in Albany, New York, to give the Legionnaires attending the conference an update of the unit's functions in Afghanistan and show his appreciation for the care packages with kind words to our Post.

In conclusion, the two years I spent as the Commander of the Lt. B. R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291 were truly amazing and worthwhile. A lot of great things were achieved and accomplished with the help and support of the officers and the members of this post. In the quest to expand the roles and opportunities available for veterans, I take with me many fond memories and many new friendships. I have been inspired by the leaders of this country and all the people I have met. During those two years, I have helped this Post reach new limits, helped our veterans and served our community. I look forward to continuing to serve the veterans of this great nation and the Chinese-American community.

