

**Report of Department President Sheila Lee-Eiler**  
***“Continuing Our Service to Veterans and Their Families”***

Commander Tom Judd and I were installed as your Department Commander and Department President on Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Thank you, to PNP Cortina Barnes for your support of me. And many thanks to PDP Susie Gleason, for installing me.

Jeff and I then attended the National Convention in Orlando, Florida in July. That was a truly magical experience. I was escorted as Arizona was introduced by Sr. Vice Melody and Jr. Vice Janae. I still get chills as I write this. We then watched the excitement as our National President Peggy Haake and her wonderful National line officers were installed.

The year started with Department hitting the ground running. Not only visiting Districts but also attending auxiliary meetings. The 2019/2020-year focus was on “you” the member. Listening to the issues and concerns that you the member had concerning participation, respect, and training. Department Chief of Staff Cathy, Mentoring and Leadership chairman Reba and Buddy Poppy chairman Lynn, Thank you!

We started the year with the “Building on the VFW Auxiliary Foundation Training”. This training was well received and appreciated by the Arizona Auxiliary members. I thank all who attended the training and shared the lessons of what you learned with your Auxiliaries. The Department worked extremely hard on their presentations as it related to their own positions and it was very much appreciated by me and the members. Thank you!

We continued the training at District meetings with our wonderful program chairman this year. When I started asking members to be program chairman for the year, I could see the reluctance and hesitation of some members by taking on the important responsibilities and challenges. However, under the direction of our wonderful program chairman PDP Stephanie Morris, we have seen the growth, knowledge and strength the Chairman’s have demonstrated in working with Auxiliary members. I am so proud and honored to have had you all on my team. Thank you!

**In between the training schedules, Jeff, Monique, and Auxiliary members threw a surprise birthday me party at my home Post. VFW and Auxiliary members were in attendance. That was the best! Jeff and I attended the Department Commander's homecoming and District 3's POW/MIA ceremony at the MANA House in Phoenix.**

**Our Fall conference was held in Tucson, Arizona and I must give kudo's again to the program chairman. Awesome job in working with the comrades for a joint training.**

**We attended VFW State Chaplain Phil Erickson's ordination at Family Faith Bible Church to support and celebrate with Phil on this major accomplishment in Apache Junction. Following Phil's achievement my husband and I attended the "Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame" where PDC Roger Gowen was inducted. What a proud moment for the Department of Arizona VFW and its Auxiliaries.**

**Arizona was very well represented at Western conference which was held in Anchorage, Alaska. I genuinely enjoyed seeing my Western "Aloha team" sisters, brothers, and the beautiful city. And OMG...the smoked salmon chowder was the BEST ever.**

**I was very honored to be asked to be the guest speaker at Bennett Academy School in Phoenix for their Veterans Day program. These children were amazing. There sister Lois and I were able to pass out Illustrating America pamphlets, Buddy Poppies, flags, bookmarks and pencils to the students and teachers. I was able to present a special Buddy Poppy to co-founder of the school Mr. Bennett. Veterans Day, Commander Tom and I rode in the Phoenix Veterans Day parade, with the VFW White Tank riders. Thank you PDC Gene and Paula Wood, for letting us ride in the back of your truck. That was fun.**

**The Department of Arizona welcomed a new Auxiliary, Maricopa Auxiliary 12043 with PDP Stephanie instituting the new group. On our way to the event, Jeff and I ran into two accidents on Interstate 10, however, I was fortunate to be able to install the members. Whew... Congratulations Maricopa Auxiliary.**

**Another honor was placing the VFW Auxiliary Dept of AZ. wreath with Sr. Vice Melody at the Pearl Harbor ceremony at the Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza Center**

on December 7, 2019. Our Commander Tom and his Sr. Vice Jeff also presented the VFW Dept. wreath. The fly over by the Air Force is my favorite.

I attended my 1<sup>st</sup> Orphan Christmas party at Post 9399. What an awesome experience. I took a picture with the Grinch! Thank you for inviting me.

Jeff and I along with Commander Tom and Melody attended a conference with the commander and family members of the 162<sup>nd</sup> Air-Guard in Tucson at their annual Christmas party. The conference and videos shown were about military suicide and the family awareness.

Another highlight of the year was Winter conference. Commander Tom and I along with Scholarship chairman Brenda Kinghorn escorted our VOD and Patriots Pen students and family members to the State Capital. Under the direction of VFW & Auxiliary Sr. Vices portrayed the "Family Feud" game using questions from both VFW and Auxiliary and the highlight was the Family Feud game moderated by our Sr. Vice's. Thank you, for engaging the audience's participation. The banquet that evening was very exciting as we learned who we would represent Arizona in Washington D.C. for the VOD Awards.

The leadership of the Department of New Mexico invited Jeff and I to attend their Fall conference and VOD weekend. It was great to see and hang out with good friends and learn how other Departments work their Auxiliary programs. We got a wonderful surprise by the entrance of National President Peggy Haake.

My Mardi Gras homecoming was held on February 8<sup>th</sup>. I must thank everyone involved to making it a success. National's Celebrating America's Freedom Event (CAFÉ) was held in Honolulu, Hawaii. My first time ever in Hawaii. The event was held at the Punchbowl where each President was announced. In part we toured the Dole plantation and the Pearl Harbor National Memorial. I am getting those chills again. We were treated to a complete and awesome luau.

A few days later Jeff and I were on our way to Washington D.C. for VOD and Legislative conference. Another moment to never be forgotten. Commander Tom and I escorting our Arizona Voice of Democracy winner on stage for the awards presentation.

**The next day the Arizona delegation attended hearings on the hill. The following day we continued our quest to visit Arizona representatives and congresspersons. I have never in my life walked over 11,000 steps.**

**Jeff and I were fortunate to be able to visit and sightsee with his son, a VFW member Bradlee who drove down from Virginia.**

**Once we returned home, it was the beginning of the outbreak of the Corona virus. We were stopped in our tracks. Visits and meetings started coming to a halt. Travel bans were put in place by the major airlines, and flights were canceled. This led to Arizona missing and National cancelling our visit with National President Peggy, which was understandable however, most disappointing.**

**But through technology some can continue their work and others must wait. Patience is what we are learning now, which is what our National President Peggy has been telling her Department Presidents all year. Department convention as we knew it for Arizona this year will be different.**

**To all the elected and appointed committee members for the 2019/2020 year. I thank you for agreeing to be a part of my team. And for your wonderful support. To the Department line officers, I give you my biggest thank you, for your support. Sr. Vice Melody, I wish you every success for the incoming year. District Presidents thank you; you were awesome, and you helped me tremendously with your dedication to the Auxiliary.**

**To my wonderful Auxiliary Presidents. Thank you! I asked that you give and do your best with your Auxiliaries. You did! I am so proud of all of you.**

**To the members, membership again for this year is over 100%. You all rock and thank you. Thank you to all the Auxiliaries who contributed to Commander Tom's and my special project "Arizona Charities". As of the writing of this article you assisted and raised over \$35,000. Just think how many Veterans this money will help. Without you the Department could not have been successful, which we are. Because of you!**

**I will miss seeing some of you at convention. But I will come visit.**

**To my Post/Auxiliary Sandy Coor 1433 and District 3. Thank you for your unwavering support.**

**To my husband Jeffrey Eiler and my family. Thank you! Your love and support have been immeasurable.**

**Mahalo and Aloha,  
Sheila Lee-Eiler**