

The American Legion at Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026

BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBIN OLDS POST TH01



American Veterans in Thailand Helping Veterans & Their Families
Since 2015

7th
WAR LOAN

NOW • ALL TOGETHER

The American Legion at Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand

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BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBIN OLDS POST TH01

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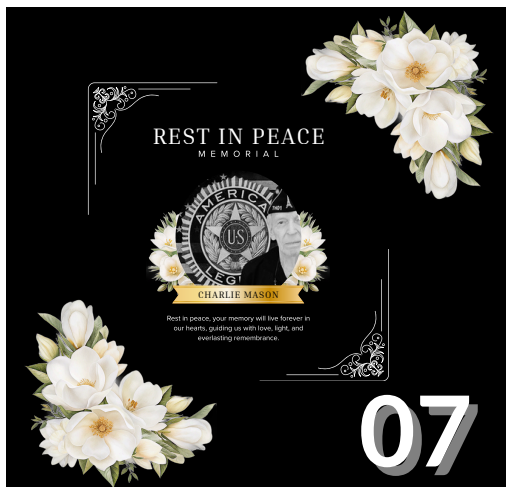
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THAI CHILDREN'S DAY!



Connect with and find more resources from Post TH01 at

AmericanLegionThailand.com

This newsletter is for American veterans, spouses and dependent children that are living in Thailand and elsewhere to keep up with current Post news.

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE



For God and Country



John Skabry Commander

Dear Members and Comrades,

This month, I had the pleasure of taking the lead in representing Post TH01 during a meeting with newly appointed U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, Sean O'Neill.

In attendance were leadership representatives from Post TH02 Pattaya, VFW Post leadership, and representatives from the Asia Miracles Rehabilitation Center. The meeting was productive and focused on issues directly impacting American veterans and citizens living in Thailand.

VA Services and the Foreign Medical Program (FMP)

We discussed access to Department of Veterans Affairs services overseas, particularly the Foreign Medical Program. Topics included enrollment procedures, reimbursement clarity, and improving awareness for veterans residing in Thailand.

APO and Diplomatic Mail Systems

Questions were raised regarding eligibility, limitations, and proper access to APO and diplomatic mail systems for qualifying individuals and organizations.

Social Security Services

We addressed access to Social Security facilities and support for Americans living abroad, including ways to improve communication and

administrative navigation for retirees.

Immigration and Visa Matters

Discussion included visa restrictions, documentation requirements, and issues affecting American families and mixed-nationality households.

Military Honors and Repatriation of Remains

We also discussed procedures surrounding military honors funerals in Thailand and the repatriation of human remains to the United States. Ensuring dignity, respect, and clarity in coordination between families, veteran service organizations, and U.S. authorities remains a priority for our community.

Discontinuation of Embassy Outreach Programs

We discussed the recent discontinuation of certain U.S. Embassy outreach programs due to low participation from American citizens (AMCITs), even as the estimated American population in Thailand has grown from approximately 80,000 to 100,000. This highlights the need for stronger engagement within our community to ensure these valuable services continue.

America 250 Celebrations

Planning efforts are underway across the Kingdom to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026. We discussed opportunities for strong veteran community participation and coordination in these historic celebrations.



For God and Country

Post Outreach Update – Khon Kaen

Our next outreach will be held in Khon Kaen at the home of Comrade Mark Faralli.

This outreach function is conducted in coordination with Karl Richter Post 10217 of the VFW in Clarion, Thailand. This marks our fourth consecutive year having the honor of representing Post TH01 in providing children with much-needed cleft palate surgery, giving them not only corrective medical care but a renewed chance at life.

There will be more information on this event in First Vice Commander Ted Potyrala's news article.

The continued success of this initiative reflects

the dedication of our members and our commitment to service beyond our own veteran community.

DPAA Recovery Mission – Lampang Province

Next week, thanks to the generous invitation of DPAA Deputy Commander and Post TH01 Comrade Major Brian Wagner, I will be attending recovery efforts in Lampang Province to help locate the remains of a World War II P-38 pilot in a remote area.

I will be joined by Assistant Service Officer Comrade Michael Cook, Comrades Joe Sowell, Dang Ooppanan, and family members. This mission reflects the ongoing commitment to accounting for those who never returned home and honoring their service and sacrifice.

POST OFFICER ELECTIONS

Post officer elections are rapidly approaching, and several officers have indicated they will not be seeking office next term.

Our Post is currently at 106% membership and building strong momentum. This is the ideal time for fresh energy and new leadership to continue moving the Post forward.

POST ADJUTANT



PAUL BEN-YEHUDA

As members of the American Legion, we are dedicated to serving our country and supporting our fellow veterans. However, our duty extends beyond our service time; it also includes planning for the future and ensuring that our wishes are respected, particularly when it comes to health care decisions. One vital document that every member should consider is a living will.

A living will, also known as an advance directive, is a legal document that outlines your preferences regarding medical treatments in situations where you may no longer be able to communicate your wishes. This document becomes especially significant in critical scenarios, such as terminal illness or incapacitation due to injury or illness. The importance of having a living will cannot be overstated, especially for veterans and their families.

Why a Living Will is Essential

- 1. **Voice Your Choices:** The primary purpose of a living will is to ensure that your medical treatment preferences are known. It allows you to specify whether you would like life-sustaining measures such as mechanical ventilation, resuscitation, or feeding tubes in case of a medical emergency. For many, the thought of prolonged suffering or being kept alive by artificial means is distressing. A living will allows you to express your choices clearly.
- 2. **Relieve Family Burden:** Making critical health decisions for a loved one during a crisis can be incredibly stressful for family members. By having a living will in place, you relieve your family of the burden of making difficult choices about your care. It provides them with clear guidance and reassurance that they are honoring your wishes.
- 3. **Legal Protection:** A living will is a legally binding document in most states, and jurisdictions providing legal clarity and ensuring that your wishes are respected by healthcare providers. As members of the American Legion, many of us have faced complicated bureaucracies; a living will can help avoid additional challenges

in the healthcare system.

- 4. **Encourage Discussions:** Creating a living will often prompts important conversations with family members about end-of-life care and preferences. This open dialogue can lead to a better understanding of each other's wishes, strengthening family bonds and fostering a supportive environment.

How to Create a Living Will

Creating a living will is a straightforward process. Here are the steps to get started:

- **Research State Laws:** Since living wills are governed by state or local jurisdiction laws, it is essential to understand the specific requirements in your location. Visit local health departments or legal aid organizations for guidance.
- **Consider Your Wishes:** Take time to reflect on your preferences regarding medical treatment. Think about scenarios where you might require life-sustaining treatments and how you would like to respond.
- **Consult with a Professional:** It can be beneficial to work with a legal professional who specializes in healthcare directives to ensure that the document is completed properly and complies with state laws.
- **Discuss with Family:** Share your completed living will with your family and friends. Ensure that they understand your decisions and are comfortable with advocating for your wishes.

Conclusion

As American Legion members, we have always understood the importance of planning and support. A living will is an essential component of preparing for the future, ensuring that our decisions are respected when we are unable to voice them ourselves. It's a powerful step toward securing our legacy and preserving our dignity in times of crisis. Don't wait until it's too late—take action now to create your living will. Your future self and your loved ones will thank you.



Ted Portyrala
1st Vice Commander,
Historian & Membership
Chair



Hugh (Charlie) Mason

22 February 2026

Charlie passed away on 22 February 2026 after a lengthy stay in the hospital. Charlie, retired from the U.S. Air Force after a distinguished career as an Air Traffic Controller.

His service included three tours at Ubon RTAFB, Thailand, as well as assignments at Travis AFB, California; Amarillo AFB, Texas; Johnson AFB, Japan; Seymour-Johnson AFB, North Carolina; and Lackland AFB, Texas. Charlie was a member of Post TH01 from 2016-2026 serving as our Chaplain from 2016-2023.

RAISING THE FLAG ON IWO JIMA



Paul Ben-Yehuda
Post Adjutant

The flag raising on Iwo Jima remains one of the most powerful symbols of bravery and sacrifice in American history. As we reflect on this iconic moment, it's essential to honor the veterans who participated in this pivotal battle, recognizing their valor and the profound significance of their actions.

In February 1945, during World War II, American forces launched one of the war's fiercest battles against the Japanese on the small island of Iwo Jima. This strategic location was crucial to the U.S. military as it provided a base for air operations and a stage for bombing missions over mainland Japan. The combat on Iwo Jima would become known not only for the brutal fighting but also for the historic act that took place on February 23, when six U.S. Marines famously raised the American flag atop Mount Suribachi.

The flag raising was captured in a photograph by Joe Rosenthal, which eventually became one of the most reproduced images in history. It depicts four Marines and a Navy corpsman hoisting the flag against a backdrop of a smoky sky, embodying a spirit of determination and hope. The men in the photograph—Harlon Block, Franklin Sousley, Michael Strank, Rene Gagnon, Ira Hayes, and John Bradley—would forever be etched into the collective memory of a nation, symbolizing the courage of not just themselves, but of all the veterans who fought in the Pacific theater.

Each of these individuals had a unique story, driven by a sense of duty and patriotism. For instance, Ira Hayes, a member of the Pima tribe in Arizona, faced the challenge of reconciling his heritage and the expectations placed upon him as a Marine. His experience as a Native American

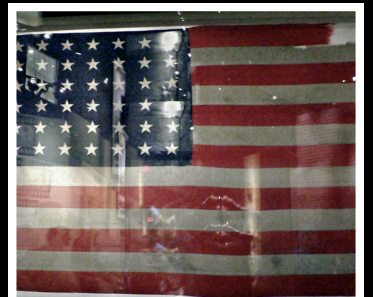
soldier added layers to the narrative of heroism, illustrating the diverse makeup of American forces.

Meanwhile, John Bradley, a Navy corpsman, was responsible for caring for wounded Marines during the battle, embodying the spirit of selflessness and sacrifice that characterized the wartime experience.

The raising of the flag on Battle of Iwo Jima was not just a moment of triumph; it was a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by the thousands of Marines who fought and died on the island. The battle claimed the lives of nearly 7,000 American servicemen and tens of thousands of Japanese soldiers. Despite the heavy toll, the photograph resonated as a rallying point for the American public, serving as a testament to the valor and resilience of the troops fighting overseas.

In the aftermath, the image sparked a wave of patriotism and was used to promote war bond drives, aiding in funding the ongoing war efforts. It immortalized the experiences of countless veterans who were part of the struggle in the Pacific, offering a visual symbol of hope amidst the chaos of conflict.

Today, we honor the bravery of these men and all veterans who served during World War II. The flag raised on Iwo Jima stands as a tribute to their courage and sacrifice, reminding us of the battles fought for freedom and the enduring spirit of those who serve. As we pause to reflect on this historic moment, we reaffirm our commitment to appreciating and supporting all veterans who answered the call of duty, ensuring their sacrifices are never forgotten.





A man and a woman were traveling on a bus.

Woman: Everytime you smile, I feel like inviting you to my place.

Man: Awwww this is a first for me. Are you single?

Woman: No, I'm a dentist.

DENTAL CARE



Greetings All!

I hope everyone is recovering well from the holiday hangover. The post and its membership have had a busy January. We had our quarterly outreach in Mukdahan hosted by Ted Potyrala. It was a wonderful success. It was great to see old faces and some new faces as well. It was great to see our better halves also get involved and start networking. I believe that without them it would be impossible to do the job here in our host country. Thank you, Ted, for being such a gracious host. Hope to be back in Mukdahan for another outreach.

This past January we also had two events surrounding the Children's Day Holiday here in Thailand. One in Ubon and a new one in Chiang Mai. Both were a resounding success. After a few adjustments in Ubon, after a change of venue, CDR John Skabry and a handful of members supported the event at the Ubon Zoo where they distributed over

*Jesus
Zamarripa*

**2nd Vice Commander &
Americanism & Activities
Chair**

2,000 bags of cookies to all who attended the event. The cookies were made by the lovely staff of Peppers Restaurant and donated by our post and its membership.

The event in Chiang Mai was spearheaded by our own Mike Cook where the post donated 8,000 baht to a local school and their Children's Day event. This was the first year supporting this event and hope to do so for years to come. Both events were a resounding success.

All our success can be attributed to the support from our membership. Whether it is time, money or both. We are spread across Thailand and the United States and sometimes it is hard to do business. Thank you for supporting this committee and your communities.



CHIANG MAI CHILDREN'S DAY 2026



Chiang Mai Children's Day 2026
Friday, 9 January 2026
Wat Sripingmuang
Municipal School

MIKE COOK
ASSISTANT SERVICE OFFICER

I had the privilege to celebrate Children's Day here in Chiang Mai with one of the local schools: Wat Sripingmuang Municipal School. 468 students attend this school with 380 students in grades 1 through 6 (primary) and 1 through 3 (secondary) school. The remaining 88 students are in kindergarten.

It was an exciting day filled with lots of smiles, joy, laughter, happiness, and gratefulness. Teachers were beaming with pride as their students participated in the various events including merit with the monks, dancing, raffles, and sporting events. As I reflect, two things intrigued me that I wanted to learn more about and share in our Post newsletter: what is the history of Thai Children's Day and what is merit, that seems to play such a significant role throughout the Thai culture.

History of Thai Children's Day

What is Thai Children's Day (Wan Dek)?

Thai Children's Day (วันเด็กแห่งชาติ, Wan Dek) is an annual event celebrated on the second Saturday of January. It is dedicated to honoring children, promoting their well-being, and emphasizing the importance of children as the future of the nation.

History and Origin

- The tradition was initiated in 1955 by Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, then Prime

Minister of Thailand.

- The idea was inspired by similar children's day celebrations around the world, including those promoted by the United Nations.
- The first Children's Day in Thailand was held on **January 18, 1955**, and later fixed to the second Saturday of January for convenience.
- The government intended to publicize the importance of children to Thai society, encourage parents to focus more on their care and education, and stimulate children's happiness and development.

Cultural Importance

- Children are highly valued in Thai society as the future of the nation and as integral to family and community continuity.
- The day helps to raise awareness about children's rights, health, education, and welfare.
- It promotes a spirit of family and societal support for young people.
- Schools, government agencies, and communities participate actively in uplifting children.

It is also a day that reflects the Thai philosophy of "Raksa" (protection) and "Panya" (wisdom/knowledge), emphasizing nurturing children as both protected and empowered individuals.

CHIANG MAI CHILDREN'S DAY 2026

How is Children's Day Celebrated in Thailand?

Nationwide Celebrations

- Most celebrations occur on the Saturday of the second week of January.
- Government agencies, the Royal Thai Army, the police, ministries, universities, parks, and media organizations participate.
- The Prime Minister traditionally gives a public speech directed toward children.

Typical Activities

1. Free Admission / Special Events for Kids:

- o Museums, zoos (like Chiang Mai Zoo), amusement parks, and other child-friendly venues often offer free or discounted admission.
- o Special exhibitions and kid-focused activities, such as workshops, games, educational shows, and performances, are arranged.

2. Gifts and Treats:

- o Local communities and organizations provide children with snacks, toys, school supplies, or small gifts.

3. Public Entertainment:

- o Puppet shows, magic shows, traditional Thai performances, and musical concerts.
- o Local government offices open their doors, allowing children to explore and learn about public services.

4. Educational Activities:

- o Many schools hold fairs, contests, and exhibitions to showcase children's talents and encourage learning.
- o Activities emphasize health, safety, and skills development.

5. Parades and Competitions:

- o Some regions hold parades featuring children dressed in traditional local costumes or as their favorite characters.

6. Community and Family Events:

- o Families spend the day together encouraging a joyful environment.
- o Parents and elders use the day to communicate values and aspirations for the younger generation.

Children's Day in Chiang Mai

- Chiang Mai, being a cultural hub, celebrates with a mix of traditional and modern activities.
- The Chiang Mai Zoo often participates by offering free entry and arranging animal shows.
- Cultural centers and temples may host exhibitions, cultural performances, and craft-making activities for children.
- Local schools organize fairs and events that reflect both Lanna (Northern Thai) culture and broader Thai values.
- Because Chiang Mai has a significant expat community, some international schools and organizations host special multicultural events for children.

Additional Relevant Points

- Media Coverage: TV stations and newspapers often broadcast special programs or features about children's issues and activities on this day.
- Public Messages: The government uses the occasion to disseminate messages about child protection, education reform, and health initiatives.
- Symbolism: Children wearing the traditional and bright colors, often yellow or red, symbolize happiness and vitality.
- Volunteering Opportunities: Many NGOs and social organizations operate campaigns helping disadvantaged children around Children's Day.

Summary

Thai Children's Day is a deeply meaningful national event that celebrates children's importance while promoting education, health, and happiness. It blends fun activities with educational content in ways that strengthen family and community bonds. For a foreigner living in Chiang Mai, participating in or observing the celebrations offers rich insight into Thai values, family structure, and community spirit. It's also a perfect day to interact with local families and children, experiencing the warmth and joy that define Thai culture.

CHIANG MAI CHILDREN'S DAY 2026

What is merit?

Understanding merit (บุญ/bun) is essential for supporting a Thai significant other, as it's deeply woven into daily life and relationships. Here's what you should know:

What Merit Means

Merit is accumulated spiritual credit from good deeds that influences your current and future lives. Thais believe merit affects everything from health and wealth to relationships and rebirth. It's not just religious - it's a worldview that shapes social behavior.

How Thais Make Merit

Common ways your partner might make merit:

- **Temple donations:** Supporting monks, temple renovations, or ceremonies
- **Food offerings:** Giving alms to monks in the morning or bringing food to temples
- **Releasing animals:** Fish, birds, or turtles (though this is controversial)
- **Ordination support:** Helping family members become monks temporarily
- **Charity:** Helping the poor, disabled, or funding education
- **Special occasions:** Birthdays, anniversaries, or after good/bad fortune

Supporting Your Partner

Dos

- Participate when invited, even if you're not Buddhist
- Contribute financially to merit-making activities within your means
- Show respect during temple visits (proper dress, removing shoes)
- Understand that supporting their parents is considered highly meritorious

- Join in transferring merit to deceased relatives during ceremonies

Don'ts

- Criticize or dismiss these practices as superstition
- Refuse to participate entirely - this can strain the relationship
- Feel obligated to believe, just be respectful
- Overspend to impress - sincerity matters more than amount

Practical Considerations

- Merit-making can be expensive during special occasions
- Your partner may want to make merit when facing challenges or after success
- Family obligations often involve merit-making activities
- Some partners may increase religious activities as they age or after life events

Cultural Bridge

Many mixed couples find a balance where the foreign partner participates in major merit-making events while maintaining their own beliefs. The key is showing respect for what's important to your partner while setting reasonable boundaries about participation and expenses.

Understanding merit helps explain many Thai behaviors around generosity, family duty, and spiritual practice - it's often the invisible force behind decisions that might otherwise seem puzzling to outsiders.

All in all, it was an amazing day that I will cherish for a lifetime. Pictures of this event can be viewed here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1tG3UDguixCvkb-E17T7vB6ewJeTVkLKu>

DATES TO REMEMBER

3 Feb 26

Thailand Veteran's Day

10 Mar 2026 (tentative)

Tawanchai Hospital Donation (Khon Kaen)

15 Mar 2026

American Legion 107th Birthday

25 May 2026

Memorial Day (event in Chiang Mai)

14 June 2026

US Army Birthday and Flag Day

4 Jul 2026

American Independence Day

14 Jul 2026

BG Robin Olds Birthday

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: 8 DECEMBER 2026, END OF YEAR PARTY, UBON RATCHATANI, PEPPERS



WE SERVE THOSE WHO SERVED

SERVICE OFFICER SUPPORT

SERVICE OFFICER, POST TH01

LARRY HAYNIE

SERVICE@AMERICANLEGIONTHAILAND.COM



The American Legion follows a philosophy of the “4 Pillars of Service and Advocacy”. Post TH01 also follows a code of service, which encompasses all veteran members and their families.

Post TH01 is firmly dedicated, to what can also be described as 3 tenets of effective and successful operations:

Cohesiveness/Comradery/Commitment

Cohesiveness: Post TH01 has an Executive Committee who are united and working together towards common goals, which benefit all veterans who have issues concerning VA benefits, and health care issues for themselves and their families.

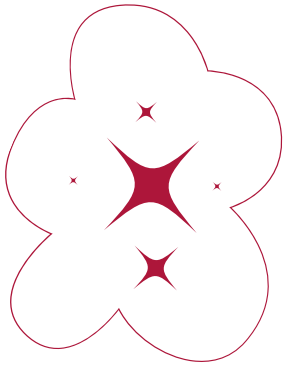
Camradery: We are a network of veterans united by our military service experiences. We strive to recruit new members and contacts through our post membership meetings, home visits, outreaches, and various telecommunications systems.

Commitment: Post TH01 is dedicated to providing the utmost in services to all veterans, their families, and to those in need in the Thai community as well. Our Post maintains a spirit of “Can Do” which reflects our commitment to assisting all who seek our services, support, guidance and advice. Our Post motto is: “We Serve Those Who Served”!!!! Come join us and be an integral part of our organization.

**MY
FELLOW
VETERANS &
FAMILY
MEMBERS;**



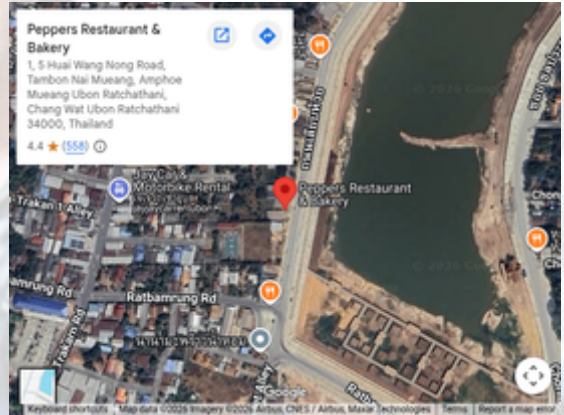
HAPPY BDAY



PHILIPPE COLOMBEY
 ANTHONY FRANCOIS
 THOMAS HUGHES
 MARLEEN MADDING
 KIRBY RAINES
 JOSEPH REEDY

LET'S HELP WISH
 POST TH01 MEMBERS
 A HAPPY BIRTHDAY
 FOR THE MONTH OF
 FEBRUARY

POST TH01 MEETS ON THE 2ND WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH



FACE-TO-FACE

1, 5 HUAI WANG NONG RD.
TAMBON NAI MUEANG,
MUEANG UBON RATCHATHANI DISTRICT,
UBON RATCHATHANI 34000 THAILAND



VIRTUAL

MONTHLY MEETINGS CAN BE
ATTENDED ONLINE/REMOTELY VIA
GOOGLE MEET

ONLINE



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Instagram

Post TH01 Website _____

www.AmericanLegionThailand.com

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